

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Philip Howard Catholic School

Elm Grove South, Barnham, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO22 0EN

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2021

Outcome

St Philip Howard Catholic School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud ambassadors of the school and speak highly of their teachers and their lessons. They are happy and confident. They feel safe and appreciate that teachers are readily available if they have a problem. Any form of bullying is rare. Pupils like coming to school. Attendance rates are very high. Pupils arrive punctually to their lessons.

Pupils respect diversity and know that poor behaviour is not tolerated. Classrooms are calm and focused places of learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and supportive. Pupils are kind to one another. They applaud success spontaneously in assemblies. Older pupils look out for younger pupils. The strong sense of community can be felt across the school.

The leadership of the headteacher inspires and motivates the school. Leaders and teachers, as well as governors, have exceptionally high expectations of all pupils. The curriculum is broad and personalised. It is designed well to meet the needs of all pupils. Enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including community activities and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, are highly valued.

Parents and guardians speak enthusiastically about the school. They value the school's commitment to academic and personal development as well as the strong Catholic ethos. One parent wrote that, 'The school promotes a feeling of community and inclusivity.' Parents say they would recommend the school to other parents.

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

Leaders and governors ensure that pupils benefit from a considered and well-sequenced curriculum. Subject leaders have successfully organised plans for how their subjects are to be taught. Clear links are made to prior learning, which help pupils to reinforce and develop their knowledge.

Teachers have an exceptional understanding of the curriculum. They use their strong subject knowledge to correct pupils' misconceptions. Teachers skilfully check how well pupils have understood what they have learned before moving them on to more complex work. This ensures that pupils achieve well, and they are exceptionally well prepared for future learning.

The school has designed a broad and ambitious curriculum, which ensures pupils make exceptional progress across a range of subjects. Curriculum content is carefully considered to continue the work undertaken in the primary school. Sixth-form work builds successively on pupils' learning in key stage 4. The planning of subjects is hierarchical and developmental. However, cross-curricular themes are not so well sequenced to build upon earlier content.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They make sure pupils study a wide range of subjects in key stage 3. This gives them a firm foundation from which to make their choice of GCSE subjects. Leaders actively encourage pupils to choose a modern foreign language. This is a priority in the school improvement plan. Pupils say that other choices, such as art, music, drama and dance, are more appealing.

In the sixth form, there are a range of courses to suit the needs and aspirations of all students. The sixth-form curriculum provides progression routes for students which are suitably tailored and thoughtfully matched to their academic needs. As a result, students achieve well. They go on to their choice of work or study at a range of universities, including those in the Russell Group.

Staff identify and support the specific needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They know their pupils well and use assessment to identify where additional teaching, explanation or reinforcement is needed. As a result of this extra support, these pupils achieve very well and do not fall behind. All pupils study the full range of subjects.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities, extra-curricular clubs and house competitions. These include the National Poetry Competition and the UK mathematics challenge. Pupils are proud of their community activities and their achievements through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Leaders ensure the curriculum goes well beyond the academic. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is wide-ranging. It embraces fundamental British values and includes statutory content about relationships and sex education. Lessons teach pupils about respecting differences, showing kindness, healthy relationships and staying safe.

All pupils receive high-quality advice and guidance about career choices. This covers the full range of further education and training options open to them. The school offers meaningful work experience for pupils in Years 10 and 12. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are well known and given further support. This ensures that they also continue successfully into education, employment or training.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are supportive and considerate. Pupils are keen to learn and actively engage with the tasks set by their teachers. Pupils respond well to teachers' questions and are keen to show what they have remembered from previous learning.

Teachers' consistent approach to behaviour management means that behaviour is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite and courteous to one another. They show a deep understanding of fairness and equality. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Low-level disruption is extremely rare. Pupils are positive about their learning.

Parents speak very highly of the school. A significantly high proportion said they would recommend the school. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher is appreciated. Parents value the ethos of the school and the sense of community.

Leaders, including trustees, know the school's strengths and development areas. They have an accurate understanding of the school's work and constantly strive for improvement. Staff are happy and proud. They say the school is well led and managed. They typically feel well supported by leaders, including with their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The welfare, well-being and safety of all pupils is a priority of the school. All staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training, which helps to ensure a consistent approach to safeguarding. Staff know how to identify risks and what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' welfare. Leaders work effectively with other agencies, and they are not afraid to challenge professionals where necessary.

Pupils are well supported and well known. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Pupils can confidently explain what they need to do to keep themselves safe, including when online. They know that staff will listen and support them if they have any concerns. They value the advice they receive about their physical health and their mental well-being.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, The St Philip Howard Catholic High School, to be outstanding in April 2016.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

Unique reference number	144243
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10201096
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1133
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	196
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Chris Kilbane
Headteacher	David Carter
Website	http://www.sphcs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Philip Howard Catholic School is an average-sized mixed 11 to 18 academy converter. It is designated as having a Roman Catholic religious character and listed under the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.
- The predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in April 2016 when its overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding. A section 48 denominational inspection to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school was carried out in November 2016.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above the national average and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs and an education, health and care plan is above the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is well below the national average.

- One pupil in key stage 4 attends alternative provision at Chichester College to study a vocational course covering the core subjects and construction.

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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, French, mathematics, history and PSHE. This involved meeting with leaders of those subjects, visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils and staff about learning in these subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other staff. They reviewed documentation and actions taken to safeguard pupils and promote their welfare, health and safety.
- The lead inspector met the chair of the trust, members of the governing board and the school improvement adviser. He also spoke on the phone with the director of Catholic education.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum documents, school policies, safeguarding documents and employment checks, including the single central record.
- Inspectors considered 223 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and a further 177 written responses from parents. Inspectors also considered the survey responses from 101 members of staff and 194 pupils. The lead inspector also received email communications from parents regarding the school.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Keith Pailthorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Foster	Ofsted Inspector

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