

Inspection of Philip Morant School and College

Rembrandt Way, Colchester, Essex CO3 4QS

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Stephanie Neill. This school is part of The Sigma Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lyn Wright, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Hammond.

What is it like to attend this school?

Even though this is a large school, there is a warm 'family feel' to it. Pupils are happy here and feel well looked after. They know that staff are available ready with a 'listening ear'. New Year 7 pupils settle in quickly and respond well to staff's high expectations. Pupils navigate the large site efficiently and quickly learn the importance of being on time for their lessons.

Pupils behave well. They appreciate staff being consistently firm and fair. Pupils see that the calm environment helps them to learn better. Whatever your faith, ethnicity, sexuality or background, you are welcome here. Pupils have a strong understanding and appreciation of inclusion and diversity. Staff share explicitly their high expectations for this.

Like their peers, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow an ambitious curriculum. They enjoy interesting lessons. Pupils' mental health and physical well-being are prioritised. Pupils highly value the wide-ranging sports opportunities and being part of a sports academy. A significant number of pupils choose to undertake extra sporting activities, including before school.

Almost all pupils and sixth-form students, including those with SEND, secure their next steps in education, employment or training.

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

Philip Morant has changed significantly over the past few years. Pupils are achieving better in their qualifications. They are enjoying school and, so, want to attend. The trust's focus on improving the quality of modern foreign languages is enabling more pupils to study for the full range of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate.

The ambitious curriculum is well established across most subjects, including in the sixth form. Pupils have a good understanding of key knowledge because teachers have thought carefully about what they need to know and do. Teachers explain concepts well. They give pupils the opportunity to practise and consolidate their learning. Teachers spot readily misconceptions and address them quickly to move pupils on in their learning.

There are strong systems for improving pupils' reading ability. Staff identify early pupils' specific needs and make sure they follow the right programme to help them improve. This includes learning phonics. As a result, pupils gain confidence reading fluently and at speed. Pupils read widely on a regular basis. The explicit teaching of vocabulary and cultural references means that pupils can access more complex texts.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those in the enhanced provision, are very well catered for. Teachers know the pupils and their needs well. They use pupils' support plans to make sure that they participate

fully in lessons. Specialist staff effectively support those pupils with visual impairment and those who are deaf. These pupils are experiencing the same curriculum and suite of qualifications as their peers. Staff successfully manage pupils who have highly complex behavioural needs. Suspensions have significantly reduced.

School is a calm and orderly place. Pupils respect staff. They show this in their responsiveness to instructions. Pupils have a good understanding of tolerance and diversity. Their understanding of religion and faith is less secure. This is due to a legacy of the school providing insufficient time for the effective teaching of religious education (RE). Leaders are rectifying this. They have given more time to the teaching of RE and are strengthening the curriculum.

The new curriculums for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and careers are working much better than previously. These areas are now taught by a specialist team which receives training on the latest government guidance. Less developed is pupils' ability to make connections across their learning for their personal development. For example, understanding the relevance of subjects and the essential skills they need for future careers.

The enrichment offer for the main school is wide-ranging and diverse. Pupils take part in many of the clubs on offer. They are proud of representing their school, for instance being part of the signing choir at Chelmsford Cathedral. The sixth-form enrichment offer is not as well planned. Currently, students who are part of the sports academy have more access to voluntary work and leadership opportunities. This is not the case for those students who follow the A-level pathway. Leaders have plans to address this.

Diligent trustees make sure that the school is led and managed effectively. Staff are proud to work at the school and feel valued. They see the differences that leaders are making. As one member summed up the views of many, 'It is a school that genuinely wants the best for the students.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The links between and parity of the programmes for pupils' personal development require further work. Some pupils do not understand clearly how their learning in PSHE, RSE and careers helps with their preparation for adulthood. Some students in the sixth form are not benefiting from the wider range of opportunities that are available. The trust and school leaders should continue in their efforts to promote the relevance of subjects and essential skills to future careers and opportunities.

They should ensure that all pupils and sixth-form students have access to a wide, rich set of experiences, regardless of the course pathway they are on.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	146794
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10268271
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,733
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	214
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Hammond
Headteacher	Stephanie Neill
Website	www.pmsc.school
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Philip Morant School and College was re-brokered in January 2019. This was when the Sigma Trust took over the running of the school. When its predecessor school, Philip Morant School and College, was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2018, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The trust has delegated some responsibilities for oversight of the school to a local governing committee.
- The current headteacher became the substantive headteacher in September 2023. She was previously appointed head of school by The Sigma Trust.
- The school manages specially resourced provision for pupils with visual impairment and for pupils who are deaf. This caters for 16 pupils of secondary age. Places are commissioned by Essex local authority.

- The school uses 14 providers of alternative provision, of which nine are unregistered and five are registered.
- Three quarters of students in the sixth form are part of the sports academy. A quarter follow the A-level pathway route.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chair of The Sigma Trust, trustees, the chair of the local governing committee and its representatives.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the trust, the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke via telephone with a sample of parents and pupils who are educated off site.
- An inspector visited a sample of alternative provision and held discussions with staff at these providers.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art, physical education, modern foreign languages and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects, including RE.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. They considered pupils' views about behaviour in school. They also spoke with staff about pupils' behaviour, their workload and well-being.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. They considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

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