

Inspection of a good school: St Philomena's Primary School

Chelsfield Road, Orpington, Kent BR5 4DR

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2023

Outcome

St Philomena's Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and confident in this small and friendly primary school. They learn about being part of a bigger community from their first days in Reception, helped and guided by older pupils as well as staff. Pupils are very polite and well mannered. Their sensible and considerate behaviour consistently reflects leaders' high expectations.

Leaders have developed a high-quality curriculum which ensures that pupils achieve well. In lessons, pupils follow routines quickly and ensure that no time for learning is wasted. They work hard and feel proud of their achievements. Parents and carers are especially appreciative of the school's work to ensure that every pupil learns to read fluently and confidently. Pupils' talents in sport, music and art are encouraged. Everyone takes part in the end-of-year show just before they leave for secondary school.

Pupils know what bullying is, but they struggle to remember any instances. They are confident that the adults would quickly sort out any problems if they arose. Leaders make it a priority to know pupils and their families well. All staff work together to ensure that pupils are well cared for and kept safe.

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

Leaders make sure that pupils receive a high-quality education. They have developed a broad and balanced curriculum which is carefully designed and sequenced.

Teaching pupils to read is an example of the quality of this work. Through a well-delivered and ambitious phonics programme, children get off to a brisk start in Reception. By the end of Year 1, pupils are confident and speedy readers. Anyone who needs extra support is given expert help. Pupils' developing skills enable them to read and enjoy a wide range of thoughtfully selected books as they move through the school. Pupils develop their vocabulary through reading and during class story times. Teachers carefully introduce them to new words in class. The school has a well-structured approach to teaching

spelling. Older pupils can write fluently and at length, using the rich vocabulary that they know.

Overall, the curriculum ensures that pupils learn the essential building blocks they need to expand their knowledge. For example, in mathematics, children in Reception learn different ways of adding numbers to make ten. They build on this knowledge in Years 1 and 2, and can confidently explain how they arrive at answers to questions. Older pupils also value regular opportunities to talk with teachers about their work. These discussions help them to find the quickest and most efficient way of tackling mathematical problems. The thoughtful design of the curriculum and its effective delivery enable pupils to apply what they have learned in one subject to their work in another. For example, their understanding of negative numbers in mathematics helps them to understand that, in history, 10BC is a more recent time than 100BC.

Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Pupils' individual needs are identified quickly. They are given extra support which is thoughtfully targeted. As a result, pupils with SEND are achieving very well.

Children gain strong foundations for learning from the early years. In physical development, for instance, Reception children move with energy and increasing precision. They benefit from an ambitious approach to developing their skills in fundamental areas like running. Adults teach them important skills, which they practise when they play outdoors. In other year groups, there are occasions where the delivery and structure of the curriculum does not promote pupils' depth of understanding as well. For example, in physical education (PE), there are instances where older pupils are not supported to develop the building blocks needed for more complex movement skills. Similarly, in geography and history, the organisation of the curriculum sometimes does not focus sharply on deepening pupils' understanding of subject content. For instance, it does not give them a clear understanding of similarities and differences between the different historical periods studied.

Leaders have thought carefully about pupils' wider development. Teachers help pupils to listen carefully to each other and build on each other's thinking. Classrooms are places where pupils focus well on learning the curriculum. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their leadership. They can apply to be ambassadors for different subjects, or run for election to the school council. Carefully selected trips enrich pupils' thinking and their experiences, such as the opportunity to spend a week on a farm.

Effective governance contributes to the strong leadership of the school. Staff value the way that leaders support them and foster a sense of pride in working for the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is at the forefront of everyone's mind. Staff and volunteers are carefully selected. All the required checks are carried out before they start working with pupils. Pupils trust staff and share any concerns they might have. Staff know how to identify and

help any pupil who might need support. Leaders make prompt referrals to external agencies, where appropriate, and work effectively to ensure the best outcomes for pupils who are at risk.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe online, and older pupils are taught about travelling safely on public transport.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While the curriculum has many strengths, in a few subjects, the thinking behind the curriculum's structure and sequence lacks rigour and thoroughness. As a result, there are times when pupils are not supported to develop the building blocks they need to grasp and master more complex ideas in a subject. Leaders need to continue their work to refine their curriculum thinking in a few subjects so that pupils are given the foundations they need to understand new and more complex learning.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Philomena's Primary School, to be good in May 2010.

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	141482
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	10255473
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margaret Fairhall
Headteacher	Veronica Maher
Website	www.st-philomenas.bromley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders use one registered alternative provider.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection for schools with a religious character was carried out in December 2022.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders. He also met with all of the trustees, who are responsible for governance. He held a telephone conversation with the school's improvement partner.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and PE. For each deep dive, he discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Other subjects were considered as part of the inspection.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector carried out a scrutiny of the school's single central record of pre-employment checks. He met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding, including records of concerns.
- The inspector considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through discussions and their responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Julian Grenier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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