



St Peter's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117140
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 279994
Inspection dates 3 October 2005 to 4 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. Geof Timms LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cottonmill Lane
School category	Community		AL1 1HL
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01727853075
Number on roll	236	Fax number	01727868842
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.J Turberville
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Michael Connell

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school takes children from the age of three into a nursery class and most stay at the school until the end of Year 6. It is located in central St Albans and is of broadly average size for a primary school. Children come from a range of social and economic backgrounds. The large majority are of white British origin, but there is a wide variety of other ethnic groups, the main ones being Bangladeshi, Pakistani, mixed heritage or other white backgrounds. Thirty-six pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The main other languages spoken are Bengali, Urdu and Punjabi. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to the majority of schools nationally. A broadly average proportion of the pupils have learning or physical difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an exceptionally effective school which provides its pupils with a high quality education which prepares them very well for the future. This view is supported by the school's perceptive self-evaluation, which is extensive and accurate, and provides a very good basis for improvement. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. As it is such an effective school in all aspects, staff are capable of maintaining their many strengths and continuing to develop and improve further. The school offers excellent value for money. Many aspects of the school's work are outstanding. Teaching and curriculum planning, together with the exceptional tracking of pupils' progress, both academically and for their personal development, are very effective. This helps create conditions favourable to the exceptionally high standards and the exemplary level of care offered to pupils. The very strong and effective leadership provided by the headteacher, senior management team and governing body keeps the school focused on its core purpose and provides a relentless focus on high achievement and success for all pupils. The provision in the nursery and reception classes is also outstanding. The children make very clear progress from their attainment on entry to the school and most achieve the expected learning goals by the end of the reception year, with a high proportion exceeding them.

What the school should do to improve further

The school has carefully considered its future development and is accurate in its self-evaluation. The leadership is very aware of priorities and they form the basis for its development planning. To continue improving and to maintain the current exceptional provision, the school should put its plan into action.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards are outstanding. The attainment on entry to the school varies but is broadly in line with that typically found for children of that age. Children make very good progress throughout the nursery and reception classes, and the majority achieve or exceed the expected levels by the time they reach the end of the reception year. The progress made throughout the school continues to build on these firm foundations and results in outstanding achievement. Pupils are set and achieve challenging targets and this supports their learning very effectively. The test results in 2004 for the end of Year 2 showed standards to be broadly in line with those expected. The Year 6 pupils did not reach such a high standard as they did in 2003, but this was due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, and the school ensured that the progress these pupils had made was still very good. This was particularly due to the work done with the pupils to develop their personal development and self-esteem. The boys' standards improved considerably due to this work. The opportunities for good quality writing in different subjects have improved significantly since the last inspection and shows how well the school responded to this

issue. Results have improved in 2005. Higher-attaining pupils achieved very high standards in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels is very good and demonstrates how well the pupils, particularly those who are higher attainers, have progressed throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school and eagerly describe the different aspects of their learning and play that excite them most. The vast majority are thoroughly proud of their achievements. This pride and enjoyment is reflected in their excellent achievement in lessons and the exceptionally positive attitudes they develop. Pupils describe why they love being part of the vibrant and stimulating community that the school provides. A significant strength in this is the exceptional degree to which they are encouraged to develop positive self-esteem and respect for the views and opinions of others. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has a very significant impact on their personal development and behaviour. Pupils are encouraged from their first days in school to keep safe and healthy and even the youngest children know the importance of taking regular exercise. Pupils are given numerous opportunities to develop an understanding of the local community and are helped to develop the key skills that will support their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The findings of the inspection support the school's view that all of the teaching is at least good, with much that is very good and excellent. The overall impact of the teaching is reflected in the progress children make. This is evident through the outcomes of the children's work and the relationships between children and adults. The very positive relationships give pupils the confidence to attempt new learning and be unafraid about making mistakes. Pupils feel safe in school and appreciate how well the teachers help them to learn, especially when they find their work difficult. Marking of pupils' work is very clear about what has been done well and what could be done to improve. The pride pupils show in their work is also reflected in its neatness. Teachers plan very effective cross-curricular links. They work well with learning support assistants. The support for pupils at an early stage of learning English is very effective in enabling these pupils to take a full part in the lessons. The introduction of a sound system into classrooms has been well evaluated by the school and this shows how pupils' attentiveness in lessons has improved. Teachers work very hard to create an interesting and exciting environment for learning. They make effective use of the interactive whiteboards. Teachers have very good questioning skills and they match the work to pupils' capabilities very effectively. Pupils' learning is assessed exceptionally well and this enables teachers to plan for them to reach the challenging academic and personal targets set.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding throughout the school. It fully meets the needs of all pupils. Carefully planned cross-curricular activities make a significant difference to pupils' enthusiasm for learning and, as a result, to the rate at which they learn. The school is working hard to ensure that the best features of the nursery and reception class are continued into the early stages of Year 1. This leads to a seamless transition in pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs are exceptionally well provided for, as is the small number of pupils who do not speak English at home. The provision for personal and social education is exemplary, and strategies to encourage the well-being of pupils have been carefully woven into the curriculum. The school has introduced an unusually broad range of activities extra to and supporting of the curriculum, and these are having a very positive impact on the confidence with which pupils develop and learn.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All staff demonstrate very high levels of care and commitment and the support and guidance they provide for pupils is outstanding. This makes a very positive contribution to the achievement and personal development of all the pupils whose views are regularly sought and acted upon. Rigorous child protection procedures are well known by all staff and are implemented very effectively. Risk assessments are completed, as necessary, and ensure that pupils always learn in a safe environment. They know how to get help and advice when they need it. Overall, the school has excellent relationships with parents and other agencies that enable all groups to work together well to ensure that pupils learn as fast as possible. Reports about pupils' progress and the targets that are set are detailed, accessible and of the highest quality, reflecting the school's commitment to parents' full involvement in their children's education. Pupils learn about their rights and are proud of the range of responsibilities they are given. The school has devised exceptionally good systems for tracking pupils' progress. This includes very good tracking of personal development as well as academic progress. The system allows the staff to set challenging targets based on pupils' past and current achievements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, staff and governing body are extremely enthusiastic about their work and are aware of the school's strengths and areas they wish to improve in the future. The governors are very supportive and involved in the school, offering a very good level of challenge and acting as critical friends. Most have specific links to a subject or other aspect of the school which they monitor and report on to other governors following visits. The school is very effective in managing the performance of teachers and this has a positive impact

on the quality of education. Teachers are well supported and make the most of opportunities to develop their skills through further training. Initiatives such as the requirement for teachers' preparation time have been very successfully introduced and the latter has been used to give pupils extra enrichment opportunities through music and, for older pupils, an opportunity to learn a modern foreign language. Pupils feel they are involved in the school, particularly through the school council. The headteacher is involved in a range of community networks and works successfully with other schools and outside agencies. For example, a link with a local independent school has supported very good development of computer provision. These links are of benefit to the school as they widen opportunities for professional development. The school's development planning is exceptionally detailed and effective in promoting change and helping maintain the outstanding achievements evident. The evidence of the outstanding and consistently effective leadership and management points to the school having a very clear capacity to improve further in the future and to maintain the exceptional standards currently achieved. Available resources are very well managed and this supports the excellent value for money that the school provides.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school last week. We thoroughly enjoyed learning about your school and the things that you enjoy about it that help you to learn so well. We particularly enjoyed meeting the school council who told us a lot about the things you like doing at school. This letter is to tell you about some of the important things we found. We think you are very lucky at your school because it is such a good school, and the headteacher, teachers and other adults all look after and care for you so well. In fact, we think your school is outstanding! Teachers encourage you to be healthy and to stay safe, and ensure you have good opportunities to learn new things. We were especially impressed by your work and the high levels you reach. We also like the way so many of you take part in the extra opportunities given you, such as in the very good art club and the exciting drama club. You behave very well at school and this helps the teachers to teach you so well. You know what to do if there is any bullying and that there is someone you can turn to for help if you need it. Mr Connell and your teachers are keen to make the school even better for you. They have very good plans for doing this and we think that if they put these plans into action your school will get even better. It was good to find out from you and your parents that so many of you are happy at school. Keep working hard and enjoy your time St Peter's!