

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Paul's Catholic College

Manor Lane, Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey TW16 6JE

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 January 2024

Outcome

St Paul's Catholic College continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is James McNulty. This school is part Ascension Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Richard Burke, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Michael Metcalf.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils talk of 'love' and 'service' as being central to the school's ethos and culture. The school's compassionate ethos helps pupils develop a strong sense of belonging. They say that everyone is enabled to perform at their very best. Both staff and pupils are very proud to be part of the school.

Pupils recognise and understand the school's very high expectations for learning and conduct. Lessons are expertly planned. This ensures they are calm and productive. Pupils frequently test their knowledge by working together. They often practise explaining their ideas to their classmates, helping to secure the learning of important information and skills. As a result, pupils achieve highly.

Behaviour in all areas of the school is orderly and respectful. Pupils are welcoming of others and remark that 'it is easy to make friends here'. They value equality and positive relationships. These are supported by consistent and well-judged teaching which helps pupils to understand these important matters in society.

If pupils have concerns, they know exactly which adult they should speak to. Pupils are frequently reminded where to get the help they need. This rigorous and thoughtful support helps pupils to flourish and readies them for the next stage of their learning.

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

The school's curriculum is extremely ambitious. Subject teams are expert at systematically building pupil's knowledge and confidence. As a result, all pupils successfully explore big

ideas and complex concepts. This in turn leads to high achievement. The school offers a balanced range of both academic and vocational post-16 subjects. This reflects their commitment to 'doing the best for as many pupils as possible, for as long as possible'. Careers provision in the sixth form is purposeful and individualised. This helps many sixth-form students go on to study at top universities and other highly competitive employment programmes.

Teacher's subject knowledge is a strength of the school. Highly effective training for new teachers helps them to develop their expertise quickly. Staff are proud of their work. They strive to improve their already excellent teaching skills. As a result, lessons are of high quality and pupils are supported in developing their knowledge and understanding. In lessons teachers use an exemplary range of materials to help pupils learn well. Any potential barriers to learning are identified accurately. This means that adaptation for individual pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is precise. Consequently, pupils get the right support at the right time to excel.

Information about what pupils do and do not know is used very effectively. Any gaps in pupil's knowledge are quickly addressed. Pupils regularly practise applying their knowledge. This means that they are well prepared for their final exams. Pupils relish the challenge of performing at their very best and making their answers 'as compelling as possible'. All staff are deeply aware of the importance of ensuring that disadvantaged pupils thrive. Because of this, these pupils feel well cared for and able to do their best, resulting in very positive academic outcomes.

Pupils who are not yet fluent readers are carefully supported. Regular checking helps well-trained staff ensure less confident readers improve quickly. The school's library is used by pupils of all ages. Many are inspired to read further by the well-judged texts teachers use in lessons.

Pupils' attendance is high and improving. The school recognises that, since the pandemic, they have needed to approach attendance differently. They have rightly committed extra resources to provide additional help where it is needed. Additional staffing ensures that families who need help are well understood. This leads to assistance that is precise and means pupils return to school as soon as possible.

Pupils' wider development is planned in detail. Leaders are alert to any specific issues that may be affecting their pupils. These are deftly incorporated into the school's 'Life Skills' programme. Pupils benefit from the balance of advice and information they receive. Where needed, some pupils work in smaller groups to explore aspects of relationships education, before learning about them with their classmates. This helps more vulnerable pupils make the most of these important lessons. Extra activities, such as museum and pantomime trips, broaden pupils' experiences. Many take on a rich selection of pupil leadership roles. They are proud of their work as peer mentors, ambassadors and representatives of the school. Pupils eagerly explain how prepared they feel for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Paul's Catholic College, to be outstanding in December 2017.

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 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	149290
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10288108
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	1,336
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	246
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Metcalf
CEO of trust	Richard Burke
Headteacher	James McNulty
Website	www.st-pauls.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school joined the Ascension Catholic Academy Trust in December 2022.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative education providers.
- St Paul's Catholic College is part of the Archdiocese of Westminster. The last Section 48 inspection took place in January 2022.
- The school meets the requirements of provider access legislation which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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 held meetings with the headteacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors met with governors, including the chair of governors. They talked to a local authority representative and representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

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