

# Inspection of an outstanding school: St Paul's School for Girls

Vernon Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 9SL

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Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

## Outcome

St Paul's School for Girls continues to be an outstanding school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders at St Paul's School for Girls have created a welcoming school culture where there is high ambition for pupils. Pupils are aware of the very high expectations the school has of them and do everything they can to meet or to exceed these. There are strong, caring relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well in lessons and during social times.

Pupils are confident, polite and tolerant individuals. They respect and value each other. Parents and carers think highly of the school. One parent commented that, 'St Paul's is not just a secondary school, it is a second home to our daughter.'

All pupils enjoy a broad and ambitious curriculum. This includes for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils feel safe and well looked after. They are confident that if they have a problem, there will be someone to talk to. Pupils are clear that bullying hardly ever happens and, if it does, it is dealt with straightaway.

Pupils have access to a wide range of enrichment activities after school and at weekends. They particularly enjoy sporting and performing arts clubs. These are very well attended by pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND.

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

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious in all three key stages. The curriculum is well sequenced and progressive and has rigour. There is a drive for excellence and a belief that all pupils can do their very best. There is confidence that pupils will live up to the expectations that the school has of them to reach the very highest possible standards. Pupils will tell you, 'I am a St Paul's girl; there's nothing I cannot achieve.'

Pupils are confident, inspired and fully engaged in their learning. Staff enjoy working at the school and have a passion to make a difference to the lives of pupils. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, and their lessons are often inspirational. Pupils enjoy their learning and are supportive of each other in lessons. Post-assessment advice from teachers helps pupils to improve their learning substantially. Pupils, including those students in the sixth form, greatly value the opportunities they have to work with teachers in revision lessons outside their regular classes.

Pupils benefit from different ways to know more and remember more. These include questioning exercises at the start of lessons, short quizzes and revisiting previous learning. Pupils' work is of a consistently high quality across the curriculum. The school has the highest aspirations for all learners, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Teaching and resources are adapted effectively to meet pupils' needs and to ensure that all can access their learning.

All teachers are teachers of reading. Leaders have ensured that pupils are able, over time, to improve their reading skills strongly. Leaders works with staff across the school to embed reading strategies in all subject areas.

Sixth-form provision is strong. Students in Years 12 and 13 have learned to become more confident, independent and self-challenging in their work. They are very keen to access the leadership opportunities available to them as well as being involved in projects that help others in the school and in the community.

There are many wider curriculum opportunities on offer. There are over 30 well-attended after-school activities provided for pupils every week. For example, the air cadets programme is very popular, as are the many trips and visits in which pupils are able to take part both at home and abroad.

Careers education in the school is strong and highly valued by pupils and sixth-form students. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is comprehensive and ambitious. It is sequenced and flexible. The pupils themselves have had a part in contributing to the PSHE curriculum, most recently to modules of work in finance and in health. The school successfully prepares all pupils and students for the next stage of their lives.

High expectations and very strong pastoral care mean that behaviour is nearly always exemplary in the school. The St Paul's culture is very clear and is driven by the school's values. Pupils respond positively to rewards and have clear and regular reminders of expectations.

Staff feel valued by leaders. They commented that their workload and well-being are seen as priorities. Governors are dedicated, supportive and challenging. They fulfil their duties with diligence and professionalism. Governors know the school well and provide appropriate advice and guidance, as well as moral and spiritual support.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online and in the community. All staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. They know how to identify and report safeguarding concerns. Robust systems are in place to ensure that all concerns are followed up quickly.

Relationships between staff and pupils at the school are strong. Because of this, pupils feel confident that there are trusted adults to whom they can speak.

Leaders work well with external agencies. They ensure that the right support is in place for vulnerable pupils and their families.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 outstanding in May 2017.

## 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 refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103531
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256948
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,031
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Mary Browning
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Dawn Casserly
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stpaulgl.bham.sch.uk">www.stpaulgl.bham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 and 10 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Leaders use a registered alternative provider.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. A section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character was carried out in July 2022.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the two deputy headteachers, other senior leaders and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and computer science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons and reviewed pupils' work for some other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils reading in Years 7 and 8.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. A range of documents, including the school's single central record of checks on adults in school, was reviewed.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during lesson visits. They observed pupils' behaviour both in lessons and outside lessons. The inspection team spoke to staff about pupils' behaviour and about staff workload in the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and to the staff questionnaire.

### **Inspection team**

David Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Simon Smith

Ofsted Inspector

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