

St Peter's Church of England Combined School, Burnham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110450
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356746
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Hugh Protherough

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Warburton
Headteacher	Lesley Blount
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed a total of 18 lessons and eight teachers. They analysed the school's work including samples of pupils' work, documents such as the school improvement plan, curriculum and lesson planning, and the tracking of pupil progress. They analysed the responses from 68 parent and carer questionnaires as well as those from staff and pupils. The inspectors met with parents and carers, members of the governing body and staff. In addition to informal conversations in lessons, they held meetings with the school council and a group of pupils from Year 6.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The impact of new teaching and assessment strategies to improve pupils' achievements in writing and especially for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The effectiveness of actions taken to raise attendance.
- The extent to which the curriculum is customised to individual needs and interests.
- How far senior leaders can demonstrate the impact of their work on improving provision and pupil outcomes.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average and serves a community with a significant number of transient families. As a result, the proportion of pupils arriving and leaving school during the course of each year is much greater than average. Following a period when the school roll had fallen, pupil numbers are increasing again. Although the great majority of pupils are White British, the increasing diversity of the school is reflected in the growing number of other groups represented such as White Other, Asian British Pakistani, White and Black Caribbean and pupils from travelling families. The overwhelming majority of pupils speak English and very few are at the early stages of learning the language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has historically been high, but is reducing rapidly as a result of revised assessment arrangements. Their needs include, specific learning, speech and language and emotional and behavioural difficulties. A new headteacher is in her second year at the school.

The governing body provides daily breakfast and after-school care clubs which were visited as part of this inspection.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Peter's continues to provide a good quality of education for its pupils. High levels of satisfaction expressed by parents and carers are a direct reflection of its culture of care and support for pupils of all backgrounds. The headteacher has settled swiftly into the school community and won the confidence of staff and pupils. She has made an accurate assessment of the school's performance, recognising strengths and, with the support of senior leaders, successfully addressing those aspects where improvement is required. As a result, teaching has improved and attainment is rising. The school is well placed to improve further.

By the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment is broadly average. The measurement of their progress is highly complex because a significant proportion of the school population changes frequently. Less than a half of the current Year 6 attended this school at the start of Year 3. The leadership team maintains detailed records which, along with an effective analysis of the progress of individuals and groups and the inspectors' analysis of pupils' work, show that overall progress is good. Pupils' past results in reading and writing have not been as strong as those in mathematics. Recent improvements to the teaching of literacy are effectively closing the gap. The headteacher's well-judged review of arrangements for the identification and support of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved provision and results in these pupils making good progress. The exception to this positive picture lies in the small but stubborn minority of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Their attainment is frequently low and their progress uneven. The school is working effectively with other agencies to engage with these families so the amount of persistent absence is reducing.

Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace because teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan lessons that engage the interest of pupils. Thorough assessment in English and mathematics ensures work is well matched to individual needs. Well-targeted support to groups and individuals helps anyone falling behind to catch up. Pupils' achievements in other subjects are satisfactory, but opportunities for them to practise and apply the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum are not systematically developed.

Children in Early Years Foundation Stage have settled happily in school. They are well cared for and make satisfactory progress. Opportunities for them to take responsibility and develop initiative in their learning are underdeveloped.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed recent improvements to the teaching of reading and writing so that pupils have greater opportunity to practise and apply these skills in other subjects of the National Curriculum.
- Ensure provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage encourages children to develop greater independence and responsibility in their work and play.
- Reduce further the amount of unauthorised absence by working with those families who persistently struggle to get their children to school, for instance by providing them with evidence of the negative impact of repeated absence on their children's learning, progress and attainment; and ultimately their life chances.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Although there are frequent new arrivals, staff are conspicuously successful in helping pupils to settle in school and feel safe, secure and valued. 'I like this school because teachers try to understand you so they can help you do better', is the view of one recently arrived pupil, whose opinion was wholeheartedly supported by his Year 6 classmates. Pupils are well behaved and offer a polite welcome to visitors. By the age of 11 pupils have secure understanding of the need for a healthy diet and regular exercise and discuss sensibly how they achieve this. These good personal attributes contribute to their satisfactory preparation for the next stage in their learning.

There is compelling evidence that the school's strategies to improve reading and writing are accelerating progress. Common approaches to the teaching of literacy and the successful targeting of additional support for groups such as reluctant readers or pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are working well. The impact is most evident for those pupils who have been at the school from the age of four. Many of the current Year 6 pupils have made very good gains from their starting points and an increasing number of them are reaching beyond the nationally expected level. The progress of recently arrived pupils is more variable. The school's well-developed tracking means that staff can explain case by case the background of those who have made good progress, as well as what is being done for those who need to catch up.

Conversations with pupils show them to be happy and enthusiastic about school. They work diligently in lessons and are keen to do well. Many are able to talk maturely about their preferred areas of study and talk excitedly about the benefits of the new computer suite. The analysis of the pupils' previous and current work reveals a good volume of activity, especially in English, mathematics and science.

The school tracks the attendance of its pupils in great detail. The overwhelming majority are prompt, punctual and attend regularly. The leadership team work effectively with partners such as education welfare to successfully support the small but significant number of vulnerable families who struggle to get their children to school each day. As a result persistent absence is beginning to reduce. Setting historical data against current levels of attendance, overall attendance is broadly average.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Good relationships between staff and pupils support a positive ethos for learning. Most lessons progress at a brisk pace, but occasionally the introductions go on for too long and pupils, though well behaved, find it hard to sustain their concentration. Lesson planning is detailed and in English and mathematics identifies appropriate objectives that cater thoughtfully for the wide range of abilities. As a result, pupils understand what they are expected to learn and when they have achieved this. Many lessons are enlivened by the teachers' effective use of new technologies. For instance, Year 6 pupils' identification with the character of Ariel was considerably enhanced through the use of music and video. Teaching assistants are at their most effective when working with individuals or small groups of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Occasionally they are insufficiently involved in supporting pupils when teachers are introducing lessons. Pupils receive good feedback about their work in English and mathematics and in these subjects are clear about their targets and what they need to do to succeed.

While the school's curriculum offers a good range of learning opportunities, it lacks coherence. Teachers' attempts to enhance learning by making links between subjects frequently interest pupils, but the inspectors' analysis of pupils' work shows that opportunities to practise and reinforce the skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in other subjects are not firmly established. A good variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities

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as well as educational visits and visitors to the school are welcomed by pupils and enhance their learning.

Good attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. The school provides a welcoming environment which celebrates pupils' work. Effective links with parents and carers and a range of agencies, such as health, and other services, ensure prompt support for pupils facing more challenging circumstances. Care clubs, before and after school, provide a valuable service for working families and are enjoyed by the pupils.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The staff team is strongly committed to the work of the school, ensuring improvement and the best possible outcomes for pupils. Members of the governing body visit school regularly, offer good support and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They successfully appointed a new headteacher who, with the School Improvement Partner, is effectively helping to increase their capacity to challenge and hold the school to account. Conversations with parents and carers show that the leadership of the headteacher is held in high regard. They are clear that the impact of recent changes has improved morale and lifted pupils' achievement.

Senior leaders have a good oversight of the work of the school. The headteacher's focus on improving the quality of teaching by raising teachers' expectations for the pace and challenge in lessons is increasingly successful. This is because senior leaders provide good role models through their own teaching and their ability to share their expertise with colleagues. The headteacher and assessment leader track the progress of individual pupils in good detail and hold teachers to account at regular progress meetings.

The school holds pertinent information about the performance of groups and individuals and puts this to good use when setting individual targets. There is evidence of purposeful action to help pupils from Traveller families to attend school regularly and to do school work when travelling. Successful improvements to arrangements for the support of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are accelerating their progress. However, the leadership team does not yet routinely check which groups and individuals contribute to activities such as school council and after-school clubs. As a result the promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

The school adopts recommended good practice for all aspects of risk assessment and the safeguarding of pupils. The headteacher and staff work productively with other agencies,

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such as health and education welfare, to support the specific needs of individual pupils and their families.

Plans to promote community cohesion are appropriate and reflect a good understanding of the local context. However, early initiatives to develop pupils' awareness of communities beyond the school have as yet had only limited impact.

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
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a satisfactory start to their education. Adults in the Reception class ensure that children are well prepared for school, meeting them in their pre-school settings and homes and providing opportunities for them to visit the class. Consequently they settle quickly, make friends and soon become accustomed to school routines. The profile of children's achievements when they enter school varies from year to year and has typically been much lower than the national picture. This was particularly the case in respect of their social skills and communication, language and literacy. Early assessments of the current class show that most arrived working at the expected levels and are making satisfactory progress across all areas of learning.

Staff plan in considerable detail to ensure a balance of activities that children choose for themselves and those that adults lead. The plan is sensibly linked to a central theme or story which engages the interest of the children, but is not always fully developed. Adults provide children with clear directions, but do not always give them sufficient opportunity to take responsibility for selecting their own equipment and materials and tidying up afterwards. Many of the current class are talkative and knowledgeable; adults are not always alert to the possibilities of extending learning by building on these personal interests and attributes.

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The teaching of letters and sounds and opportunities to practise writing are improving children's early literacy skills. Singing games and a good variety of additional materials motivate the children in these sessions, but sometimes they go on for too long so children lose interest, especially the boys. The deployment of additional adults such as teachers and teaching assistants during these times does not always make maximum use of their talents.

The new Reception leader is enthusiastic and receptive. She recognises that while current arrangements ensure all children are safe, secure and eager to learn, the impact of provision could be greater. Although adults keep careful check on the children at work and play, the quality of day-to-day assessments is variable and the arrangements for storing these makes it difficult to maintain an overview of individual progress. As a result assessment does not consistently inform planning for the next steps in learning. Parents say that the records and samples of work shared at the recent parents' evening were helpful and informative, but there are as yet no opportunities for children to help select and build a personal record of their individual achievements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

At 34%, the proportion of questionnaire returns is in line with the national average. Inspection evidence supports the overwhelmingly positive views expressed by those parents and carers who returned their questionnaires. The great majority of pupils are making good progress. Although there a few pupils who can present challenging behaviour, this is well managed by the school. The school has taken appropriate steps to request that parents and carers park more considerately at the end of the school day.

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 Combined 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 198 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	68	22	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	72	18	26	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	63	24	35	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	66	20	29	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	69	20	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	60	27	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	51	33	49	0	0	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)	34	50	32	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	60	25	37	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	43	36	53	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	47	35	51	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	57	28	41	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	69	19	28	0	0	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



23 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Burnham SL1 7DE

Thank you all for the help you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. We were pleased to be able to talk to so many of you during the two days and the things you told us were extremely helpful. We agree with you (and your mums and dads) that St Peter's is a good school. The staff work hard to make lessons fun and interesting and because you listen and do your best, most of you are making good progress and achieving well.

You told us you feel safe and secure at school and that teachers take good care of you, especially those new pupils who sometimes arrive halfway through the year. Several of you told us that behaviour is good and that if there any problems they are sorted out quickly. We agree. School is a happy place where you get on together very well.

There are three things that we think will make your school even better. We would like your teachers to give you more opportunities to use your reading, writing, mathematics and computer skills in other subjects; for instance, in history, finding out about the people who lived in Tudor times and making a presentation. This will help you learn how to research on your own and prepare you for secondary school.

Reception children work hard and we think they could do even better if your teachers helped you to be more independent (do more things for yourself), for instance choosing your equipment and tidying up afterwards.

A few of you miss too much school. When this happens you get behind with your work and this makes it much harder for you to achieve the grades that you need to succeed in life. We want you to help your parents and carers by showing them how keen you are to get to school on time each day and do your best.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough

Lead inspector

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