

# School inspection report

30 January to 1 February 2024

## **St Philomena's School**

Hadleigh Road  
Frinton-on-Sea  
Essex  
CO13 9HQ

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Dedicated leaders and governors effectively promote the school's aims and Catholic ethos. The community spirit of the school underpins all its work with staff, parents and governors all working together in the best interests of the pupils.
2. Pupil wellbeing is prioritised and is at the heart of all decision-making by leaders and governors. They foster a supportive and child-centred learning environment that results in pupils feeling valued and happy.
3. Pupils experience an appropriate range of subjects, and senior leaders have introduced specialist teachers, in subjects such as science, PE, music, speech and drama, and Spanish. This extends pupils' learning further as they are taught by those with in-depth knowledge of their subject. School leaders consider pupils' views and interests when developing a stimulating variety of extra-curricular clubs.
4. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disability (SEND), make good progress. Children in the early years make good progress according to their starting points and are stimulated by a range of age-appropriate activities. Teachers carefully review data to monitor the progress of pupils and implement effective extension and support strategies when required.
5. Planning to meet pupils' individual needs is not always thorough enough. There is some inconsistency between year groups and teachers. When careful planning and associated teaching strategies are not utilised well, the progress that pupils make is restricted.
6. Pupils are extremely respectful in their relationships and display maturity in the way that they are kind to others. The school's caring ethos and the effective curriculum for relationships and sex education (RSE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) contribute well to this.
7. Leaders have implemented comprehensive policies for behaviour and bullying. Pupils having a well-developed sense of right and wrong. This leads to high levels of kind and considerate behaviour throughout the school. Any rare incidences of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
8. Leaders successfully promote inclusion and diversity, with pupils displaying effective knowledge of these terms and how they relate to their own behaviour and attitudes. This ensures that differences, such as race, religion or gender, do not affect how pupils are treated at school, or the way pupils treat each other.
9. Community is a key feature of the school's ethos and this extends to how the pupils engage with the local community. Leaders promote extensive work with charities and church groups, which generate a sense of responsibility and empathy for the pupils.
10. Leaders' proactive approach to safeguarding fosters a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for pupils, ensuring that safeguarding is a key feature of the school's culture. Staff and governors are suitably trained and have the knowledge and understanding to keep pupils safe.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

### Recommended next steps

Leaders and managers should:

- strengthen teaching and planning so that there is consistency in meeting pupils' needs in lessons to enable them to make as much progress as possible.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. St Philomena's School is effectively run by a team of staff that actively promote the Catholic ethos of the school so that pupils' needs are placed at the forefront of their work. The leadership team leads by example by always considering pupil wellbeing in their decision-making processes. Each pupil is valued and treated as an individual, with their own unique needs and abilities. Although pupils' academic attainment is something leaders value and promote, welfare is also of high priority to ensure that pupils are not only successful learners but also enjoy their education and childhood years.
12. Governors and school leaders work in partnership to evaluate all aspects of school life, with carefully considered future strategy. Strategic planning by the leadership team feeds into thorough development planning that considers pupils' needs, for example, the employment of specialist teaching staff and the development of outdoor areas to enhance pupils' physical and social skills.
13. Governors are active in monitoring the school through regular visits, as well as scrutinising documentation, so that the school meets the Standards consistently and pupils are making progress. They work in harmony with the school's leaders to promote pupil wellbeing and welfare, with the aim of pupils feeling happy and safe in school as well as being focused learners.
14. Leaders have a systematic approach to safety. They assess risks carefully and put measures in place to mitigate any risks, including following recommendations from the fire risk assessment, and when planning educational visits. Governors effectively oversee this process.
15. School leaders have written and implemented a detailed accessibility plan that outlines the school's actions for pupils to participate fully in the education, facilities and services provided by the school. This plan is reviewed by both staff and governors, and any further actions are incorporated into the school's practice, to ensure that the school continues to be inclusive.
16. Leaders and staff are readily accessible to parents. For example, they are available in the mornings when the pupils are dropped to school and this time is used effectively for regular and informal conversations, which fosters a successful partnership between school and home. Through their website, the school has provided parents with a wealth of information about the ethos and values of the school, as well as required key policies. Parents receive detailed written reports about their child's attainment and progress at school, with useful targets identified for future development.
17. There is a comprehensive complaints policy that is made available on the website. The policy is implemented when complaints are raised with the school. Timescales are adhered to and detailed records of complaints are kept, including how they were resolved and any relevant action points. Governors understand their role in ensuring that the complaints process is followed diligently.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 18. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Pupils benefit from the range of subjects and activities offered at school. Senior leaders, with support of the governors, have introduced subject specialist teaching in science, music, speech and drama, PE and Spanish, in order to enhance the learning experiences of the pupils, alongside the lessons delivered by their class teachers. Quality music and singing are a key feature of the school's work, which enables pupils to express themselves creatively.
20. In most incidences, learning in lessons is tailored to meet the needs of pupils, including those who have SEND. Most teaching in the school exemplifies the school's aim to meet individual pupils' needs, with teachers setting high expectations and challenge for pupils. Generally, teachers expertly plan teaching to help pupils access learning at the right level for them to make good progress, and teachers offer extra support where required. In some lessons, the teaching does not consider pupils' needs. This means that some pupils do not access the lesson as well as they could, which limits the progress that they make.
21. The curriculum provision enables pupils to make good progress across a range of subject areas. Overall, teachers help pupils to learn and make progress by giving them support and challenge in lessons. Older pupils are well prepared for their transition to senior school including covering aspects of the curriculum that are in advance of their chronological age. Pupils are effective in the self-evaluation of their work which helps them to take responsibility for their learning.
22. Teachers effectively use data to track pupils' performance to confirm that pupils, including those who have SEND, make good progress. Individual pupils have targeted one-to-one support, as and when required, to enhance their learning. This support is effective because of the staff's extensive knowledge of individual pupils and the regular communication between class teachers, the SEND department and parents.
23. Children in the early years make good progress with their learning in relation to their starting points. Early years staff plan a broad range of stimulating activities that motivate the children to acquire new knowledge and skills. For example, children develop oral vocabulary through their practical topics, and learning that takes place outside enables children to develop their physical skills. Staff in the early years support individuals in class, where required, such as working on focused literacy and numeracy tasks.
24. Teachers have an in-depth knowledge of each pupil they teach. They use this knowledge well to give pupils helpful feedback, showing them how to make progress. Effective use is made of colour-coded marking to provide clear indications to pupils of how to improve their work.
25. To enhance the curriculum, the school offers a wide variety of enrichment opportunities in the form of educational visits, such as visiting museums to extend learning in art and history, and enrichment days, such as safer internet day and mental health day. Pupils participate in after-school clubs with excitement because the clubs have been tailored to meet their interests, such as golf, drama, coding, STEM and art. Pupils also experience ample opportunities to play outside of teaching time and benefit from the outdoor areas that have been developed by senior leaders. For example, developing their physical skills when using climbing apparatus and enhancing their linguistic skills when accessing the quiet area to read.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

**26. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

27. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of the terms respect, tolerance and discrimination, and how these impact on their own actions towards everyone at school. As a result, positive relationships exist between members of a school community where everyone is valued. Pupils are respectful towards each other and their teachers. Pupils enjoy opportunities to socialise with those from different year groups, especially at break and lunch times, strengthening the school's focus on community.
28. Pupils have a well-developed spiritual knowledge and understanding. They take part in prayers in a variety of situations, such as before lunch, at the end of the school day and at the beginning of assembly. This enables them to consider the needs of others as well as reflecting on the positive aspects of their lives. Music, particularly singing, is one of the many ways that pupils develop their self-esteem and appreciate the non-material aspects of life. The school's inclusive and respectful approach is evident in the way that pupils confidently sing solos, regardless of their singing ability.
29. Leaders have implemented an age-appropriate scheme for RSE. Pupils understand how to form positive relationships and how to resolve any issues that might arise in friendship groups. As a result, pupils can reflect on any problems in their own friendships and relationships. Leaders arrange sessions to support pupils' social development when required. This results in pupils making positive choices as they reflect on the context and impact of their behaviour.
30. Pupils behave extremely well, and display empathy and consideration for others. Behaviour incidences are usually low level and are swiftly dealt with by members of staff. Pupils are cognisant that sanctions are a vital part of reflecting on and improving their own behaviour. Bullying rarely occurs but is resolved sensitively and effectively. School leaders keep detailed records of behaviour and bullying incidents, which they analyse to ensure that there are no patterns in relation to discrimination.
31. Pupils' views are central to the school's decision-making process, which is evident through the work of school council and the 'Green Team'. For example, the school council has been influential in making suggestions for extra-curricular clubs that reflect the pupils' interests, and the 'Green Team' is developing a new nature area at the school. Year 6 prefects are involved in the life of the school as active and important members of the community. They effectively fulfil a variety of roles and responsibilities, such as head pupils, house captains, and librarians. In undertaking their roles, pupils contribute positively to the life of the school and this develops their self-esteem and self-confidence.
32. Admission and attendance registers are maintained accurately. Staff follow up any absences and inform the local authority when pupils join and leave the school at non-standard times.
33. Pupils feel safe at school due to the well-maintained and secure premises that pays attention to all aspects of health and safety. Pupils have access to suitably qualified first aiders where required, and regular fire drills are undertaken. Children in the early years have access to paediatric first aiders to assist with any minor injuries at school. The staff in the early years keep appropriate records of first aid and administration of medicines and inform parents appropriately.



## The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

**34. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

35. Fundamental British values are promoted effectively through PSHE and assemblies. Pupils are able to distinguish right from wrong and understand why rules are important. They treat others with respect, regardless of differences. They understand the term democracy and how it applies to their lives at school, for example, in elections to the school council and in selecting head pupils.
36. The PSHE curriculum provides a grounding for the pupils to learn about economic education through teaching units that promote an appreciation of the value of money. This is reinforced through practical activities, such as a charity activity aimed at supporting the local food bank and a local charity that supports struggling families and individuals in the local community, which helps the pupils understand that some people do not have enough money.
37. Pupils display empathy in their understanding about diversity and inclusion, recognising that there are many differences between pupils in the school, such as race, religion and gender, but that all pupils should be treated equally. The age-appropriate curriculum for both RSE and PSHE provides opportunities for pupils to appreciate and celebrate differences so that they can learn from each other's individuality and improve their social development. Pupils strengthen their understanding of differences in assemblies based on religious festivals and when parents talk to pupils about their different backgrounds.
38. Pupils understand the school values of kindness and respect, and the importance of displaying them in their daily life. As a result, pupils' social development develops positively during their time at the school. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education, leaving as happy, considerate, well-rounded young people. Transition information is provided for Year 6 pupils and the academic challenge provided by teachers in lessons for these pupils helps them to be ready for their move to senior school. As part of this transition process, pupils have high expectations of themselves.
39. Pupils are well prepared for being active members of society. They readily show empathy for others. This is facilitated by leaders through a rich variety of links with the local community. Events to support the school's immediate environment include harvest donations to the local foodbank, visits to local gardens to birdwatch, undertaking local beach cleans, and inviting elder members of the local community to watch Christmas performances. These links often include the wider school community, for example, pupils and their parents join the headteacher at local churches, of a variety of denominations, to participate in their services at the weekend.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 40. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

41. Leaders' proactive approach to safeguarding fosters a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for pupils. Governors and school leaders have drawn up a safeguarding policy that comprehensively describes the procedures to keep pupils safe. Governors have suitable knowledge of safeguarding and are active in their oversight of how the school manages safeguarding, including through a detailed annual review. Governors receive relevant safeguarding training.
42. School leaders have robust systems in place to carry out safeguarding checks when recruiting staff. All safer recruitment checks are correctly recorded on a central register of appointments. All staff involved in recruitment procedures have received appropriate training.
43. Safeguarding leads have sufficient knowledge and understanding to undertake their roles effectively. They receive suitable training and attend regular meetings to strengthen their understanding of local thresholds and how to work effectively with safeguarding partners.
44. All staff have relevant induction training relating to safeguarding, as well as annual training when they are made aware of any changes to the policy and statutory requirements. They recognise their responsibilities related to whistleblowing and understand how to make a referral should the need arise. This results in pupils feeling safe at school. Pupils know that they can approach staff if they have any concerns, and that appropriate action will be taken to support their individual needs and welfare.
45. Early years' staff understand, and effectively implement, the code of conduct relating to the use of mobile devices in the setting.
46. Pupils understand how to stay safe online, for example, that they should not give out personal details and should not access new websites without asking an adult. The school has suitable measures in place to filter content on the internet.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 47. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## School details

<b>School</b>	St Philomena's School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	881/6021
<b>Registered charity number</b>	298635
<b>Address</b>	St Philomena's School Hadleigh Road Frinton-on-Sea Essex CO13 9HQ
<b>Phone number</b>	01255 674492
<b>Email address</b>	admin@stphilomenas.com
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stphilomenas.com">http://www.stphilomenas.com</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	St Philomena's School Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Josephine Geldard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Philippa Mathews
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 11
<b>Number of pupils</b>	111
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 to 10 October 2019

## Information about the school

48. St Philomena's Catholic School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 4 and 11 years. The school was established in 1926 by the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy and moved to its present site in 1936. Two additional buildings were purchased in 1996 and 2002. The St Philomena's Education Trust was formed in 1987 and members of the governing body are both directors of the limited company and trustees of the charity.
49. There are 14 children in the early years, which comprises one reception class.
50. The school has identified five pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
51. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language.
52. The school's aims are reflected in the following statement, 'Growing together, learning together, achieving together in Christ'.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

30 January to 1 February 2024

53. A team of 3 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

54. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

55. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

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