

Inspection of St Philip's School

Harrow Close, Leatherhead Road, Chessington, Surrey KT9 2HR

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St. Philip's are happy and kept safe. They enjoy positive working relationships with staff and their peers. Pupils particularly enjoy caring for the animals on site, as well as the canine support provided by 'Bobby', the school's therapeutic dog.

Leaders have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. They have ensured that pupils study a broad and varied curriculum and there are a range of qualifications available. This offer has been carefully considered with pupils' future in mind. Preparing pupils for the next stage of their education, employment or training and developing their independence are both central to leaders' ethos.

Leaders have developed well-established, clear and appropriate routines. This means that pupils know what is expected of them and behave well. Bullying is very rare, but when it happens, leaders deal with it swiftly and ensure that it does not persist. All staff are trained mental health first aiders. They are skilled at supporting pupils to become calm when they feel anxious.

Pupils experience an extensive range of opportunities that are designed to support their personal development. For example, they attend visits to the theatre, restaurants, sporting fixtures, art galleries and museums. Older pupils also look forward to their residential trip to the Isle of Wight.

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

Leaders have constructed ambitious curriculum pathways that provide pupils with a range of choices, both in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth-form provision. Pupils are assessed carefully when they first arrive at the school. This helps teachers to identify the right pathways and necessary support for pupils.

Across all pathways, the curriculum is focused on ensuring that pupils are ready for the next stage of their education, employment or training. Pupils are supported to study subjects that they may want to pursue, such as media, forestry skills, childcare or photography. This is underpinned by ensuring that pupils have successfully secured appropriate knowledge in English and mathematics through accessing functional, entry-level or GCSE qualifications.

The curriculum is well sequenced so that pupils revisit concepts and practise important skills. This helps pupils to embed key knowledge and increases their confidence to tackle new ideas. For example, in science, pupils practised representing the composition and movement of blood by passing rice, water, marshmallows and sweets through a tube. This supported pupils to develop their understanding of the role of arteries and veins, as well as the risks associated with heart disease. Similarly, in art, pupils explored a range of cityscapes using moveable

satellite images. This helped to develop their understanding of abstract concepts such as scale and proportion.

Some teaching builds in checks on what pupils understand and remember, but this is not consistently the case. This means that some pupils struggle to understand new ideas because they have not secured the prior knowledge that they need.

Leaders make sure that there is significant focus on developing pupils' reading. Pupils read a range of different texts each day, including writing they will come across outside of school, such as menus and newspaper articles. A small number of pupils receive additional help with their early reading through following a structured phonics programme. However, some of these pupils do not get sufficiently well-planned opportunities to practise their reading. This affects the development of reading fluency.

Leaders work well with a range of specialists such as educational psychologists, occupational therapists, and art and drama therapists. Together, they focus in making sure that pupils are supported to achieve the targets outlined in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. In addition, every pupil receives specific support with the development of their communication and language, including from the speech and language therapist.

Adults model calm and respectful behaviour. They encourage pupils to be thoughtful and kind to one another. Pupils are generally enthusiastic about school and keen to learn.

Leaders' relentless focus on developing pupils' independence is exemplary. For example, they make sure that pupils are well prepared and confident to tackle independent travel to and from school. The curriculum has been designed so that pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about themes related to healthy relationships, respect and tolerance. There are many opportunities which aim to support pupils to develop their leadership qualities. Pupils also get involved regularly in contributing to the local community. They raise money for charity and learn about respecting nature and taking care of animals. Pupils' cultural awareness is enriched through workshops led by professional artists and theatre groups.

Pupils receive appropriate careers advice and guidance. For example, leaders work closely with organisations and local employers so that all pupils complete a period of external work experience. Care is taken by staff to ensure that students are both academically and emotionally ready to progress to further education, training or employment.

Staff are positive and proud to work at St. Philip's and feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Staff, including those at the earlier stages of their careers, feel well supported to develop professionally.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team ensures that staff are trained to recognise the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe and report any concerns that they may have immediately.

Leaders have forged strong relationships with local safeguarding partners and use this to secure the right support for pupils and families. For example, leaders have developed several in-house therapy options to cater for pupils' additional needs.

Leaders keep detailed and comprehensive records. This includes appropriate records of the pre-employment checks carried out on applicants' suitability to work at the school.

The curriculum has been designed to help pupils to understand personal safety. For example, pupils learn about what to do when they are approached by a stranger and how to recognise online risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teaching does not build in checks to find out if pupils have secured the knowledge that they need before moving on to new learning. This means that some pupils struggle to know and remember more over time. Leaders should ensure that teachers check what pupils have learned before moving on to more complex ideas.
- Some pupils at the earlier stages of reading do not get sufficient time to practise their decoding and blending skills. Consequently, this reduces the development of their reading fluency. Leaders should ensure that these pupils have increased reading practice and that this is purposefully planned to build up pupils' reading fluency.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	142740
Local authority	Kingston upon Thames
Inspection number	10255274
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Prior
Principal	Ben Walsh
Website	www.stphilips-chessington.org
Date of previous inspection	12 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Philip's joined the Orchard Hill Academy Trust in 2016. The predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2018 and judged to be good.
- All pupils at the school have an EHC plan. Pupils have a range of additional needs, including those related to moderate learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder, speech, language and communication needs, and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Leaders use one registered alternative provider operated by the local authority.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including reading and communication, mathematics, science, design and technology, and art. To do this, they met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the Orchard Hill Academy Trust, and spoke with a parent governor and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with staff and pupils.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

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