

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Paul's CofE Primary School, Stalybridge

Huddersfield Road, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 2PT

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 March 2025

Outcome

St Paul's CofE Primary School, Stalybridge has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Simon Wright. This school is part of the Chester Diocesan Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Neil Dixon, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Mason.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are high priority in this school. Their well-being is considered at every stage. Pupils understand that staff care about them. They feel safe. Pupils appreciate that staff are available to talk to if they have any worries. They enjoy attending this school and enter with broad smiles on their faces.

The values are the beating heart of the school. They permeate throughout all aspects of school life. This helps pupils to understand how to treat others and to make sensible choices. Pupils behave well and rise to the high expectations that are set. This begins in the early years, where clear routines are established. Children learn to share and take turns and play together harmoniously.

The school sets high expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils display positive attitudes in their lessons and work hard. Pupils appreciate the variety of activities that the school offers. They understand that this helps them to experience 'life in all its fullness'. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well.

Pupils are proud to receive genuine opportunities to be leaders in the school, such as being part of the ethos group. Pupils feel that these opportunities help them gain important skills for the future.

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

Children get off to a flying start in the early years. The school knows its children well. It has set out a carefully considered curriculum and ensures that activities are purposeful. Children learn how to use the classroom and to work together respectfully. They participate positively in all areas of learning. Staff use every opportunity to talk to the children about their learning. This helps to challenge children's thinking and understanding. Children acquire the necessary knowledge that they require to be successful in Year 1.

The school prioritises reading. Staff are well trained and teach the phonics programme effectively. This starts in the early years. Regular checks of what pupils can read mean that pupils at risk of falling behind in the phonics programme are identified promptly. These pupils receive appropriate support to catch up. Pupils read books that match the sounds that they know. This helps them to develop into confident and fluent readers. A love of reading is promoted throughout the school. Pupils in all classes enjoy listening to the carefully selected texts that staff read to them. Older pupils have a good grasp of different authors.

The school has designed a curriculum which identifies the key knowledge that it wants pupils to know and remember. This helps teachers know what to teach and when this should happen. This ensures that pupils are able to build their knowledge securely over time. They achieve well across a range of different subjects.

The school is insistent that each lesson begins with pupils revisiting their prior learning. This helps pupils to remember key knowledge. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and they present information clearly. In most subjects, teachers check that pupils' understanding has been retained, which enables appropriate activities to be set. However, in a few subjects, such as mathematics, teachers do not check pupils' understanding thoroughly enough. At times, this leads to some pupils being supported by adults when this help is not required. This prevents some pupils from learning independently.

The school is quick to identify additional needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers carefully adapt activities to enable these pupils to receive the support that they need. This support is effective and helps pupils to achieve well.

The personal development offer helps to prepare pupils well for their future life in modern Britain. Pupils understand different faiths and religions and they celebrate the differences between themselves and others. Pupils have access to a range of clubs, such as school band in which they play ukuleles and guitars. Pupils benefit from the plentiful trips and visits that take place. They take ownership of raising money for different charities. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and their learning. Their attendance rates are high.

Staff feel listened to and well supported in their roles. The school appreciates the support it receives from the trust. Trustees and members of the local governing body know the school well and provide appropriate support and challenge.

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 few subjects, teachers' checks on pupils' learning do not provide sufficient information about what pupils can and cannot do. At times, this leads to some pupils receiving additional support when they do not need it. This limits their ability to work independently. The school should undertake thorough checks of pupils' understanding to ensure that pupils progress smoothly through these curriculum areas.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in January 2020.

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	143551
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10355988
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Mason
CEO of the trust	Neil Dixon
Headteacher	Simon Wright
Website	www.st-paulsstalybridge.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection, which is an inspection of the school's religious character, took place in January 2025. The next inspection will take place in approximately five years.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The inspector also spoke with a representative of the diocese, members of the local governing body, trustees and the trust's director of education.
- The inspector visited a number of lessons, including the early years, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed some pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke with a range of staff to discuss how the school supports their workload and well-being. There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- The inspector spoke with parents and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, attendance records, minutes from the governing body, school development plans and school self-evaluation documents.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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

Bev Dolman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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