

Inspection of a good school: St Peter's School

Cottonmill Lane, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 1HL

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 November 2023

Outcome

St Peter's School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The values of 'positive, caring and inclusive' are golden threads that run through every area of the school. Pupils know and understand these values. They explain how the values help them. For example, pupils know that caring is wider than just caring for each other. It extends to the environment, resources and the wider world.

Pupils enjoy high-quality pastoral support. They know that staff care about them, and this ensures they feel safe. There are respectful and trusting relationships between everyone. Many pupils love coming to school. They have positive attitudes towards their learning. They know that the school is ambitious for them and this motivates them to try their best.

Pupils understand what bullying is. They never intentionally do or say anything unkind that may upset others. When they do, they quickly apologise. Pupils say they are 'one big team' who all look out for each other.

Pupils behave well. They understand the behaviour expectations. When needed, pupils quickly adjust their behaviour and respond positively. Movement around the site is calm and orderly. Pupils understand that kind and considerate behaviour ensures the school is a happy place for everyone.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

There is an ambitious and well-planned curriculum in place. It is adapted to ensure all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can access it and progress. Teachers have expert subject knowledge. They use this to break down difficult concepts. This helps pupils to develop their understanding. Pupils' knowledge builds step by step. Teachers regularly check pupils' learning. They identify gaps quickly and put any extra help in place.

Well-trained and knowledgeable adults support pupils with SEND effectively. Consequently, many pupils with SEND achieve well. However, help for other pupils is of

variable quality. Some adults lack the knowledge and skills needed to support all pupils well. They sometimes accept incorrect answers for questions and do not encourage pupils to think carefully about what they are saying. This affects pupils' progress.

Work in some pupils' books is not up to the high standard leaders expect. Written work is often poorly presented and errors are not routinely picked up. For example, in mathematics, number reversals are not corrected, and pupils continue to repeat these errors over time. Workbooks do not reflect pupils' high engagement in learning.

Reading is a high priority. The school promotes reading through displays and reading ambassadors. Pupils enjoy reading and listening to their class stories. Children in the Reception class use their phonics skills to read books to each other during free play. In the Nursery, children develop their communication skills, and some start to identify letters and sounds in the environment. Teachers deliver the phonics programme skilfully. Pupils gain the knowledge and skills required to become fluent and accurate readers. Books are chosen to carefully match the sounds pupils know. There are regular checks to ensure anyone at risk of falling behind quickly gets help to keep up.

Learning is rarely disrupted. All pupils, including children in the Reception class, know and follow the school routines. Pupils are attentive and hard-working. Pupils learn how to manage their emotions. They talk confidently about the strategies they can use to help them remain calm when they are feeling angry or frustrated. Leaders work effectively to help pupils achieve high attendance. They work with families and external agencies to bring about improvements.

Pupils' wider development is a strength. Pupils take on leadership roles such as eco-councillors, play leaders and online ambassadors. They carry out their duties with pride. The wide variety of after-school clubs means there is something for everyone. Pupils learn about the wider world through many trips and events. Pupils understand about fairness and equality. They know democracy is a fair system, even though you can sometimes feel disappointed by the outcome. They accept and welcome everyone, regardless of difference. Pupils understand risk when using the internet and learn how to stay safe. The weekly pupil-led whole-school circle time sessions ensure every pupil has a voice in school. Pupils feel valued because adults listen to their views.

Parents are very supportive of the school. Many parents of pupils with SEND and children in the Reception class feel very well supported.

The governing body members know the school well. They have the expertise to be able to support and challenge leaders effectively. Staff are proud of their school. They want the best for the pupils. They say leaders care about their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils with SEND are supported well. This is not always the case for other pupils. The support they receive is not always of a high-enough quality. Some adults lack the knowledge and skills needed to support pupils well. This means pupils are sometimes at risk of not making as much progress as they are capable of. Leaders should provide training that will ensure all pupils always receive high-quality support.
- The standard of work in pupils' books is variable. Some books are untidy and messy. Pupils' work does not reflect their learning and knowledge. Basic errors are not routinely being picked up and so pupils continue to make the same mistakes. Leaders should put a clear set of expectations in place which insist on high-quality presentation in all workbooks.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	117140
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10294961
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	346
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James Clarke
Headteacher	Gillie Young
Website	www.stpeters.herts.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	24 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is a nursery provision on site, which is managed by the school.
- The school has undergone a period of significant change. There has been a major building project to accommodate the expansion from a one-form to two-form entry school. Currently, there are single-form classes in Years 4, 5 and 6 and two-form classes in all other years.
- There are before- and after-school clubs, which are run by the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of staff. She met with governors and the local authority improvement partner and talked to parents at morning drop-off.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography to evaluate the quality of education. For each of these, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed some younger pupils reading to staff and talked to them about their reading. The inspector also spoke to older pupils about reading.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour and met with groups of pupils to seek their views of the school. She also spoke to pupils informally in class, around the school and during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector scrutinised the single central record and other safeguarding files. She spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, governors, pupils and parents to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- The inspector reviewed 129 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. She considered 78 free-text responses from parents and 4 written communications received through the school office. She took 39 responses to the staff survey into account.

Inspection team

Karen Stanton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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