

# St Peter's Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118576
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	358389
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Hutchings

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	106
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lawrence McVeigh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Denise Curzon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 December 2007
<b>School address</b>	Holcombe Road Rochester Medway ME1 2HU
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons involving four teachers and observed assemblies. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning documents, assessment information and pupils' work. In addition, inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 59 parents and carers, and scrutinised others from staff.

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

- They looked at how well leaders have evaluated the factors impacting on pupils' writing and how effectively any action taken is improving attainment, given the lower attainment in 2010 than in previous years.
- They looked at how well teaching challenges all groups of pupils, particularly boys and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- They investigated the impact of the school's strategies to improve attendance.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high and mainly related to speech, language and communication difficulties. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. In recent years, an increasing proportion of pupils join the school from Eastern European countries and some are at an early stage of speaking English. More pupils join or leave the school during the school year than is usually found. Extended childcare is provided through a service-level agreement with City Way Nursery and this is subject to a separate inspection. The school has a number of awards for its work, including Healthy School status and the Eco School award. Since the last inspection the school was subject to a formal closure notice, with a final decision to keep it open made in September 2009. The current headteacher joined the school in June 2010.

**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 Infant School is a good school which places itself at the heart of the local community. As a result of a warm, positive ethos, pupils develop confidence and learn well. Outstanding care, guidance and support enable parents and carers to build a good partnership with the school and help pupils to feel exceptionally safe and secure. The clear focus on pupils' personal development results in them behaving well and acquiring the positive skills of working independently, which gives them a good foundation for the next stage of their education. The school works with an exceptional range of partners to enrich pupils' experiences. For example, during the inspection, pupils participated in a local music festival. A teacher from a local secondary school trains older pupils as Young Leaders, who then organise daily playground games. This is only one example of the outstanding way pupils support the school and wider community. Another instance is seen in pupils' success in having a salt bin installed in the road after writing to the local council about the difficulty they had encountered on the pavements during winter snow.

Children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The broad curriculum across the school promotes pupils' creative and physical development well, in addition to developing their literacy and numeracy skills. For example, regular cooking sessions make a strong contribution to pupils' excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle as well as developing numeracy skills by weighing out ingredients. Teaching is effective throughout the school because teachers know pupils well and use this information to ensure that pupils are given work which builds systematically on their existing skills and knowledge. Even so, some aspects of teaching are not fully consistent in all classes. For example, on occasion, the pace during the lesson introduction is too slow so that pupils begin to lose concentration when they have to listen for a long time. There are examples of teachers giving pupils good opportunities to follow up on the advice given to them in marking, but sometimes misconceptions are not resolved quickly enough. Teachers are currently devising a programme to share the most effective practice.

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 varies from year to year because of differing needs in each cohort, but is generally average. Their attainment in reading and mathematics is stronger than in writing. The wider range of approaches introduced this year to promote both reading and writing is narrowing the gap successfully. However, the school has identified rightly that pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise their writing skills in their topic work and that higher-attaining pupils could reach even higher levels if they were expected to write at greater length.

Parents and carers appreciate the speed with which the headteacher established herself as a strong leader. New systems have been introduced to promote attendance, which is improving overall. However, the attendance of a small minority of pupils is low and this has an adverse impact on their learning. Since the last inspection, staff and the governing

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body have shown considerable resilience and skill in maintaining a good quality of education for pupils while challenging proposals to close the school. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate and improvement plans are matched closely to identified areas of weakness, giving the school a good capacity to improve further.

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

- Share the most effective practice to ensure that teaching enables pupils' progress to be accelerated further by:
  - making sure that lesson introductions are conducted at a good pace
  - giving pupils more activities in their topic work which require them to use their writing skills
  - ensuring that higher-attaining pupils have opportunities to write at greater length
  - giving pupils opportunities to follow up the advice given to them when teachers mark their work.
- Improve the attendance of the few pupils who find it difficult to attend regularly.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

Pupils know that they are expected to work hard, commenting that 'it is one of our Golden Rules'. They talk knowledgeably about what they are learning because teachers make the class and individual targets clear to them. Pupils work very well in groups, organising themselves and working cooperatively. For example, in one lesson during the inspection, individuals were initially uncertain about how to draw a pictogram from the data they were given, but discussed the problem as a group quickly and worked out for themselves how to represent the information accurately, without the need for adult intervention. Pupils concentrate well and do their best because they enjoy their work.

Overall, children enter the Reception Year with skills and knowledge levels that are below those typical of their age, particularly in their development of early literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils make good progress from their starting points when they join the school, either in the Reception Year or later, because their attainment is monitored closely and effective action is taken if a pupil is seen to be progressing too slowly. Consequently, all groups of pupils make good progress, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Last year, attainment was below the national average, but this reflected a higher number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities than usual, particularly among boys. Overall, girls achieve better than boys. However, an emphasis on reducing the gap is proving successful this year. The changes made to topics and choices of books are more motivating for boys, while also improving girls' progress.

Pupils' good personal development means that they are ready to take on a range of responsibilities successfully, such as the Caring Crew who carry out tasks including setting up the hall for assemblies and composting fruit waste after break. Pupils of all ages take turns as Playground Friends, making sure that all pupils are included at playtime. Work undertaken in lessons promotes pupils' emotional well-being well. 'Treat others as you would like them to treat you' is seen as a whole-school approach for both pupils and adults. Representation on the school council develops pupils' understanding of citizenship

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well as they learn about roles such as chairman or treasurer. The campaign organised by the school council to identify potential health and safety issues around the school made a strong contribution to pupils' excellent understanding of how to take care of themselves; for example, the danger of coats which had fallen on the ground. Pupils have positive attitudes towards school, each other and the world in general, shown, for example, when pupils initiated a 'bring and buy sale' to raise charity funds following floods in Pakistan. Attendance fell last year to below average levels. The school has established good procedures to challenge poor attendance and provides help and support where necessary. Although absence is falling, there are still some families who do not subscribe to the school's expectations.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</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

**How effective is the provision?**

Teachers work together well to share expertise and plan lessons which engage and motivate pupils, often using computer software effectively to illustrate learning. Teachers and teaching assistants praise pupils well for their achievements, while making their expectations about the quantity and quality of work absolutely clear. Achievement and effort are recognised well in assemblies. Teachers know their pupils well and use this information to plan work at varying levels so that all ability groups are challenged to take their learning forward quickly. Lessons are organised to give pupils regular opportunities to review how successful they are in meeting their targets and to understand how this will

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be taken forward in the next lesson. Occasionally, introductions to lessons are too slow. However, there are examples of whole-class sessions which are focused well to take account of pupils' different levels of achievement. An emphasis on requiring pupils to explain their thinking promotes their thinking and speaking skills well in all classes.

The curriculum gives pupils a wide range of well-planned and challenging activities. Links between subjects make learning coherent and interesting. There are some opportunities for pupils to use and apply their basic skills of literacy and numeracy in other areas of the curriculum, but this does not happen often enough. Specialist teaching in music, cookery and sport broadens pupils' experiences well. The range of well-attended clubs, including sport, drama, art, music and craft, is impressive for an infant school and enriches pupils' school experience greatly.

Parents and carers commented particularly on how the school's nurturing atmosphere ensures that pupils thrive. They appreciate particularly that adults know each pupil by name and welcome them personally on arrival each day. The sense of belonging to a community is seen in the way the school supports pupils as part of their family, helping parents and carers to access additional support when this is needed. The school identifies pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities exceptionally well and at an early stage because of the expertise within the school. Staff use a wide range of strategies, within the classroom and individually, which meet pupils' needs well and often result in rapid progress.

*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?

Senior leaders and the governing body have a strong drive to take the school forward. All staff share this aspiration, showing a positive 'can do' attitude, and are involved actively in planning and implementing the development plan. Self-evaluation is accurate so that priorities are focused well on areas to bring about the greatest improvement. For example, the school has identified that it is necessary to accelerate progress in reading to underpin pupils' writing skills and pupils are now being taught phonetics (the sounds letters make) in smaller groups to provide more focused coaching. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties effectively and holds the school to account for improving pupils' attainment. The governing body was proactive in securing the school's future and ongoing financial viability. Safeguarding requirements meet statutory requirements well. The school's engagement with parents and carers is a significant strength. Many activities are organised, such as regular coffee mornings and workshops, where parents and carers can share ideas and find additional ways to contribute to their children's learning at home.

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Parents and carers give additional support in many practical ways. For example, the Healthy School Parent Group works with Green Team pupils to grow vegetables used in the school kitchen or to make products for sale at school events.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination effectively, as shown in the good progress made by pupils from different backgrounds and the reducing gap between girls' and boys' attainment. Strong links with the local community help to promote community cohesion well, for example helping pupils to understand different roles and cultures through visitors to the school. Themed weeks, such as World Week, and visits linked to topics give pupils a good understanding of different cultures and faiths. A current school priority is to raise pupils' awareness of different areas in the United Kingdom. Initial steps have been taken to develop links with other schools, but these do not yet involve pupils directly.

*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>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</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>1</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>2</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>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage grow in confidence quickly because of the school's strong focus on pastoral care and support. Children's welfare is given a high priority. Focused and imaginative planning enables children to develop as enthusiastic learners and to make good progress across all their areas of learning, including those areas where their skills are weaker. For example, a teacher-led activity about Goldilocks helped children to taste and talk about porridge and then to develop their early literacy skills by writing their own thoughts on large spoon-shaped pieces of paper. Many children join the Reception Year with communication, language and literacy and number skills below those expected for their age. By the time they reach Year 1, the gap has closed, although attainment in these areas remains below average. Children negotiate well with each other so that they sustain the activities they choose themselves. For example, when



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children were acting out the Red Riding Hood story, they all remained within the group, developing their speaking skills for a long time before moving on to a different activity. When children painted their clay castles, they took great care to ensure that they had covered each section completely in an appropriate colour.

Strong links with the local Sure Start centres are used very well to promote additional activities which help parents and carers to develop their own parenting skills. This was seen during the inspection at the 'Stay and Play' session when children and their parents and carers engaged in a range of activities around the theme of gardening. These were enjoyed thoroughly and gave adults additional ideas about how they can support their children's learning at home. Although many children's achievements are shared formally with their parents and carers, leaders are aware that this could be extended further. They plan to introduce a 'Learning Journal' to provide fuller feedback on day-to-day learning.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

The number of questionnaires returned from parents and carers was above the national average. The overwhelming majority of those who responded were positive about all aspects of the school's work and many wrote very supportive comments. They comment particularly on the school's warm, family atmosphere and how this helps children to settle easily into the school. They appreciate that teachers make time to chat, helping to address any issues parents and carers may have quickly. Comments were also made about the value of the workshops and out-of-school activities, which help to make parents and carers feel part of the school and children to feel secure and included. The negative issues raised were about individual concerns and were taken into account during the inspection.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Peter's Infant 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 106 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	69	18	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	51	86	8	14	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	58	25	42	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	64	20	34	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	42	71	17	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	73	15	25	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	68	17	29	2	3	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)	30	51	24	41	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	66	19	32	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	56	22	37	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	58	24	41	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	64	21	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	75	13	22	1	2	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](http://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"><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.**



28 March 2011

Dear Children

**Inspection of St Peter's Infant School, Rochester, ME1 2HU**

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking to you thoroughly and seeing your work. The celebration assembly is a very good way of seeing how much you do in school. We were impressed by how well behaved you are and how you work together sensibly. You go to a good school and these are some of the positive things about it.

- You get off to a good start in the Reception Year.
- Adults care for you exceptionally well so that the school is a happy and safe place for you to work and play together.
- The school teaches you well so that you have a very good understanding of how to be healthy and safe.
- Many of you care very well for others, for example as Young Leaders or as part of the Caring Crew.
- The school council is well run and has helped you to understand how you can keep the school safe.
- Your teachers plan many imaginative activities for you and you work hard because you find learning interesting.

The headteacher, staff and governing body work well together to make sure that the school continues to improve. To make the school even better, we have asked your teachers to make sure that you do not sit on the carpet for too long at the beginning of the lesson. We think that you can make even more progress in writing if you can practise your skills in topic work and sometimes write at greater length. We have also asked them to make sure that you follow up on the 'pink' suggestions they make on your work. You can help by attending school regularly and asking if there is anything you do not understand. We know that you will continue to do your best. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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