

# St Philip's Catholic Primary School

URN: 114569

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

22–23 May 2025

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

2

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

#### Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

## Compliance statement

- St Philip's is compliant with the general norms of the Bishops' Conference in relation to 10% curriculum time.
- St Philip's implements the diocesan bishop's requirements in relation to phased implementation of the *Religious Education Directory* and the Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum stipulation.
- St Philip's has fully responded to the areas of improvement from the previous inspection.

## What the school does well

- At St Philip's the family and sense of community in the school is tangible.
- The mission statement and the values are central to the school and therefore shape the life and worship of St Philip's.
- The vision, drive, passion and impact of the acting headteacher, including her accurate self-evaluation.
- The pastoral care of pupils, staff, families and each other- this is a universal feeling articulated by stakeholders and highly valued by all.
- The behaviour of pupils including their behaviour for learning in all lessons and throughout the school, results in the pupils' receptiveness to learning.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all religious education lessons have a clear focus, with reduced success criteria, so that formative and self-assessment both feeds into summative assessment and informs provision for individual needs.
- Plan opportunities for class teachers and religious education leaders to meet regularly, both within school and with deanery colleagues, to moderate work and through this, share ideas and identify areas of strength and development.
- Employ a range of resources and training experiences so that, with formation, staff are fully equipped to lead and coach pupils in providing a variety of stimulating and high-quality prayer and liturgy experiences which will further contribute to their spiritual and moral development.

## Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

### Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

#### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

2

At St Philip's, the light of Christ is clearly evident. It is a community where all are encouraged to let their 'light shine' and to grow and develop. The school leader has worked tirelessly to ensure and foster a real growth in the sense of community, including home, school, parish and local neighbours; this is palpable and spoken about highly by all stakeholders. The profile of the school's Catholic life has been raised through the school newsletter and the effective use of social media and this should now be celebrated more widely on the school's website. The school community is driven by its mission statement: children described this as, 'showing us how to live our lives ... Jesus is kind and caring so I can be kind and caring to others.' Pupils enjoy participating in charity work; they talk with passion about how each class is invited during enterprise week to choose a charity to support. Pupils are proud to be part of their school family and participate fully in the opportunities given to them to celebrate their faith. Pupils are respectful of themselves and others and demonstrate good manners. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is very good.

St Philip's is a welcoming, inclusive, calm and purposeful Catholic environment. Staff, pupils, and governors speak about the school 'family' where everyone cares for each other. Consequently, the school is a joyful and supportive place to work and learn. The pastoral care provided to staff, pupils, and families is a strength and this is valued by all. School leaders know families well and they seek to provide for the diverse needs of their community. One parent commented particularly on how his child with special educational needs is supported and how effective the communication has been during his time at school. The established 'special friends' scheme between Year 6 and Early Years Foundation Stage is a highlight for many pupils and families. Staff enjoy coming to work because they are well looked after and always have someone to go to for support. Subsequently, staff are strong role models for pupils and are committed to implementing the school's mission statement. Pupils note that, 'The adults live out the mission statement too.' The school follows a diocesan-approved relationships, sex, and health education

scheme promoting Church teaching. This is evidenced in an excellent response-based class book which should now be considered for the rest of the school.

Leaders and governors are committed to the Church's mission, and school policies clearly reflect the school's Catholic identity and mission. Governors spoke about how they are proud of the openness of all pupils, knowing they are happy to come to school and feel safe, and about the positivity and participation of the staff team, knowing this example permeates from the top. There are opportunities for staff training, including those provided by the diocese and in-house provision. There are good links with the new parish priest and plans are in place to further strengthen the relationship with the parishes. Pupils and staff have a good understanding of the different aspects of Catholic social teaching and staff make connections during both worship and learning. Leaders make provision for pupils to become active participants putting their faith into action, such as almsgiving and fasting for the Lenten frugal lunches. Governors play a clear role in evaluating the school's Catholic life and provide well-informed challenges and support. Self-evaluation is accurate because it is based on openness and reliable evidence. This has become part of the school's culture, succinctly expressed by staff as, 'trust builds a Catholic community.'

# Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

## Religious education key judgement grade

### Pupil outcomes

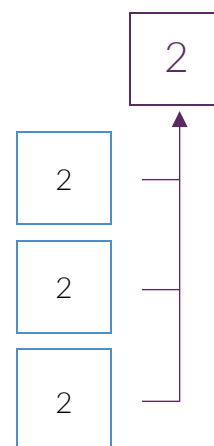
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils throughout the school are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education. Lessons are well-planned and each lesson refers back to previous learning ensuring pupils readily build on prior learning. Pupils of all ages visibly engage in and enjoy religious education. A pupil said, 'We never give up when things get hard so if we are struggling in our work, we keep going.' Pupil books are recognised as special, gold coloured on the front with an image of their class saint and inside a copy of the mission statement. Pupils take pride in their work and their books are well-presented, showing coverage and fidelity to the *Religious Education Directory* and the *Come and See* scheme. Books reflect that pupils enjoy a range of activities, both creative and written. This variety leads to high levels of engagement and application in lessons. Pupils use religious vocabulary appropriate to their age and when talking about their work, pupils can speak about what they have learned using subject-specific vocabulary. They enjoy celebrating their past and present learning. They respond readily to questions posed in class and as they become older can self-assess their learning according to the criteria given, achieving in line with age-related expectations.

Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the value of religious education. This is evident in lessons and through the respect pupils show towards the subject. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. A teacher, talking about reconciliation explained 'God forgives constantly, hold that in our hearts.' Questioning is utilised effectively to strengthen learning. Teachers are skilled at making links with previous learning, Catholic social teaching and collective worship. There is a supportive culture of staff training; governors note that, 'Staff are confident in teaching the content of the *Directory* due to training.' The religious education leader provides support and guidance to new teachers and all staff members. Teaching staff have welcomed opportunities for peer observations. One teacher summed up the approach, 'All teachers need to be reflective learners.' Teachers provide a variety of creative and in some cases, innovative, tasks to engage learners, making learning memorable. They use music, songs and art to enhance lessons and consolidate the key elements of learning. Pupils are well supported by adults in lessons, and

adaptations to activities ensure pupils with special educational needs and disabilities achieve well in lessons. All staff frequently check pupils' understanding during tasks, roaming and supporting. There are pupils who are ready to further deepen their learning and they should now be challenged further.

Leaders ensure the diocesan curriculum is fully delivered and, following the phased introduction of the *Directory*, are faithful to its content and directives. They ensure that religious education is a priority and that it is given full parity with other core subjects, resulting in provisions that meet the requirements of the bishop. This is evident in the fact the objectives for religious education are included in the school improvement plan. All leaders are committed to professional development both internally and at diocesan level and have clear systems to disseminate their learning to their colleagues. There is a 'Governor day' when classes are visited and this is followed by a subject leader meeting. Through reflection, governors have identified that a more detailed manner of reporting back to their colleagues would be of benefit. The subject leader demonstrates a real commitment to ongoing staff development across the school and staff comment that he is always available when they need support and value his input. The findings of leaders' monitoring are shared with governors, enabling them to be clear on the strengths and areas of development in religious education. However, greater detail in leaders' analysis of their findings from monitoring is needed to ensure more rigorous analysis and self-challenge.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Prayer is central to life at St Philip's. Pupils explained that each prayer time begins with lighting a candle, symbolising Jesus' presence. A daily routine of prayer is well established supported by carefully chosen scripture and a weekly liturgy that is both meaningful and age-appropriate. A variety of Catholic traditions are drawn upon, enriching pupils' spiritual experiences. Pupils engage in multiple forms of prayer, including singing, music, silent reflection and meditation. Across all age groups, pupils show reverence and attentiveness during prayer actively participating with joy and respect. Prayer is aligned with the Church's liturgical calendar, helping pupils grow in their understanding of the liturgical year. Pastoral care sessions are held annually to explore the meaning behind the school's mission statement. Pupils are actively involved in planning and leading liturgies and do so with confidence and enthusiasm. They ask thoughtful questions like, 'How can we be like the apostles?' prompting reflective responses such as, 'Be faithful and follow Jesus' ways.' Pupils have been taught to reflect using the 'windows, mirrors, and doors' approach to evaluate liturgical experiences. This method is effective, although some pupils would benefit from sentence stems to help deepen their reflections.

St Philip's has worked diligently to facilitate and establish a range of different prayer and worship settings; these include individual, class, key stage, a bespoke pastoral care group system and whole school. Catholic social teaching is echoed through prayer and liturgy and pupils have a good understanding of the call of Christians to care for the world and to support those in need both through prayer and action. Adults are excellent models for faith and practice at all levels. Pupils follow the example set by these leaders, responding reverently and thoughtfully. Opportunities for spontaneous prayer are provided and a young pupil offered, 'Help us to be more like Jesus ... God is always with us.' Christian meditation sessions are held daily after lunchtime. During this time the teacher encouraged pupils to take any worries and concerns from lunchtime and the morning and place them with God. Throughout the school there are several well-used and attractive spaces to pray and reflect. Parents are enthusiastic about attending school Masses and events, as encouraged by the school. The new parish priest is very

committed to interaction between parish and school expressing, 'Both as a priest and person – I want to bring the parish into the school.'

Leaders and governors have ensured a prayer and liturgy policy is in place which identifies a path that develops pupils' familiarity with the traditional prayers of the Church. There is a clear schedule ensuring that key times of the Church's year are recognised and celebrated, offering members of the community notable experiences. During their feast day liturgy for St Philip Neri, the school community was reminded of the school motto 'to work is to pray', that praying with a saint is like 'praying with a friend' and that St Philip is the patron saint of 'joy and laughter.' Following this celebration the festivities continued; pupils were engaged in a range of creative activities for example, the writing of a joke book. Leaders have prioritised the resourcing of prayer and liturgy and this is evidenced in the school's distinctive high-quality and attractive Catholic environment. Governors are actively involved in the prayer life of the school by regularly attending liturgies. Staff have 'prayer partners' during Lent and have received training to support liturgy planning, valuing all the support this gives. The prayer life of the school community is regularly reviewed; consequently areas for development are correctly identified. Governors express that 'we continue to grow – being open to new things.'



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Philip's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	114569
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8453343
Full postal address of the school	St Philip's Catholic Primary School, High Street, New Town, Uckfield, TN22 5DJ
School phone number	01825 762032
Headteacher	Sarah McCurdy – Acting Headteacher
Chair of governors	Julia Webb
School Website	<a href="http://www.stphilips.e-sussex.sch.uk">http://www.stphilips.e-sussex.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	2 <sup>nd</sup> October 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

## The inspection team

Fiona McGonigle  
Ursula Hargrave

Lead  
Team

## Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement