

St Philips School

Harrow Close, Leatherhead Road, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 2HR

Inspection dates 6–7 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students, staff, parents and carers are positive about the school. It has a very happy harmonious atmosphere, relationships are excellent and students enjoy it greatly. Pastoral support for students, families and staff is highly effective.
- There is a strong emphasis on learning, well-being and preparation for life. The school animals help students' confidence, appreciation of life and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Staff have high expectations for the behaviour and learning of all students. Students rise to this, learn well and develop extremely good behaviour and attitudes.
- All groups of students achieve well, because they participate in a wide range of activities and because the quality of teaching is good.
- Post-16 provision, is good; students achieve well because courses are varied, practical and suitable for their needs.
- Students develop very high levels of positive behaviour and feel extremely safe. They are very considerate, very respectful and caring of others and highly positive about learning.
- Leadership, including governance, has developed since the previous inspection and is now good. Leaders have successfully driven improvements in behaviour, teaching and achievement.
- Leaders at all levels work well together, successfully driving improvement across the school. They are imaginative, creative and innovative, implementing new approaches and making sure that these have a positive impact on the learning and well-being of all.
- Effective partnerships with other professionals, including researchers, psychologists and speech therapists, contribute to school development and positive outcomes for all.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding because explanations and activities are not always sufficiently varied to meet students' needs and maximise the learning of all.
- Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively to support learning throughout lessons.
- The school's effective systems for marking students' work and showing students how to improve are not always implemented.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by 20 teachers. Seventeen of these observations or visits were joint visits with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or either of the two assistant headteachers.
- Discussions were held with students, governors, an officer from the local authority, senior leaders and staff.
- The inspector received the views of parents and carers through 31 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, written comments and informal discussions.
- The inspectors received the views of staff through 32 responses to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire and discussions, together with the views of students through informal discussions in and out of lessons.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' current and recent progress, students' work, the school's development plan, planning and monitoring documents, documents relating to safeguarding, and records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Jo Curd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mary Geddes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All the students have statements of special educational needs. Just less than 70% have moderate learning difficulties, about 25% have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and about 15% have severe and complex learning difficulties. There are slightly more boys than girls.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is higher than the national average. This is additional funding for specific groups of pupils, in this case those who are looked after or who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Nearly 40% of students are from a very wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, this is higher than in most other schools. The proportion of students who have English as an additional language is also slightly higher than in most other schools.
- Although all the students are registered at the school full time, some also attend Malden Oaks School or Kingston College for specialist GCSE or vocational courses.
- Leadership is spread over four parts of the school, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, Post-16 provision and Oak for students with autistic spectrum disorders or other complex needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - activities and explanations in lessons are finely matched to the needs of all pupils
 - teaching assistants are deployed effectively throughout lessons
 - systems for marking and feedback to pupils, showing them how to improve their learning, are implemented effectively throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Given their starting points, all groups of students achieve well. Over the last two years almost all students have progressed in line with, or better than, similar students elsewhere. Students enjoy school, develop very positive attitudes to learning and are interested in a wide range of subjects. Achievement is not outstanding because progress slows in a few lessons where teaching requires improvement.
- There is no significant difference in the progress of any group. Students who are relatively more able benefit from the high expectations of staff and engaging and challenging activities. Those who have more complex and profound difficulties are usually supported well by teachers, teaching assistants and other specialists. Those who have English as an additional language also achieve well because most activities are very visual and practical.
- The school receives additional catch-up funding for all Year 7 students. This is used effectively on additional staff to enable small classes and emotional support, as well staff training to improve their effectiveness. This helps them all achieve well.
- Pupil premium funding is also used for additional staff and training. These students achieve well, often better than students who are not eligible for this funding. At the end of the summer term 2013, the attainment of Year 11 students known to be eligible for pupil premium was very slightly behind others in English and slightly ahead in mathematics.
- During the inspection good or better progress in most lessons was visible, as students grappled with new learning and confidently participated in a range of interesting activities. Occasionally this was slower because students were not sufficiently involved in practical activities. These were slightly too easy or difficult for them or, over time, they were not clear how to improve.
- Students in Year 11 in 2013 made particularly good progress in English and mathematics because expectations of them were high and because they were taught well by specialist teachers who had good subject knowledge and understanding of their needs.
- Students with emotional difficulties, including any known to be eligible for pupil premium funding, achieve particularly well because pastoral systems are so effective. These successfully reduce emotional difficulties or provide students with effective strategies to deal with them. Consequently, discrimination is reduced and these students are more ready and able to learn and achieve well.
- Students achieve increasingly well in a range of accredited qualifications and courses including GCSEs. At the end of Year 11, most students go on to local further education colleges, some stay on at Cedar and a few go on to employment.
- Students in the Post-16 provision achieve well, particularly in developing confidence and life skills. They undertake a range of vocational courses and develop practical skills such as cooking and shopping. Those students attending alternative provision achieve well. At the end of their time at the school, most go on to local further education colleges. A very few go to residential or specialist colleges.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most aspects of teaching, including lesson observations, discussions and analysis of students' work during the inspection, indicate that most teaching over time is good. Some is outstanding and a small proportion requires improvement.
- There is a strong emphasis on basic skills, and English and mathematics lessons are effective. In a GCSE English lesson, students excitedly and highly successfully reviewed their understanding of different types of writing and grammar through a game of noughts and crosses. They then used these skills diligently and accurately to write persuasive letters to school governors. In a mathematics lesson, students actively investigated probability through rolling dice and making graphs. Staff had high expectations and all the students achieved extremely well.

- Teachers incorporate basic skills of reading, writing, communication and mathematics across a range of lessons. For example, one class discussed, researched and read recipes in a food technology lesson. Others used and developed communication and mathematical skills well in a physical education lesson of boccia. Effective questions from the teacher helped students to focus on, discuss and improve their teamwork and strategies. They successfully developed mathematical skills, estimating and measuring how successful their shots had been.
- Teachers carefully observe and listen to students and successfully adapt their expectations and explanations accordingly. They correct and guide students well verbally. The school now has effective systems for marking students' work and recording how the students can improve. However, these systems are not always fully implemented and important feedback is not always recorded. Consequently so staff and students cannot always check back to see, and learn from, key guidance that has been given previously.
- Most activities are varied to meet different students' needs and engage students actively and practically. However, activities are sometimes slightly too easy or difficult for some students. For example, explanations were too lengthy and complex for some students in a sixth form English lesson, which reduced the progress they made overall.
- Strong teamwork with other professionals enhances teaching. For example, a speech therapist who helped a class of students with more complex needs, organised and developed their writing by breaking a story into distinct parts which they could focus on in turn, rather than having to think of it all at once.
- Teaching assistants are experienced and are often deployed well to help learning, especially with students who have a shorter attention span or emotional difficulties. For example, they help students with complex difficulties stay on task. Sometimes, teaching assistants are underused, limiting the part they play in students' learning and development, especially if whole class explanations from teachers are too long.
- Almost all parents and carers are very happy with everything the school offers, including the quality of teaching. One parent, reflecting the views of most said, 'We are so pleased with our daughter's achievements, all down to the wonderful staff at the school.'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students develop very positive attitudes to learning. They continue to try hard even if activities are slightly too easy or too difficult. Very high levels of engagement, confidence and resilience were seen in almost all the lessons observed in the inspection.
- All the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire said that their children were happy at the school. One parent, voicing these opinions said, 'Thank you for making our daughter's time at the school a happy one. There were times when she was unhappy, but you ALL got her through with your determination, hard work, patience and understanding.'
- Students, staff, parents and carers are unanimous about how safe students feel. Students say this is because they know that staff and friends will always listen to and help them, whenever this is needed.
- Students have a very good understanding about different forms of bullying, including physical, verbal and cyber bullying. They know that using derogatory racist and sexist language is wrong and that this is not accepted or tolerated at school.
- Students are proud of the school and their achievements. Attendance is above the national average. In an English lesson, students discussed and wrote persuasive arguments in favour of school uniform, because they wanted others to know that they were from St Philips when they went on school outings.
- The way teachers manage behaviour is excellent. It is highly consistent and effective, minimising disruption to learning and maximising the well-being of all. Most students gain high levels of confidence and independence and those with challenging behaviour learn strategies to overcome these. The few students with volatile behaviour were seen settled and achieving extremely well in class, whilst others who had refused to go to other schools now have 100% attendance. The

school takes inappropriate behaviour seriously and there are very rare occasions of short exclusions for this.

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Social events, such as assemblies, play and lunch times, are highly cohesive and inclusive. Students are very respectful, appreciative and supportive of, and to, each other and to staff and to visitors. Students learn about a range of cultures and beliefs in lessons, assemblies and special events. They learn to recognise and value similarities, differences and diversity.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers at all levels monitor, assess and evaluate frequently, accurately and effectively. They are imaginative, creative and innovative, determinedly striving for improvement. They implement new approaches and fund professional education researchers to ensure that the impact of provision is positive for all. They have high expectations and want the best for, and from, the whole school community.
- The headteacher has had a very positive impact on the school, raising expectations, strengthening and delegating leadership, as well as extending opportunities for all.
- Staff share a strong vision to enable all students to achieve as much as possible. Teamwork is strong and staff at all levels are positive. Staff particularly appreciate how supportive colleagues are.
- Leaders are currently reviewing the deployment of staff, including teaching assistants, as they are fully aware that these staff are not always deployed effectively in all lessons.
- Leaders and managers successfully ensure that students are prepared well for later life and learning, academically, physically, emotionally and socially. There is a strong focus on the basic skills of reading, writing, communication, mathematics and physical education, along with other skills such as travelling independently, shopping and cooking. Each of these is taught well, contributing effectively to the achievement, well-being and health of all.
- Leaders have successfully improved teaching through accurate monitoring, helpful evaluation and effective training. Teachers contribute ideas and implement new approaches. The network for learning, a project on making all learning visible and explicit, is notable here. Teachers report how 'rigorous training, peer observations and professional development courses' have helped all students achieve well.
- Local authority officers work closely with the school and have been effective in helping to drive improvements. They visit regularly and contribute to monitoring, self-evaluation and school development plans. They also provide effective links with other schools and networks, fostering discussion and cooperation with other special schools in the authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is effective. Governors have received training and have a good understanding of the school, its teaching and how well students here achieve in comparison with others elsewhere. All statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding, are met. They support and challenge the school effectively and are vigilant in working with other leaders to tackle any underperformance. They manage finances well and know how effectively pupil premium and Year 7 catch up funding is spent. Systems to ensure that staff salary increases are related to national standards and outcomes for pupils are effective and used well.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102622
Local authority	Kingston upon Thames
Inspection number	425484

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	139
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Way
Headteacher	Jude Bowen
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 October 2011
Telephone number	0208 3972672
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