

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118758
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	291245
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Barron

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Duncan Dewar-Whalley
Headteacher	Caroline Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001
School address	West Ridge Sittingbourne ME10 1UJ
Telephone number	01795 423479
Fax number	01795 439968

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. Pupils come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Nearly all are of White British heritage. Very few pupils have a first language other than English and none of these are at the early stages of acquiring English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which provides a good education for its pupils. It is well led by an energetic headteacher who has ensured that governors and staff share her enthusiasm and vision for raising standards through improving achievement. They have worked well together to ensure the school has analysed and evaluated its performance effectively and also identified and implemented improvements where needed. As a result the school has made good progress since the last inspection, especially in raising standards and achievement.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are keen and eager to learn and their enjoyment of school is outstanding. They say they feel safe and secure, describe the school as a friendly place and say that teachers 'make learning fun'. Parents appreciate that the school offers pupils a caring atmosphere in which to learn and comment about the good level of support their children receive. Pupils try hard to do well. They respect others, behave well and display responsible attitudes. They make sensible and healthy choices, have a good community spirit and are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Standards are above average and achievement is good. The quality of teaching and learning, whilst good overall, varies in different year groups and this can affect pupils' progress. Children enter the Foundation Stage with broadly average skills and make satisfactory progress both in this year group and in Years 1 and 2 because of satisfactory teaching. However, teaching is at its best in Years 3 to 6 and pupils make consistently good progress in these year groups. As a result standards are presently above the national average overall in Year 6 and have been for several years. However standards in English are not as high as those in mathematics and science because achievement in writing, especially boys' writing, is weaker.

The curriculum is good and is enhanced by a range of activities that further develop pupils' skills and their enjoyment of learning. Procedures for care, guidance and support are good and contribute well to pupils' sense of well-being. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils requiring extra help, especially those with learning difficulties or disabilities, are well supported and make good progress as a result. However, the quality of teachers' marking is variable and does not always give pupils a firm idea of how to improve their work. In addition not all pupils are aware of their individual learning targets and this can affect their progress.

Leadership and management are good. The governing body fulfils its duties well and offers a good level of support and challenge to the school. This has helped the school to gain a realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses. The school has clear plans to bring about further improvement and demonstrates a good capacity to achieve them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, especially boys' writing.
- Improve the effectiveness of teachers' marking and the use of target setting in order to consistently provide pupils with effective guidance about how to improve their work.
- Ensure pupils achieve equally well in all year groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage fluctuates from year to year but is usually broadly average, although language skills are often less well developed. Standards rise to above average and, taking the school as a whole, pupils' achievement is good. Children make satisfactory progress both in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 because of satisfactory teaching. Pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout the rest of the school because of good teaching so that, by Year 6, the standards they attain have been above the national average overall for the last five years. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because they are clearly identified at an early stage and then receive a consistently good level of support. However, although standards have improved since the previous inspection, standards in writing, and especially boys' writing, are not as high as those in mathematics and science in all year groups. The school has correctly identified the need to improve achievement in these subject areas as a key priority issue.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are polite, well behaved and appear eager to please. Their enjoyment of school is outstanding and they display good attitudes to learning. This is reflected in their good attendance and good achievement. There is a real sense of community within the school. Pupils respect and value one another and the adults around them. They take their responsibilities seriously and talk enthusiastically about the fact that their elected School Council gives them opportunities to participate in school decision making.

Pupils demonstrate a willingness to help those less fortunate than themselves, for example by raising funds for charities. They feel safe and secure and say that they know there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good although their awareness of the diverseness of life in British multicultural society is less secure. Their good progress in developing numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and, to a lesser extent literacy skills, together with their good understanding of individual and collective responsibility, means that they are well prepared for future life.

Pupils enjoy taking part in visits to places of interest and welcoming visitors to the school. They have a good understanding of the importance of making healthy choices, especially about what they eat. Pupils also talk excitedly about how their involvement in the wide range of popular after school sporting activities makes them fitter and healthier.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Foundation Stage because they are provided with a suitable range of activities which often blend teacher directed tasks with independent learning. Whilst teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory, it is at its best in Years 3 to 6 where pupils make good progress because teaching is consistently good and caters for pupils' individual needs effectively. Lessons in these year groups are well structured, well paced and have clear learning intentions. Teachers use a variety of approaches to make learning interesting and to make sure

pupils work hard. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to ensure pupils of all abilities are provided with appropriate activities and with the support they need to succeed. As a result, pupils achieve well so that standards are consistently above average overall by the end of Year 6.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy coming to school because they are provided with a good curriculum which is broad and balanced and meets their needs and interests well. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and ensures that pupils become aware of the importance of fitness, well-being and leading a healthy lifestyle. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the extra-curricular activities the school provides for all age groups whilst interesting visits and visitors to school increase their enjoyment of learning. Themed days and weeks, for example, 'Fair Trade Fortnight', help develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and also for gifted and talented pupils, is good and helps them to make good progress. In addition, the school makes best use of the small outside area available for Foundation Stage children to help them develop the skills associated with outdoor play.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's Catholic ethos actively promotes an extended family atmosphere which contributes to pupils' enthusiasm, sense of well-being and their enjoyment of learning. Parents are very positive about how well the school cares for and supports their children and comment that their children say that they feel safe and valued as individuals and that their teachers are 'kind and helpful'. Adults know pupils well and ensure that rare instances of unkind behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. Health and safety routines are fully in place and child protection procedures are understood and followed precisely by all staff.

Induction and transfer arrangements are good and help pupils to quickly settle into new routines, especially in the Foundation Stage. Vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are monitored and supported effectively and make good progress as a result.

However, not all pupils are aware of their individual learning targets in English and mathematics. The quality of teachers' marking is also inconsistent in different classes. Some is of high quality but not all marking helps pupils to understand what they have to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is a dedicated leader who has ensured that the school has been thorough in regularly checking and analysing its performance and in implementing change where needed. She has been well supported in this by the governing body, which fulfils its statutory duties well. Governors are involved in all major decisions and many individual governors have a firm understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However both the headteacher and governors have established coherent strategies to tackle inconsistencies in achievement between different year groups.

The school works closely with parents and regularly seeks their views. Links with external agencies are good and support pupils' learning well, particularly those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school's resources, criticised in the previous inspection report, are now good although the school has not yet developed an outside learning environment for Foundation Stage pupils.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

8 June 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School, West Ridge, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 1UJ

Thank you for making us very welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our two days at the school and especially enjoyed talking to some of you about what you like the most about your school and seeing you work in lessons.

Here are some of the things we particularly like about your school:

- St Peter's Catholic Primary School is a good school, which gives you a good start to your education and makes sure you make good progress in learning.
- Your personal development is good and your enjoyment of school is outstanding.
- You are very friendly and your behaviour is good.
- The quality of care and support you receive from the school is good.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make sure that your school continues to improve in the future. We believe your headteacher and teachers can do some things to make your school better. We have asked them to:
 - help you to improve your writing skills, especially boys' writing
 - make sure that when your teachers mark your work they always give you ideas about how you can improve
 - make sure that you all know what your personal targets are and that you work towards achieving them
 - make sure that all year groups make equally good progress. You can help your school to get even better by continuing to work hard.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Barron (Lead inspector)