

Inspection of a good school: The Palmer Catholic Academy

Aldborough Road South, Seven Kings, Ilford, Essex IG3 8EU

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 January 2022

Outcome

The Palmer Catholic Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders place great importance on developing the whole child. They welcome pupils of all faiths and none. They provide pupils with kindness and support. Pupils respond well to this. They are safe and enjoy their learning.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well, and they show respect towards each other and towards adults. Bullying is quite rare. When it does occur, leaders take action to stop it. Pupils know that bullying is not tolerated. Learning mentors work with those pupils who need support with their behaviour. This helps them to improve their behaviour towards others.

Teachers teach pupils well. They go back over what pupils already know before moving on to new work. This means that pupils remember what they have learned. They learn new knowledge with confidence. Teachers check what pupils know regularly. They make sure that pupils know how to improve their work. This helps pupils to produce work of high quality.

Leaders prepare pupils well for their future. Pupils are part of a diverse school community. They learn about their differences, as well as what they have in common. Leaders prioritise pupils' spiritual development. Pupils go on annual retreats. Weekly mass and daily prayer are features of school life.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. This includes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum is broad and balanced. For example, in Years 7 to 9, pupils study creative arts, French and Spanish. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils study religious studies GCSE. The proportion of pupils who are entered for the English Baccalaureate is increasing. In the sixth form, leaders offer a wide range of A-level subjects.

Leaders have constructed the curriculum well. The curriculum is coherent and well sequenced. Further development of curriculum thinking in a few subjects would strengthen this further.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They identify gaps in pupils' learning and adapt the curriculum to ensure that pupils secure essential knowledge. Pupils learn more knowledge and skills over time. Teachers help pupils to improve their work. For example, when learning about 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde', Year 11 pupils receive precise feedback. They are then able to apply this immediately to their next written assignment.

Teachers make connections between new learning and what pupils already know. This helps pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding at a higher level. In A-level biology, for example, teachers revisit the function of kidneys taught at GCSE. Students are then able to move on to their new learning on osmoregulation. Students respond well to teachers' questioning and to activities set for them.

Leaders ensure that they identify and understand pupils' SEND. They visit primary schools to meet pupils with SEND, and their parents and carers. They provide teachers with strategies to use when teaching these pupils. This means that pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as other pupils. Leaders provide extra reading support for pupils at an early stage of reading. They check these pupils' progress in reading to ensure that they catch up with their peers.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils meet these expectations most of the time. Behaviour in lessons is particularly good. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare. Pupils are well motivated and focused on their learning. Some girls in Years 9 to 11 said that boys sometimes use derogatory language towards them. They also said that there were occasional friendship issues within groups of girls. Leaders take such behaviour seriously. Pupils learn about bullying and harassment as part of the curriculum. Leaders use assemblies and organisations such as theatre groups to address these issues. However, in spite of this, leaders' work to prevent such behaviour is not fully effective.

Leaders have designed a well-considered programme for pupils' personal and social development. Leaders promote diversity, for example through celebrating different faiths and through Black History Month. Pupils form new friendships and discover new interests and talents on annual retreats. Pupils learn about relationships and how to keep safe. Leaders prepare pupils well for higher education, training and employment.

Staff view their workload as manageable. They say that leaders are mindful of their well-being. Staff feel valued and well supported by leaders and their colleagues. Leaders, including governors, prioritise staff welfare. They see this as an essential part of the school's ethos.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture of safeguarding across the school community. Staff know about the safeguarding risks to pupils. They receive regular training and updates. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including online. Leaders engage with parents to raise their awareness of safeguarding issues. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and safeguarding team are knowledgeable and well skilled. They prioritise the identification of risk. Staff are alert to potential signs of concern. They are clear about reporting procedures. The DSL and safeguarding team work effectively with other agencies. This secures the help that pupils need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, curriculum sequencing is not very coherent. This means that pupils' learning does not always build progressively towards planned end-points. Leaders should ensure that further curriculum development takes place to enable pupils to build knowledge and skills in a logical, systematic way across all subjects.
- A few pupils display attitudes towards others that lead to some pupils feeling isolated and upset. Leaders must ensure that their approach to preventing such attitudes has greater impact.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2017.

How can I feedback 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137088
Local authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	10211492
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1,178
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	242
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Anthony
Headteacher	Paul Downey
Website	www.tpc.academy
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school is of the Roman Catholic denomination. It is in the Diocese of Brentwood. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in May 2018. Section 48 inspections were suspended during the pandemic and restarted in September 2021. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight years of its previous section 48 inspection.
- The school is a member of The Good Shepherd Catholic Trust.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, other school leaders, members of the governing body, members of the board of trustees and the diocesan link adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke with the curriculum leader for science, looked at curriculum plans and visited lessons in this subject area.
- Inspectors met with the school's DSL and two deputy DSLs. They looked at safeguarding documentation and record-keeping, including the single central record. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 316 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, 58 responses to the staff survey and 22 responses to the online survey for parents, Parent View.

Inspection team

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