

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126060
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293452
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Pentney
Headteacher	Gerard Mapp
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001
School address	Chapmans Lane East Grinstead RH19 1JB
Telephone number	01342 321985
Fax number	01342 300679

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

There are rather more girls than boys in this average size primary school. Fewer pupils than average have learning difficulties. A very small number of pupils are learning English as an additional language.

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 but with some good features. The headteacher and school leaders have been successful in creating an environment where pupils feel safe and want to do well. It is this strength that is particularly appreciated by parents, who praise 'the caring ethos that promotes the full development of the child'. The good care, guidance and support that the pupils receive mean that their personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' positive attitudes reflect the school's Catholic Christian ethos. As a parent explains, 'Pupils are polite, helpful and friendly because they learn to treat each other the way they want to be treated.' Pupils' enthusiastic commitment to tackling environmental issues is remarkably strong.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. School leaders' success in ensuring pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has not been matched by a similar rigour to ensure pupils achieve as well as they can. This is because there has been insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning, so that the school has been slow in arresting the drift in standards in recent years. Children are generally of above average ability when they join St Peter's. They make sound progress in Reception and standards are above average at the start of Year 1. They have mostly been significantly above average in the Year 2 tests. Standards at the end of Year 6 have fallen since the last inspection, and in 2005 and 2006 were only a little above average. They are better this year. These above average standards represent satisfactory achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because, as a parent commented, 'They are given a lot of extra help in the areas they are weakest in.' It is more able pupils who do not always do as well as they should. This is because they are not always challenged enough and the pace of lessons is sometimes too slow. Although much of the teaching is good, teaching and learning are satisfactory because of this, and because pupils are not helped enough to achieve their full potential by building steadily on their key skills, particularly in writing. Nonetheless, pupils are motivated well, and often enthused by the curriculum, which is satisfactory but improving as teachers increasingly link subjects together to make learning interesting and fun.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor more regularly the quality of teaching and learning and the progress that pupils are making.
- Ensure that all teachers have high expectations of the amount of work that pupils are capable of doing in lessons and that work is more closely matched to ability, particularly for the more able.
- Provide more structured opportunities for pupils to build steadily on their writing skills.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are generally above average and this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' above average starting points. Children make satisfactory progress in Reception, with almost all achieving and several exceeding the early learning goals expected for this Foundation Stage of their education. Standards in Years 1 and 2 have, in most years, been better than in

the last inspection. They have mostly been above average, although results for the current Year 2 show them to be lower this year. The school attributes this to the interruptions caused by staff illness. Writing has dipped the most. This reflects a whole-school weakness where pupils make less progress in writing than they are capable of because they are not given enough structured opportunities to develop and steadily build on their writing skills. Standards in the Year 6 tests have drifted downwards since the last inspection, when they were well above average. In 2006, they were only a little above average. Teacher assessments show that they are better this year.

Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because they benefit from very well targeted support. This is also the case for the very small number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. More able pupils do least well, with fewer pupils attaining higher levels in the Year 2 and Year 6 tests than might reasonably be expected, given pupils' capabilities. This is because teachers do not always set these pupils challenging enough work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are eager to learn. As a consequence, attendance is above average and behaviour and attitudes are very good. Pupils are attentive in lessons, although sometimes their attention wanes when they are expected to sit passively for too long. Pupils feel safe and well cared for because the school's strong Catholic Christian ethos encourages an atmosphere of friendship and trust. Pupils say, 'We all have our own groups of friends and all the groups link up in a happy circle.'

Pupils have a very good awareness of what makes a healthy lifestyle, both in terms of food and exercise, and in taking wider responsibility for 'our carbon footprints'. Older pupils, in particular, have a keen awareness of their contribution to the school community's aim of reducing energy consumption. Alongside their basic literacy and numeracy skills and the business enterprise links made in conjunction with local secondary schools, this sense of responsibility prepares them well for future life.

Pupils support a wide range of charities and so learn respect for people in different circumstances. Their understanding of different faiths and cultures is broadened through the school's multi-faith weeks.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Relationships are very good, and pupils often work hard because they like and are keen to please their teachers. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology in lessons, which is an improvement since the last inspection. With the teaching assistants, they cater very well for pupils with learning difficulties and for the very small number who are at an early stage of learning English, so that these pupils make good progress. Expectations are not always high enough, however, for other pupils, and particularly the more able. Sometimes the pace of learning is slower than it could be and, too often, work is not matched closely enough to pupils' different abilities. This means that, as a parent observed, 'Children are not always stretched academically.'

Pupils are not given enough help to build steadily on their writing skills. This is the case throughout the school. Opportunities for extended writing are missed in some subjects. This particularly limits the progress of more able pupils who too often record work in, for example, science on unchallenging worksheets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has been making creative links between subjects, although some of these remain at an early stage and not enough opportunities are taken for pupils to develop extended writing skills across different subjects. Parents have noted recent improvements, however, and say, 'Subjects are taught in an interesting and stimulating way, with project work, school visits and experts coming into the school adding to the children's learning experience.' In the Foundation Stage, imaginative planning ensures a high level of enjoyment and good development of the skills of independent learning. This approach has been extended this year to Years 1 and 2, so that pupils in these classes are also increasingly making choices for themselves over the activities they undertake.

Music provision is particularly strong throughout the school, with pupils benefiting from specialist teaching that helps them to make good progress in their skills and performing ability. Specialist teaching in physical education contributes to the good provision for pupils' physical well-being.

Pupils with learning difficulties are very well provided for, with effective systems of additional support and encouragement resulting in their good progress. The school generally caters less well for its more able pupils, although it has a register of gifted and talented pupils and there are some extra activities available to them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are robust and risk assessments are completed appropriately. In this secure and nurturing environment, pupils learn to take responsibility for their own progress and welfare, as well as being valued members of a strong community. The school works well with parents and other agencies to ensure the good provision for the care and well-being of all pupils. All pupils are aware of their targets for learning and older pupils are required to produce evidence to show that their target has been met. They say, 'We are encouraged to think outside the box to take our learning on a bit more.' Though their targets give pupils very clear guidance on how to improve their work, marking is not always as helpful. Some gives pupils pointers to the next steps in their learning but some does little more than acknowledge that the work has been done.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School leaders, staff, governors and pupils have a strong sense of shared responsibility, resulting in a supportive and caring environment. As a result, pupils feel that 'it's like a little family in each class'. Initiatives this year have resulted in significant changes to the curriculum. These have increased pupils' enjoyment and motivation for learning, but the changes are too recent for the school to have evaluated their impact on pupils' achievement. There has been insufficient

monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in all classes to ensure that teaching fully meets the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able. The school has recognised that its tracking of pupils' progress has not been rigorous enough and it is in the process of putting in place more comprehensive systems to better identify pupils at risk of slipping behind.

Governors know the school well and are proud of its successes. They have rightly challenged leaders to explain the drift in standards in Year 6 tests over the last few years, and realise that they need more progress and monitoring data to fully support the school in its drive to raise achievement to previously high standards.

Some aspects of the school are not as good as they were in the last inspection report and its self-evaluation shows the school in an overly rosy light. Nevertheless, the recent improvements and school leaders' success in sustaining such a positive ethos, show that the school has a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	1
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

4 July 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary, East Grinstead RH19 1JB

Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited you. We think St Peter's is giving you a sound education. You mostly reach above average standards, which is as it should be because many of you are very able. We think that some of you are capable of doing even better. Those of you who need extra help get it and do well as a result.

We were particularly pleased to see how much you enjoy school. You behave well and are keen to learn. We were impressed by how much you know and care about the environment and how committed you are to improving it.

Your parents are especially happy about the way the school looks after you. We agree that this is one of the things that the school does really well. You make good use of your targets so you know what you need to do to do better, although marking does not always give you as much help as it could. Teaching is satisfactory. You like your teachers and they are increasingly making lessons interesting and fun by linking different subjects together. Sometimes, though, we think they should expect you to get through more work in lessons, and we would like to see them set more difficult work for those of you who can do it. We would also like to see you given more opportunities to write and more help in improving your writing skills.

The headteacher and staff have done a good job in making the school a place where you are happy and keen to learn. We would like to see them do more to check on how well you are doing in lessons to make sure you all make as much progress as you possibly can.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and doing your very best.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.

Yours faithfully, Selwyn Ward Lead inspector