

St Peter's Catholic Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125276
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315220
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Jennifer Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1097
6th form	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Shortland
Headteacher	Mr Robert Guinea
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Horseshoe Lane East Merrow Guildford GU1 2TN
Telephone number	01483 534654
Fax number	01483 306571

Age group	11-18
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2008
Inspection number	315220

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Peter's Catholic Comprehensive School serves the Catholic Deanery of Guildford, covering a wide area of South West Surrey; a generally more prosperous area. Almost 60 percent of students come from Catholic families; the remainder are from other Christian denominations and a small number from other faiths. Student numbers in the Sixth Form have increased considerably over the last few years. A lower than average proportion of students is entitled to free school meals.

The school was awarded specialist status in Technology in 2000 and was re-designated in 2005. It also achieved the Healthy Schools Award in 2007, Investors in People and the International Schools Award in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'St Peter's is a lovely caring community, I feel my children are valued, encouraged and well known by all their teachers. We are fortunate to have such a great school.' Many parents express such sentiments. Inspectors also judge that St Peter's is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Because it is constantly striving to improve, standards have risen significantly over the last two years. The headteacher leads the school outstandingly well in its Christian values, and together with his leadership team and other staff, has created a very caring, supportive and importantly an improving school with high standards. The community cohesion in the school is palpable in all that it strives to achieve. As a student reported, 'this is a school that aims to encourage personal growth; socially, spiritually and morally through to adulthood.'

Behaviour has improved markedly and fixed term exclusions have declined. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last two years and attendance is slightly above the national average. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding and there are many opportunities for their cultural development. Overall, their personal development and well-being are outstanding.

Students enter the school with standards above average and they make good progress throughout the first three years in the school. This progress is further consolidated in nearly all subjects by the end of Year 11. In 2007, 67% of students achieved 5 or more higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics, well above the national average. There have been significant improvements in standards over the last three years. Standards in the Sixth Form have also been improving in many subjects. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and occasionally outstanding with well-planned lessons conducted by subject specialists, who work hard to ensure students achieve highly. A minority of lessons, although well paced, are more passive and require students to make insufficient effort. The quality of feedback through marking, is too variable across departments and is sometimes more positive than the work deserves.

The curriculum has been considerably enhanced, with specific provision for those students who need extra support for their learning in the earlier years. Individualised learning programmes for students in Years 10 and 11, who require a more flexible curriculum, are carefully created, much of which is provided in conjunction with a local college. Although not yet fully developed, the school recognises that it needs to provide a greater degree of challenge for more able students in some lessons. An interesting programme for gifted and talented students is provided, creating occasional day-long courses and extra-curricular enrichment. This provision together with an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities for all produces an outstanding curriculum overall. The school's specialist technology status has contributed significantly to the curriculum and resource provision, and is beginning to have an impact on standards.

The school is very inclusive and it provides a safe environment for students, in which their care and guidance is outstanding. Monitoring and tracking of students' progress is very good and, where this is used well by departments, the targets set are used effectively to help students understand clearly what they need to do to improve in order to achieve more. However, at present this good practice is not apparent in all subjects. The school is very aware of this and is working hard to improve the situation and to develop assessment strategies.

The headteacher and his senior leadership team work collaboratively and very effectively. Their consistency of approach is outstanding and has been a main driver in the improvements of the last few years. The schools' self-evaluation is lucid and accurate in its identification of strengths and areas for development. The areas for development are carried through to the school's very effective improvement plan and are addressed in the annual departmental reviews. The solid improvements made recently reflect outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

A sixth form student aptly cites, 'A sense of belonging and community are paramount in any school. At St. Peter's we get it all: the fun, the atmosphere, the help, the support and the grades.' St Peter's has a good, effective and rapidly improving sixth form. Students' and parents' increasing confidence in the school's care, guidance and community ethos is reflected in that over half of the Year 11 students progress into the Sixth Form. Students are very positive about their experience here, and enjoy their studies. They act as very good role models for younger students. A new Sixth Form centre is soon to be built, which will further enhance provision for these students.

Standards have improved steadily over the last two years and are in line with national averages overall. There is a wider provision of Advanced Level courses since the last inspection and an additional vocational course in physical education. The school recognises the need to extend the provision further. New vocational courses are planned for September 2008 and collaboration with its partners in the Guildford 14-19 Federation is developing well. Following a recent review of teaching, the school set out clear guidance to ensure greater consistency of approach, in order to raise the quality of teaching further. Students' progress is consequently now being tracked in line with whole-school systems and the school is looking to develop further academic mentoring. Recent changes in leadership and management are having a positive impact. The full-time presence of a new non-teaching Sixth Form co-ordinator is much appreciated by students, whose support and guidance are welcomed. Attendance is being monitored more closely and the leadership team are very clear that they need to challenge students to higher levels of commitment to raise standards even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that existing good practice in assessment and marking is used consistently across the school in order to further students' good progress.
- Capitalise on students' willingness to participate more actively in their own learning, including the effective use of targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students enter the school with standards higher than national averages. Standards are above the national average by the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science and are well above national averages at the end of Year 11. Standards have risen considerably over the last three years. The school has exceeded its targets year-on-year and is now setting targets against the top 25% of all schools nationally. Students attain particularly high GCSE standards in

English, mathematics, science, religious education, design technology, statistics, music, Spanish and girls in geography and boys in physical education.

Achievement overall is good. Students' progress in mathematics at both key stages is very good and well above national averages. The school has put in place effective strategies to enable students to make better progress in English, which has for a number of years, been less marked in Key Stages 3 and 4 than in mathematics and science. Boys do particularly well at Key Stage 3 and although there are a small but increasing number of students with learning difficulties, they make good progress. Those students with English as an additional language also make good progress. The progress of students is tracked very closely through the school's system called 'One Place', with aspirational targets set for all students in all subjects, which are shared with students and parents.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

This really is a school 'where every child matters'. Students' personal development and well-being is strongly linked to the culture and ethos of the school and is outstanding. Relationships between students and with staff are excellent and moral and social development are very strong. Several students remark on the strong sense of community in the school where students and staff are always keen to help each other. Spiritual development is enhanced through regular prayer and reflection. Students' cultural development is well sustained through their work in subjects and through extra-curricular opportunities including an extensive range of visits, trips and foreign exchanges. The majority of students enjoy their lessons, have a very positive attitude to their studies and behave very well in lessons. Attendance is above average. Procedures for checking attendance and ensuring that students appreciate the importance of good attendance are secure. Students feel that the school is a very safe environment in which to learn and are very confident in the school's ability to deal with the very small amount of bullying that occurs. Healthy lifestyles are enhanced by the good uptake of extra-curricular activities involving exercise, in addition to the healthy choices provided in the dining hall.

Students make an outstanding contribution to the school community, responding positively to the roles and responsibilities that they take. These exceptional leadership and teamwork contributions allow students to develop excellent personal qualities, important for their future economic well-being. Students contribute very well to the community beyond the school. Their involvement and fund-raising supports the local community as well as charities at home and abroad.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good because teachers have a clear idea of students' prior learning and they demonstrate very good subject knowledge. They have high expectations of their students. Typically, lessons are well planned and often relate the start of the lesson to students' own experiences or draw on previously taught skills, getting lessons off to a good start. In the majority of lessons, the pace is brisk and appropriate intellectual challenge engages

students' interest enabling them to participate fully and make good progress. For example, in a Year 9 information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, the teacher directed questions to suit the ability of the individual student whilst at the same time checking their knowledge and understanding. In all lessons a variety of resources are used well, including interactive white-board technology, which is well resourced throughout the school. The attitudes and behaviour of students are excellent often enabling the subtleties of the subject to be explored. Very good relationships exist between the students themselves and with the teachers. Regular homework supports class work, although the marking policy is applied inconsistently in a number of subjects and occasionally poor quality or incomplete work goes unchallenged. Teaching assistants support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well, so they can take a full part in lessons. In satisfactory lessons, students are more passive learners and opportunities to engage students in more active methods of learning are overlooked.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of the curriculum and other activities are outstanding and a real strength of the school, contributing to the high standards and personal development of students. All statutory requirements are met and there is very good provision for citizenship. The school's specialist technology status has led to improved choice and performance in technology-related subjects. For example, all students take GCSE statistics by the end of Year 10 and study GCSE technology from a wide range of options. The curriculum is inclusive, dynamic and flexible focusing on personalised pathways to higher education. It provides for all learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to progress and develop well with a number of highly individualised programmes for students in Years 10 and 11. Provision for personal, social and health education is good, with useful contributions from other agencies such as business advisers to promote a strong work-related dimension.

A significant strength is extra-curricular provision that involves almost all the students in the school and contributes to their enjoyment and achievement. Their horizons are stretched by a wealth of competitive sports, business and performing arts activities with a great many off-site excursions and international trips abroad. The students also benefit from numerous on-site activities to develop self-confidence including the student voice and council, technology and science clubs, drama reviews, musical soirées and charity fund-raising. Gifted and talented students are offered additional enrichment activities. As a result, the students are well prepared for life beyond school and to become active and responsible citizens.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. There is a very strong commitment from all staff in the school to support the progress of all students and teachers know their students very well. Requirements for safeguarding students and ensuring their welfare are securely met. Procedures for identifying students with learning difficulties and disabilities are assured, although the response to their individual needs is not consistently addressed in all subjects. Provision for the gifted and talented is developing well. The pastoral system is very effective and very well managed. There are good systems for supporting students, with home-college

links being particularly strong. Students value their good relationships with teachers and many students commented that whenever there was a problem they felt very confident that there was always a member of staff they could go to for help. They are particularly appreciative of the opportunities provided for them to express their views through the year councils and the student council. They feel their views are listened to and respected.

A high level of support is provided to help students reach their targets including support classes after school or at lunchtime in most subjects. Academic guidance through marking and assessment is improving, so that students generally know how well they are doing but not necessarily what they need to do to improve further. Careers education and guidance is good and there are good links with local primary schools. The induction for new students joining Year 7 is excellent. One parent commented, 'My children both settled very quickly when joining the school, which is a credit to the staff. We really appreciate the strong pastoral support provided.' Students are given very good advice and guidance on subject and course option choices in Years 9 and 11. Alternative provision is often found for those students whose needs cannot be fully met in the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

'The school has gone from strength to strength under the leadership of the headteacher', was how one parent described the leadership of the school and this view was echoed by many in their questionnaire responses and is fully endorsed by inspectors' findings. Leadership and management are outstanding, brought about by a determined and relentless focus on raising standards led from the top, without sacrificing the outstanding pastoral care, guidance and support. What makes this leadership and management outstanding, is the teamwork at all levels in the school and the consistency of management practices. The school is very inclusive of all its students and the sense of community is felt by all, both within the school and in its reach beyond the school. The technology status has had a particularly positive impact on the school.

Teachers are helped to develop professionally through well-targeted continuing professional development, linked to their performance management. All staff are held to account for standards in their departments or in their areas of responsibility, by very effective self-review. Whole school self-evaluation is outstanding and the high degree of consistency in line-management, lesson scrutiny and performance management across the school underpins the significant improvements in the last two years. This has had an impact on the relatively weaker subjects of business studies, ICT and English. Governors provide excellent support and challenge to the senior team and the headteacher. They understand the school well by making regular visits to lessons and through their highly effective committees.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
---	----------------	-------

Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of St Peter's Catholic Comprehensive School, Guildford, GU1 2TN

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for the very polite and helpful way you welcomed us. We enjoyed discussing your work with you and seeing the progress you were making. You talked very warmly about your school and teachers; you are justifiably proud of your school!

We judged that your school provides you with a good education and it is led outstandingly well by the headteacher and his senior team. There is a real sense of community in your school and it is very inclusive of all of its students. Teachers work hard to help you achieve well, so it is not surprising that a significant number of lessons were good and some were outstanding. We were pleased that you work hard in lessons, and achieve standards in Year 9 and Year 11 that are well above the national average overall. We were especially pleased with the number of you achieving 5 or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics. Well done!

Your behaviour is excellent and you tell us that you enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in your good attendance. Your teachers take exceptionally good care of you and help you settle well when you first join the school. They guide and support you well throughout your school career, particularly at critical times when, for example, making course choices in Year 9 and Year 11. The sixth form is going from strength to strength and providing a greater range of courses than when the school was inspected previously. We hope even more of you will aspire to become members of the sixth form when the time comes. You take pride in the responsibilities that you have been given. We were very impressed with the high level of participation in the wide range of clubs and activities provided, some of which have led to the prestigious International Schools Award. We hope that you will continue to take advantage of these excellent opportunities. The school's technology status has helped to improve standards in a range of subjects and has provided good resources for technology.

We have asked the school to look at the following areas to make the school even better:

- ensure that assessment and marking is always consistently used across subjects to help you do even better
- build on your willingness to be more actively engaged in your learning and to use your targets more effectively.

We wish you all the very best for the future and good luck to all of you sitting tests and examinations later this year.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector