

St Philip's School

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils; and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

St Philip's School is a Catholic boys' preparatory school in the London borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It was established in 1934. The school admits pupils aged between seven and 13 years. At the time of the inspection, there were 109 pupils on roll. The school's Catholic faith underpins its ethos. The school aims to develop pupils' all-round personal and academic potential and to ensure that every pupil is valued as a member of the school community. Pupils move on to a wide range of independent secondary schools of their choice. The school was last inspected in May 2007.

Evaluation of the school

St Philip's School provides an outstanding education for its pupils and is successful in meeting its aims. An outstanding curriculum and consistently good teaching ensure that pupils make outstanding progress and personal development, so that by the time they leave they have achieved very high standards and have developed into confident young people. Parents are rightly overwhelmingly supportive of the school. The school is diligent in ensuring the care and safety of its pupils on a day-to-day basis, but the overall provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is inadequate because its documentation and procedures have not fully kept pace with national requirements and guidelines for safeguarding pupils and recruiting staff. The provision of facilities for pupils who are unwell also does not meet requirements.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is outstanding. The school has maintained its outstanding curriculum since the last inspection and is in the process of implementing an improved and better timetabled personal, health and social education scheme. The curriculum is well balanced between academic study and creative and physical activity. Although the school has made only limited progress in

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

developing a design and technology curriculum, pupils have good opportunities and succeed well with the 3-D aspects of the art scheme. The curriculum is tailored very effectively to meet the demands of external examinations such as Common Entrance and scholarships which are available from Year 6 to Year 8. There is a strong emphasis on English and mathematics and by the time pupils leave they have made excellent progress in these areas, where most achieve the higher examination levels. Pupils also achieve high levels in other subjects such as science. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good additional support resulting in them making good and sometimes outstanding progress, especially in English. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activity involving regular clubs, such as chess, fencing, judo and art, and visits to places of interest, including residential and exchange visits abroad. Music also features strongly in the life of the school. Teaching and assessment are good overall with strengths similar to the last inspection. Most lessons are good and some are outstanding. A common strength of all lessons is the excellent relationships established between pupils and teachers, built on strong mutual respect. Teachers know their pupils well and involve them effectively during lessons by asking questions and seeking views. In the very best lessons, pupils have the chance to explain their ideas in more detail. Teachers are confident in what they teach and are mostly well prepared. In one outstanding science lesson about food chains, there was a good balance of reviewing homework, gaining new knowledge, discussion and opportunities for independent work. In another excellent lesson, pupils worked together very effectively sharing ideas to solve mathematics problems from a scholarship examination paper. In some lessons, the pace of learning is slower than it should be because activities do not flow well and there are occasionally missed opportunities for pupils to engage in collaborative work.

Teachers regularly mark pupils' work and sometimes include helpful comments for improvement. Ongoing tests and biannual standardised tests provide good information about pupils' progress. While the external examination timetable successfully determines pupils' long-term targets, the school is not yet using test information efficiently to set short-term learning targets in order to overcome variations in the rate of progress that sometimes occur across the year groups. The presentation of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding, as it was in the last inspection. They leave the school confident and articulate young people. Pupils' questionnaires showed that they are overwhelmingly very happy at school and with what it provides. One pupil commented, 'This is a great school with a lovely community.' They enjoy lessons, epitomised by their willingness to engage with activities and ask or answer questions. Attendance and behaviour are good. Opportunities for prayerful reflection in assemblies, enjoyment in art and participation in activities such as sport successfully develop pupils' spiritual development. They develop a clear sense of right and wrong which, along with their

excellent social skills, pervades the ethos of the school. Their personal development and excellent achievements in their studies, including physical and creative activities, enable pupils to develop the sort of skills likely to help to ensure their future economic well-being.

Where parents and carers made comments about the school's pastoral care, they were very appreciative and complimentary. One parent commented, 'St Philip's transformed him from a shy and withdrawn child to a happy, challenge-loving one. Well done!' Another said, 'I cannot praise the pastoral care at St Philip's highly enough, it is truly exceptional.'

The school is active in its community through links with a nearby maintained primary school and within the borough by taking part in the Mayor's initiatives with small charities locally. In a wider context, the school supports a number of national charities and also has special links with an orphanage in Sri Lanka. Pupils make positive contributions to the school community by taking part in drama productions, being members of sports teams and the choir, and through the democratically elected membership of the 'Witan' (a school council).

Pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths is adequately developed through curriculum studies in assemblies, geography, history and religious education, although there are no specific links with groups of pupils from other heritages or backgrounds.

Pupils gain a good knowledge of national institutions, culture and traditions. There is a wide range of visits to places of interest, including the Houses of Parliament and national museums and galleries. These visits are successfully linked with the history, geography and art curricula.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is inadequate because the school does not meet the regulations in important areas. The required single register of staff to show that appropriate checks have been undertaken is incomplete and procedures for vetting and appointing staff are not yet properly documented or established. The designated member of staff for child protection has not completed the required training and written procedures are not specific enough to the school. While the required health and safety and fire risk assessments are undertaken, the leadership of the school has not been sufficiently diligent in keeping documentation reviewed and up-to-date.

Pupils are well supervised at all times while in school and they say that they feel safe. Pupils move around the school, including the many stairways, sensibly and safely. They are not concerned about bullying and say that for the vast majority of the time they all 'get on' well. They learn about leading safe and healthy lives in lessons, especially in science, and in discussions during the regular assemblies.

Regular physical education, including swimming, ensures that pupils have plenty of exercise to keep them fit.

The school complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. The school is planning a major refurbishment which has the potential to address the poor disabled access identified in the last inspection.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that it meets the requirements of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance 'Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (DCSF-04217-2006)' by:
 - finalising policies and procedures regarding child protection and safer recruitment, making them specific to the school (paragraph 3(2)(b))
 - ensuring that the designated member of staff completes the enhanced child protection training (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- compile a single central staff register to show that all required checks have been made and ratified (paragraph 4C(2) and 4C(3))
- ensure that the single register shows that the required checks have been undertaken on each member of the proprietorial body (paragraph 4C(6) and 4C(7)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are unwell (paragraph 5(1)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- improve the use of test information to set short- and medium-term learning targets for pupils.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils				✓
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School details

Name of school	St Philip's School
DCSF number	207/6104
Unique reference number	100516
Type of school	Preparatory
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 1934
Age range of pupils	7–13
Gender of pupils	Male
Number on roll (full time pupils)	109
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,550
Address of school	6 Wetherby Place London SW7 4NE
Telephone number	020 7373 3944
Fax number	020 7244 9766
Email address	info@stphilipschool.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr H Biggs-Davison
Proprietor	St Philip's School Trust
Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl HMI
Dates of inspection	14 January 2010