

Inspection of St Paul's School

73 Hertford Street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 8NJ

Inspection dates: 30 November to 2 December 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

This school meets pupils' needs. In many cases, pupils have missed a lot of school or have had difficulties in other schools. When they come to St Paul's, their attendance usually improves. In addition, they learn things that will help them get jobs when they are older.

Pupils' behaviour is often challenging. Staff manage this carefully. They teach pupils about the damage caused by bullying, and they stop it if it happens in school. They also help pupils to understand the impact of poor choices, both on themselves and others. When pupils get upset or angry, staff help them to calm down.

Staff know a lot about safeguarding. They do the right things to protect pupils.

Pupils have English and mathematics lessons every day. Older pupils work towards qualifications. Those who need help with reading, get what they need. In other subjects, curriculum plans are not so well organised, but pupils do experience a broad range of activities.

A particular feature of the school is its focus on work-based learning. Through links with different organisations, pupils learn about different careers. This helps them to make informed choices about what they want to do when they leave school.

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

Pupils who come to this school have usually had a lot of difficulties in their lives and learning. Many have missed a lot of school or have been in several different schools. All have significant special educational needs.

Leaders and staff understand this and make careful checks on what pupils know and what they need. They find out about their behaviour and the things that upset them. They use this information to plan the best ways to help them. If pupils need some time out, then staff manage this well. However, they also set clear rules, so that everyone understands expectations. These routines ensure staff and pupils know where they stand and help the school day to run as smoothly as possible. Poor behaviour does happen, but its impact on learning is kept to a minimum.

In class, pupils learn English and mathematics every day. The school has a structured phonics programme for those pupils who need support with their early reading. Staff introduce pupils to different types of books and encourage them to take an interest in reading. Mathematics is planned carefully so that new learning builds on what has come before. In both English and mathematics, pupils work towards appropriate qualifications.

The curriculum includes science, art, physical education (PE), crime studies and humanities. Again, staff have guidance to follow to ensure that lessons cover the right things. However, planning in some subjects, such as art, could be improved so that pupils build up knowledge in a more carefully sequenced way.

The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is established across the school. Through relationships, sex and health education, staff teach pupils about healthy relationships, different types of families and the importance of consent. Lessons cover the dangers of prejudice and discrimination. In doing so, staff are mindful of the protected characteristics. However, they could do more to make sure pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of what these mean.

Careers guidance is interwoven with the school's vocational curriculum. Older pupils can spend time at different settings learning about different jobs. Currently, pupils have opportunities to learn about childcare, construction trades and horticulture. In addition, staff use Prince's Trust resources to help pupils prepare for life after school. For example, they learn about how to manage money and why it is important to respect the law. Staff also take them out and about, often using public transport, to get them used to different situations and places.

Values of the week, such as empathy, guide classroom discussions and feed into everyday lessons. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and attitudes and to consider how their actions affect others. Rewards, like the pupil five-point system, help them to think about their choices and understand consequences.

In most cases, pupils' attendance improves over time, but there is still room for further improvement.

Leaders have made sure that the school's required policies are fit for purpose. The complaints policy, for example, sets out how to make a complaint and what to do at each stage of the process. When complaints have been received, the school has followed this policy correctly.

The school buildings meet requirements. There are no showers on site, but pupils can use showers at a local venue that they use for PE. This arrangement meets the minimum required standard but is not ideal.

The school's website includes all the information that it should. Attendance and admissions registers are kept correctly. If a pupil does not turn up in the morning, then staff find out where they are.

The St Paul's Community Trust provides informed oversight of the school's work. Trustees and governors have effective systems for gathering and checking information. Their decision-making is guided by the interests of pupils while also being mindful of the welfare and workload of staff. They have ensured that the school continues to meet the independent school standards and that it has a suitable accessibility plan.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are very alert to the risks that pupils can, and do, face. They are up to date with current guidance and make sure everyone knows what to do if they have a concern. Staff record incidents and concerns in detail and share the right information with the right people. When needs be, the school is quick to refer matters to the appropriate local authority officer or other professional agency.

All the required checks on adults are carried out and recorded.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Curriculum planning for creative subjects, such as art and design, lack enough detail about what should be taught. Leaders should review and improve these plans so that pupils learn the right things in the right order.
- The school's PSHE programme takes account of the protected characteristics, but teaching does not make sufficient reference to these. Consequently, pupils do not know enough about what the protected characteristics are. Leaders should ensure that staff make use of the training and guidance they have received to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the protected characteristics.

- Most pupils' attendance improves over time but there is still room for further improvement. Leaders should continue to set aspirational targets for improving school attendance so that pupils get into better habits that will serve them well in the future.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	135208
DfE registration number	330/6115
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10205735
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Proprietor	St Paul's Community Trust
Chair	Patrick Wing
Headteacher	Kerenza Palmer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,000 (depending on need)
Telephone number	0121 464 2556
Website	www.stpaulstrust.org.uk
Email address	SchoolOffice@stpaulstrust.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 to 11 July 2019

Information about this school

- St Paul's School is a small 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 7 to 19, but currently only caters for pupils up to the age of 16.
- The school is part of the St Paul's Community Development Trust. The trust operates a children's centre, nursery and out-of-school play services. These centres and services are inspected separately.
- The school uses two alternative providers to support the vocational curriculum. One of these is registered with Ofsted. One is not registered with Ofsted. The school uses local sports venues for PE.
- The school's last full inspection was in July 2019, when it was found to be a good school. Since then, Ofsted has carried out two emergency inspections: one in March 2020 and one in October 2020. Both these inspections found that the school met all the independent school standards that were checked.

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.

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, staff, the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer of St Paul's Community Trust. One of the inspectors had an online meeting with a behaviour mentor. Both inspectors spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art, and science. In these subjects, inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, looked at work and talked to staff. Inspectors also looked at plans and work in PSHE and some other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at the school's website and examined several documents. These included school policies and records relating to safeguarding, the curriculum, complaints, health and safety, pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff's, pupils' and parents' views. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with two parents of pupils.

- Inspectors checked the single central record of employment checks on staff, looked at pupils' records and talked with staff about safeguarding matters.
- The lead inspector checked that the premises complied with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and levels of supervision throughout the day.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Forrest

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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