

# St Peter's School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110906
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	337599
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martin Cragg HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1197
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	142
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mick Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Valerie Ford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	St Peter's Road Huntingdon Cambridgeshire
<b>Telephone number</b>	01480 459581
<b>Fax number</b>	01480 457968
<b>Email address</b>	office@stpeters.camb.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 November 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	337599

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2009

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 35 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, governors' documentation and records of monitoring and evaluation. Questionnaires were received from 406 parents and carers, 144 students and 103 staff.

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

- the trends in students' attainment and progress, especially in the core subjects and for particular groups of students
- the evidence for good progress as a result of good teaching and assessment
- the evidence for highly effective care, guidance and support, particularly in identifying and providing for students with special educational and other needs
- the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation in identifying strategies for improvement and their impact on students' performance.

## Information about the school

The school is larger than average and serves a diverse area in and around the town of Huntingdon. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Around 14% of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and just over 10% of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above the national average. The large majority of these students have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, social or emotional needs. The school became a specialist school for mathematics and computing in 2005. It has achieved Healthy School status and Artsmark, Sportsmark, Basic Skills Mark, Inclusion Mark and ICT Mark awards. In 2008 it was named in the National Challenge programme but has now been removed because the school has achieved the targets set for it.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

St Peter's is a satisfactory school. However, it has made substantial improvement in the last three years and much of its work is now good. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. There is a strong ethos of valuing all students equally and a commitment to their achievement. As one parent said, "the school gives each student the feeling that they can be successful and are a valuable part of the school". Staff know students well and provide high quality support which has led to the recent improvement in their progress towards the challenging targets set for them. Students feel safe in the school and develop good personal qualities to equip them for their future lives.

The headteacher and senior staff provide clear direction, focused on raising achievement. Determined and consistent approaches to teaching and assessment have brought about clear improvement since the last inspection. Behaviour and attendance are now good and exclusions have fallen considerably. Teaching is good and students make good progress in lessons. Staff and governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well, arising from rigorous monitoring and evaluation. As a result, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

Students' achievement is satisfactory because, although students make good progress in their learning, attainment is low when judged over three years. However, there has been rapid improvement in results recently. In the provisional results for Year 11 in 2009, many indicators are now in line with the national average, although the proportion achieving at least five higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics is below average and performance in science is well below average. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is now broadly average overall but below average in science, according to the school's assessment data. Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form but their attainment is below average. Students with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because they are very well supported and because the curriculum, especially at Key Stage 4, builds on their interests and skills. In the lessons observed, students generally made good progress. They settled to work and most concentrated well. In the best lessons, students worked independently with confidence and collaborated constructively. However these skills are not yet established securely enough throughout the school.

Teachers know their subjects well and use consistent approaches to lesson planning, assessment and behaviour management. Many lessons contain a good variety of resources and activities to engage students' interest. However, a small minority of lessons are less effective because teachers do not plan carefully enough to match work to the needs and attainment of different students. Students are also not fully involved in the assessment of their work and progress. As a result, they are often not as clear about

**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

exactly what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum is broad and meets the needs of students well. There are good opportunities for students to follow vocational courses and increasingly individualised programmes for the most vulnerable who are at risk of not attending or underperforming. The school's specialist status has contributed strongly to improved results in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), and the school's targets have been met. There is a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities which are well-supported.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by:
  - building on the recent improvements at Key Stage 3 to increase the proportion of students achieving a higher GCSE grade in both English and mathematics
  - improving teaching and students' progress in science throughout the school
  - - increasing students' rate of progress in the sixth form.
- Improve less effective teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
  - plan lessons carefully to match work to the specific needs and attainment of students
  - increase students' confidence in assessing their own work and that of their peers
  - ensure that students know exactly what to improve in their work and how to do so.
- Provide greater opportunity for students to develop and apply good learning skills when working independently or collaboratively.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>3</b>
----------

Attainment is low when judged over the last three years. In 2007, attainment in the school was well below average. Since then there has been substantial annual improvement. In 2009, provisional results for Year 9 indicate that attainment is broadly average in English and mathematics, although it remains below average in science. Provisional results for Year 11 in 2009 improved and most indicators are now broadly average. However, the proportion achieving a higher grade at GCSE in English or mathematics is below average and it is well below average for science. In other subjects results have improved considerably and some achieved 100% grades A\*-C.

Students make good progress in their learning. This is confirmed by external measures of progress by the end of Years 9 and 11, and by the school's own detailed tracking of students' performance. Students with special educational needs and those who speak

**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

English as an additional language are supported effectively in lessons and encouraged to participate. As a result, they make good progress. Students respond well to the clear objectives set in lessons. They show positive attitudes to learning and settle to work promptly. They concentrate on tasks and particularly enjoy practical or collaborative activities. Where they are challenged by effective teaching, they take initiative and work effectively. However, in a small minority of lessons they remain too passive because teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity for them to apply their skills.

Students are confident that staff will help them with any problems that arise and say they feel safe. Although a few parents raised bullying as a concern, inspectors found no evidence to suggest that it was not dealt with effectively. Behaviour in lessons is good. Consistent approaches from staff ensure good concentration and little need for teachers to use sanctions. Students participate enthusiastically in physical education (PE) lessons and sports activities. They understand how to keep themselves safe because of an effective life skills programme. Regular cultural and diversity days, and strong emphasis on valuing all students, promote good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students from differing backgrounds are integrated effectively into school life.

Students make good contributions to the school and local community through taking on responsibility to help others in sports leadership, mentoring or student ambassador roles, the school council or work in primary schools. Attendance is now above the national average because of very effective support to avoid persistent absence, including curriculum initiatives such as the 'Inspire' programme for students with specific needs. Students are well-prepared for their future working lives through good computer skills, regular enterprise days and effective guidance on choice of courses and progression at each key stage.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	<b>2</b>
	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

The large majority of teaching is good. Although some teaching is satisfactory, inspectors also observed several outstanding lessons. A clear learning and teaching policy sets consistent expectations for lesson planning and structure. This provides a good foundation and leads to clear learning objectives for lessons and a good range of activities to interest students. Most teachers set high expectations, maintain good pace in learning and use resources imaginatively. As a result, students make good progress. Teachers use questions well to assess students' progress in lessons and increasingly encourage them to assess their work or that of their peers. However, in a small minority of lessons, work does not match the needs of students closely enough and self-assessment is rarely used. Teachers' marking is generally good but some students do not know exactly what to improve in their work because comments are too general. The curriculum is good. Students benefit from a comprehensive range of courses at Key Stage 4 which are well matched to their needs and interests. There is a strong and relevant vocational programme which is already contributing to students' motivation and raising attainment. There are very effective programmes for students with specific needs. The 'Inspire' programme has successfully maintained some students in school on accredited courses, doubling their attendance rates. Good collaboration with other schools has extended the curriculum through new Diploma courses. Targets for achievement and examination entry in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) have been met. There is a very good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities which contributes to students' learning and well-being and which is well supported across the range of different groups in the school.

Outstanding care and support for students confirms the strong commitment of the school to promote achievement and success for all. Inclusion is a high priority and key staff ensure that students with specific needs are identified promptly, supported effectively and encouraged to be successful. As a result, students with a range of complex needs are very well integrated into the school. There are very good arrangements to support students as they transfer from primary school and as they progress through the school. Staff know students as individuals and there is a good level of trust which allows any problems to be quickly resolved. The school works very effectively with a range of agencies to secure students' well-being. There are also close links with parents. A number of parents wrote to say how well the school had helped their child and family.

**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

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior staff set high expectations and focus strongly on raising achievement. This drive has brought about marked improvement in the school since the last inspection. Systems for self-evaluation are rigorous and provide senior and middle leaders with a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, there has been a strong focus on improving teaching and assessment based on very clear expectations of effective lessons. There is a detailed system for tracking and reporting students' progress which is analysed to identify students who require support. As teaching has improved, so has students' progress towards the challenging targets set for them.

The school promotes equality of opportunity strongly and values all students. Staff deal effectively with the very few incidents of racism. Students from a variety of backgrounds are successfully integrated and make at least similar progress to their peers. The school promotes community cohesion well, celebrating cultural diversity and engaging with the local and international community through a good range of activities. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory overall. Child protection is a significant priority and the school's practice is very effective. There is good communication with parents and many opportunities for them to find out more about the work of the school and their children's progress. This is especially true for parents of students who are vulnerable or have specific needs. There are good partnerships with local schools, colleges and the community which enhance students' experience and learning.

Governors are enthusiastic and committed. They visit the school regularly and know it well. They increasingly hold the school to account and are building their role in setting priorities and strategic planning. Resources are deployed effectively despite difficulties arising from the withdrawal of National Challenge funding.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2



<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Sixth form

Students' achievement and progress are satisfactory and attainment is broadly average. Attendance is average. Most students complete their courses and almost all progress to higher education, employment or training at the end of their time in the sixth form. Students participate well in lessons and enjoy working independently. They have mature attitudes and many show leadership in the school through organising clubs and events, assistance in lessons and on the school council, and by taking assemblies. Teaching is at least satisfactory but it is not yet consistent enough to ensure good progress for all. The curriculum provides a suitable range of courses with more vocational options now available to meet students' needs. However, the school acknowledges the need to match students more effectively to courses. Good guidance and support is provided to students and this supplies them with the information necessary to make choices about their future. Teachers set challenging targets and review students' progress regularly. Leadership is satisfactory and staff have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the sixth form, based on regular monitoring.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

Most parents are positive about the school and its work. A very large majority were

**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

happy with their child's experience at the school. Some made strong comments about how far the school had improved recently and others took the time to write in detail about the very effective support provided for their children which had brought them success and helped the family. Parents approved of the school's communication via 'Parentmail' and the 'Ibehave' record for behaviour, linked to the rewards system.

A few parents commented about unacceptable behaviour and the school's success in dealing with bullying. However, almost as many parents recorded that bullying had been dealt with effectively by the school and that behaviour was well-managed. Inspectors spent some time visiting lessons, observing breaks and movement around the school, talking to students and Guild managers, and reviewing recent parental questionnaires collected by the school. Inspectors found no confirmation that behaviour was a concern or that bullying was not tackled effectively when reported.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Peter's 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 406 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1197 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	118	29	249	61	27	7	9	2
The school keeps my child safe	148	36	241	59	12	3	2	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	184	45	201	49	14	3	5	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	138	34	226	56	31	8	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	109	27	264	65	18	4	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	106	26	243	60	42	10	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	16	285	70	37	9	6	1
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)	117	29	246	60	18	4	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	92	23	270	66	31	8	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	114	28	229	56	45	11	9	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	86	21	252	62	34	8	10	2
The school is led and managed effectively	169	42	209	51	11	3	5	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	151	37	225	55	22	5	4	1

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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



13 November 2009

Dear students

Inspection of St Peter's School, Huntingdon, PE29 7DD

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to many of you in lessons, in meetings and at breaks. You helped us to find out about the school. Thanks also to those of you who filled in a questionnaire. This letter is to tell you what we found on our inspection.

We saw that your school is improving rapidly, particularly recently. Your attendance is now above average. Results for Year 11 in 2009 were broadly in line with the national average in many cases. However, some key areas remain below average. Results for Year 9 were at least average except in science. In the sixth form results improved and were just below average. You mostly make good progress in your lessons because most teaching is good. You generally behave well and concentrate. You told us that you feel safe around the school and that students get on well together. You trust staff to sort out any problems effectively. We found that you receive excellent support from staff who know you well and track your work and progress closely. You benefit from a good choice of courses in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, with an increasing range of vocational options. You take on responsibilities well and many of you participate in the good range of extra-curricular activities and events. Your headteacher and senior staff set high expectations for you and for staff and have put in place good strategies which have brought about improvements.

We asked the school to improve some aspects of its work. Although results are improving, there is more to do to make teaching and your progress better in science and in the sixth form. We also asked for more of you to achieve five higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics. We suggested all teachers should match work in lessons to your different needs and give you opportunities to assess your own work. We felt that you sometimes do not know exactly what to do to improve your work. We asked teachers to give you more opportunities to develop learning skills by working independently or with others. You can help by taking on these responsibilities for your own learning with maturity and making the best of them.

I am sure that your school will continue to improve. I wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg

Her Majesty's Inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**