

# St Philip's School

Independent School

Inspection report

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DfES Registration Number	207/6104
Unique Reference Number	100516
Inspection number	307214
Inspection dates	16-17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

St Philip's School is a popular Roman Catholic preparatory school located in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and opened in 1934. Approximately half of the pupils are of white British heritage and the rest are from a wide range of other nationalities. All come from relatively affluent and privileged backgrounds, but a small proportion come from families who rely on bursaries to attend the school. The school admits boys aged seven to thirteen and there are currently 105 pupils on roll. The school has a few pupils with additional learning needs, mainly specific and moderate learning difficulties. The school has close links with the Oratory Church in Brompton Road as well as with local Roman Catholic primary schools. The school was last inspected in January 2002.

The school's mission statement identifies *'the responsibility of the school to develop each pupil's potential as fully as possible in terms of their spiritual, social and general academic development. The school community should be one which reflects true Christian values and all individuals within it need to develop their ability to live and work together for the good of all and, above all, for the greater glory of God'*. The school also states *'We have the highest aspirations for all our children, all of whom have unique God-given talents; it is the school's collective responsibility to recognize and develop these talents. Every child must feel that he is a valued member of the school community; we are in the confidence-building business!'*

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided at St Philip's School is outstanding. There is an interesting and varied curriculum and outstanding teaching, which engage pupils' interests effectively. As a result, pupils are making very good progress in most subjects. Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school, which has a good Christian ethos and provides a good quality of care. It meets all the regulations apart from those relating to access for the disabled. The school has made a good level of improvement since its last inspection.

### Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. A wide range of activities is provided for pupils, although there is inadequate coverage of aspects of design and technology (DT). An outstanding feature of the educational provision is the wide range of educational

visits and extra-curricular activities provided. These add immensely to pupils' enjoyment of their education. Schemes of work for Common Entrance subjects cover the syllabus well. Work is very well matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Other lessons provide good coverage of art and design, information and communication technology (ICT), music, physical education and sports.

Personal, social and health education is good and is rooted in the Christian ethos of the school. A very good range of sporting activities are available to pupils, and they say that they especially enjoy their sporting fixtures with other schools.

Teaching is outstanding. In the lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was never less than good and frequently had outstanding features. Relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are exceptionally good, warm, caring and respectful. Pupils are confident in speaking to staff and will share their problems and ask for help with their work assured that they will have a positive response. One pupil said, *"Teachers create a bond with you. You understand them and they understand you"*. There are very high expectations and pupils are consistently challenged to work to their full capacity. Lessons are well planned and take into account pupils' prior attainment and underlying abilities. There is outstanding support for pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties. Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge. An outstanding feature of teaching is the very good use of questioning to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject being taught. The school is generally well equipped and resources are used effectively. However, there are insufficient resources for teaching aspects of DT in Years 7 and 8. Teachers have effective systems for managing pupils' behaviour, which encourage them to behave responsibly.

There are good systems for assessing pupils' progress and attainment. They are used effectively to inform teachers' planning and to match work to pupils' needs. A number of standardised tests are also used to assess pupils' performance in reading and spelling. A particularly good feature of the school's assessment system is the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, targets) report produced for each pupil. This is used as an individual education plan to set challenging and realistic targets for improvement. Both parents and pupils contribute to the SWOT report, which adds to its effectiveness as an assessment tool. The school has good systems for measuring its performance against Common Entrance examination criteria; in some subjects, such as science, teachers also use National Curriculum attainment target criteria to measure pupils' performance.

Pupils make very good progress in most subjects. They also make very good progress in the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. However, there is some variation in standards of handwriting and presentation, which are sometimes unsatisfactory. Pupils make good progress in religious studies and citizenship. Progress in DT is satisfactory overall, but older pupils' progress in working with resistant materials is unsatisfactory.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their attendance and behaviour are good. Poor behaviour is not a feature of the school, but any incidents that may arise are dealt with fairly and firmly. Consequently, pupils feel safe and enjoy working in a happy, well-organised and friendly environment. This is backed up by parents' comments to the same effect. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school and all say they really enjoy being there. The daily act of collective worship reinforces the Catholic ethos of the school. Opportunities are taken to celebrate pupils' individual efforts by the handing out of awards. Pupils are consistently encouraged to take responsibility for their own work, and there are incentive schemes such as house points support this. Pupils also have a range of jobs around the school, such as tidying up, which encourages their sense of responsibility. The school's citizenship programme provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about the public institutions and services of England. Some pupils have visited the House of Lords and interviewed peers of the realm. Teachers make good use of the multicultural nature of the school and Church community to develop pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultures. Pupils are very positive about future employment, and feel they are well prepared for the next phase of their education.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

All pupils are well known to staff and their welfare and well-being are good and are given a high priority. This contributes very well to pupils' excellent personal development. All pupils are encouraged to follow active and healthy life styles, parents are encouraged to provide healthy snack lunches and pupils are free to access water in lessons and between classes as they wish. Pupils understand and respect the behaviour code and this contributes to their safety in and around the premises. Arrangements to ensure child protection are sound. Policies are reviewed regularly and accurate records are kept carefully, for example of admissions. Risk assessments and fire safety are suitably managed. First aid provision is particularly good, two staff have full qualifications and all other staff have had basic first aid training. As yet the school does not meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002, as its policy is still in working draft form.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes appropriate checks with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm the suitability of staff to work with children. The school has a good staff appointment system which ensures that all appropriate checks are undertaken before staff are appointed.

## School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory. The building was originally a nineteenth century family home, and has sufficient space for the activities carried out, although some of the classrooms are rather cramped. There is an appropriate communal outdoor area, which has facilities for badminton and other games. It has attractive plants and shrubs, which adds to its appearance. The school is attractively decorated and is well maintained. There are five floors and the staircases are narrow and steep; they are not suitable for anyone with limited mobility. In addition, there is no disabled access to the building and none of the toilets have been adapted for wheelchair users. There are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has excellent communication procedures with full-termly reports and half-termly interim reports sent to all parents to keep them informed of their children's progress. Parents are alerted quickly if the school has any concerns and parents are welcomed into school to meet with the headteacher or class teachers whenever the need arises. Close and supportive links with home to support pupils in their learning and development is a feature of the school. The school has an attractive prospectus and website which convey a very good range of relevant and valuable information. Weekly newsletters and the close links with the parents association provide respectively an additional valuable medium and contact for communication with parents.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has suitable procedures for receiving and handling complaints.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide a toilet that is suitably adapted for those with limited mobility (paragraph 5(k))
- improve disabled access (paragraphs 5(g) and 5(h)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve the range of pupils' experiences and progress in DT by providing pupils in Years 7 and 8 with more opportunities to work with resistant materials
- improve the consistency of standards of handwriting and presentation across the school.

## School details

Name of school	St Philip's School
DfES number	207/6104
Unique reference number	100516
Type of school	Preparatory
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 1934
Age range of pupils	7-13
Gender of pupils	Male
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	105
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	0
Number of pupils who are looked after	0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,230
Address of school	6 Wetherby Place London SW7 4NE
Telephone number	0207373 3944
Fax number	0207244 9766
Email address	info@stphilipschool.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr H Biggs-Davison
Proprietor	St Philip's School Trust
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett AI
Dates of inspection	16-17 May 2007