

St Philip Howard Catholic Voluntary Academy

Address: Sunlaws Street, SK13 8DR

Unique reference number (URN): 142042

Inspection report: 6 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Attendance is a priority and leaders' actions have real impact. Pupils know that being in school every day matters. Staff work tirelessly to remove barriers to pupils' attendance. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities consistently have high attendance and persistent absence for this group is below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils face greater challenges to their attendance, but strategies, including home visits, mentoring and family engagement, make a difference. Adjustments to the timings of the school day, ensures that pupils have time to eat a healthy breakfast and, as a result, helps improve their punctuality and engagement with school.

Leaders have created a culture that is calm, respectful and highly supportive of learning. Classrooms are purposeful. Pupils show maturity and self-discipline. They understand the school's expectations and respond positively to routines. Staff apply behaviour policies consistently. Pupils say this fairness helps them to feel respected and valued. Bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly. Pupils describe the school as welcoming and inclusive. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and trusting. Behaviour data is monitored closely, for example while the use of suspensions has risen, leaders use effective approaches to help pupils meet expectations and avoid any repeat issues. The use of permanent exclusion has fallen significantly. Pupils are kept safe and are proud to belong to a community, where everyone works together to succeed.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils benefit from a carefully planned personal development programme that helps them to build the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for the future. The programme is broad and organised so that content builds logically over time. Pupils learn in detail about how to look after their physical and mental health, form positive relationships and stay safe in different situations, including when online. They understand the importance of the values that underpin life in today's modern Britain. They talk confidently about these values and show that they understand how to make careful and informed choices.

The school provides varied opportunities that greatly enrich pupils' experiences and widen their understanding of the world. These opportunities encourage pupils to discover new interests, work with others and strengthens their confidence. Leaders think carefully about how every pupil can take part. They remove potential barriers, for example, by adapting activities when necessary and by offering appropriate financial support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included in wider school life.

Pupils take on meaningful roles that contribute to the life of the school. They help shape the community through offering responsibilities that encourage them to act with maturity and to support others. These experiences help pupils to develop personal qualities, such as resilience and empathy. Older pupils use these qualities to guide and encourage their younger peers. Careers education is well structured and includes opportunities for pupils to meet employers and consider different pathways. Pupils prepare very well for their next steps.

Leaders place a clear emphasis on pupils' wellbeing. Pupils know where to get help if they have worries and say that adults take their concerns seriously. They feel valued as individuals and are proud of the positive relationships that exist across the school. Pupils describe an environment where kindness, respect and inclusion are part of everyday life, which helps them to grow into thoughtful and well-rounded young people.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils generally achieve close to national averages, making secure progress from their starting points. Leaders recognise that pupils' attainment in English and mathematics has not been in line with their high expectations. They have acted to strengthen curriculum ambition, particularly in mathematics. Across subjects, most pupils build up their knowledge and develop the skills they need for future learning. Their work shows increasing depth and accuracy. Pupils are motivated to succeed and take pride in their achievements.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally achieve well from their starting points and access the same curriculum as their peers. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from targeted support, including mentoring and additional tuition. However gaps remain between their attainment in GCSE examinations and that of their peers. Leaders' actions are beginning to secure improvement and pupils leave school typically well prepared for their next steps in education, training, or employment.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have constructed a broad and balanced curriculum that reflects the school's ethos of ambition and inclusion. The curriculum is generally well sequenced, it enables pupils to build knowledge and skills over time. Subject leaders think about subject content carefully, particularly in English, where pupils revisit key texts and develop analytical writing skills. In mathematics, leaders are working to ensure that the same high-quality curriculum is in place across all phases. Leaders monitor teaching quality through regular reviews and use evidence from these reviews and wider research to inform improvement. Revised schemes of learning and specific training programmes for staff have helped teachers to use strategies that helps to deepen pupils' understanding.

Teachers demonstrate effective subject knowledge and use strategies, such as retrieval practice and modelling, to help pupils recall prior learning and apply new concepts. Pupils are encouraged to discuss ideas and improve their work. While teaching is typically effective, leaders recognise that the implementation of how well teachers adapt their teaching and expectations for pupils' handwriting are not consistent across subject areas.

Reading is prioritised across the curriculum. Pupils who join the school with low reading ages benefit from targeted support and use of the refurbished library, accessing a range of books that extends their understanding of the wider world.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have established an inclusive culture, where staff identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately. They follow a cycle of assessing pupils' needs, planning suitable support, taking action and reviewing its impact, so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive timely and appropriate help. Ongoing assessment and well-planned transition arrangements mean that pupils' needs are understood from the outset. Well-trained support staff are deployed effectively so that pupils with SEND learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Staff use the training they receive well. This helps them to notice when pupils may require additional support and make purposeful adjustments to teaching so that all pupils can access the curriculum in most subjects without lowering expectations. Despite this, leaders know that teachers' use of adaptive teaching is not consistent across all subjects.

Leaders reduce barriers to pupils' learning and wellbeing through targeted support, including programmes that strengthen pupils' knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. They track pupils' progress carefully, though some evaluations of the support for pupils are not robust enough to accelerate improvement. Pupil premium funding is used to address gaps in knowledge and confidence, including through one-to-one tuition and wider opportunities that build pupils' knowledge, experiences and interests, broadening their understanding of the world. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies, including the virtual school, to shape provision for children who are in care or were previously in care.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have taken purposeful steps to improve provision. Leaders have developed a staff training package that is coherent, informed by a range of research and support from external expertise. The impact of staff training can be seen through improvements to the curriculum and in how well the school supports pupils' personal development. Leaders generally manage staff workload and wellbeing effectively, which staff appreciate.

Governance is effective, including in meeting statutory duties. Collectively trustees, governors and the executive team provide robust challenge and support to the school. They monitor progress against improvement plans and hold leaders to account for pupils' outcomes and resource allocation. Decisions are made in pupils' best interests, including in relation to the provision for pupils who require particular support, for example, with the addition of the new 'wellbeing hub'. Leaders and governors engage positively with parents, carers and the wider community.

Leaders recognise that developing middle leadership and securing stability within the senior leadership team remains a priority. Leaders are committed to building further capacity and sustaining progress. That said, there is a need for greater consistency in their approach to evaluating some aspects of their work, for example, in relation to the impact of pupils' different packages of support. Staff understand their role in school improvement and contribute positively, reflecting a shared ambition for pupils to thrive.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are part of a vibrant school community built on the ethos of togetherness and care. They are kept safe by staff who know them well. Pupils trust that adults will listen and help them, which gives them confidence that any concerns will be dealt with quickly. They describe the school as a 'family' and 'welcoming', where everyone works together. They say that these are major reasons why they enjoy coming to school.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the site. They understand the school's high expectations and respond positively to routines. Pupils treat each other well and bullying is rare. Relationships between pupils and staff are highly respectful. Pupils show pride in their work and are motivated to succeed.

Pupils enjoy learning. Teachers explain new ideas clearly and check their understanding so that pupils can build knowledge over time. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported to learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Pupils value the help they receive from teaching assistants and the encouragement to become independent learners.

Beyond lessons, pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities that help them thrive. They take part in sports teams, drama productions and a range of clubs that build teamwork and communication skills. Trips, such as the Barcelona visit in Year 10 and the Kenya expedition, broaden pupils' horizons and teach them resilience and empathy. Leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND can join in.

Pupils are encouraged to become leaders and contribute to school life. The student leadership team is highly respected and purposeful. Pupils act as wellbeing ambassadors, sports captains and mentors for younger pupils. These roles develop their confidence and responsibility, preparing pupils to play an active part in society.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to ensure that high-quality teaching is embedded across the school, including how well teachers adapt their teaching when needed, so that pupils achieve consistently highly across the curriculum.
 - Leaders should continue their work to strengthen leadership expertise and improve their evaluation of the school's work, so that they can sustain improvement across all areas of provision.
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About this inspection

This school is part of St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kevin Gritton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Noon.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with members of the trust, the governing board and a range of pupils and school staff during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Nottingham. Its last section 48 inspection was in March 2025.

The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Michael Kays

Lead inspector:

Nyree Parker, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Richard Vasey, Ofsted Inspector

Christine Horrocks, Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Long, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 6 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

572

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

485

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

29.37%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

5.77%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

11.71%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	24.3%	45.2%	Below
2023/24	39.6%	45.9%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23	36.1%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	40.3	45.9	Below
2023/24	43.8	45.9	Close to average
2022/23	45.9	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	0.22	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23	0.12	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	0.0%	25.6%	Below
2023/24	18.8%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23	28.6%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	32.1	34.9	Close to average
2023/24	29.4	34.6	Below
2022/23	36.8	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	-0.33	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23	-0.63	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	0.0%	52.8%	-52.8 pp
2023/24	18.8%	53.1%	-34.4 pp
2022/23	28.6%	52.4%	-23.9 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	32.1	50.3	-18.2
2023/24	29.4	50.0	-20.6
2022/23	36.8	50.3	-13.5

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24	-0.33	0.16	-0.50
2022/23	-0.63	0.17	-0.80

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers	93%	91%	Average
2022 leavers	92%	93%	Average
2021 leavers	87%	94%	Not available

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 terms)	8.6%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24	8.3%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23	7.6%	9.0%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 terms)	23.5%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24	20.8%	25.6%	Below
2022/23	20.3%	26.5%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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