

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115070
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	378995
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Norma Ball

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	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosie Jenkin
Headteacher	John Smith
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons as well as small teaching groups withdrawn from class, observing a total of eight teachers. They also made shorter visits to classes to look at displays and observe individual pupils and groups at work. They met parents and carers informally during the inspection and held meetings with the headteacher, teaching staff, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised samples of pupils' work, teachers' planning, the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress and management, curriculum and safeguarding documentation. In addition, inspectors took account of responses to questionnaires from 94 parents and carers, 32 staff and 105 pupils.

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

- How successful is the school in improving progress for all pupils, particularly in writing and for girls in mathematics?
- How effectively is assessment information used to plan tasks that challenge all groups of pupils, especially the most able pupils?
- Do leaders and managers at all levels, including subject leaders, rigorously monitor the school's work and maintain a sharp, consistent focus on improving progress for all pupils?

Information about the school

St Peter's is an average-sized primary school serving the village and immediate local area. The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is smaller than that found nationally and a few of these pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average but a smaller than average proportion of these pupils are supported at 'school action plus' or have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The school holds the Activemark and Healthy School status.

A nursery shares the school site, but is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Peter's provides a satisfactory quality of education. A significant feature of the school is the good care, guidance and support provided for pupils by all staff. This care is extended well by a wide range of good partnerships with other schools and agencies. Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their above-average attendance. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and their personal development is good. Parents and carers are generally pleased with all that the school provides. One said, 'St Peter's satisfies our children's needs and interests and we have no worries about our children's education. We believe we have taken the best decision for our children and St Peter's proves it to us every year.'

Children settle quickly into the Reception class and make a good start to their learning. Older pupils make satisfactory progress through the school and leave Year 6 with average standards. Progress is not better because teachers make inconsistent use of information on pupils' progress to plan appropriately challenging tasks in lessons, especially for more-able pupils. The curriculum provides a good range of learning experiences for pupils and in particular an interesting range of writing experiences help engage pupils' interest in writing, especially boys. As a result progress in writing is beginning to improve for all pupils, but this is not yet reflected in rising attainment. Progress in mathematics has improved for girls and boys, especially through work on problem solving, although attainment remains average. A wide range of extra-curricular activities add an important dimension to learning and extend the creative curriculum well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress. Their needs are promptly assessed, work is adapted well for their needs, and they receive a range of satisfactory and sometimes good support.

The headteacher shares his enthusiasm to improve the school with a united and committed staff. Some senior leaders and managers, including subject leaders, are still developing their skills. Monitoring responsibilities rest mainly with the headteacher and are not shared fully with senior staff, and as a result monitoring is not sufficiently regular or rigorous to help accelerate pupils' achievement. In particular, monitoring of lessons to identify and share good practice among staff is not effective enough to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good. Members of the governing body have improved their skills so that they are better placed to evaluate the school's work and offer more incisive challenge. Some issues from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed and the rest are now

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receiving attention in line with action planning. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The school's self-evaluation procedures are mostly effective and accurate, demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by ensuring a greater proportion of teaching is good or better by identifying and sharing good practice.
- Ensure assessment information is used consistently well to plan lessons that provide challenge for all groups of pupils, especially the more able.
- Develop the skills of teachers with leadership responsibilities to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise achievement through rigorous and more effective monitoring.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy learning and behave well in lessons so there is a good learning ethos. They show enthusiasm in discussing ideas, in groups and with their learning partners. The successful focus on improving pupils' writing skills is well integrated into lessons. For example, in a Year 6 class pupils made good progress in writing a script based on a book they had read. Working in groups, they revised and adapted their scripts with enthusiasm in preparation for a lively rehearsal in the hall. Pupils' progress is limited in some lessons because the work is not well matched to their ability or they are all given the same task. The work is often too easy, especially for more-able pupils. It does not stretch them to do their best and so limits their progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are encouraged to develop independence and contribute in lessons. In groups, where additional support is given for literacy and numeracy, work is adapted appropriately for their needs and so they make the same progress as their peers.

Pupils show kindness and care to each other and courtesy to adults. Pupils' spiritual awareness is good, as shown in their ability to reflect on their actions and their enjoyment of the quiet reading areas around the school. Less well developed, but satisfactory, is their appreciation of the richness and diversity of other cultures beyond their local community. Older pupils have a wide range of responsibilities such as peer mentors and play leaders, for which they receive special training. They carry out their duties with pride and efficiency. The school council is well respected and

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the introduction of the playtime tuck shop with healthy snacks is one of their initiatives. Relationships at every level are good. Pupils understand clearly about being safe, including through safe use of the internet. Healthy School status and the Activemark award exemplify pupils' good awareness of what is important for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' average attainment and good personal development ensure they are soundly placed for the next stage of their education and later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers display good subject knowledge and good questioning helps them to assess pupils' understanding. Where lessons are less effective teachers do not consistently use what they know about pupils' progress to plan work that is matched carefully to their ability to stretch them and accelerate progress. Work is marked regularly in a way that praises pupils for their effort, but does not always give guidance on how to improve their work. Use of targets to identify for pupils what they need to learn next in literacy and numeracy is developing well through the school and pupils say they find them helpful. Teaching support staff are deployed well in classes and in small groups out of class to ensure all pupils, especially those who find learning difficult, are helped to develop confidence and independence in their learning. One pupil, typical of many, said, 'Teachers listen to you and we do some really interesting work.'

Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the themed approach to learning, for example,

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

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their work on the Victorians, which provided good writing opportunities following inspiration from a visit to the school by an actor in the role of Charles Dickens, and also a trip to the Colne Valley railway. Visits out of school, visitors and school clubs offer excitement and good enrichment for pupils, and opportunities to develop their sports and creative skills. The school choir is especially well regarded in the local community and performs regularly in events. Pupils show great confidence in the staff who care for them and so are happy to tell them of any concerns. Transition arrangements at all stages are sensitively organised so pupils are confident about moving to the next stage of their learning, in school or beyond.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is an energetic leader and has a clear perception of the important areas for development in the school. Strategies to improve achievement for pupils are becoming embedded and showing signs of success, although they are not yet having a noted impact on accelerating progress throughout the school. Subject leaders are developing their roles and responsibilities and share with teaching staff a united enthusiasm to improve the school. All staff and the governing body recognise they have capacity to improve further, especially through more rigorous and regular monitoring of achievement and teaching and learning. Members of the governing body have links with each class to extend their understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development, and are now extending their involvement in strategic planning.

The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils are helped to develop an appreciation of their own community, although they do not yet develop a full appreciation of their future role as national and global citizens, particularly in extending their awareness of the richness and diversity of other faiths and cultures. The school is free of discrimination and promotes equal opportunities soundly, ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Policies and procedures are well integrated throughout the school and staff receive regular training. Partnerships with local schools are used productively, and support provided by the local authority has been used prudently. Links with parents and carers are good. Regular progress reports and family learning programmes keep them well informed about their children's development.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly and develop a thorough enjoyment of learning because they are provided with a range of well-resourced and stimulating learning experiences. Their confidence and independence are developed well because of the good care they receive. All areas of learning are covered well in the indoor and outdoor classroom and activities are quickly adapted to take account of children's interests. Well-focused teaching sessions engage children well and all staff are skilled in subtly intervening in children's independent games to help extend their ideas and encourage their speaking skills.

Children enter Reception with skills and abilities that are below the levels expected nationally, especially in writing. There is a careful focus on developing writing skills through guiding children carefully to blend letters and sounds. Enjoyable tasks to encourage children to develop their writing skills as well as their understanding of numbers contribute to their good progress, although skills in writing remain below the levels found nationally. Learning is fun. For example, letter and number skills were extended well in the post office role play area. One boy, very pleased with the letter he had prepared, said excitedly, 'I am doing a big job in the post office so I need an envelope for my special letter.' Reception is led well and staff work as an efficient and energetic team. Staff monitor children's development carefully both informally, while they are playing, and in more structured learning sessions. The close links with the on-site independent nursery are especially well used to provide continuity in learning for children. Good links between school and home mean that parents and carers are kept fully involved in their children's development.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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 proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was higher than average and most were positive. In particular, the vast majority are pleased that their children enjoy school and all feel that they are kept safe. A small minority did not feel that unacceptable behaviour was dealt with effectively or that their suggestions and concerns were taken into account. Inspection evidence indicates that the school works well to build good links with parents and carers. The headteacher and staff are readily available to meet with parents and carers and discuss their concerns and their views are regularly canvassed. There are a few older pupils whose behaviour can be challenging but they are well managed by staff. The inspection found that behaviour in lessons and around the school was 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 Controlled Primary School, Sible Hedingham 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 94 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 202 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	56	36	38	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	58	62	36	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	41	49	52	6	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	47	40	43	6	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	41	47	50	4	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	41	45	48	7	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	53	38	40	4	4	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)	39	41	46	49	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	37	49	52	6	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	26	44	47	15	16	8	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	34	47	50	11	12	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	34	36	52	55	3	3	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	49	41	44	3	3	2	2

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 8 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



28 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Sible Hedingham, Halstead CO9 3NR

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so polite and helpful. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We especially enjoyed the lovely singing in the Christmas carol practice and how gently and sincerely you sang 'Silent Night'.

Adults take good care of you, so you feel safe. You behave well and care for each other. You told us that you enjoy learning and are proud of your school. You know a lot about how to keep safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. In your lessons we saw how much you enjoy your work and you like to join in discussions and share your ideas. Your headteacher, teachers and the governing body are working hard to help you do the best you can.

We think that St Peter's is a satisfactory school. This means that it does some things well, but also needs to make some things better.

- We have asked your teachers to share the good things they do, to help you learn more and make better progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers know how well you are doing and we have asked them to use this information to plan tasks in lessons that are not too easy and not too difficult.
- To make sure that your lessons are always of a high quality and you are learning as much as you can, we have asked the headteacher and other senior teachers to regularly check on what is happening in classrooms.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and doing your best at school. It was a great pleasure to visit St Peter's and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball
Lead inspector

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