

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118758
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339296
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2010
Reporting inspector	John W Paull

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 – 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Duncan Dewar-Whalley
Executive Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 9 lessons, which were taken by 7 different teachers. To ascertain parents' views, they spoke to around 12 directly and analysed responses to the 143 questionnaires and/or letters that were returned. Inspectors also spoke to groups of pupils, staff and governors, including the chair. Inspectors observed the school's work, looking at a sample of pupils' books, and documentation, related to safeguarding, the tracking and assessment of pupils' progress and plans for future improvements.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether strategies introduced since the last inspection by senior and subject leaders have been effective in raising attainment and speeding up progress
- whether senior leaders', governors' and staff's self-evaluations, especially in aspects of pupils' personal development, are accurate
- the basis and validity of senior leaders' and governors' evaluations of their own work, especially where they believe it is outstanding
- the quality and effectiveness of improvements since the last inspection that have been made in provision for children in the Reception class.

Information about the school

St Peter's Catholic Primary School is of average size. It caters for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in its Reception class. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The majority of pupils have White British heritage, although the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds has risen steadily since the last inspection and is now above average. Nevertheless, very few are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.

The school is part of a federation of Catholic primary schools, led by an executive headteacher. It also has a head of school. The school holds a wide range of awards and accreditations. These include Investor in People and an International School Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St Peter's is an outstanding school, including an excellent Reception class. This represents considerable improvement since the last inspection when the school was good with a satisfactory Foundation Stage. Senior leaders and governors have used their self-evaluations of the school's performance extremely well, establishing exactly what they needed to do to respond effectively to the last report. Plans for the future, set alongside this excellent track record suggest that the capacity to sustain improvement is outstandingly strong.

Every parent who returned a questionnaire, without exception, indicated their overall happiness with their children's experiences, and nearly all believe that their children's progress and the school's leadership are good. A typical comment states, 'It is a wonderful school with an excellent teaching staff. My child is very happy and is learning very well.' Another said, 'The headteachers and the governors have every reason to be very proud of what they have done here.' Inspectors agree with this. The achievement of all different groups and ages through the school is good and pupils' attainment is above average by the time pupils leave in Year 6, and significantly so recently. That said, performance in science is not quite as consistent as in other subjects. This is because pupils do not always sufficiently understand how to draw conclusions from what they observe during a test or experiment. Nevertheless, learning and progress are good, sometimes outstanding. This holds true of all groups, including gifted pupils and those with special educational needs. Art work displayed around the building is frequently of a very high standard.

A remarkable ethos of cooperation and sociability, regard for individuals, enjoyment of learning and high morale is evident. This means that many aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding, including their behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils freely offer their help. Their kindness is unstinting and reflects in the considerable work that they undertake to improve the community. They sing at local residential homes, enter and are currently holders of a gold award in the Sittingbourne in Bloom event and contribute their time and skills to the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development campaigns. Partnerships and links with other agencies are extensive, reaching out to schools in overseas settings.

The remarkable strength of leadership extends to auditing the impact of such provision on learning and attitudes, and the drawing up of plans to ensure continuing improvement. This is typical of how leadership at all levels builds and embeds ambition and improves performance. It produces effective teaching, based on

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constant adaptation of planning to meet carefully assessed individual needs. An excellent curriculum with strong creative enhancements promotes enjoyment and much extra-curricular activity. Safeguarding is taken seriously and all statutory requirements to protect children are met well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils' scientific thinking is broadened and deepened, so high attainment in this subject is as consistent as in others, by:
 - emphasising the connections between what pupils do during a test or experiment and the observed results
 - extending the many good opportunities for pupils to develop creative thinking skills to include thinking about planning scientific observations.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking and creative skills are supported strongly during lessons by good teaching and some that is outstanding. It is based on a highly innovative curriculum. This results in good learning and progress of all groups, which is evident in the way that pupils extend their vocabulary and express their ideas for writing. In Year 5, for example, a game and photographs were used to encourage descriptive language, resulting in great enjoyment and rapid progress. Good achievement is evident in the school's own tracking records. While boys' and girls' work has contributed to this upward trend, girls have in the past outperformed boys by more than is usual. In mathematics lessons, pupils typically extend their numeracy skills very effectively in response to challenging questions and tasks. As a result, learning and progress of all groups are good. In Year 3, pupils demonstrated good skills in operating a computer program. However, while they changed inputs and variables skilfully, it was less clear that they understood the need to do so systematically in order to draw solid conclusions about cause and effect. This links to overall attainment in science that is not as consistently high as in other subjects.

Good achievement is also apparent in younger age groups. Taking starting points into account, pupils learn and progress well, so attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is at least average for nearly all pupils, and above average for many.

Other outcomes are exceptionally good. All pupils who were asked said that they enjoy school and feel safe in it, which is reflected in their responses to questionnaires. One pupil, while others around smiled and enthusiastically nodded their agreement, commented, 'This school's brilliant, everyone is friends here and you learn new things as well.' Year 6 pupils, while working on a gardening project in the grounds, displayed remarkably sensible attitudes, joking with each other amicably while getting on with laying compost or planting. They also explained that when everything had grown and fruited, they would sell it to make a profit for their own enterprise fund. Together with the innovative teaching of banking skills, this contributes much to excellent early development of future life and workplace skills.

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Pupils value their school council and put forward several convincing explanations of its importance, including how its elections are conducted in proper voting booths and based on manifestos.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

During all observed lessons pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities were catered for effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants alike pitched questions and adapted tasks at just the right levels to ensure good progress. Indeed, the full range of pupils' different abilities are known well to the staff, who adjust lesson plans accordingly. This is because they are skilful in making ongoing assessments of pupils' responses during lessons and then formulating subsequent questions and tasks. Methods and procedures for tracking progress are also thorough. Very good leadership has ensured that teaching staff fully understand and use the results to adapt planning to meet needs. No teaching was less than satisfactory and most was good or outstanding. Just occasionally, the pace of learning slowed down when the introduction to lessons went on for too long. Nevertheless, a very strong feature, evident in all teaching, is the strong relationships that teachers build with their pupils, who have enormous trust in them. This results in excellent behaviour, such that little teaching time is ever lost. Teachers' questioning is good, emphasising that pupils should think creatively for themselves and encouraging them when they do. However, in a lesson that included some scientific content, opportunities were missed to help pupils think about what might happen if experimental variables were altered in different ways.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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This good teaching is based on a very rich, broad curriculum that is often underpinned by creative themes that engage pupils' fascination and hold enjoyment and interest for them. Work on Ancient Egypt is an example of this. Older pupils produced lively, accurate factual writing full of interesting details about Howard Carter and his archaeological findings. They illustrated their findings with art work of a particularly high standard.

The outstanding commitment and care that all adults show towards pupils also ensure that learning is entered into as a cooperative venture and pupils want to do well and to please. Partnerships with other schools and agencies, including the federated school, provide an excellently well-used source of further expertise for the support of vulnerable pupils. Whether such vulnerability stems from social or emotional causes or is based on an identified special educational need, there is considerable determination to get to the root and find a remedy. The result is that all pupils feel cared for and thrive.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Ensuring that high standards are maintained is the main aim of all subject and senior leaders. They are a strong, united team who carry out their responsibilities with remarkable determination, skill and effectiveness. The governors are part of this. They keep in close communication with the staff, visiting and analysing the school's performance and using information highly effectively to support, challenge and offer help. As a result, improvement since the last inspection is clear across all areas of provision. This improvement is very apparent in the Early Years Foundation Stage, for example, which is now an outstanding feature of the provision. It has also resulted in improvements to teaching that are ongoing and an upward trend in test results in Years 2 and 6. Improvements in outcomes related to pupils' personal development are also evident. Those that were previously good now match the others that were already outstanding.

All elements of safeguarding are tackled conscientiously and systematically. Particular evidence is how the few minor issues pointed out by inspectors were either rectified on the spot or added to an already comprehensive action plan if not possible immediately. All staff vetting and other statutory requirements are up to date. Anything that might affect learning adversely is tackled to good effect. This is seen in

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efforts to bring the performance of boys up to that of girls in writing. While this has not yet been fully effective, standards have risen well. Efforts are exceptional to build a strong community and to show pupils that their attitudes and actions are an important component in this. Partnerships with schools in different countries are an established feature, with one in France joining others in African nations. These are used to demonstrate commonalities with children across the world, as well as to build respect for differences. Nearer home, pupils take part wholeheartedly in several activities sponsored by local organisations, including civic functions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception with skills that are similar to those usually found at this age. However, language and communication and some mathematical skills are often lower. Nevertheless, all the children enjoy the remarkably rich curriculum planned for them. They settle quickly, owing to the strong emphasis placed on personal, social and emotional development when they first enter and the excellent transition arrangements with local playgroups and other settings. The welcoming and highly stimulating learning environment that children meet and outstanding teaching ensure that progress is rapid. Behaviour is outstanding. The children play safely, share equipment highly responsibly and speak happily about what they do and know, including 'what is good for you'.

The outstanding provision captures children's natural curiosity and provides a remarkably rich range of activities, carefully balanced between those led by staff and those chosen by children. All adults are exceptionally adept in engaging children in conversation, developing vocabulary and sentence construction. They also have highly developed skills in observing and assessing what children do, so next steps in

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learning are planned individually and very appropriately. This is particularly important as the accommodation is not ideal. The outside area is cramped, but the coordinator plans activities and resources them very effectively to engage children's interest and enjoyment across all areas of learning, despite the difficulties. The staff are highly skilled practitioners who all understand children's learning and developmental needs. Systems to monitor and track progress are very thorough and analysed to great effect. The teacher and assistants alike know how to target the needs of individuals outstandingly well across all areas of learning. As a result, learning and outcomes are outstanding and attainment rises to a little above what is usual by the time children move into Year 1.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents' views, as expressed in questionnaires, letters and face to face, are consistently positive and highly supportive of what is provided. A very few felt that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively. However, inspectors judged that behaviour is usually outstanding. The returned questionnaires are remarkable for the number of parents who recorded strong agreement with the positive statements. All staff at the school know that the overwhelming body of parents support them highly and they told inspectors that they are determined to live up to this trust.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Peter's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 143 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 203 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	59	59	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	112	78	31	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	78	55	60	42	4	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	89	62	50	35	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	95	66	46	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	83	58	54	38	2	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	88	62	54	38	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	93	65	46	32	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	75	52	60	42	2	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	71	50	61	43	5	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	64	45	71	50	3	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	101	71	38	27	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	103	72	40	28	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Sittingbourne ME10 1UJ

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when the other inspectors and I visited your school. You helped enormously to make the two days go smoothly. We enjoyed speaking to you and visiting your lessons. It is great that so many of you told us that you enjoy school a lot. We also enjoyed speaking to you, including those of you whom we met in the meeting and in the dining room. One of them said, 'School is wonderful. It's fun and friendly and you learn a lot.' We all agree with this remark. Indeed, it is an outstanding school.

Here are some important things that we found out about your school:

- Your teachers care for you exceptionally well.
- Your learning and progress are good because you are taught well.
- Your behaviour is excellent.
- You know a great deal about how to stay safe and eat healthily.
- Your willingness to do jobs that help your teachers and to cooperate with each other is excellent.
- Your knowledge about children in other countries is helping you to understand that you have much in common with them and to respect the things that are different about them.
- Your work is of good quality, although science is sometimes not quite as good as the other subjects. We have asked the staff and governors to include more opportunities for you to develop your thinking about experiments.
- Your executive headteacher, head of school and other staff have lots of really good ideas to keep your school as excellent as it is now.

The other inspectors and I wish you the very best for your future and hope that you will always enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

John W Paull
Lead inspector

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