



Inspection report

St Peter and St Paul CE Primary School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 114564
LEA East Sussex

Inspection number 274786
Inspection dates 5 and 6 May 2005
Reporting inspector Ms C Herring HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Buckhurst Road
School category	Voluntary Aided <i>Diocese of Chichester</i>		Bexhill-on-Sea
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		East Sussex TN40 1QE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01424 211073
Number on roll	412	Fax number	01424 218081
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr C Miles
Date of previous inspection	September 2003	Headteacher	Mr R White

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	20 June 2005	274786

Introduction

When St Peter and St Paul CE Primary School was inspected in September 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in May 2005.

Description of the school

St Peter and St Paul CE Aided Primary School is in Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex. It is much larger than most primary schools, with 418 pupils on roll. The pupils live in owner-occupied or rented accommodation locally and in the surrounding areas and approximately ten per cent enter and leave other than at the customary times of transfer. Twelve per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below average. The number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds has increased and a small number are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Just over 25 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, which is above average; however, none have a Statement of Special Educational Need. There have been three headteachers in the last 15 months and several other staff changes. The newly appointed substantive headteacher has made a positive start and morale among teachers and other staff is good.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Over the past 18 months St Peter and St Paul CE Primary School has made significant improvement. It offers a satisfactory standard of education with many strengths. Standards remain too low but they are improving and an increasing number of the pupils make satisfactory or better progress, with many achieving well. The pupils are keen to succeed and behaviour and attitudes are mostly good. The quality of provision is much improved and is good overall. Almost all the teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and two thirds are good or better. The curriculum is broad and adequately balanced but because of limited resources, information and communication technology (ICT) is underused. There is a wide range of extracurricular activities which are well attended. The leadership team has a strong understanding of the processes and practices necessary to drive and sustain improvement.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of September 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with raising achievement; increasing the effectiveness of leadership and management; improving the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring that the curriculum met the pupils' needs. There has been good progress in relation to teaching, learning, assessment, and leadership and management; reasonable progress has been made on improving curriculum provision and achievement. Standards are below what they should be but expectations are considerably higher than previously.

Capacity to improve

The school is well placed to improve. The capacity of the leadership team is good and all school leaders, including the governors, are determined to raise standards. A comprehensive programme for monitoring the school's performance effectively shapes the way subsequent work is planned; and suitable actions address underperformance. Weakness in the leadership of literacy, for example, has been effectively resolved with the appointment of a leading teacher of literacy. Most importantly, the school recognises the benefits of external expertise and evaluation and has a good grasp of comparative data. These notable developments make the senior staff more circumspect in judging performance and more able to challenge low expectation. However, some co-ordinators do not contribute fully to school self-evaluation and development planning. The impact of the contribution from the local education authority (LEA) to improvement has been very good and the LEA has wisely committed resources to support the next stage of the school's development. The school's budgetary position is weak and it faces difficulty in sustaining the pace and cost of improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- raise the attainment and achievement of all pupils;
- strengthen the processes of self-evaluation and development planning and ensure that everyone is involved;
- improve provision for ICT.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory overall and often good. However in a few of the classes in Key Stages 1 and 2 the pupils make less progress than they ought. These differences are largely due to variation in the quality of teaching. Standards of attainment are average to above average in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 but low and below what they should be in Key Stage 2.

The pupils in the reception classes make a good start; most reach standards that are expected for five-year-olds and many can speak, read and write at levels that are above those expected for their age. However this rate of progress is not maintained consistently across Key Stage 1. Nonetheless standards are rising and assessments indicate that the results of the 2005 national tests for Key Stage 1 should be better than the previous year and that the upward trend of improvement will continue.

The 2004 national test results for Key Stage 2 were well below the school's targets and the proportions of the pupils reaching the expected Level 4 were too low in all subjects. During the past year, however, the pupils in Year 6 have made good gains in their learning and many have made very good progress and overcome gaps in their previous learning. Assessment indicates that the 2005 test results at Level 4 should show a slight improvement on the previous year although fewer of the pupils are expected to achieve the higher levels.

A range of suitable strategies have been implemented to raise attainment and address the gaps in the pupils' learning. These include additional support for groups and individuals and changes in the co-ordination of provision for special education needs. The latter development is timely as some of the pupils who have special educational needs make too little progress in lessons.

Personal development

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and is underpinned by a comprehensive and valuable policy. The school fosters good relationships at all levels and the adults are consistent in their dealings with the pupils. The pupils recognise the need for rules and know the difference between right and wrong. The

teachers provide regular opportunities for the pupils to work collaboratively and are appropriate role models of effective teamwork. The rate of attendance is good and above the national figure but, during the inspection, punctuality was poor.

The pupils' social development is enhanced through a number of clubs including French, ICT, protecting the environment, sports and drama and dance. Residential visits in Years 5 and 6, and trips throughout the year, enhance the curriculum and enable the pupils to learn important skills in co-operation and leadership. During breaks and lunchtimes the pupils play together well, sharing equipment and taking turns. The older pupils take responsibility for play activities and some routine administrative and supervisory tasks. The recently formed school council gives elected members a good opportunity to represent their classmates and to voice suggestions and concerns.

Assemblies contribute to the pupils' growing sense of spirituality and moral development; they provide a focus for the pupils to consider their reactions to significant events. Lessons in history and geography, and a positive approach to behaviour management, help them to understand the consequences of choices. Different faiths and traditions are explored through religious education and in assembly. The pupils' cultural awareness is developed through music from around the world and art is stimulated by the work of famous artists. However, there is insufficient co-ordination, either in schemes of work or short-term planning, to promote an awareness of the contribution of other cultures to British society.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning are good overall and improvement has been rapid. Lessons are interesting and made meaningful with practical activities and a real sense of purpose. Good use is made of data on achievement and attainment to organise groups and plan suitable activities. The emphasis on developing the pupils' thinking through talk, and ensuring their participation via the use of resources and a range of questioning strategies are highly effective. Many of the teachers are skilled at planning opportunities to assess the pupils' learning throughout the lesson.

During the inspection, planning and preparation were thorough. There were high expectations of what the pupils should achieve and the teaching built on what they already knew. The tasks captured the pupils' imagination and reflected the wide range of needs. Classroom organisation enhanced learning. The teaching assistants made an effective contribution, working well alongside the teachers and giving targeted help to specific groups of pupils. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory. On this occasion the pupils made insufficient progress because of the teacher's weak subject knowledge and a lack of preparation.

There are robust and effective systems for recording the pupils' attainment and tracking their progress. Additionally, the pupils benefit from improvements to marking. The teachers tell the pupils what they have done well and what they need to improve. This development and the introduction of curriculum targets have empowered some of the older pupils, who discuss, assess and improve their work with confidence.

The curriculum is satisfactory and a sound emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Planning is good and the quality is closely monitored and evaluated. However, because some lessons over-run, the time which is allocated for individual subjects is occasionally eroded. The school is considering a new method of curriculum planning and is appropriately piloting and evaluating the approach. The provision for pupils with additional needs is satisfactory overall but a minority of the pupils who have special educational needs make insufficient progress in lessons because tasks are not suitably matched to their needs.

The learning environment is much improved and the classrooms and corridors celebrate the pupils' achievements and provide a good stimulus and support for learning. However, because of limited resources, opportunities for the pupils to use ICT to enhance learning are rare. The school pays due attention to the pupils' safety, health and general well-being.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of the whole school community. He has created a strong leadership team which shares a common vision and responsibility for improvement. Its members' proactive and positive style is effective and the emphasis on staff development through training and coaching is good. However the quality of subject co-ordination is uneven and the role remains underdeveloped. Some co-ordinators do not contribute fully to school self-evaluation and development planning or hold responsibility for standards and achievement.

Monitoring and evaluation are satisfactory overall. Evaluation is purposeful and usually accurate, however, there is insufficient use of hard data to measure performance and improvement. Governance has improved satisfactorily and a group of the governors plays a key role in leading and monitoring the school's development. These governors are well informed and fulfil all their responsibilities including holding the leadership to account and contributing to the school's strategic development.

The LEA has played a crucial role in the school's improvement. It has been especially proactive in securing strong leadership and increasing the effectiveness of the governing body. LEA officers and consultants have provided high quality, well-targeted support which has raised expectations, developed leadership and management and significantly enhanced the quality of teaching. Additional funding from the LEA is intended to minimise the likely impact of budgetary weaknesses on the school's progress. The diocese has been supportive of the school and, in particular, in providing assistance to the headteacher and the governing body.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

St Peter and St Paul CE Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in September 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in May and September 2004 and in February 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of September 2003.

In May 2005, inspectors returned to inspect the school for two days: two HMI and one Additional Inspector visited on the first day, an HMI and an Additional Inspector visited for the second day. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twenty four lessons or parts of lesson, three registration sessions and three assemblies were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the chair of governors, and representatives from the LEA, and informally with other staff and with pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and areas for improvement in the inspection report of September 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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