

St Paul's Way Trust School

125 St Paul's Way, London, E3 4TF

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Achievement is outstanding in all years. The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics has doubled over the last four years. Whatever extra help or support some groups of students need, they receive it and so all make rapid and sustained progress.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations and use their excellent subject knowledge to plan lessons that almost always challenge and motivate students to achieve their best. Students have positive relationships with their teachers and with one another, contributing to high-quality learning.
- The school has exceptional links with businesses and high profile universities such as Queen Mary, University of London King's College, London, Warwick and UEL. These greatly extend the experiences students have within and beyond the school day.
- The school uses its visual arts and science specialisms to drive a highly effective academic and innovative curriculum which meets students' needs, interests and aspirations and helps them to achieve exceptionally well.
- The headteacher, governors, managers, and senior and middle leaders have been successful in their relentless pursuit of scholarship and excellence. They are not complacent and continue to seek improvements.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. They overwhelmingly agree that the new building gives them a very safe and inspiring environment in which to learn. They express surprise that bullying might take place, but know exactly what to do if it should occur. Attendance, including in the sixth form, is above average.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported extremely well, contributing greatly to their success. The school offers a wealth of after-school and enrichment activities that the students value and enjoy.
- The sixth form is outstanding. It is in its second year and increasingly popular. Achievement is rising rapidly due to strong teaching which is supported by the school's university partners. Students work extremely hard and make rapid progress towards their AS-and A-level targets. Teachers encourage students to be ambitious about their future education and careers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons, some with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors attended tutor group sessions, assemblies and a day when Year 7 students worked on science investigations.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, directors of learning, heads of faculties, staff, several groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chair of the Trust and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including school policies, data on standards and progress, safeguarding and lesson observations, improvement plans, anonymised performance management records and minutes of governors' meetings.
- Inspectors took into account the very few responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and a questionnaire completed by a member of staff.

Inspection team

Heather Leatt,	Lead inspector
Raminda Arora	Additional inspector
Clare Gillies	Additional inspector
Avtar Sherri	Additional inspector
Clifford Walker	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Paul's Way Trust School is an average-sized secondary school.
- In January 2011, the school moved into its new purpose-built building and opened its sixth form the following September.
- The school has a specialism in the visual arts and is also a Faraday Science School.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are very high compared to national averages. More than four fifths of the students are Bangladeshi.
- The movement of students in and out of school at times other than the start of Year 7 is much higher than that seen nationally.
- A well above average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium which in this school provides additional funding for children in local authority care and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Approximately one fifth of Year 7 students are eligible for the catch-up premium which funds extra support to strengthen their literacy skills.
- The proportion of disabled students and those receiving support through school action is well above average, as is the proportion supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs. The most common needs relate to hearing impairment and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. The school has a specially resourced provision for 17 deaf students with statements of special educational needs, which it calls a deaf support base.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school uses alternative provision at City Gateway Free School.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that all teachers meet students' needs by planning tasks at the right level for them, challenging them and intervening with support when necessary
 - checking that students respond to the comments teachers write about their work.
- Deepen provision for students' health education by:
 - using the science specialism to discuss health topics from all angles
 - exploiting the school's links with its university partners and the NHS.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter the school with below average standards in English and mathematics. By the end of Year 11, all groups of students' attainment is broadly in line with national figures, reflecting the outstanding progress they make. In 2011 and 2012, the proportion of students who made even more progress than expected in English and mathematics was high compared to national figures. Although the percentage of GCSE A*/A grades has been below average in some subjects, data show that the percentage will improve in 2013. This is because in all years, leaders and teachers target support and resources towards students who need them, so they catch up quickly and exceed expectations.
- The learning and progress of groups of students who are disabled, have special educational needs, do not speak English as their first language, or are supported through the pupil premium, is similarly outstanding. Students who join the school other than in Year 7 also achieve very well. This is due to the school's success in promoting equality of opportunity for all students, particularly those in the deaf support unit.
- In 2012, over 85% of Year 11 students were known to be eligible for free school meals. Making outstanding progress, their performance in English and mathematics and that of looked after students was less than half a GCSE grade lower than other students – a much smaller gap than that seen nationally. Year 7 students receiving catch-up support are improving their reading and numeracy skills rapidly. The very small number of students who attend alternative provision also achieve well, with most making expected or better than expected progress.
- Literacy has a high profile across the school. In all subjects, teachers are acutely aware of the need to develop students' ability to read, write and speak well, and they routinely model these skills in lessons. There is a particular emphasis on developing students' speaking in lessons to enable the high proportion of students for whom English is not their first language to thrive. The importance of developing reading is recognised and students are encouraged to read aloud in lessons. Reading support and intervention, for those who need them, begin early in Year 7 and continue across the key stages. Consequently, most students read and write well and are developing their confidence as speakers.
- Students take GCSE mathematics early and do well. If they could achieve a higher grade, they take the examination again. Those who do not need to take the examination again study mathematics at a higher level.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is improving rapidly. Year 13 students started their advanced studies with relatively low GCSE grades and the first AS results in 2012 were below national standards. However, teachers have successfully focused on helping these students to study independently and to master essay techniques and predicted A-level results are higher. Year 12 students are achieving extremely well.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching in all key stages is very rarely less than good and it is often outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations of all students so they feel encouraged to achieve and progress well. Students respond well to their teachers, to each other and to the work set and in the best lessons make excellent contributions to their own and each other's learning. Deaf students join in many normal lessons, with practical and thoughtful support from teachers and teaching assistants.
- The many outstanding lessons have the following features in common:
 - Questioning used skilfully, particularly in the sixth form, to develop students' ability to explain, analyse and evaluate their work.

- Challenge, pace and engagement which require students to hypothesise and speculate. In a Year 8 English class, students used their knowledge of the Gothic style of writing and narrative structure to consider the direction an Edgar Allan Poe story might take. One student's answer was so imaginative and vivid that it drew a gasp from the others.
- Excellent subject knowledge and insight into examination preparation and an in-depth understanding of individual students' needs, allowing all to make good or outstanding progress.
- Where teaching is not outstanding teachers occasionally do not plan work that is sufficiently challenging and miss opportunities to accelerate their progress even further.
- Teachers imaginatively use of a range of ways to check students' progress and understanding, for example, students assessing their own and each other's work effectively and, where relevant, linking this to National Curriculum levels and examination criteria. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is highly effective across the curriculum and subject-specific vocabulary is stressed in many lessons; for example, a teacher modelling and then supporting a Year 11 student with English as an additional language to articulate a complex sentence correctly in science or discussions on symmetry in an art lesson.
- Most teachers assess students' progress regularly and thoroughly, giving them constructive oral and written feedback on their achievement so they can plan how to improve their work in the future. While students respond well to oral feedback, the habit of responding to what teachers have written, important to achieve the highest grades, is not seen consistently in all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students have very good attitudes to learning. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is calm, considerate and courteous. Lessons that take place in the many open areas of the school do so without disturbance or disruption. Students report that they feel happy and safe at school, particularly since the move to the new buildings. Senior leaders check and ensure students attending education off site behave well and are kept safe.
- Attendance for all groups of students in Years 7 to 11 is either broadly in line with, or ahead of, national figures. Attendance in the sixth form is high. Students arrive punctually to school and to lessons.
- Parents, carers and staff express no concerns regarding students' behaviour. Students report that racist incidents and bullying are very rare and that they are dealt with promptly and firmly if they occur. Students are aware of different types of bullying, for example homophobic or cyber-bullying and say they have been well advised as to how to deal with them if they encounter them. They are aware of the importance of understanding different faiths and lifestyles and speak of the school being a place that is tolerant of difference and celebrates diversity.
- Students' awareness of personal safety is raised through assemblies, tutor time, visiting speakers and attendance at seminars. However, the health and emotional aspects of sex and relationship education are areas that students feel they need to know more about. The school is well placed through its science specialism and university and NHS links to strengthen provision.
- The school develops students' awareness of the risks associated with extremism through the curriculum, for example in religious education lessons. In an outstanding Year 13 lesson, a powerful debate around countering terrorism took place and students' understanding was further developed through role play.
- Students who join the school after Year 7 settle in well and are encouraged to play a full part in school life. For example, a Year 11 girl who joined the school in October 2012 commented how happy and settled she is and how much help she has had from teachers to catch up on GCSE work. She is on target to achieve high grades in her GCSE examinations.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides strong and inspirational leadership. Together with the outstanding governing body, trustees and senior and middle leaders, he has been uncompromising in driving up standards of achievement while raising students' aspirations and providing them with an outstanding and memorable education.
- All leaders and managers, including those responsible for governance, share an ambitious vision for the success of the school and are determined that each and every student will be able to achieve to their highest potential. The numerous links that have been forged with universities and businesses provide students with impressive, high-quality experiences, for example through the school's DNA research programme into diabetes in collaboration with Queen Mary, University of London and the local NHS Trust, or work with the National Portrait Gallery.
- The school's well-developed systems and processes mean that leaders and managers regularly check and evaluate the school's performance in depth, reflected in the accuracy of its checks on how well it is doing and its well-organised plans for the future.
- The school focuses relentlessly on improving teaching and learning, and tackles underperformance vigorously. This is underpinned by robust performance management and a supportive and tailored system of professional development for all staff. A member of the support staff observed that the atmosphere is consistently positive and supportive and appreciates being able to learn from the excellent examples of teaching seen every day. Staff morale is high.
- The curriculum enables all groups of students, including the few who attend alternative provision, to achieve extremely well. The range of opportunities supporting students' spiritual, cultural, social and moral development is impressive. The introduction of Foundation Day, held in Queen Mary's Great Hall of the People's Palace, is regarded as a highlight of the year by the school community, reflecting the remarkable progress the school has made.
- Pupil premium funding is used in many ways, each tailored to meet the students' individual needs, for example in reading or writing, or to boost their confidence by funding trips or residential trips. Its effectiveness can be seen in the outstanding progress students make, particularly by those in Key Stage 4, many of whom did not begin at the school in Year 7.
- The school has a range of strategies in place to engage successfully with parents and carers. It does a great deal to open its facilities to parents and carers and the local community. English as an additional language classes for parents and carers are very popular. Parents' evenings and academic review days have attendance rates of over 90%.
- The local authority provided support to help the school turn around following the 2009 inspection and now provides only light touch support, regarding the school as outstanding.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are exemplary. It takes all reasonable steps to ensure the behaviour and safety of students when attending off-site provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective and very well equipped to carry out its statutory duties. It is robust in holding the headteacher and senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance. Governors are fully aware of the quality of teaching and learning and that several teachers have not moved up the pay scales in recent years as their performance has not matched the high standards required. They also have full knowledge of the way in which the pupil premium funding is spent and how it impacts on standards. They have an excellent awareness of the school and share senior leaders' strategic direction and vision. The Chair of the Governing Body confirmed that governors are kept well informed through the headteacher's regular, in-depth reports. They are also well supported by the local authority, which provides them with national data by which to measure the school's performance, and also with training.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100970
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	400443
Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	916
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Heathcote
Headteacher	Grahame Price
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 July 2010
Telephone number	020 7987 1883
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