

Inspection of St Philip's School

6 Wetherby Place, London SW7 4NE

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 March 2025

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this warm, welcoming and supportive school. From the Reception class onwards, they settle quickly and benefit from the school's highly positive ethos of 'teamwork, kindness and fun'. Most pupils and parents told inspectors that the school 'feels like a family'. Pupils form strong relationships with their teachers and each other. They know that they have someone to talk to if they are worried about anything. Pupils feel extremely happy and safe.

The school has the highest expectations for pupils' achievement, including for the small number with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND). Pupils achieve highly across all areas of the curriculum and perform extremely well in senior school entrance exams. They are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils benefit from an excellent range of clubs such as debating, video game design, backgammon, acrobatics and touch typing. The sporting opportunities on offer are equally noteworthy. All boys take part in 'games' for two whole afternoons a week. There are also many fixtures against other schools. Children in Reception class learn swimming once a week. Through sports, pupils challenge themselves and develop their resilience, independence and competitive spirit.

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

The school has developed a highly ambitious curriculum that exceeds what is expected nationally. Across all subjects, it has thought carefully about the important knowledge pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. For example, in science pupils deepen their understanding of magnetic forces over time. In Reception Year, they read a book about magnets and manipulate the magnetised carriages on the train set. In Year 3, they learn about the attraction and repulsion of north and south poles and construct a compass. Older pupils then learn about electro-magnetism, combining their understanding of forces and electricity. In classics, pupils build on their knowledge of the present tense to learn about the perfect past, pluperfect and future tenses.

Reading is a high priority in the school. Children in Reception class benefit from a well-taught phonics programme. They learn quickly and securely to segment and blend the words they read. Expert staff ensure that children have many fun opportunities to practise the sounds they hear. They provide excellent support for any pupils who need to catch up. Younger pupils read one-to-one with an adult every day and visit the local library every week. Reading prefects from the older years read regularly with younger pupils. A strong culture of reading pervades across all year groups. Pupils are proud to be recognised as 'word millionaires' in the weekly reading assembly and are proud prolific readers.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and present information clearly. They check pupils' understanding carefully and address misconceptions swiftly, providing

clear feedback to pupils about how to improve in their understanding and skills. As a result, pupils develop a deep body of knowledge across the curriculum. They produce work which is consistently of a very high standard. Pupils confidently use subject-specific vocabulary and can apply their learning to a range of contexts. For instance, in English, pupils in Year 8 write knowledgeably about how the author John Steinbeck uses language and symbolism to develop the theme of loneliness in 'Of Mice and Men' and make explicit links to their previous learning of 'Animal Farm'.

Children in the early years get off to a flying start. The curriculum is framed around 'understanding me, others and my surroundings'. Children develop strong language, number and physical skills. They learn how to manage their emotions appropriately. Children also learn about different cultures, for example by learning about the festivals of Diwali and Yom Kippur. Through the class 'passport' programme they 'visit' a different country every week. Recently they 'visited' the USA and learned about its animals, music and architecture. To support their physical development, children take part in 'playball' every Friday afternoon. As a result, they are very well prepared for Year 1.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. One pupil in Year 8 described the behaviour of his peers as 'almost immaculate but not robotic'. Pupils are highly attentive during lessons. They consistently demonstrate excellent attitudes to their learning. In Reception, children are motivated and share and cooperate well with each other. Pupils' attendance is high. The school works highly effectively with parents and carers and has robust strategies in place to ensure that pupils attend school regularly.

Pupils learn a well-coordinated programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). They learn about respectful relationships and consent. Pupils also learn how to keep themselves healthy and to stay safe when online. Pupils are thoughtful citizens in their local and wider community through charity fundraising activities that they organise. Pupils benefit from a broad range of trips which enhance the curriculum to places including Buckingham Palace, the Barbican and the Olympic Park. Every pupil takes part in the annual school play. They also participate in house competitions including poetry and music recitals, Latin declamations and singing competitions. Many older pupils relish being part of 'Schola', the school choir.

The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards are met consistently. This includes compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Parents are glowing in their praise of the school. However, a number of staff raised concerns about poor communication in the school and do not feel supported with their workload, wellbeing or professional development. Staff also express their disappointment that this had not improved since the last inspection. Governors do not have a clear oversight of this area of the school's work. In addition, they do not monitor or check other key elements of the school's work as sharply as they could.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some staff raise issues around their workload and wellbeing within the school. As a result, they report that concerns relating to communication, behaviour and general school planning are sometimes not listened to well enough. The school should ensure that the workload and wellbeing of all staff, including leaders, is prioritised and monitored effectively.
- Governors do not have a clear enough oversight of some key aspects of the school's work. Consequently, they do not provide support and challenge as effectively as they could and some areas for improvement identified previously have not been fully addressed. Governors should make sure that they have the skills and expertise to fulfil their roles successfully and ensure that the school addresses effectively all key aspects of its work.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	100516
DfE registration number	207/6104
Local authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	10341980
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	4 to 13
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	St Philip's School Trust Ltd
Chair	John Dean
Headteacher	Alex Thomas
Annual fees (day pupils)	Forms 3 to 8: £28,170 Reception: £25,020
Telephone number	020 7373 3944
Website	www.stpschool.co.uk
Email address	office@stpschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 September 2024

Information about this school

- This is a Catholic preparatory school for boys. The school is registered for up to 110 pupils aged four to 13 years. The school recently opened a Reception class in September 2024.
- A material change inspection took place on 10 September 2024. The last standard inspection took place 8 to 10 March 2022, when the school was judged to be good and all the independent school standards were met.
- The school is in a former residential property in Kensington and Chelsea. Pupils have access to a large garden at the rear of the school. Sporting activities take place at an off-site specialist sports provision.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The proprietor has appointed trustees who are also governors of the school.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and classics. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects. They visited the early years classroom.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector also met with representatives of the proprietor body, the chair of the governors and other governors.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors undertook a tour of the school and visited the classrooms, social areas and other facilities. They checked the school buildings and grounds against the independent school standards.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school throughout the day, including at breaktimes and in lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experience of the school.
- Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, including their written comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and staff survey.

Inspection team

Christian Hicks, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Smith

His Majesty's Inspector

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