

St Paul's Academy

Address: Finchale Road, Abbey Wood, London, SE2 9PX

Unique reference number (URN): 105135

Inspection report: 23 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ●
Needs attention	● ●
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The ambitious personal development curriculum builds pupils' confidence and character over time. Pupils learn important topics such as democracy, law and respect for others. They learn about protected characteristics and how different beliefs shape families and communities. Staff prioritise pupils' wellbeing. They know pupils very well and provide extra help to those that need it.

Pupils debate sensitive issues with maturity. They listen carefully to each other. They speak confidently about equality and diversity and different faiths and cultures. Pupils know how to manage their mental health and how to use coping strategies when they feel worried. They understand the risks linked to drugs and tobacco and the signs of healthy relationships. They know how to stay safe online and offline and how to make sensible choices about social media.

Careers education is excellent, and every pupil receives expert guidance. Staff ensure that pupils learn about employment trends so that they understand the choices ahead of them. All pupils in Year 10 complete work experience and develop important workplace skills. The school tracks participation closely so that no pupil misses out. Pupils who need extra support receive tailored guidance.

Pupils feel proud to belong to the school community. They celebrate their culture and faith during culture day and St Paul's feast day. They take part in a wide range of activities through the 'St Paul's academy promise'. The promise ensures that every pupil develops their interests, spirituality, skills and knowledge to be responsible citizens. Every pupil takes part in trips, sports, arts and faith-based activities. They contribute to charity work in the local community. Pupils take on leadership roles across the school, such as school council and subject ambassadors. Staff listen to pupils and adapt the offer so that every pupil benefits fully from the ambitious programme.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils attend well, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their attendance sits broadly in line with national figures. Staff know their pupils and understand the local challenges many families face. They set high expectations for attendance. The school prioritises meeting with families and building strong relationships. They identify what helps pupils want to attend, such as making sure new arrivals join a club quickly. Daily systems and careful analysis help them spot concerns early and take action. Their work is making a clear difference, with attendance improving this year.

The school has strengthened behaviour systems. Leaders have reset the school culture, using consistent language such as 'be ready, be respectful and be safe'. Pupils and staff understand this well. Staff receive effective training so that expectations are consistent.

They say behaviour in lessons has improved a great deal. The number of pupils requiring suspension from school has reduced significantly. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning and engage well with the rewards systems. Pupils get on well with one another. Bullying is not tolerated and is dealt with quickly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Pupils learn a broad and balanced range of subjects. The curriculum is organised in a logical order that helps pupils build knowledge over time. Leaders have a clear understanding of what the school's curriculum does well and where it needs to improve.

Teachers have established strong routines. Pupils know what is expected of them in lessons. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They explain new ideas clearly using subject-specific vocabulary. This helps pupils deepen their understanding. Activities at the start of lessons help pupils remember what they have previously learned.

Teachers use trust-wide assessment systems to check what pupils know and identify any gaps. They generally check pupils' understanding well. Teachers ask questions that encourage pupils to think more deeply, such as explaining their reasoning. At times, questioning does not identify pupils' misconceptions or address them quickly. Some teaching misses opportunities to stretch and challenge pupils who are capable of achieving more.

Staff make sure that pupils who are at the earliest stages of reading get targeted support that matches their needs. They have clear processes to identify pupils who need extra help with early foundations such as reading, spelling and handwriting. Pupils who have not yet secured key knowledge and skills are supported well to catch up.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and the areas that need further development. They know their context well and understand the barriers that some pupils face. Leaders have high expectations for pupils and staff. The leadership team has made rapid progress in areas where they identified that improvement was needed. Leaders make decisions that put pupils first.

Staff generally feel their workload is manageable. They know that raising standards sometimes requires flexibility and short periods of extra effort. They feel well supported by leaders and value the wellbeing opportunities. Professional learning is an entitlement for all staff. Time is protected so that staff can work together to meet the needs of their pupils. They value the subject-specific resources and development opportunities. Staff are supported to complete high-quality training national qualifications. Early career teachers are also well supported. They benefit from an experienced team and an effective training programme.

Directors have a clear vision for the school. They take account of the local context and ensure that the school's Roman Catholic ethos guides their work. Directors and governors hold the school to account and provide highly effective support to staff and leaders. This has helped the school improve quickly. Directors and governors know their statutory

responsibilities. They work closely with staff to understand how the school operates in practice. Leaders are working to improve the school's profile in the local community. This is already having a positive impact, especially for parents or carers of pupils who have recently joined the school.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Pupils' attainment and progress in national examinations such as GCSEs are not as good as they need to be over time. This is especially the case for those pupils who have previously achieved well in primary school. Some pupils do not develop the extended writing skills needed to achieve the highest outcomes. The progress of some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is hindered because their needs are not always quickly identified. This hinders how well they develop a secure body of knowledge and apply new skills. Leaders have begun to take action, but it is too early to identify impact. However, pupils who are disadvantaged attain outcomes that are in line with their peers.

Despite pupils' low achievement, staff support pupils to progress well beyond the school. They secure appropriate destinations in education, employment and training. Vulnerable pupils who are at risk of not being in employment or training receive the support they need to progress to suitable pathways. Pupils generally speak confidently and accurately in lessons using subject-specific vocabulary. Their books are usually well organised. Most pupils secure the foundational knowledge they need in reading, spelling and number facts.

Inclusion

Needs attention ●

Staff have started to put new systems in place to understand pupils' needs, but this work is still developing. This means that some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not have their needs identified quickly or accurately. When teachers do not have the right information, they cannot adapt lessons in the way pupils need. However, when pupils' needs are understood, the support they receive helps them progress from their starting points.

The school is working towards a more consistent approach to planning and reviewing support for pupils with SEND. Not all pupils currently have plans that are checked and updated regularly. Low parental involvement makes this harder to do well. Staff know this needs to improve and have put clear steps in place to strengthen the process.

Support for pupils with the highest needs is also developing. These pupils follow an adapted curriculum in English and mathematics and benefit from extra help. However, the school is still deciding what the long-term goals for these pupils should be. Decisions about when pupils are ready to move out of the high-needs provision are not yet based on fully accurate assessment. Even so, staff make sure pupils join mainstream lessons whenever possible so they feel part of the wider school community.

Staff use additional pupil funding to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. Some of these strategies are having a positive impact on their school experience.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are happy, polite and respectful. They attend well. This is especially true for pupils who are disadvantaged. Pupils treat one another with respect and show maturity in their daily interactions. They are reflective and curious, and they speak with confidence. Pupils discuss sensitive topics in a thoughtful way.

Pupils generally behave well. They build positive relationships with staff and greet them warmly each morning. They respond quickly when reminded to adjust their uniform or improve their behaviour. If any bullying or unkindness occurs, staff deal with it straight away. Pupils know who they can talk to if they feel worried, and they receive the support they need to stay safe and manage their wellbeing.

Over time, pupils have not achieved as well in national examinations as they could have. Leaders have high expectations and have put support in place to improve the curriculum and teaching. Some pupils' barriers to learning, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have not been identified quickly. This means they do not always receive the right help at the right time. When pupils' needs are identified, they receive targeted support to be successful. Pupils who are disadvantaged make secure progress. However, leaders recognise that there is more work to do.

Pupils take part in a rich and ambitious personal development and wellbeing curriculum. The 'St Paul's Academy promise' reflects the school's Roman Catholic ethos. This ensures that pupils grow in faith, character and readiness for life in modern Britain. Pupils take on extensive student leadership roles, such as sports leaders, subject ambassadors, school librarians or mentoring younger pupils. Some pupils collaborate with the local authority to improve the local community, such as creating signage in parks. Pupils deepen their cultural understanding through trips to museums and theatres. They benefit from excellent careers guidance, which supports them to secure next steps in education, employment or training.

Next steps

- Leaders must ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly and accurately so that pupils receive the support they need to make effective progress.
- Leaders must ensure that the support for pupils with SEND is regularly reviewed to ensure that they are accessing a provision that is suitable for their needs.
- Leaders must ensure that all staff know and understand the needs of pupils with SEND and consistently use the best strategies to help pupils learn in the classroom.
- Leaders must ensure that teachers consistently check what pupils know and can do so that any misconceptions or learning gaps that pupils have can be quickly addressed.

- Leaders should ensure that teachers provide opportunities to extend and deepen the learning of pupils, including pupils with high prior attainment, to ensure that they achieve the best possible outcomes.
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About this inspection

This school is part of St Benedict Catholic Academy 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), Jonathon Ronan, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Noel Campbell.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior school leaders, the CEO, directors, a member of the diocese, staff and pupils during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of one alternative provision.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The school appointed a new principal, Anton Innocent, who took up their post in January 2026.

Principal: Anton Innocent

Lead inspector:

Piers Saunders, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Paul Metcalf, Ofsted Inspector

Shaun Dodds, Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Fowler, Ofsted Inspector

Alan Blount, Ofsted Inspector

Ray Lau, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 23 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,119

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,200

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

39.32%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.23%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

11.35%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	26.9%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	38.5%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33.3%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	40.4	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	42.5	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	43.8	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.25	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.04	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	24.1%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	28.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	24.6%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	36.8	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	36.7	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	37.6	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.55	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.39	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	24.1%	53.1%	-29.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	28.7%	53.1%	-24.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	24.6%	52.4%	-27.8 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	36.8	50.4	-13.6
2023/24 (final)	36.7	50.0	-13.3
2022/23 (final)	37.6	50.3	-12.7

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.55	0.16	-0.71
2022/23 (final)	-0.39	0.17	-0.56

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	91%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	92%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	96%	94%	Average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	7.9%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.6%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.7%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	24.2%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	21.0%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	21.1%	26.5%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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