

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117448
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339008
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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 of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harry Nixon
Headteacher	Philippa Golding
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 18 lessons and observed all teachers at least once. They held meetings with staff, groups of pupils, and three governors. They scrutinised the school's work, and looked at assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and improvement plans. The team received and analysed 154 parental questionnaires, 101 responses to the Key Stage 2 pupil survey and 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.

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

- how well the school supports the academic and personal development of its more vulnerable pupils
- the extent to which teachers use assessment to inform their planning, to support learning and to challenge more able pupils
- the effectiveness of provision in extending and enriching experiences for gifted and talented pupils.

Information about the school

Most pupils are from White British backgrounds in this average sized school. A small number speak English as an additional language. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Their needs are mostly associated with specific learning difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery and a Reception class. The school has received both Healthy Schools and Eco Bonze status.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Peter's Primary is a good school. It has developed some outstanding features most notably in the way it promotes the care and well-being of all pupils. This is greatly valued by almost all parents one of whom aptly wrote, 'I feel my children are achieving well academically in a happy, safe and caring environment'. The school's improvement in recent years is directly attributable to the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy head, supported by an increasingly effective staff team.

The youngest children enter the Nursery with skills above those expected for their age. They rapidly build on these skills in a stimulating and secure environment in both the Nursery and Reception. Progress is good and improving across the rest of the school so that attainment as measured by Key Stage 2 test results is well above average and rising. Almost all pupils reach and many exceed nationally expected levels by the time they leave Year 6. They are prepared well for success at secondary school and beyond. Pupils show respect for others and for cultural differences and are inquisitive and curious. Their behaviour around the school is immaculate, adding much to the calm and welcoming atmosphere immediately felt by a visitor on arrival. They show great concern for others through fundraising and much interest in the environment through recycling and their 'Eco' club. They say they are happy in school because they trust their teachers and are confident that any concerns shared with adults will be quickly sorted out.

There is a very sharp focus throughout the school on developing each child as an individual and on reducing barriers to learning for whatever the reason. Several factors contribute to the pupil's good achievement, including:

- lively teaching that grabs and retains pupils' interest
- a rich and stimulating curriculum enhanced greatly by a wide range of additional activities
- the rigorous use of very thorough assessment systems to check progress and tailor support very closely to meet individual need
- the determined drive for higher achievement shared by all staff
- high expectations expressed through challenging but achievable targets
- sharply focused support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities from skilled support staff.

Teaching has improved considerably in recent years and there are some outstanding features, although these are not seen consistently across all year groups. In the most effective lessons, teachers use interesting activities to involve pupils and capture their interests; however, teachers do not always use assessment information to guide lesson planning or use marking to engage pupils in their learning.

The school has a demonstrable record of improvement in recent years. When an area of concern is identified it is tackled relentlessly. One good example of this is attendance, which has shown steady improvement to the point where it is now above average and continuing to rise. Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's qualities on which to base future planning, the one exception being in evaluating its impact on community cohesion. It is well placed to improve further and is on the path to achieve its goal of becoming 'outstanding by 2012'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use assessment information more effectively to challenge the more able.
 - Extend marking to engage pupils more in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Observations of lessons show pupils work hard and with much enjoyment. They collaborate well when working with others, particularly when discussing their ideas or trying to work out the answer to a question posed by their teacher. Almost all apply themselves to tasks and persevere when they find the going hard, such as when Year 6 pupils responded confidently as they were challenged by increasingly complex and difficult probability problems. The excellent behaviour of most pupils aids their learning, but a small minority do not concentrate fully in lessons when not directly supervised.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who have specific learning difficulties make outstanding progress by the judicious balance between participation in lessons and withdrawal for focused activities. They become confident and able to access all that the school provides for them,

Pupils feel very safe in school and aware of how to cope with any risks they might face now and in the future. Almost all pupils have a clear understanding of how diet and exercise can help them to stay fit and healthy. They greatly enjoy the wide range of physical activities available, enhanced by outside providers. They have a voice in the school and are starting to make more decisions about their learning. They contribute much to the life of the school and to the area, and their great thoughtfulness is shown when raising funds such as for their link school in Uganda.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers inspire pupils to learn through their enthusiasm and the creation of a wonderfully inviting learning environment. They make lessons interesting, using resources creatively to stimulate learning. Their questioning is often skilled and probing with the expectation that pupils will give detailed rather than brief answers. This was seen particularly effectively in a Year 2 lesson when the teacher drew out thoughtful responses from pupils as they considered what they should include in their posters. Nevertheless, at times assessment information is not used to ensure that the more able are sufficiently challenged. Furthermore, marking, while thorough, does not consistently provide opportunities for pupils to assess their work and that of others or set personal targets.

Pupils have plenty of opportunity in which to practise and develop their literacy, numeracy and computer skills as closer links become established between subjects. The successful focus on improving writing comes in part by making this a focus of the cross-curricular work undertaken by each class. Pupils' experiences are enriched by a wide range of extra activities such as the much enjoyed 'Caribbean Carnival Week'. Gifted and talented pupils gain much from the links with local schools and events such as that run by the University of Hertfordshire for talented mathematicians. Partnership work also extends opportunities in music and information and communication technology.

The school provides a safe and welcoming environment for all pupils. Arrangements to help them settle into school or move between classes are thoughtfully planned. By carefully checking the progress of specific pupils and meeting frequently to discuss their

progress, the school is able to target additional staff support to meet their individual needs. This is supplemented by other professionals who provide further expertise to help the school to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The staff team shares the headteacher's drive and vision to move the school forward. Teachers are reflective of their practice and very keen to improve. Their professional development is closely matched to individual need. Data analysis is very thorough and used to challenge and drive improvement. From this and other monitoring activities, priorities for improvement are identified. Governors understand the school's qualities, but do not always seek parental views to shape future planning or monitor carefully the impact of their policies on pupils.

Secure arrangements are in place for safeguarding the welfare of pupils, ensuring that those working in school are properly vetted. Responsibilities are clear, so that the school provides a safe environment for all. Pupils of all backgrounds mix happily together demonstrating the school's success in ensuring that discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. Equal opportunities are well promoted, so that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make good and improving progress.

The strong partnership with parents starts from before their children enter the Nursery. All of the staff team know their pupils' and families' circumstances well and use this information to target support or signpost them to suitable other outside agencies. Partnerships with other schools and external providers enable the school to provide a wide range of activities that it would not be able to do otherwise and make an outstanding contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school and their achievement. The school has a clear understanding of the community and the context within which it works. It undertakes many actions to help the community work together more cohesively, but their impact has not been fully evaluated.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The youngest children have an outstanding start to their school life in a highly stimulating environment both inside and outdoors. As a consequence, almost all children reach and a significant number exceed expected goals in all areas of their learning by the time they leave Reception. Language and number are constantly reinforced such as when Reception children noted the number of worms they found when digging in the garden, so that children build on their skills areas and become articulate and confident learners. They are inquisitive, independent and work and play happily together.

The main reasons for their outstanding achievement in all areas of learning include:

- the sharp focus on meeting the needs of each child and using their interests to stimulate and engage them in learning
- adults knowing when to intervene to move learning forward and when to step back to let children explore their ideas and initiate their own activities
- the high expectations of both work and behaviour are understood by all children
- the strong partnership with home that helps to give children a smooth start in both classes
- rigorous on-going assessment that is used to support daily planning, to adapt activities and to identify the next steps in each child's learning
- teachers and support staff working as a very close team, paying very careful attention to the welfare of children.

The outstanding features seen at the last inspection have been maintained and built upon as a result of highly effective leadership. There is a continual drive for improvement based on keeping provision constantly under review and an excellent understanding of the needs of young children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are very much in support of the school and have no major concerns. They are unanimous in reporting that the school keep their children safe. Most say their children enjoy school. They are pleased with the quality of teaching and the way their children are helped to have a healthy lifestyle. These are areas that are endorsed by the inspection team. A few parents feel their children do not make sufficient progress, although inspectors found progress to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 154 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 222 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	101	66	45	29	6	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	119	77	35	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	59	38	79	51	11	7	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	49	61	40	14	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	82	53	68	44	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	64	42	80	52	10	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	73	47	79	51	2	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	61	40	72	47	11	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	45	77	50	6	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	65	42	69	45	10	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	36	91	59	6	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	87	56	59	38	6	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	94	61	56	36	4	3	0	0

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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



15 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Rickmansworth, WD3 8HD

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently. We agree with you that St Peter's is a good and improving school. It has formed close links with home and brings in other people so that it can provide more activities for you such as in sport. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers take excellent care of you. Those of you who have special jobs, like members of the school council, carry out your duties responsibly. You take keep yourselves fit and healthy, by eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise.

Thank you for sharing your views with us. The youngest children have an excellent start in the Nursery and Reception. You make good progress during your time in school, learning the skills you need for the future and becoming mature and responsible people. This is because you are taught well and have interesting things to learn. You clearly enjoy the wide range of activities provided for you.

Everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. The two things we have asked the teachers and other adults to do are:

- enable you to learn better through more helpful marking
- use assessment information to plan more challenging work for those of you who need it.

We are sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make these improvements. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to take great pride in your school and continuing to be enthusiastic about learning.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

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