

Inspection of St Pauls' Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane, Swanley Village, Kent BR8 7PJ

Inspection dates:	17 and 18 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are immensely proud and happy to attend this school. They flourish in this caring community and develop a strong sense of belonging. Children in the early years settle seamlessly into the school's highly effective routines. Pupils spoke about how their school mantra, the 'St Paul's Way', inspires them to persevere and be the best version of themselves.

The school is aspirational for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers' high expectations help pupils to build their knowledge over time. Most pupils achieve well across the curriculum.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning is exemplary. Attendance is high. Pupils take collective responsibility for their own behaviour and helping their peers. They meet the high expectations that staff have of their conduct. Pupils develop a thirst for knowledge that helps them to become keen and resilient learners.

The school provides a vast array of activities for pupils to learn beyond the academic curriculum. Trips and visits to historically and culturally important places, including in London, are meticulously planned to bring learning to life. Pupils relish the many leadership roles available to them, such as librarians. These responsibilities help pupils to make a meaningful contribution to their school.

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

The school has designed a rich and engaging curriculum from the early years to Year 6. The curriculum is designed carefully to address the diverse needs in the school's mixed-aged classes. The key knowledge pupils are to learn has been precisely identified and sequenced in each subject.

Children in the early years access a first-class education. Skilled staff support learning consistently across all the areas of learning exceptionally well. High-quality interactions with adults help children to develop their communication and language skills successfully. This enables them to secure early literacy and numeracy skills. The focus on important personal and social skills helps children to learn and play co-operatively with their friends. As a result, children are highly prepared for the Year 1 curriculum.

Early reading is prioritised. Children in the early years enjoy sharing stories with one another and listening to adults read to them. Knowledgeable staff deliver phonics effectively. This ensures that pupils learn to read successfully from the very get go. If pupils fall behind, they receive the support they need to catch up quickly. Across the curriculum, the school ensures that pupils develop highly sophisticated subject-specific words and phrases. Pupils use this terminology to exemplify their thoughts and ideas well. Older pupils develop a deep love of reading and enjoy a range of reading opportunities across the day.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. Overall, they deliver the curriculum skilfully. For example, staff think carefully about how meaningful tasks can be used to support pupils to remember the key information across the curriculum successfully. Typically, staff make sure that any gaps in pupils' understanding are addressed swiftly. However, the school knows there is more to do in a small number of subjects where some of the changes introduced are newer than others. Sometimes, expectations could be higher and adaptation to learning activities could be more precise.

Staff know how to identify the signs that pupils might need additional help, including those with SEND. They generally adapt their delivery of the curriculum for these pupils skilfully. They use a range of aids, including modified texts, to support learning and help pupils to learn the curriculum with increasing independence. As a result, pupils with SEND typically benefit highly from the high-quality support they receive.

The way that the school develops pupils' character is truly commendable. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn the important skills to help them keep safe, including online. They learn how to be a good friend and speak to a trusted adult if they have any worries. Initiatives such as the school's 'job centre' provides pupils with meaningful opportunities to learn commitment and responsibility. In turn, the 'points' pupils earn and can spend on small rewards, instil important life skills such as money management. High proportions of pupils make use of the school's extensive extra-curricular offer, which is based on pupils' suggestions. This ensures pupils enjoy bespoke opportunities to develop their interests and talents.

The school is well led and managed. Governors utilise established systems to assure themselves that the school's systems are working well. They fulfil their roles and responsibilities diligently and provide effective challenge and support to the school. Staff are proud to work at the school. They are overwhelmingly positive about how the school proficiently takes their workload and well-being into consideration.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, the implementation of the curriculum is varied. This means that, at times, pupils' learning is stronger in some subjects than others. The school should further strengthen how staff adapt learning to meet pupils needs so that there is even greater consistency in the outcomes that pupils achieve.

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	118590
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10379800
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Strachan
Headteacher	Benjamin Hulme (Executive headteacher) James Johnson (Head of School)
Website	www.st-pauls-swanley.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Pupils in key stage 1 and 2 are split across three mixed-age classes. Children in the early years are taught separately in a single Reception class.
- The school is part of the Compass Federation, a formal partnership between two other local primary schools, in September 2023.
- Leadership of the federation is provided by an executive headteacher with oversight of all three schools. The school has its own head of school who provides leadership on a day-to-day basis.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also met with members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and geography. 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to them informally during social times.
- Inspectors met some parents to gain their views of the school. They reviewed the responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text submissions. They also took account of staff responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.

Inspection team

Laura James, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Jody Murphy

Ofsted Inspector

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