



St Peter's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110906
Local Authority CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number 288810
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Alan Alder HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	St Peter's Road
School category	Foundation		Huntingdon
Age range of pupils	11–18		Cambridgeshire PE29 7DD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01480 459581
Number on roll (school)	1261	Fax number	01480 457968
Number on roll (6th form)	133		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr D Cracknell
		Headteacher	Mrs V Ford
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	24–25 January 2007	288810

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a large and diverse area. The majority of students live in Huntingdon, including in some areas of significant deprivation. Others come from a number of small villages. About one in seven students is eligible for a free school meal, a similar proportion to that found nationally. Most pupils are from a white British background. About one in ten is from a minority ethnic group. Of these pupils, the biggest groups are from Pakistani, Black Caribbean, Black African and Portuguese backgrounds. An increasing number of students are joining the school from Poland. Nearly five per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language. The headteacher joined the school in September 2006.

The school was awarded specialist status for mathematics and computing in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school, which is improving. The headteacher has worked quickly to improve behaviour, attendance and punctuality, with notable success. While these are now satisfactory, and pupils say they feel safe in school, the school's own evaluation recognises there is more to do on these areas, as well as others. The effectiveness of the work done so far shows that the school's capacity for improvement is good. However, in a minority of areas of the school, self-evaluation is not searching enough and actions taken to bring about improvements are not taken robustly enough.

Students make satisfactory progress and the standards they reach are broadly average. This reflects the quality of teaching they receive. Whilst a good number of lessons are of good quality, and some are outstanding, too many lack the spark needed to stimulate students' interest. This is one reason why students' enjoyment of school is only satisfactory. As one year 9 student said, 'lessons need to be more fun'. The school's leaders and managers review the quality of teaching regularly, and take steps to improve it. However some subject leaders are not having sufficient impact on the quality of teaching.

The curriculum, particularly for students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, is good. It provides well for those with different interests and abilities. It gives students satisfactory skills for the workplace and for future economic well-being. It provides a good range of subjects, including the academic and those which are more closely matched to the world of work. However, students' literacy skills are insufficiently developed through the curriculum.

There is not an adequate means of assessing the learning potential of those students who join the school from overseas and whose English is at an early stage of acquisition. As a result the school cannot be sure if they receive the support and challenge that they need in different subjects. Although these students are now becoming integrated into school life, their early days are difficult because some are the butt of racist remarks. The school takes appropriate actions to deal with this. However, the progress of different cultural groups in the school is not monitored closely enough to ensure they are making the progress they should be.

Students receive the recommended amount of physical education and many also walk to school, so they exercise regularly. Their healthiness is generally good as is their understanding of health matters. Nevertheless, this does not influence their choice of food enough from a school canteen menu which, despite recent changes, still offers too many items which have a high fat or sugar content.

Students contribute well to both the school and the local community.

The school's specialist status has had a good impact on the curriculum and on resources. It has resulted in the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) to all in Year 7 to 11. There is also a growing use of this technology for teaching purposes. Staffing has been increased in mathematics and this has helped to improve the learning

of some students and progress is being made towards the school's targets. The impact of specialist status on teaching quality throughout the school is at an early stage.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Standards in the sixth form are well below the national average, but are improving. Students make broadly satisfactory progress. The curriculum contains a variety of courses which enable students with different abilities to make progress. Students are taught satisfactorily.

Students are positive about their experience in the sixth form and enjoy their education. They play a satisfactory part in the life of the school and act as mentors to younger students. Students' work is monitored well and they receive good advice on how to improve their work. They are well informed about career opportunities and courses in further and higher education. The sixth form is satisfactorily managed by the recently appointed director of sixth form.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of lessons by making them more stimulating and faster-moving so that students' learning and behaviour improve.
- Ensure that all self-evaluation is searching and that actions taken to improve are better targeted and more robustly implemented.
- Ensure that the potential of students at an early stage of English language acquisition is properly assessed and their progress monitored closely so that their progress improves further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

When pupils enter the school, their standards are broadly average for their age, as they are when they leave the school. They therefore make satisfactory progress. The published data from 2005 shows that in the Year 9 tests, the weakest areas were English and mathematics. Provisional data from the 2006 tests shows that there has been improvement in mathematics. English remains a concern, particularly for those students who join the school having achieved above average standards in their primary schools.

In the GCSE examinations, the proportion of students who achieve 5 or more higher grade GCSE results, including English and mathematics, is well below national averages. This is because of weaknesses in mathematics. Indications from recent modular tests, and the progress being made by those students who are being entered for GCSE mathematics in Year 10, indicate that this is an improving area.

The data from 2005 shows that the small number of students from Pakistani backgrounds make significantly less progress than their abilities suggest they should. Other groups make at least satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Attendance is now satisfactory. Students' punctuality, while still a concern, is improving steadily. Truancy is declining. Most students behave well in class and around the school, but the behaviour of a few is at times disrespectful in outside areas, and some indulge in boisterous outbursts. Students generally feel safe: incidents of bullying are declining as a result of the school's decisive action in this area. The school's strategies for increasing tolerance and understanding and preparing students for their future in an increasingly multi-cultural society are satisfactory. During the lunch-hour, for instance, one group of boys and girls from different ethnic backgrounds devised and rehearsed together their own dance routine.

Social, moral and cultural development is satisfactory. However, opportunities to develop students' spiritual awareness are frequently missed, and this aspect is unsatisfactory.

Many students make valuable contributions both to the school and to the local community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. This applies both to the main school and in the sixth form. There are a number of examples of good, and occasionally outstanding teaching, and some instances of inadequate teaching.

When lessons include activities in which students are actively engaged, and when their understanding is checked regularly, students enjoy lessons and make good progress. They concentrate, share the teacher's enthusiasm for the topic, and behave very well. However, in too many lessons the pace is leisurely, students are not required to work with a sense of purpose, and their concentration dwindles. Some lapse into passivity and some become noisy, undermining the learning of others. In some lessons more able pupils are not challenged highly enough.

The quality of marking is too variable. There some excellent practice, but there is also some superficial marking. Students are not involved in assessing their own work against

examination or other criteria often enough. Homework is not used often enough to reinforce and extend learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum, including that in the sixth form, is good. There is a good range of courses to suit students' different abilities and aspirations. However, there is not sufficient emphasis on developing literacy across the curriculum. The range of enrichment and extra curricular activities is good and includes a range of sports which are well-supported and activities such as Enterprise Days, summer schools and study clubs. These enhance pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good both in the main school and the sixth form. Students regularly seek advice from staff and feel well supported. Students are given good advice and guidance on options and choices for future study. A good system exists for tracking the progress that students make in their subjects and the way this is followed-up has been strengthened recently.

The introduction of mixed age tutor groups has led to a good increase in the support given to younger students by sixth form and other students. The requirements for child protection are met and suitable risk assessments are undertaken.

In the sixth form particularly, good assessment helps teachers to give individual students effective advice on how to improve their work and progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and some aspects are good. The school is led very effectively by the recently appointed headteacher who is beginning to have an impact in major aspects of the school's life. The effect of the organisation of the school day on students has been evaluated well. The changes made as a consequence have had a positive effect on their attendance, punctuality and behaviour. The school has been able to recruit more permanent staff and this is improving students' enjoyment and learning in several subjects, particularly in English. The headteacher is well aware of the next steps to develop the school further.

Senior staff have been allocated to subject areas to manage and support heads of department and to make them more accountable for students' learning. Arrangements

for the monitoring of teaching and learning and formal evaluations of subject departments have also been put in place but the impact of these is yet to be fully realised in all areas. There have been some good improvements, such as in mathematics. In English a detailed analysis of data showing how well students performed in different parts of the subject revealed an area of particular weakness. As a result, remedial action has been taken for Year 9 students, to good effect. However, not all areas of the school evaluate their work with sufficient rigour, or take robust enough actions to bring about improvements. For example, there is insufficient monitoring of the marking of students' work and the setting of homework and its completion.

Parental concerns over behaviour, the seeking of theirs and students' views and student safety are being tackled robustly by the headteacher and other senior members of staff.

Governors are setting high expectations for the school and provide challenge to the headteacher. Finances are managed well. The school's income is relatively modest, but its expenditure is well targeted on improving students' learning, with satisfactory results. The school therefore provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 January 2007

Dear Students

St Peter's School, St Peter's Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 7DD

Thank you for the help you gave us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and talking with you.

We found that your school is satisfactory and is improving. Your new headteacher has made some important changes to the way the school operates. As a result your attendance has improved well and is now satisfactory, though too many of you still arrive late for school in the morning. Behaviour is also improving. Some other strengths include the good range of subjects to choose from both in Years 10 and 11 as well as in the sixth form, and the fact that you are healthy and take a good amount of exercise.

We have identified some areas for improvement. One of these is that lessons should be more interesting and move at a faster pace. This will help you to learn better, without being distracted. A second area is for all the subject departments to make sure they are very clear about what they should do to help you learn more and to make absolutely sure that this happens in your lessons. Finally your school should assess those of you who are learning the English language very carefully so it knows what your potential is and what to do to help you to achieve it.

You can help your school to get better by being punctual and making sure that you behave well and concentrate in class.

Best wishes for your future,

Yours sincerely,

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector