

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125714
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	315294
Inspection date	19 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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 on roll	
School	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Iwanikiw
Headteacher	Maria Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2003
School address	Augusta Place Leamington Spa CV32 5EL
Telephone number	01926 427497
Fax number	01926 427497

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school is located in the town centre of Leamington Spa. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Children's skills when they start school in the Reception Year are typically in line with expectations for their age. A small proportion of pupils start school still in the early stages of learning English. Most of these pupils have Polish as their main home language. There has been a complete change in teaching staff since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with good features where the welcoming atmosphere reflects the calm and caring leadership of the headteacher. Satisfactory teaching leads to pupils' achievement being satisfactory. Standards have been broadly average by the end of Year 6 in recent years. The well above average test results achieved at the end of Year 6 in 2007 represented satisfactory progress from their starting points for this particularly capable group of pupils. Children in the Reception Year make satisfactory progress, and this steady progress then continues throughout the rest of the school. In English, pupils make the best progress in reading because basic skills are taught well. In writing, there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in different subjects and teachers do not always expect enough of the most able, slowing their progress.

Throughout the school, teachers are hard-working and enthusiastic. They make learning fun, helping to ensure that pupils become eager learners. Teachers explain new ideas clearly at the start of lessons, but the pace of learning sometimes slows when pupils are expected to sit and listen for too long. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are supported well by able teaching assistants. Pupils in the early stages of learning English quickly learn to speak confidently.

Pupils' good personal development is supported effectively by the distinctive Christian character of the school. Pupils are well cared for and they quickly learn good values. Consequently, they behave well and are at ease when talking to visitors. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. One pupil, summarising the views of many, said, 'There is always something exciting going on.' A good range of visits and visitors enriches the satisfactory curriculum. For example, a 'mad scientist club' is helping to build pupils' interest in science. Very good links with the parish church ensure that pupils' spiritual development is especially strong.

Satisfactory leadership is moving the school forward despite the many recent changes in teaching staff. Members of staff work together well and there is a shared commitment to improvement. The headteacher understands what needs improving and is doing the right things to tackle the school's weaknesses. Senior managers evaluate provision thoroughly, but some evaluations are over generous. This is because they do not make sharp enough use of assessment information to check that all pupils are achieving well enough.

The school has good links with parents and outside agencies. Most parents are happy with the school. One parent summed up their views by writing that 'children are welcomed wholeheartedly into the school community and staff take a huge interest in each child and family'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Sound teaching enables children to make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. By the start of Year 1, most children are working within the levels expected for their age. Children do best in personal, social and emotional development because friendly members of staff help children to settle quickly into school routines and to gain confidence. For example, a pictorial timetable that helps children know what they are to learn next encourages them to be independent. There are suitably interesting activities to promote learning, including opportunities to develop the children's imaginations in the 'dark play tunnel'. Members of staff teach letter sounds especially well through the use of songs and rhymes, although there are occasions when

children are expected to sit still for too long resulting in a loss of concentration and slower learning. Children's progress is monitored carefully, although not all activities take enough account of children's differing needs. The school has appropriate plans to make greater use of the outdoor area. This is made difficult because the area is also used for whole school playtimes.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers always expect enough of pupils when they are writing and give them more opportunities to practise their writing skills in different subjects.
- Increase the pace of learning by ensuring that pupils do not have to sit for too long at the start of lessons.
- Make better use of information about pupils' progress so that senior managers gain a more accurate picture of how well the school is doing.

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

Children make satisfactory progress in the Reception Year and this is maintained throughout the rest of the school. In most years, standards are broadly average overall by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Throughout the school, pupils make the best progress in reading. They regularly share books with their teachers and their parents ensuring that skills improve quickly. In writing, whilst most pupils reach nationally expected levels by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, too few reach beyond this. This is because expectations are not always high enough for the most able pupils. Pupils do not always present their work neatly enough and they make careless errors in spelling and punctuation. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good support that helps them to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils, including those in the Reception Year, behave well in school and in the relatively confined play areas outside. They say that unkind behaviour is dealt with quickly by adults, and they are supportive of each other. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and their attendance is good. Pupils say that there is a 'good mix of work and play' and that 'the teachers make lessons fun'.

Pupils are good at taking responsibility. They contribute well to the community, for example by making posters that remind others to 'keep our town tidy'. They show good concern for those less fortunate than themselves by raising funds to support a children's home in Sierra Leone. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and of the danger of eating too much 'junk food'. They know that it is important to stay safe and they appreciate the 'kerb safety' lessons they are given in the town.

Pupils' spiritual development is especially strong. In assembly, pupils know that they need to be still when the candle is lit and when reflecting on the needs of others. They volunteer to share their own prayers with the rest of the school. In contrast, pupils have a comparatively limited knowledge of cultures other than their own.

Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. They develop good levels of confidence and make sound progress in developing basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are some good features to teaching across the school. Teachers explain tasks clearly, often with the help of the interactive whiteboards. Good questioning and praise are used well to engage the pupils' interest and to help them know what they are expected to do in each lesson. However, the pace of learning drops when teachers carry on whole class discussions for too long, resulting in some pupils becoming inattentive. Teachers do not always ensure that work is challenging enough for all pupils, especially in writing tasks. This reduces the progress made by the more able pupils in particular.

Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well, enabling them to make good progress. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to speak English are also helped to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides sound support for developing basic skills, although planning does not always take enough account of the needs of older or more able pupils in the mixed age classes. Members of staff are developing links between subjects and have correctly identified that pupils do not yet get sufficient opportunities to practise their writing in different subjects so that skills can develop more quickly.

The school makes good use of visitors to enrich the curriculum. Pupils learn how to become healthy and happy individuals with the help of 'Healthy Harold', a visiting puppet. Creative arts are promoted well. For example, an artist supported pupils in painting a magnificent playground mural. Visits that include a retreat for older pupils contribute well to pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'The school has a feeling of warmth and caring when you go in, and my children are well looked after.' This comment from a parent accurately captures a strength of the school that ensures that pupils' personal development is good. Members of staff know and care for all pupils well, right from the time they start school in the Reception Year. Good links with outside agencies, including parents, safeguard pupils' well-being.

The school has developed thorough assessment procedures in English and mathematics, but information collected is not used consistently to ensure that enough is expected from all pupils, particularly in writing. All pupils, including those in the early stages of learning to speak English, are given targets to aim at and they find these helpful. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good guidance to help them improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders are steadily moving the school in the right direction. There have been many changes in teaching staff and these have been managed well by the headteacher. Satisfactory systems for evaluating how well the school is doing mean that senior managers know what needs improving but their evaluations are not always accurate enough. The monitoring of teaching is rigorous but information about pupils' progress is not used well enough to gain a realistic picture of overall achievement.

Subject leaders take a full part in monitoring provision, although their action plans do not always identify clearly enough how planned improvements are to be checked. Whole school development planning is becoming more detailed and is now rightly focused on ironing out the remaining inconsistencies in teaching. Recent initiatives are having a positive effect on learning, demonstrating the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement. For example, a more structured approach to teaching letter sounds is helping younger children to pick up writing skills more quickly.

There are many new governors. They are beginning to ask challenging questions to hold the school to account. Their financial planning is thorough. Available resources are deployed well and have a good effect on learning. For example, spending on teaching assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Leamington Spa, CV32 5EL

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. We enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school and what you think about it. You are getting a satisfactory education, which means that we found some good things in the school and also other aspects that could be improved.

- Some of the things we found out about your school.
- Satisfactory teaching means that you make steady progress as you move through the school. However, some of you could be doing better in writing.
- You settle quickly in the Reception Year and get on well together.
- You are happy at school and behave well. You make a good contribution to the local community and the parish. We are pleased that you found your retreat so rewarding.
- All adults in school are kind and caring, and the visits that they plan help to bring subjects alive. Your work with an artist has certainly helped to brighten up the playgrounds!
- You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.
- Most of your parents and carers are pleased that you come to this school.
- The leaders of your school know what needs improving and they are working hard to make sure that you learn more quickly.

- What we have asked your school to do now.
- Help you to do better in writing by making sure that teachers always expect enough of you and by giving you more opportunities to practise writing in different subjects.
- Ensure that you do not have to sit for too long on the carpet at the start of lessons so that there is always a fast pace to your learning.
- Make better use of information about your progress to help the headteacher and teachers get an even clearer picture of how well the school is doing.

We wish you well for the future. We hope you continue to help your teachers by working hard and trying your best.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Capper Lead inspector