

Inspection of St Richard's Catholic College

Ashdown Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex TN40 1SE

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel really safe and valued at St Richard's Catholic College. Pupils know that there are adults who will listen to them and help them if they are worried about something or someone. Leaders and staff listen to their pupils and respond appropriately to ensure that all pupils feel supported and included. For example, a recent school-wide campaign, 'Delete the hate', to raise awareness and reduce the use of inappropriate and offensive language online was highly successful.

Expectations of staff about behaviour and conduct are very high and consistent across the school. There are clear routines in place that mean the school provides a very calm environment to learn in. Pupils are confident that any bullying is quickly sorted out by staff. They treat their teachers and peers with the utmost respect and are unfailingly polite.

All pupils enjoy a wide range of volunteering opportunities and extra-curricular clubs, including sports and arts-based activities. Leaders and staff are committed to finding and developing each pupil's talents and interests. Pupils are encouraged by staff to take an active role in their school community through a range of fundraising activities, as well as awards schemes, including The Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme.

Parents and pupils are rightfully proud of their school community. They would not hesitate in recommending the school to others. As one parent wrote, 'The school not only develops and encourages academic success, but it motivates and inspires them to become fully rounded, responsible, balanced members of society.'

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

Leaders and teachers have a clear and ambitious vision for the curriculum. They know what they want pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to learn and why. In some subjects, including languages, geography and mathematics, leaders have carefully selected the most important knowledge to teach pupils. Curriculum plans show the order pupils are to be taught the knowledge to help them know more and do more over time. As a result, achievement is high overall. Some other subjects, including design technology, are at an earlier stage of curriculum development but also show clear and coherent plans. Teachers are regularly checking what pupils know and can do, but this information is not always informing the next steps of teaching. For example, pupils' misconceptions are not always addressed before they move on to more complex content. Some pupils are not clear about what their strengths are and what they need to do to improve their work.

Relationships among staff and pupils reflect the school's values of positivity and kindness. Pupils speak really enthusiastically about the care, support and education they receive at the school. Leaders have exceptionally high expectations of

behaviour, and pupils show consistently positive behaviour in lessons, corridors and at social times.

Personal development is a clear strength of the school. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is age appropriate and responsive to the needs of pupils. Beyond the curriculum, staff have high expectations of all pupils to participate in school life. There are award systems in place, such as 'The Crest' award, to motivate all pupils to take part in extra-curricular clubs and school wide events. Pupils value the role that the school plays in developing their confidence and resilience. They enjoy opportunities in different subjects to discuss, debate and attend trips to enrich their learning experiences. Pupils value the support they receive to prepare them for life beyond school. For example, pupils enjoy a range of meaningful encounters with the world of work across all year groups. The school has a strong alumni network, which supports careers education in assemblies and other events across the school.

Leaders have put in place a strong and effective pastoral care system. Pupils learn about the world around them from different perspectives, and they value the importance of acceptance and diversity. The inclusive nature of the school runs through the heart of everything that the staff and pupils do. As a result, pupils with SEND are identified quickly and given the support they need, including when preparing for and sitting examinations.

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the school and pupils. They are dedicated to providing all pupils with the best quality of education and care. Leaders reflect on what is working and make changes where they are needed. Staff receive extensive, well planned professional development opportunities. Leaders value staff views and take appropriate actions to manage workload. Governors share leaders' high aspirations and dedication. They play an active role in supporting and challenging the school to 'go the extra mile'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders have put a range of effective systems in place so that staff take appropriate action when a pupil needs extra care and support. All staff are trained to carry out their safeguarding duties appropriately and effectively. The knowledge and understanding of all staff are checked and updated regularly, including sharing safeguarding tips in the staff bulletin.

Pupils are taught important information they need so that they can keep themselves safe and manage risks. They are able to report their concerns and get the help they need in a variety of ways.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching in some subjects is not always informed by what pupils show they know and remember. Some pupils have misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge that are not addressed before teachers move on to more complex content. Information teachers collect from checking what pupils understand in lessons should be used, consistently well across all subjects, to plan the next steps of teaching.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	114612
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10199317
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1045
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison Horan
Principal	Doreen Cronin
Website	www.strichardscs.com
Date of previous inspection	14 November 2006, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses four registered alternative providers to meet the needs of a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 11 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2018, when the school was graded as outstanding. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before November 2026.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this 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.

- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders of the school, members of staff, pupils and parents.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school development plan, pupil premium and catch-up funding plans and relevant school policies.
- Inspectors did deep dives in English, mathematics, science, geography, languages and physical education. This involved inspectors talking to subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visiting lessons and looking at pupils' work. Inspectors also visited lessons and looked at subject planning in PSHE, music and art. Design technology planning documentation was also viewed and discussed.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils to gather their views. They considered 291 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 185 free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of 60 responses to the survey for staff and 366 responses to the pupils' survey. Members of the parental focus group were also spoken to during the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by looking at relevant documentation, staff recruitment checks and training records. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, a local authority adviser and a Diocesan representative.

Inspection team

Hanna Miller, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Carlyle	Ofsted Inspector
Paul McKeown	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Culling	Her Majesty's Inspector

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