

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117448
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	290838
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Helen Ranger

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	231
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Ms P Golding
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	Church Lane Mill End Rickmansworth WD3 8HD
Telephone number	01923 773240
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized school serves a mainly residential area of Rickmansworth. Most pupils live locally and come from families whose social and economic circumstances are mostly favourable. About 15% come from minority ethnic groups and a small number speak English as an additional language. When they start in Nursery, pupils' attainment is above the levels seen in most schools. Fewer pupils than average have learning difficulties or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Peter's is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. It has many important good elements that have already set it well on the way to achieving its determination to become a thoroughly good school. Its inspection in 2005 identified some significant concerns about staffing, management and pupils' achievements. At that time the headteacher was brand new in post and there had been high staff turnover which had a negative impact on pupils' day-to-day progress. Effective teamwork by the staff and governors together with the good use of support from the local authority over the past two years has resulted in improvements in all the areas formerly causing concern. Good leadership and management and much improved stability in staffing and teaching have led to mainly good provision for pupils. The impact of this so far has meant that almost all underachievement by pupils has been stemmed. The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies.

Parents have remained very supportive of the school and their views are very positive, summed up by the one who wrote, 'We have seen a significant improvement in the school'. The school has maintained close links with pupils' families and with the wider community, especially the local church. These partnerships enhance the quality of pupils' learning. Care, guidance and support for pupils is good.

Pupil's progress is satisfactory overall. With the improvements to teaching, pupils are now making increasingly good day-to-day progress in lessons. Those who were underachieving because of the former weaknesses in provision are making up lost ground. Consequently academic achievement is now satisfactory in relation to pupils' capabilities and is continuing to improve. The upheavals of recent years have not affected the youngest pupils. Outstanding practice in the Foundation Stage gives the pupils an excellent start, enabling them to reach much higher than expected standards by the end of Reception. Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have mostly been above average over the past few years. However, until more recently the school had not built systematically enough on children's above average attainment on entry or the extremely good start made in the Foundation Stage. In particular the more capable pupils have not always been challenged enough. While this is now improving well, as the quality of teachers' planning has improved, these efforts need to be sustained for pupils to reach their full potential. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school, behave well and have a good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles. Attendance is similar to the national average but there are too many instances of unnecessary absence by a minority of pupils.

The main reason for pupils' improving achievement is that teaching is now good and leads to efficient learning. However, the quality of individual lessons varies from satisfactory to outstanding. The school is rightly aiming to make all lessons at least good so that standards continue to rise. The arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and setting targets for further improvement have been developed well. They are ensuring that individuals' skills, knowledge and understanding are built up efficiently. The curriculum is mostly good but is more limited in its provision for pupils with particular gifts or talents.

The success in eradicating the former serious weaknesses has demonstrated the school's good capacity to improve further. Staff and governors evaluate strengths and weaknesses accurately and have clear plans for the future. Pupils' recently improved achievements have ensured that the school now gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently high in all lessons.
- Ensure that the more capable pupils fully realise their potential.
- Extend provision for individuals who have particular gifts or talents.
- Continue the efforts to improve attendance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When the school was inspected in 2005, many pupils were not achieving as well as they should. The exception was in the Foundation Stage where pupils did very well. This is still the case in the Foundation Stage and pupils enter Year 1 with high standards in all areas of learning. Achievement in the rest of the school is now satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities and those learning to speak English make good progress because they are effectively supported in lessons. Achievement is continuing to improve because pupils' progress is checked and tracked more rigorously than in the past and because of recent improvements in the quality of teaching. Standards in the end-of-Key Stage 1 assessments in reading, writing and mathematics have varied in recent years but have not reached the high levels that might be expected, given pupils' attainment at the end of Reception. Progress is generally good in Key Stage 1 in writing and mathematics. Standards in Year 2 are currently above average overall, although only an average proportion of pupils reached Level 3 in reading. While achievement in reading for this year group is satisfactory in relation to pupils' starting points, data indicates that some of the more capable pupils could still do better.

Pupils in Key Stage 2 are now achieving satisfactorily. There has been recent accelerated progress in Years 3 to 5. Progress in Year 6 has been affected by staff changes outside the school's control but the pupils have made satisfactory progress compared with their Year 2 test results. Standards in this key stage are currently above average in English, mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, although the attendance of a few could be better. In the Foundation Stage pupils develop great respect for one another. Very good relationships pervade the school at all levels. Pupils feel safe and conduct themselves with due regard to the safety of others. Reports of bullying or racist incidents are infrequent and soon resolved. Pupils are keen to learn and to make friends. Responding well to the religious status of the school and the opportunities for teamwork, especially in music and sports, pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Many pupils in Years 5 and 6 show pride in helping others, for example by being play leaders for the younger ones. Pupils know their views are valued and they make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. The school council has initiated charity fund-raising and improvements to the school environment. Pupils lead healthy lifestyles, they take at least two hours of exercise each week and show a good awareness of healthy eating, enjoying the recent improvements to school lunches. Overall, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are now good. They are excellent in the Foundation Stage and mostly good elsewhere. A minority of lessons are no better than satisfactory because tasks are not matched closely enough to the full range of pupils' needs. In Nursery and Reception, staff teamwork is of high quality. Activities in these age groups are very wide-ranging and exciting, with an excellent balance between adult-led sessions and child-initiated learning. Across the school, good routines and very good relationships create a climate in the classroom in which pupils want to learn. Lessons are mainly well planned and progress is monitored more rigorously now through frequent assessment. Accurate systems of tracking pupils' progress, including focused questioning, are bedding down well in the core subjects and teachers are increasingly able to respond well to individual needs. Teaching assistants are well deployed, so that pupils identified for support now make good progress towards their targets. Pupils whose first language is not English are catered for well. However, higher attaining pupils are not consistently challenged, in reading at Key Stage 1 in particular. Initiatives to develop pupils' ability to write at length are stimulating and bearing fruit.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners well. It is exceptionally good in the Foundation Stage. The emphasis in planning for all children to flourish in core subjects is beginning to extend to other subjects. The influence of the clergy of St Peter's Church is strong and enhances personal, social and religious education well. Good links have been made between subjects such as English, history and art which make learning more interesting for pupils, and other subjects are beginning to follow suit. Provision in sport is enhanced well through links with the local secondary sports college. Clubs have developed in response to requests from pupils. There is good provision for music that includes a choir and instrumental tuition. Improved opportunities for pupils to apply their computer skills across the entire curriculum are being developed with the introduction of interactive whiteboards. The school has outline plans to introduce French and to develop a coherent cross-school approach to providing for gifted and talented pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is effective and much appreciated by parents and pupils alike. There is good attention to health and safety and the school fulfils its duty of safeguarding pupils' welfare. The provision for those who have learning difficulties or disabilities is well managed and there is careful attention to those whose first language is not English. Academic guidance is good. There are improved arrangements for assessing and marking pupils' work and for discussing their learning targets with them. The result of this is that all pupils are guided well in how they can improve, which is promoting better progress. In most areas, the more capable pupils are now being provided with targets that are challenging their learning more rigorously and leading to higher achievement. This is supporting their improving achievement but is not yet consistent for all individuals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The improvements of the past two years have been led and managed well by the senior staff and governors. The headteacher and chair of governors have been instrumental in driving forward developments. An effective partnership with the local authority has also helped the school achieve its goals. Crucial to the school's progress has been good staff recruitment, retention and training. Having dealt well with the most urgent priorities following its last inspection, the school is now planning effectively for the longer-term. Subject leaders are increasingly monitoring standards and the curriculum in their areas. This sensibly started with the core subjects and is gradually including foundation subject leaders. Governors bring a very good range of skills to the school. They support and question staff and act well as 'critical friends'.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Peter's C of E Primary School, Rickmansworth, WD3 8HD

Thank you for your welcome when Mr Mason and I visited you recently. We enjoyed meeting you a great deal. You and your parents told us that your school has improved a lot over the past couple of years and we agree! You are making better progress with your work now and reaching good standards for your age. That's because the staff are determined to keep your school improving. We think they are doing this pretty well and we have asked them to make sure that every lesson is as good as possible. One way of doing this is with those of you who find learning fairly easy. We would like your teachers to give you plenty of activities that make you think really hard, so that you learn even more.

We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and how well you behave. You are also putting into practice a lot of the things your teachers tell you about leading safe and healthy lives.

Children in your school get a fantastic start in Nursery and Reception. While we were with you, these classes held a wedding celebration which was enormous fun and helped them to learn about a great many things too. The teachers in all the other age groups plan interesting things for you to do too. At present, they are thinking about the best ways to help any of you with a particular gift or talent, such as in writing, sport or music. We agree that this would make your school even better.

Of course, you can only make the most of the good things your school offers you if you attend. A few of you are absent from school sometimes without a really good reason. This means you miss things and your teachers have to work extra hard to help you catch up. Please make sure you get to school whenever you can.

Your school is getting better because the staff and governors have all worked well together for your benefit. Ms Golding has made sure that the adults know what works well in your school and what can still be made better. They have good plans for the future. We hope you carry on enjoying school and send our best wishes to Year 6 for their move to their next schools.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Helen Ranger Lead inspector