

# Inspection of a good school: St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School Woods

Avenue, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 8NN

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 June 2024

## **Outcome**

St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Everyone is welcomed at this warm and caring school. Pupils come from a diverse range of backgrounds and enjoy attending school. They celebrate each other's differences. Pupils value being at a school where the shared Catholic values unite everyone and lead to a strong sense of community.

There are warm relationships between pupils and staff throughout the school. Pupils know whom to talk to if they are worried. Pupils trust adults to listen to them and sort out any problems sensitively. This makes them feel happy and safe.

Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. They are kind and respectful towards each other. Pupils say everyone is treated equally. They understand that this does not always mean that everyone is treated the same. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive any additional help they need to participate in all aspects of school life. One pupil commented, 'I am accepted for who I am, not what I look like or what I need.'

The school is ambitious for what all pupils can achieve. Pupils grow in resilience and confidence with the care and nurturing support that staff provide. Staff help pupils to learn from their mistakes and develop a 'can-do' attitude.

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

Pupils follow a broad and ambitious curriculum. From the beginning of the early years, the curriculum follows a clear sequence. In many subjects, such as mathematics, teachers receive effective training. This enables them to become experts at explaining new learning clearly. Pupils develop a deep understanding of what they learn through well-sequenced lessons. Teachers regularly check how well pupils are learning. When necessary, they provide additional opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning.

pupils to build on their learning. Sometimes, pupils repeat learning that they already know. This slows their progress.

Reading lies at the heart of the school's curriculum. Starting in Nursery, children learn that letters make sounds and learn the basics of early reading. Pupils quickly build on this knowledge and become capable readers. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. They read accurately and fluently. Any pupil who needs extra help receives it promptly. Older pupils are eager to share their love of books and reading. Year 6 pupils oversee a weekly 'book swap'. This is an opportunity for pupils and parents to choose books to read at home. Visits from authors inspire pupils to read more widely and write their own stories.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, pupils' standards in writing have not been as high as other subjects. The school has made raising writing standards a priority. It has recently reviewed its writing curriculum. The standard of writing in pupils' books is rapidly improving as the new curriculum becomes embedded.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. Staff receive precise information on how to support these pupils. In some cases, support is through a bespoke curriculum that closely matches a pupil's individual needs. This high-quality support enables pupils with SEND to thrive at school.

Pupils are very polite and courteous. They have exceptional attitudes towards their learning and behaviour. In lessons, pupils work hard, and distractions are rare. At social times, pupils get along well and play together respectfully. At all times, throughout the school day, pupils' behaviour is excellent. There is a strong emphasis on pupils becoming respectful and responsible young people.

The programme for pupils' wider development is exemplary. Pupils carry out leadership roles, such as house captains, with pride. 'Trouble busters' help resolve playground disputes and are respected by everyone. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including when online. Trips and visiting speakers are carefully planned so pupils gain experiences that they may not otherwise have. Pupils develop excellent knowledge of different faiths and cultures. They recognise and value the many differences between themselves and others. There are many clubs on offer, such as choir, coding and sports. These are tailored to meet pupils' needs and interests. The 'well-being' team, made up of staff, pupils and governors, plans events to help everyone stay healthy in mind and body.

Governors are highly committed to all aspects of school life. They are well informed about the work of the school, including its strengths and areas for development. Staff are proud to work at this school. They feel valued by leaders and appreciate the time given to support their workload and well-being.

## **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 few foundation subjects, the activities teachers give pupils to complete do not enable them to build on what they have learned previously. The school should provide training and support for teachers so that activities pupils undertake enable them to learn something new or to consolidate their learning. This will ensure they are ready for future learning in all subjects.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2014.

## 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** 117469

**Local authority** Hertfordshire

**Inspection number** 10318590

**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** 468

**Appropriate authority** The governing body

**Chair of governing body** Linda Graham

**Headteacher** Mairead Waugh

**Website** [www.sphoward.herts.sch.uk](http://www.sphoward.herts.sch.uk)

**Date of previous inspection** 26 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provisions.
- The school operates a before- and after-school provision.
- The school runs a nursery provision for children from the age of three years.
- The school is in the Catholic Diocese of Westminster. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2021. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place within five years of its last inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, pupils and parents; and



considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at work in pupils' books. She also heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including the special educational needs and disabilities coordinators. She also spoke to subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspector met with leaders, teachers and support staff to talk about the curriculum, workload, and the behaviour and personal development of pupils. She also met with groups of pupils to talk about learning and well-being and to hear their views of the school.
- The inspector held a discussion with governors and had a telephone discussion with the school improvement partner from the local authority.
- The inspector considered a range of documents, including the school's plans for improvement and minutes of meetings of the local governing body. She also looked at a range of pupils' workbooks from each year group.
- The inspector observed the behaviour of pupils during lessons, around the school, in the lunch hall, on the playground and at the before-school club. The inspector looked at behaviour and attendance records and considered leaders' analyses of these.
- The inspector considered the 157 online responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, including 72 free-text comments. She also spoke to nine parents during the inspection. The inspector considered the 47 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and the 231 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Karen Stanton, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

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