

# Inspection of St Paul's School

73 Hertford Street, Birmingham B12 8NJ

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Inspection dates: 15 to 17 October 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This is a school where everybody cares deeply for all pupils to be safe, happy and successful. Trustees, leaders and staff have a tangible moral purpose. They get to know pupils well because they take the time to do so. Pupils appreciate this. They feel safe, valued, appreciated and respected here.

Pupils have had negative experiences in their education before joining St Paul's and many have been excluded from other settings. The behaviour of pupils improves dramatically here because of the positive relationships between staff and pupils. In lessons, pupils mostly display positive attitudes and behaviour. At breaktimes, behaviour is less positive. The school is working effectively to help pupils put this right.

The school wants all pupils to overcome the challenges they have faced in the past. There is a culture of 'trying something new' and 'never giving up'. Everyone wants pupils to achieve and make a positive contribution as well-rounded citizens. Leaders at all levels are determined to make the provision fulfil this ambition.

The school has been unsettled since the last inspection due to changes in staffing and the school site. There is now renewed stability in the school, and it is in a secure position to move forward purposefully.

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

There is ambition here for pupils to receive a suitable and successful education, including for students in the sixth form. The school has recently introduced a new curriculum which is broad and interesting. It provides pupils with experiences in creative and vocational subjects as well as a focus on English, mathematics and personal, social and health education (PSHE). A renewed focus on pupils sharing and enjoying literature is already paying dividends, with pupils happy to discuss the books they are reading or being read. However, there is some inconsistency in the way staff deliver the curriculum. There is also variability in the quality of the work pupils produce. This is due to the differences in staff expertise to deliver the curriculum and the high turnover of staff in recent times. The school has not yet been able to monitor how well the curriculum is delivered or to check how well pupils are learning and remembering it.

The school puts great emphasis on offering pupils experiences that contribute to their personal development. In the sixth form, for instance, students receive targeted and effective support to help them make choices about their future. Staff support them to make applications to progress to work or further education. They take them to a range of settings for relevant and valuable experience to help them gain a clear sense of what they want to pursue next.

Pupils receive a wide range of creative, vocational and cultural experiences. These include an assortment of trips and work experience placements. The school

welcomes visitors from agencies such as the police and careers guidance organisations to work with pupils. There is a strong focus on improving pupils' aspirations and life choices. They learn about staying safe and healthy and making a positive contribution to society. They have opportunities to work on the trust's city farm, visit a boxing gym, cook foods from different cultures, go swimming and, recently, visit London. The school's PSHE curriculum helps pupils gain an appropriate understanding of equality and cultural diversity.

The school has recently introduced a new behaviour policy. However, the policy has not been in place long enough for leaders to be sure it is making the difference needed. When pupils display less than positive behaviours in lessons, their learning is impacted, and they develop gaps in their knowledge.

Pupils miss too much school and this too creates gaps in their learning. The school works hard with pupils and their families to improve this. Staff help pupils to catch up on any missed learning. However, as time is limited, gaps persist because the school has not identified precisely what is most important for pupils to catch up with.

The trust has ensured that the independent school standards have been consistently met. Pupils and students benefit from well-resourced sites that are safe and well maintained. Leaders and trustees maintain strong working relationships with other agencies, including the local authority. Careful checks are made on the suitability of staff who work here and this contributes to the effective culture of safeguarding.

Trustees accept that there have been challenges in the leadership structure of the school since the last inspection. In recent months, new leaders have started making the changes which are needed to improve the school. But most developments are at an early stage of implementation. Those who quality assure the provision do not yet have an accurate picture of the impact these changes have had. The school is outward-looking and has started making useful links with other settings to share good practice and expertise. Leaders at all levels are considerate of staff well-being and workload, and staff at this school are proud to work here. They recognise that recent changes are putting the school on the right track to move forward and be successful.

The school's accessibility plan meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The way the school's curriculum is delivered is not consistent. As a result, most

pupils have a varied learning experience and do not achieve as well as they could. The school should carefully evaluate the impact of the curriculum and support staff so that they enable all pupils to learn effectively.

- The school has recently changed its approach to supporting pupils' behaviour. Although initial indications are that it is having a positive impact, the behaviour of pupils is not as positive as it should be and learning time is not always maximised. The school should continue the work to implement a successful behaviour strategy and ensure that pupils spend a greater time engaged in learning and achieve more.
- Too many pupils miss too much of their education. As a result, these pupils develop gaps in their learning. The school should make sure that staff prioritise the most important learning for these pupils so that they access the most important aspects of the curriculum successfully.

### **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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135208
<b>DfE registration number</b>	330/6115
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10342057
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent day school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	41
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	18
<b>Proprietor</b>	St Paul's Community Development Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Patrick Wing
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Stevenson
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£25,000 (depending on need)
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4642556
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stpaulstrust.org.uk">www.stpaulstrust.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:schooloffice@stpaulstrust.org.uk">schooloffice@stpaulstrust.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 November to 2 December 2021

## Information about this school

- The school's last full inspection was in November 2021, when it was found to be a good school.
- St Paul's School is an independent special school catering for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Most pupils are referred to the school by Birmingham local authority.
- The school is registered to take pupils from ages 11 to 19, but currently, the youngest pupils are in Year 8.
- The school is run by St Paul's Community Development Trust which is a registered charity.
- The school is based on two sites: one for secondary pupils and the other for students in the sixth form.
- The school uses three alternative provisions to support the vocational curriculum. One of these is registered with Ofsted. Two are not registered with Ofsted.
- A new headteacher took up their post in September 2024.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator.
- 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and PSHE. 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.
- An inspector met with the chair of the proprietor board and other trustees. They

also met with the chief executive officer, the safeguarding lead and the human resources lead for the trust.

- The lead inspector spoke with the owner of one of the alternative provisions the school uses.
- The lead inspector checked that the premises complied with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses. Inspectors also took account of responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documents, including school improvement plans, the school's website and minutes from governor meetings.

### **Inspection team**

Gareth Morgan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mike Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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