



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

ST PHILOMENA'S SCHOOL

OCTOBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	St Philomena's School			
DfE number	881/6021			
Registered charity number	2968635			
Address	St Philomena's School Hadleigh Road Frinton-on-Sea Essex CO13 9HQ			
Telephone number	01255 674492			
Email address	generalenquiries@stphilomenas.com			
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara McKeown			
Chair of governors	Mrs Josephine Geldard			
Age range	4 to 11			
Number of pupils	100			
	Boys	48	Girls	52
	EYFS	12	Form I to VI	88
Inspection dates	12 to 13 Oct 2016			

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and grade descriptors from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and an assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Ruth McFarlane	Reporting inspector
Mrs Jennifer Moran	Team inspector (Head of year, IAPS school)
Mr Ian Sterling	Team inspector (Head of prep, ISA school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 St Philomena's School is an independent Catholic day school for boys and girls aged between 4 and 11 years. It is owned by St Philomena's Educational Trust. Governance is undertaken by a governing body appointed by the trustees. The school was founded as a boarding school in 1926, in Frinton-on-Sea, by the Sisters of Mercy. In 1936 it transferred to its present nearby site as a day school. It became an educational charity in 1987, when the first lay headteacher was appointed. She is now the chair of governors.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, computer facilities have been improved and the school has expanded its site, occupying three adjacent detached houses. A new headteacher was appointed in 2011. The school comprises an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children aged 4 to 5 years, and six classes for older children aged 5 to 11, divided by age.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school's principal aims are to reflect the values of the biblical gospels and to encourage pupils to develop appreciation, understanding, optimism, tolerance, respect and care for each other and the world. It also seeks to foster qualities of excellence, perseverance, self-discipline and independence; provide challenge and motivation for each pupil and teach a curriculum that is broad, relevant and differentiated to meet the needs of individual pupils. In doing so, it desires to encourage responsibilities and to extend the intellectual, creative and physical capabilities of each individual.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Almost all the pupils come from white British families. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has identified 18 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional specialist help, mostly in literacy and numeracy. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified 12 pupils as being more able, and the curriculum is modified for them.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Form I	Year 1
Form II	Year 2
Form III	Year 3
Form IV	Year 4
Form V	Year 5
Form VI	Year 6

Recommendations from the previous inspection

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an Interim inspection in October 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Include subject development plans within the school development plan to improve strategic planning at all levels.
 - Use assessment data more rigorously to improve lesson planning, and to ensure that sufficient challenge is provided in tasks for the most able pupils.
 - Develop a formal system to record the day-to-day risk assessments of the EYFS classrooms, equipment and outside areas.
 - Consolidate the current programme of self-assessment and development planning in the EYFS.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met the recommendation to use assessment data more rigorously to improve lesson planning and ensure that sufficient challenge is provided in tasks for the most able pupils.

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well overall and their attainment is above the national average.
- Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are excellent in music, art and the communication skills of speaking, listening and reading.
- Pupils' study skills are not well developed.
- Planning for school improvement is not sufficiently focused on ironing out any inconsistencies in the outcomes of teaching and the curriculum.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.

- Pupils are highly self-disciplined; they are courteous and respectful of each other, staff and visitors.
- Pupils are adaptable, resilient and know how to stay safe. They make a strong contribution to their community.
- Pupils' self-reliance and their understanding of the importance of making good choices that affect their mental and physical health, are underdeveloped.
- Pupils' understanding of democracy, diversity and their responsibilities as citizens is limited.

Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure that planning for improvement is structured and monitored more effectively so that it has a greater impact on raising standards in pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the curriculum and the development of pupils' personal skills.
- Develop pupils' study skills and self-reliance, so that they can take more responsibility for their own learning and increase their understanding of the importance of decision making to their future mental and physical health and well-being.
- Help pupils to understand the diverse society Britain has become and how British democracy works, so that they increase their appreciation of their responsibilities as future citizens.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 The school's aims, which are to provide challenge and motivation for each pupil and teach a curriculum that is broad and relevant and that is appropriately varied to meet the needs of individual pupils, are largely met. The curriculum extends the intellectual, creative and physical capabilities of all and recognises and develops all talents.
- 3.3 Pupils' attainment is above average. The school does not take part in National Curriculum tests so this was judged using a range of evidence, including pupils' performance in lessons, workbooks and interviews and information regarding their destinations as leavers. On leaving the school, most pupils move to maintained schools. Evidence shows that they usually enter the top ability groups for major subjects. Others gain places at selective secondary schools. Occasionally, academic scholarships are gained.
- 3.4 Pupils, including those in the EYFS, achieve well and make good progress over time. This is shown in the good quality data produced by the school for literacy and numeracy. The use of data has improved significantly since the previous inspection, in response to the recommendation to use assessment data more rigorously to improve lesson planning and ensure that sufficient challenge is provided in tasks for the most able pupils. Challenges are now provided more effectively but not all staff use the data well in class.
- 3.5 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in their subjects are variable. Their skills are highly developed in music and art. During the inspection, pupils from four classes entered in a regional music festival achieved first prize for the fourth year running. While the choristers were at the festival, the choral singing of those remaining at the school served to enrich the spiritual ethos around the school. The artwork displayed across the school is of a high standard. Art lessons are vibrant and pupils are inspired by the exciting tasks and expert subject knowledge of the teachers. Pupils do well in individual sports and the most able have achieved regional success and, in some cases, national success in sports such as karate and tennis. In team sports they achieve less well, though not from want of effort. The school sometimes struggles to have sufficient keen and interested pupils to put together teams for sports such as football.
- 3.6 Pupils' speaking and listening skills are excellent, as a result of a focus on developing these skills throughout the school following an annual assessment made by outside experts. Reading skills are excellent, displaying the impact of high-quality teaching of the sounds letters make throughout the school and the individual attention given to pupils in their reading development, including the weekly input of appropriately qualified governors coming into school to help develop pupils' reading skills. In most subjects, pupils relish opportunities to develop their language skills, as when, in art sessions, they were encouraged to use and understand vocabulary such as 'perspective' and 'horizon'. Their written communication is a little less well-developed than their speaking and listening overall, reflecting slight inconsistencies in teaching. Mathematics skills develop well across the school due to a sustained focus on improving the resources, helping teachers match tasks to pupils' abilities effectively. Some excellent progress is evident in mathematics lessons. It is less consistent in other subjects when pupils are provided with fewer opportunities to apply what they have learned.
- 3.7 Pupils with SEND make good progress, as the curriculum provides well for their individual needs and staff know their pupils well and work individually with them. They also receive effective specialist help. Almost all the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their children make good progress and all feel that the school offers a

suitable range of subjects. A large majority of them indicated that there is a good choice of extra-curricular activities. Inspection evidence suggests that the extra-curricular provision is largely based on subjects found in the main curriculum and that there is sometimes a limited choice beyond that to extend pupils' horizons.

- 3.8 There are three main reasons why progress is not consistent across all subjects and age groups. Firstly, variations are evident in the impact of the teaching and the quality of teachers' marking across classes. This is evident from work scrutinised and lesson observations. The slight inconsistency evident in lessons occurs where the style and impact of teaching precludes pupils from finding things out for themselves. Pupils' development of knowledge, skills and understanding accelerates when pupils decide for themselves which methods to use to carry out a task, and then explain their thinking.
- 3.9 Secondly, the amount of time allocated each week to history, geography, science and information and communication technology (ICT) is balanced, but, in practice, judging from workbooks, the lessons observed during the inspection and work on display, a more limited amount of work has been covered in those subjects and a lack of sufficient depth of study and therefore, reduced progress. As less work is covered, this also limits the use of literacy and numeracy across the different subjects. Resources for ICT, and resources in general, have been improved since the previous inspection. Mostly, these resources are used successfully to support pupils' learning, as in mathematics. However, despite adequate time allocated in the computer suite for each class, evidence of the use of ICT to support pupils' learning is limited, having an adverse impact on how well pupils achieve.
- 3.10 Finally, weaknesses in the plan for whole school academic development, including a lack of clear reference to individual subject development, which is a recommendation of the previous inspection, limits the ability of the leadership to drive improvement to its highest level. The impact of teaching and the curriculum is good in the EYFS, and children make good progress, as shown by the above-average proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1. Opportunities are occasionally missed to ensure progress is at its best, because the recommendation to link EYFS self-assessment with the development plan has not yet been fully achieved. The link between the whole school development plan, pupil progress data and target setting for pupils and staff at all levels, and thus to raise standards further, is not strong. The progress data, consequently, is not used effectively in some classrooms to guide lesson planning. It was a recommendation of the previous inspection to use assessment data more rigorously.
- 3.11 Pupils' study skills develop more slowly than most other aspects of their achievement because they are given insufficient opportunities to draw on a wide range of sources, research topics for themselves and thus develop the ability to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and want to do well. They have too few occasions to show initiative or independence, be questioning participants, reflect on the knowledge gained or challenge their own understanding. They are willing to work in pairs and in groups, and when given these opportunities, there is a tangible feeling of excellent learning. However, in many lessons they are passive listeners and ask few questions, unless cajoled. This means that, while achieving well overall, they do not often show leadership in their learning.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' personal development is good.
- 4.2 The school's personal and pastoral aims, which are to encourage pupils to develop appreciation, understanding, optimism, tolerance, respect and care for each other and the world, are largely met. The school is particularly successful in its aim to foster in pupils a sense of self-discipline and perseverance. On many occasions during the inspection, pupils were observed working diligently at their tasks, even when they were finding the work challenging. Their work in books also showed such perseverance over time.
- 4.3 The good personal skills of the pupils demonstrate the school's ethos in action. This can be seen in their response in assemblies, where spirituality flourishes, and their positive response to the school's emphasis on prayer. Moments of quiet reflection are frequent, and pupils show a good appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. The well-developed programmes of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and religious education are secure foundation stones which underpin pupils' good personal skills. The school's focus on art and music enhances pupils' spirituality. Pupils and adults alike enjoy the melodious timbre of pupils' choral singing emanating from the hall as they move about the school.
- 4.4 The most significant strengths of the pupils' personal skills are their high levels of self-discipline and their adaptability. This is because they are supported well by staff and are encouraged to try new experiences. Pupils enjoy working in the woodland learning environment and the trips to the nearby beach for activities in a beach learning environment. In the EYFS, children concentrate well on their work, such as when they are writing party invitations or sewing teddy bears onto a card. This ability to focus is evident in the rest of the school, for example when pupils persevered in their attempts to calculate fractions in a mathematics session and persevered with their charcoal drawings in art.
- 4.5 Pupils develop good levels of self-esteem and self-knowledge by the time they leave Year 6. They show great confidence in dealing with each other, staff and visitors and in performing, for example with the choirs. Their resilience is clear, for example, when concentrating on their work for long periods. Their understanding of how to improve their own learning and performance is less well developed because the guidance they receive is not always clear enough to help them to improve and they are not, as a rule, given freedom to explore how they can learn for themselves. This can be traced back to insufficient focus by the leadership on driving the planning for further improvement, whether in lifting academic standards or in raising personal skills to their highest level.
- 4.6 Almost all parents who stated a view in the pre-inspection questionnaire are strongly supportive of the school's work to promote an environment that supports their child's personal development and all respondents feel that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils show great tolerance and respect for others, and their moral understanding and sense of responsibility for their own behaviour is good. Rules for behaviour are clear and pupils understand the need for rules in school. They have developed an excellent ability to distinguish right from wrong and take a moral stance on many subjects. Some classes create their own class rules. Combined with pupils' self-discipline, this leads to pupils' exemplary behaviour. However, they have not been taught how to link this with understanding the need for the rule of law in society. They have a limited understanding of how laws are made in England, how democracy works in Britain and the roles of parliament and the judiciary in British society.

- 4.7 Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe due in part to the school's careful work to ensure internet safety, which has also involved a presentation to parents. Pupils fully understand how to stay safe on the roads, near water and near railways. The impact of the school's work to ensure pupils understand the need for exercise in order to lead a healthy lifestyle is strong. They receive plenty of exercise through play activities, sports sessions such as swimming and sports-based extra-curricular activity such as netball and football. However, they are less sure about why they need a healthy diet or what a healthy diet comprises, and their understanding that the decisions they make are important for their future is not well developed. All pupils bring their lunch to school and the school has started an initiative to improve the choices they make in this regard. The school's work to develop pupils' mental health is also underdeveloped.
- 4.8 Pupils show great respect for their own culture and way of life. However, their understanding of diversity and multi-cultural Britain is not developed sufficiently. Pupils talk enthusiastically about tolerance and respect, but there is little in the curriculum to enable pupils to learn to understand their responsibilities as citizens.
- 4.9 Pupils contribute well to their local community. They have strong links with the local Catholic church and take part in many events in the diocese. In addition to this, they often sing at a local senior citizens' home and at a local garden centre at Christmas. Pupils have also developed strong links with the local Anglican church, other local schools, the local tennis club and the local cricket club. They also have an awareness of national and global issues, and have organised a school council-sponsored run in aid of charity. Links are also being currently developed with institutions in Sierra Leone. Charitable giving is frequent and reflects pupils' good awareness of the importance of contributing positively to the wider local and world community.
- 4.10 Pupils develop good levels of resilience and self-esteem but other life skills, such as study skills and problem solving, are not well developed because pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop independence in their learning. The school ethos is one of care and attention to individuals and their needs but monitoring, evaluation, planning and implementation of the provision has not been fully effective in addressing the gaps now identified. Notwithstanding, staff are excellent role models and promote positive behaviour well. Pupils, in turn, respond well to the encouragement they receive from the staff.