

St Peter's CofE (VC) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124262
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292937
Inspection date	11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Walker
Headteacher	Pauline Livesey
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003
School address	The Square Marchington Uttoxeter ST14 8LH
Telephone number	01283 820252
Fax number	01283 820252

Age group	3-9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school serves the village of Marchington and surrounding area. Attainment on entry to the school varies but is above average in most years. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Supportive members of staff work closely with parents to help pupils achieve well at this good school. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were very pleased with all aspects of the school's work. One parent spoke for many by saying, 'I sincerely hope the school gets the positive recognition it deserves.'

Good provision in the Nursery and Reception classes helps children to make a good start to their education. These children become knowledgeable and develop a thirst for learning. By the end of the Reception Year most are working at or beyond the levels expected for their age. Good teaching and learning enable pupils to continue to do well in Years 1 to 4. As a result of pupils' good progress, standards are well above the nationally expected levels by the end of Year 4 and pupils achieve well. In Years 1 and 2, not all pupils of above average ability make enough progress in writing. This is because they are not always expected to use punctuation properly or extend their story writing to the levels of which they are capable.

All members of staff are approachable and ensure that care, guidance and support are good. Good relationships and interesting lessons help pupils to enjoy school thoroughly. Consequently, their personal development and well-being are good. They listen to each other's ideas well and behave sensibly. They are enthusiastic about taking part in activities and say that they especially enjoy practical subjects such as art and physical education. The good curriculum ensures that pupils learn a broad range of skills, including how to speak French. The curriculum is adapted successfully to meet the needs of most learners in the mixed-age classes. Good links with other schools help to expand pupils' knowledge beyond their local community and make learning enjoyable and meaningful.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher spends a large proportion of her time working with the pupils, enabling her to know all pupils very well and providing them with valuable additional support. Leaders and governors work together successfully and are keen to make the school even better. There is a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through the monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision and of how well children are working. Limited time for subject leaders to analyse test information in detail means that targets are not always made challenging enough and minor dips in progress are not identified swiftly. Nevertheless, the school achieves its vision to be 'a secure and happy place, where children grow in confidence building on their knowledge and skills as they move eagerly onwards to the next stage of their education'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that more able pupils in Years 1 and 2 all make good progress in developing their writing.
- Use information on how well pupils are doing to set consistently challenging targets and to check that all are learning quickly enough.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress and are working at or beyond the levels expected for their age when they start in Year 1. Their

standards in knowledge and understanding of the world and matching sounds to letters are especially well developed.

In Years 1 to 4, pupils make good progress overall. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make better progress in reading and mathematics than in writing. In writing, progress is satisfactory because some of the more able pupils do not learn quickly enough. These pupils do not use punctuation consistently and their story writing is underdeveloped. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average. By the end of Year 4, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make particularly good progress in reading and writing. Progress is not quite as fast in mathematics because pupils are not all quick at mental mathematics. The school has put into place good strategies to improve standards in this respect.

Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties are supported well, enabling them to make good progress towards their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is especially strong. Pupils write thoughtful prayers for each other. In assemblies they talk confidently about how 'God's chair' reminds them that He is with them throughout the day. Good links with a school in Burton-on-Trent play an important part in helping pupils to develop a good understanding of life in multicultural Britain. Pupils contribute to the community very well and they enjoy taking responsibility. The school council is fully involved in school life and ensures that pupils' views are represented well. Pupils show a good concern for the needs of others by raising funds for different charities. Activities such as these, as well as the effective focus on developing basic skills, lay a good foundation for pupils' future working lives.

Pupils' obvious enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance and their good attitudes towards learning. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children make plenty of friends and these good relationships are maintained throughout the rest of the school. Behaviour is good and pupils try hard in most lessons. Occasionally some younger pupils find it hard to cooperate and get a little fidgety when listening to the teacher.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They join in enthusiastically with the 'Shake Awake' exercise sessions in the morning and they choose some healthy foods at lunchtime.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers make good use of resources to engage and motivate pupils successfully. Work is made purposeful and this ensures that pupils are keen to do their best. For example, in Years 1 and 2 the teacher pretended to be 'Isabella, the ice-cream seller' when introducing data handling work so that pupils understood why it was important to carry out their calculations carefully. Clear instructions enable pupils to focus on their targets in most lessons and questioning is used successfully to encourage them to think for themselves. Teachers generally plan challenging work, although expectations for writing are not always high enough, especially for more able pupils in Years 1 and 2. In the Nursery and Reception classes, adults provide sensitive support

for individuals enabling them to make good progress in all areas of learning. Throughout the school, teaching assistants are deployed well and they provide valuable support in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is planned well to make learning fun. This is a major reason why pupils enjoy school so much. At the time of the inspection, pupils were very excited about their forthcoming 'seaside day'. For one day only, the village was to be renamed 'Marchington-on-Sea' and teachers had planned various activities linked to this central theme.

Throughout the school, there is a sharp focus on teaching basic skills and this is successful. Teachers have identified correctly the need to extend pupils' opportunities for using their writing across the curriculum. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children benefit from a good range of interesting and purposeful activities that promote a good range of skills and encourage independence. Opportunities for children in Reception to work outside are restricted by the lack of easy access to their outdoor area.

The curriculum is enriched by a good number of visitors and visits which help to bring subjects alive. Clubs contribute well to pupils' personal development. For example, the 'Dining Club' helps pupils to learn good table manners. A residential visit with children from other first schools helps pupils in Year 4 to be prepared well for their transfer to middle school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are right to be full of praise for the way that their children are looked after. As one parent said, 'The whole environment is very friendly, and the teachers are highly approachable.' This means that pupils always have someone to turn to if they have a concern. Consequently, this is a happy school where pupils feel safe and secure. The school works well with parents and outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being and to help them settle into the Nursery and Reception classes smoothly.

Academic support is good. There are thorough systems for monitoring pupils' progress in English and mathematics. The school is developing new systems for other subjects, although this still needs further work so that progress in science can be measured against national expectations. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, are set clear individual targets and these give pupils a good understanding of how to improve. As one pupil explained, 'At first I was rubbish at it and now I'm really good.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is well respected and ensures that all members of staff work together well as a team in a positive and caring environment. As a result, issues identified from the last inspection have been tackled successfully and standards have improved. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

Systems for evaluating the school's effectiveness are good overall. Day-to-day monitoring and evaluation is thorough. As a result, the headteacher has a good understanding of what is going well and what needs improving and this is communicated to members of staff and used well to

take the school forward. The school has gathered a wealth of information about pupils' progress. This is used well to identify pupils who are not working at the levels expected for their ages. These less able pupils are then provided with good support enabling them to catch up with their peers. However, test information is not yet used rigorously enough to set challenging targets, particularly for more able pupils, or to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress. This weakness makes it more difficult for the headteacher, subject leaders and governors to respond to any changes in pupils' achievement as soon as they arise.

Governance is good. Governors are supportive and provide a good level of challenge. They hold the school to account where they can but are aware that they can be even more rigorous once pupils' progress is analysed in more detail. Although the school is working within a tight budget, governors ensure that resources are used well to support learning.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	2
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	2
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	3
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

12 July 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of St Peter's C of E (VC) First School, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 8LH

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for sharing your work with us. We are pleased that you enjoy coming to this good school.

- Here are some other things about your school.
- You make good progress overall, although some of you could do better when writing in Years 1 and 2.
- You behave sensibly and responsibly. Your school council helps teachers know what you would like to improve.
- Teaching is good and your teachers help you to learn quickly by making lessons interesting.
- You study a wide range of topics and we are pleased that you learn the importance of staying safe and healthy. We especially like the way you show the midday supervisors which foods are especially good for you.
- All adults in school are kind and caring and look after you well. We like the way you learn good manners in the 'Dining Club'.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors are working together well to make your school even better.
- Your parents and carers are delighted that you come to this school.
- What we have asked your school to do now.
- Help those of you who are quick at learning in Years 1 and 2 to always write well.
- Ensure that the leaders of your school use the information they have collected to give you challenging targets and to check that you are all doing as well as you can.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you about your work and watching you learn. We hope your day at 'Marchington-on-Sea' was a success.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Cartlidge Lead inspector