

St Philip Howard Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126102
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	381187
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline White HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	900
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Bedford
Headteacher	David Todd
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2007
School address	Elm Grove South Barnham Bognor Regis PO22 0EN
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed 39 lessons and 38 teachers. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at its data on students' performance and records of the support provided to them and scrutinised the school's improvement plans, policies and procedures, including those related to health and safety and risk assessments. The inspection team analysed 241 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 190 from students and 43 returned by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of teaching and assessment for learning in providing an appropriate level of challenge for all students.
- The success of tracking and intervention in reducing any variation in students' performance and progress across and within subjects.
- The impact of leadership at all levels, but particularly subject leadership, in driving improvement.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form.

Information about the school

This average-sized comprehensive school has achieved specialist humanities status. A relatively low proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. Few students are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, although a below average number have a statement of special educational needs. The school has been awarded Healthy School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides its students with a good quality of education, including in the sixth form, and some aspects of its work are outstanding. The strong Catholic ethos permeates the school and contributes to students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students feel extremely safe and valued as individuals. They are proud of their school and have a strong sense of belonging. This is evident not only in their caring relationships and considerate behaviour but also in their high attendance. They are proactive in seeking to create a cohesive community which looks not only inwards but makes a good contribution to the wider community. The parents and carers who returned questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about their children's experiences at school. One comment reflected the sentiments of many: 'All three of our children have flourished in the school's caring environment, and, while academic standards are high, we feel good behaviour and a sense of social responsibility are equally emphasised.'

Generally, most students, as well as those with additional needs, make good progress from their starting points. In 2010, students left Year 11 with attainment significantly above the national average in terms of the proportion of students who gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Teaching, which is good overall, sustains the high attainment. However, there are inconsistencies, including in the use of assessment to support learning, which slow students' progress and result in unevenness in their performance across GCSE and sixth form courses. In addition, in some lessons teachers miss opportunities to develop the skills of independent learning. The good curriculum is appropriately flexible and regularly reviewed to ensure that it caters for the needs and interests of students.

Parents and carers are actively involved in the life of the school. Their views are regularly sought and acted upon. The school's surveys highlight very positive relationships with most groups of parents and carers. The commitment to collaboration is also expressed in the school's outstanding partnership work with a wide network of schools, colleges and other agencies. These activities not only enhance provision and outcomes for students but also extend staff and students' opportunities to develop leadership and interpersonal skills. The school's specialism in humanities has been an important catalyst for many of these partnerships.

Senior leaders and governors are very aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. Improvement plans are focused on the right priorities and systems for

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monitoring the school's work are comprehensive. However, not all subject leaders are equally astute at reading the strategic messages derived from monitoring and translating them into the right actions to secure timely improvement. The governing body is very dedicated to the school and to the success, safety and well-being of every student. In their work with senior leaders, governors are increasingly adept at balancing support with productive challenge. Accurate self-evaluation processes and improved performance in some key areas, for example students' attendance, show good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the acceleration of students' progress, including in the sixth form, by:
 - ensuring all teachers are rigorous in using assessment information to plan lessons that challenge students appropriately and consistently
 - clarifying and sharing success criteria in lessons to check students' understanding and drive their progress
 - extending opportunities for students to gain independence in their learning through collaboration and evaluating their own and others' work
 - sharing and building the skills of subject leaders so they are equally effective in monitoring the work of their teams and maintaining a sharp focus on students' progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students enjoy a positive experience in the classroom, where learning is mostly good. In the best lessons, students are encouraged to become independent learners through activities that are well matched to their needs, present an element of challenge and provoke students to think for themselves. Clear success criteria are shared with effective use of exemplar materials and high-quality resources. Students have opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work, and to develop their understanding and ideas as well as their speaking and listening skills through collaboration. Good and sometimes excellent questioning is used to deepen and evaluate students' grasp of key learning points. Consequently, students make at least good progress. In an A-level English lesson, as a result of well-structured, collaborative activities and the teacher's precise but open questioning, students grappled successfully with some very complex concepts about language acquisition.

Students' prior attainment on entry to the school ranges from broadly average to above average. Their attainment in GCSE examinations is significantly above the national average. In particular, they make very good progress consistently in English and mathematics. There are no underperforming groups in the school. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers and their attainment is above average. In 2010, the attainment of students with a statement of special educational needs taking GCSE examinations was high.

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With well-developed financial, communication and social skills, students are fully prepared for their future lives. Their good behaviour stems from a strong sense of right and wrong and a very genuine desire to make a positive contribution in life. Students confidently told inspectors that they feel free from different forms of harassment and have complete confidence in the support provided by staff. The value they place on their health is reflected in the Healthy Schools award and demonstrated in their good participation in sporting activities and maintaining a healthy diet. Student voice is considered highly in the school and the cafeteria menus are constantly refreshed in response to the needs and requests of students. Students express their keen commitment to the improvement of the school through the student body. Members are involved in a wide range of decision-making including the appointment of staff.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Where teaching is at its most effective, students are fully absorbed in challenging work that develops their skills and understanding at a rapid pace. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a detailed picture of students’ prior attainment. Assessment information is used well to tailor learning to individual needs. Students understand their work, know how to improve it and so they make good, and sometimes, outstanding progress. Teachers probe students’ understanding of appropriate learning objectives, skilfully tackling misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge. In a Year 9 information and communication technology lesson, students

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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were making good progress designing their own website; their skills were built systematically, success criteria were reiterated and students received clear, concise and practical feedback about how they could improve their work. The teacher drove the pace of learning with humour and tenacity, and encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Where teaching is less secure, lesson planning does not always draw sufficiently on available information about students' progress. The skills that secure progress, for example, well-chosen and directed questioning and precise feedback about the next learning step, are unrefined. Consequently, students' progress slows.

The curriculum has been developed to ensure it meets students' needs, capabilities and interests well. The school provides an appropriate range of subjects, courses and wider learning experiences which fully meet statutory requirements. A variety of well-run enrichment activities further enhance students' enjoyment. In Year 7, a competence-based curriculum supports students' transition into secondary education and enables them to make connections in their learning. Six 'deep learning days' for all students each year have been introduced successfully. On these days the usual timetable is suspended and students have valuable opportunities for extended activities that develop a range of learning skills. Well-established links with other providers also increase choice and flexibility. Students benefit from very good care and support and good quality guidance about courses and their subsequent career and work-related decisions.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's clear, shared vision of a compassionate, supportive learning community where all students have the opportunity to succeed gives direction to the work of the school. Leaders and managers at all levels are strongly committed to continuous improvement but are not yet equally effective in securing it. In particular, there is variation in the quality of subject leadership. However, team work is a strength, roles and responsibilities capitalise on individual talents and line management challenges and supports leaders. A comprehensive staff development programme is well managed and covers key aspects relating to teaching and learning. School lesson observation records closely matched the judgements made by the inspection team and strategies for converting satisfactory teaching to good are becoming embedded.

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Senior leaders and the governing body have rightly prioritised the improvement of teaching and learning, achievement and the sixth form. Governors are involved systematically in evaluating the school’s performance in these areas. They regularly seek the views of parents, carers and students, for example through the parish parent and carers groups, the student body and the students’ curriculum committee. Good safeguarding procedures are secured through clear policies, regular staff training, the delivery of the curriculum and effective risk assessment systems.

Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are at the heart of the school’s ethos. Students respect and value difference as a reflection of the worth that the school attaches to every individual. Strengthened systems for tracking students’ progress enable leaders to monitor outcomes for different groups of students and there are no noticeable variations. The better targeted interventions to support students’ learning are helping to reduce unevenness in performance across some subjects. The school is a highly cohesive community that makes a thoughtful and sustained positive contribution to its local neighbourhood but acknowledges there is scope to give students greater contact with people from all walks of life and backgrounds.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students greatly value the close-knit and highly supportive environment of the sixth form. ‘We are like a family,’ was the view expressed by one student and acknowledged by many others. Sixth formers make a very good contribution to the school and wider community. To give just a few examples: they organise whole-

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school charity events; provide a fortnightly programme for senior citizens to socialise with students and develop skills such as with computing and other new technologies; some are special ministers taking an active role in the chaplaincy and liturgical life of the school, others are trained to provide a peer mediator service for younger students and many take a leading role in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

In response to variation in students’ performance across subjects, in the last year the school has made a concerted effort to share effective teaching practice and this is developing more consistency in students’ rate of progress, with high performance in A-level English language and mathematics leading the way. In its improvement plans, the school rightly prioritises the need to build on these successes. Inspectors’ lesson observations and a range of assessment information support the view that most groups of students make good progress in their academic studies. Attendance, success and retention rates are high.

Strong, trusting relationships are an important factor in students’ enjoyment of learning. Good and outstanding lessons are characterised by high levels of student participation in well-focused discussion. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and a variety of questioning techniques to challenge students and extend their thinking. Tutors have daily contact with students and monitor their progress and welfare closely. High quality, individualised guidance ensures that students have a clear view of their future options and are well prepared for higher education, training or the world of work.

The head of the sixth form works successfully with the experienced team of tutors to tailor provision to students’ needs. Well-managed collaboration with other schools in an area partnership broadens the choice of courses available to students. While the school specialises in A-level subjects, a range of vocational courses are available through the partnership.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over a quarter of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The vast majority were happy with their child’s experience at school. In particular, parents and carers were extremely confident that the school keeps their children safe and that their children enjoy school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Philip Howard Catholic High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 241 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 900 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	118	53	103	46	3	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	117	52	105	47	1	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	80	36	115	51	16	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	85	38	121	54	7	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	102	46	112	50	4	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	53	24	132	59	26	12	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	16	144	64	33	15	4	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	79	35	124	55	5	2	3	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	85	38	124	55	8	4	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	62	28	136	61	13	6	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	20	133	59	17	8	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	114	51	97	43	4	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	118	53	98	44	6	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Philip Howard Catholic High School, Bognor Regis PO22 0EN

Thank you very much for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were impressed by your courtesy, helpfulness and the great pride that you take in your school. These are our main findings:

- Yours is a good school where you feel absolutely safe and well cared for.
- Your high attendance, outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, good behaviour and the good teaching and learning combine to secure high achievement.
- Your school encourages you to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- You make a good contribution to the school and the wider community.
- The curriculum meets your needs well and you appreciate the good number of clubs and activities available. The school works extremely well with other organisations to enhance your learning experience.
- Your school has a good sixth form where students enjoy their studies.
- Leaders, managers and members of the governing body are doing a good job in running the school and know its strengths and areas for development well.

Your school's leaders are ambitious to build on the school's strengths. They worked with us to consider what the school should do next to improve further. This included tackling some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, extending opportunities for you to gain independence in your learning and further developing the skills of some subject leaders. You can help by working with your teachers to become more independent in your learning.

Thank you again for your help during the inspection. We hope you continue to enjoy your time at school and wish you all every future success.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White

Her Majesty's Inspector

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