

Inspection of St Polycarp's Catholic Primary School

Waverley Lane, Farnham, Surrey GU9 8BQ

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 March 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Paula Best. This school is part of Xavier Catholic Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), James Kibble, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter O'Brien.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Polycarp's Catholic Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Polycarp's Catholic Primary School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a welcoming and nurturing environment where pupils can thrive, both academically and personally. Pupils value the kindness and support of staff who care for them very well. Pupils are keen learners. They work hard and achieve high standards. Pupils know what is expected of them and their behaviour is exemplary. Routines and high expectations are embedded from Reception onwards. In lessons, pupils move seamlessly between different activities and no time is wasted.

Pupils show care and respect for each other. Those who act as well-being ambassadors, for example, set up 'kindness boxes' to encourage pupils to do good deeds. Helping others is an important part of school life. Pupils on the 'one world council' oversee the school's charity work. They show initiative in their organisation of various fundraising events which pupils participate in enthusiastically.

All pupils have the chance to benefit from a rich programme of extra-curricular activities. Budding musicians, including the school choir, perform at various events and all pupils take part in the annual Lent concert. Sport has a high profile as well and pupils know that being physically active supports their well-being. They compete regularly in sports festivals, activity days and tournaments.

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

This is a truly inclusive school. The school ensures that all pupils access the same ambitious curriculum and that no-one is left behind in their learning. Leaders at all levels leave nothing to chance in ensuring that pupils receive a high-quality education. Rigorous systems identify accurately pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and make sure that these pupils learn successfully. The school is very well-led and managed. Staff feel valued for their work and appreciate the supportive school culture.

The school delivers the full breadth of subjects as set out in the national curriculum. Pupils benefit from specialist teachers in subjects such as music, physical education (PE) and Spanish. In some subjects, the curriculum goes beyond the national curriculum. In design and technology (DT), for example, pupils learn business skills as well as detailed subject-specific knowledge. The richness of the curriculum as a whole prepares pupils exceptionally well for their next steps in education.

The curriculum starts in Reception where skilled staff make sure that children receive a great start to their education. Learning activities are purposeful and help children secure the foundational knowledge they need for future learning. For example, staff reinforce specific vocabulary and take every opportunity to develop children's language skills. Early reading is a priority. From Reception to Year 2, staff teach the well-structured phonics consistently well. Weaker readers receive effective, targeted support and catch up quickly as a result. Pupils develop a love of reading. For example, they enjoy weekly library lessons, daily story time and working with the school's resident author.

The school and the trust provide various opportunities for staff to develop their teaching skills and subject knowledge. The impact of this training is evident in the consistently well-delivered curriculum. Staff use their subject expertise to explain concepts clearly and adapt teaching skilfully for pupils with SEND. They are quick to intervene when pupils misunderstand or make mistakes. Teachers plan sequences of learning carefully. They revisit prior learning, to help pupils remember essential knowledge. As a result, pupils achieve highly and their work across the curriculum is of an excellent standard.

The simple school rules of 'ready, respectful, safe' are applied and followed consistently. Classrooms are calm and pupils behave in a sensible way as a result. The school supports pupils' emotional well-being and has effective strategies to help pupils who struggle in managing their own behaviour. Attendance rates are high and the school works with parents to overcome any barriers to regular attendance.

Pupils' broader development underpins the curriculum. The school encourages pupils to develop character traits in line with the school's STARR values which include self-belief and tolerance. Pupils embrace the many opportunities to develop their leadership and teamwork skills. The school offers well-considered enrichment activities to enhance pupils' learning and give them memorable experiences. These include educational trips and activities beyond the classroom. For example, pupils showcase their work at the school science fair and exhibit their artwork through their projects with local artists. Pupils learn that other people have very different lives to theirs, preparing them for life beyond their school and community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	147429
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10341875
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	420
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter O'Brien
CEO of the trust	James Kibble
Headteacher	Paula Best
Website	www.stpolycarps.surrey.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school converted to academy status in September 2019 and is part of the Xavier Catholic Education Trust.
- The headteacher took up post in 2019.
- The school has a Catholic ethos and is within the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in July 2019.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 discussions with the headteacher and other members of the school leadership team. The lead inspector met with the vice-chair of the trust board, representatives of the local governing committee, including the chair, and spoke with the CEO and deputy CEO of the trust. A discussion was held with a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, PE, history and design and technology. 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 discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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 spoke to groups of pupils and staff and evaluated responses to the online staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and considered responses to the survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Jude Wilson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

James Everett

Ofsted Inspector

Kirstine Boon

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025