

Inspection of St Paul's C of E (Aided) Primary School

St Paul's Road West, Dorking, Surrey RH4 2HS

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 11 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a friendly and caring school at the heart of its local community. It is highly inclusive, with pupils knowing that everyone is treated equally well. Pupils feel happy, safe, and are proud to attend. They value 'Talk Time' where there are opportunities to speak to adults should anyone need extra help or support.

Pupils benefit from a culture where 'inspiring learning' is the school's aim. High expectations are set for pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy their lessons and achieve well. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well provided for. Parents value how staff take time to ensure individual needs are well considered and understood.

The school is a lively but orderly place. Pupils behave very well both in the classroom and at social times. During lunchtime, pupils enjoy each other's company, playing with the wide range of activities and games available. The 'garden club' provides a place for pupils to explore nature and build teamwork skills through collaboration with one another.

The school's extensive enrichment programme provides pupils with rich experiences beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils value the 'St Paul's Pledge', which sets out the many trips, clubs and visitors that they will encounter during their time at the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school is highly ambitious for what pupils will achieve. In most subjects the important knowledge that pupils need to learn had been thoughtfully considered. This has been well ordered to ensure learning builds sequentially. However, this is not yet the case across the full curriculum. In a small number of subjects, the precise knowledge pupils should learn is not clearly identified, meaning teachers do not always use activities that help pupils learn as well as they could. The school recognises this and are focused on continuing to make refinements to the curriculum.

Children get off to a strong start in early years. The activities that children complete are carefully designed and well resourced. Children confidently make use of all available space including the rich and stimulating outdoor environment. The school have ensured that there are well-established systems for identifying children who may have SEND at any early stage. Staff adapt learning to help children acquire the skills they need in readiness for key stage 1.

Overall pupils achieve well and are thoroughly prepared for their next stages of education. At key stages 1 and 2, the school's curriculum is typically taught very effectively. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise what they have learned previously. Some subjects, such as French, are taught particularly well. However, in a small number of

subjects, the way new learning is introduced and how pupils' progress is checked is not yet as consistently effective. The school have a clear strategy for increasing staff expertise providing ongoing training to ensure that staff can help pupils to achieve highly in all subjects.

The school have ensured that reading is prioritised and well resourced. Children begin to learn to read right from the start of Reception. The school's chosen phonics programme helps pupils confidently learn new sounds and words. Those who need more help to develop into confident readers receive comprehensive additional support. Careful thought has gone into the books that pupils read as they get older, ensuring these reflect a diverse and modern Britain. 'Our time to enjoy reading' known as 'OTTER' is a protected part of every day during which pupils practise and enjoy reading.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is very positive. Pupils know the school rules. In Reception, children understand the 'five magic things' that they are expected to do to learn well. Pupils are polite and respectful. There are warm relationships between staff and pupils. Those who need more help to regulate their feelings get additional help. Pupils' attendance is high. For the small number of pupils who attend less frequently, the school work closely with families to help overcome barriers to good attendance, including securing support from external agencies.

The school's personal development programme is exceptional. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is expertly nurtured. This includes developing a detailed understanding of different religions. Opportunities to discuss and hear different view points are numerous. Pupils are highly respectful of diversity. Many pupils benefit from the numerous roles and responsibilities that they take on within the school. This includes being part of the faith team and eco-council. Pupils value making a positive contribution to their school community.

Governors understand their roles well and fulfil their duties effectively. Leaders and governors have a secure understanding of the strengths of the school and the priority areas that require further refinement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a very small number of subjects, leaders have not yet precisely identified and sequenced the detailed knowledge that they want pupils to learn in the curriculum. This means that teachers do not always know what needs to be taught or check how well pupils are learning. Leaders need to ensure that across

all subjects the key steps of knowledge that pupils should learn are coherently planned and that pupils' learning is checked upon effectively.

- In a few subjects, the curriculum is not taught as well as leaders intend. This means that pupils do not always achieve as highly as they could. Leaders should continue to ensure that staff receive the training that they need to provide them with the expertise to implement the curriculum effectively in all areas.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	125171
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10321882
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Fiona Ruddock
Headteacher	Ann Alden
Website	www.stpaulsschool-dorking.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 February 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed to her role since the last inspection. There have also been a number of other changes in leadership at the school.
- The school is a Church of England primary school within the Diocese of Guildford. The school's religious character was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in September 2017.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the leader responsible for pupils with SEND, other teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors and had conversations with representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Guildford.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and staff to hear their views.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential Ofsted surveys for staff, pupils and Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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