

Inspection of St Philip's Catholic Primary School

High Street, New Town, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5DJ

Inspection dates:	29 and 30 April 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this small and welcoming school. They develop a deep enthusiasm for learning and the world around them. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have strong and trusting relationships with staff. This helps them to feel safe. Pupils know who to turn to if they are worried and are confident that concerns will be addressed promptly.

Pupils achieve well at this school. The school has a broad curriculum, alongside a rich programme of extra-curricular clubs, trips and sporting events. This supports leaders' high ambitions for all pupils to be realised. In particular, the school supports disadvantaged pupils' learning and personal development effectively.

The school places a strong emphasis on mental health, safety and well-being. Pupils play an active role in supporting one another. For example, well-being champions help ensure pupils are not left without support during breaktimes. Online safety cadets lead assemblies and discussions to help their peers stay safe online.

From the early years upwards, pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility through a wide range of leadership roles. These include art council members and healthy eating monitors. Pupils relish these opportunities and carry them out with pride.

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

The school has developed an interesting curriculum which begins in the early years. In most subjects, the school has clearly defined the knowledge, skills and vocabulary pupils should learn over time. Staff are well informed about pupils' prior learning. They use this knowledge effectively to build pupils' understanding gradually. In a small number of subjects, the school is at an earlier stage of identifying the key content. This means that pupils' learning does not build on what they have learnt previously.

Staff have secure subject knowledge. This supports them in designing tasks and provides appropriate resources that help pupils learn. Staff explain new content clearly, and this supports pupils in understanding what they are learning. In some subjects, staff routinely check pupils' understanding. This informs their future teaching and supports pupils to achieve well. In subjects where the school's checks of learning are less well developed, gaps in pupils' understanding are not identified accurately. As a result, teaching does not always address these gaps.

The school has recently prioritised the teaching of reading. The new phonics programme is well embedded. Staff teach phonics effectively. This begins in the Nursery, where children enjoy activities that help them develop their listening and speaking skills. The school provides carefully designed catch-up support for weaker readers, which helps them learn to read fluently. Beyond phonics, pupils read widely

and enjoy listening to class books that expose them to stories they might not otherwise read. In reading lessons, teachers help pupils to identify the strategies used by authors, so they can use these in their own writing.

The school accurately identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are trained so that they meet these needs effectively. This helps pupils with SEND successfully access the same curriculum as their peers and to achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour and conduct are positive from Nursery onwards. All staff have high expectations. This supports the consistent behaviour throughout the school. Pupils move around the school calmly and respectfully, often holding doors for each other and adults. From Nursery through to Year 6, pupils show high levels of focus, engagement and interest in their learning. Pupils' attendance is generally in line with the national average. The school works positively with families to remove barriers to attendance.

Pupils thrive due to the school's exceptional personal development opportunities. A strong personal, social and health education curriculum means pupils develop a deep understanding of healthy relationships, keeping safe and discrimination. An innovative pastoral approach involves staff working with small groups of pupils across the school. They discuss and practise diverse issues such as well-being and improving table manners. Pupils have an excellent understanding of fundamental British values such as tolerance and democracy. Pupils firmly believe that everyone is equal and that there are no exceptions to this.

Governors have provided strong support during a period of leadership uncertainty. They ensure the school remains focused on its ambitious aims to promote pupils' personal development alongside academic learning. Staff are proud to work at the school and appreciate the recent improvements, including in pupils' behaviour. The school prioritises staff professional development to enable them to focus on pupils' learning. Parents and carers are equally positive about the school's work to keep their children happy, supported and learning well.

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 couple of foundation subjects, the curriculum design and assessment are not as refined as they should be. Pupils are not routinely supported to build on their prior understanding, so their learning is slowed over time. The school should

identify the key knowledge and skills it intends pupils to learn and remember and check pupils' understanding accurately to inform future teaching.

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	114569
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10341346
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julia Webb
Headteacher	Sarah McCurdy (Acting Headteacher)
Website	www.stphilips.e-sussex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The acting headteacher took up their post in November 2023 and the chair of governors took up their post in January 2023.
- This school is a Catholic school in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. The school last received a section 48 inspection in October 2017 and is due to be inspected again in 2025.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- There is a before-school club on the school site managed by the school.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with two members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives from the local authority and the diocese on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum information for a range of other subjects, including pupils' work. They reviewed a range of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness and priorities for improvement. They also looked at information relating to behaviour, attendance and SEND.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lunchtimes.
- The views of staff and pupils were gathered through both formal and informal discussions. Staff also completed an Ofsted survey.
- The views of parents were gathered through the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The team inspector also spoke to parents during the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors 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

Katie Hancock, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Hygate

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025