



# St Peter's RC High School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 131880  
**Local Authority** Manchester  
**Inspection number** 293873  
**Inspection dates** 9–10 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jim Kidd

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Kirkmanshulme Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Gorton, Manchester
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Lancashire M12 4WB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 2481550
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	896	<b>Fax number</b>	0161 2481551
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Fr S Ansbro
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J McNerney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 March 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves central and east Manchester and moved to a new building three and a half years ago. Over 40% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the proportion whose first language is not English is over twice the national average: 45 different languages are represented in the school. Many pupils live in areas of economic hardship and the proportion eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. St Peter's became a specialist business and enterprise college in September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Peter's is a good school with some outstanding features, in which its pupils feel happy, valued and very well cared for. Leadership and management are good. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the excellent senior team has created a clear vision for improvement which is shared by pupils, staff and governors. As a result, the school has made impressive improvements since the previous inspection. All members of the school community are very proud of what has been achieved in very difficult circumstances over the years. In the words of its governor: 'The school has emerged triumphant from a period of great difficulty'.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and a significant proportion is outstanding. GCSE results have risen markedly over the past three years because of this. Although attainment is still below expectations, pupils make good progress from their well below average starting points in Year 7. Most pupils are fully aware of what they need to do to reach higher standards but the quality of teachers' marking is not consistent in showing pupils how to improve. Pupils have a high regard for their teachers and say: 'Our teachers make learning fun and this is a social school in which we have to work hard too'. The school's emphasis on pupils' personal development has reaped rewards. Behaviour is good and much better than at the time of the previous inspection. The school's strategies to encourage pupils to come to school regularly have led to a remarkable improvement in attendance, which demonstrates just how much pupils enjoy St Peter's. The school tries hard to foster their emotional development. The support and guidance which teachers and other staff give to all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, are outstanding and ensure that they can take full advantage of what the school offers them.

An overriding concern of the school, to meet the needs and wants of each individual, has led to the establishment of an outstanding curriculum. The Pathfinder initiative, for example, in which St Peter's is a leading school, provides the ideal balance between academic and vocational courses. There are also excellent links with other schools and institutions to support pupils' learning. Business and enterprise status already adds much to the curriculum and pupils are already involved in a range of relevant activities to reinforce their understanding of the world of work.

In St Peter's RC High School, pupils thrive within a caring, safe yet vibrant environment and parents are very positive about what the school does for their sons and daughters. There is regular and accurate evaluation of performance in all areas of school life. All staff play their part willingly in ensuring that improvement can be sustained. Governors are fully supportive and are also prepared to challenge the leadership when they think it is important to do so. Inspectors agree with the school's view of its performance and effectiveness. Pupils' good achievement, the outstanding curriculum, exceptional care, support and guidance and the strengths in leadership and management demonstrate that it has outstanding capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement by improving the consistency of marking.
- Ensure that all pupils are aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards on entry are significantly below average and many students arrive with poor literacy skills. In 2005, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below average but there was a significant improvement in attainment in mathematics and science in 2006. Work seen during the inspection reflects this improvement and shows improvement in English too. Standards are now much closer to the national average.

Attainment in GCSE examinations shows a sharply rising trend over recent years. In 2005 and 2006, because of the school's good use of assessment data to monitor progress, most pupils reached or exceeded the challenging targets set for them. In addition, the more relevant curriculum and the school's effective action to improve the standards and achievement of boys in particular have made a major contribution to the good progress pupils now make.

Many pupils join after Year 7 and a significant number of them need additional support. The fact that they, along with vulnerable pupils, those with learning difficulties, and those at an early stage of learning English, make good progress is testimony to the excellent care, guidance and support they receive.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Personal development is good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress in all areas of school life. Pupils develop into well rounded and mature young citizens by the time they leave. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. For example, during English lessons pupils can interpret poetry about oppression with a skill which belies their years and they show empathy with characters from a range of cultures different to their own. They also discuss common threads about oppressive situations, including atrocities in Nazi Germany. Parents are aware of what the school does to teach them about right and wrong and say: 'The school teaches our pupils their subjects and also about how to live moral lives.'

The appointments of an attendance officer and attendance manager have resulted in quite remarkable improvements in attendance since the previous inspection and it is now broadly average. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and the school is proud of the high levels of racial harmony within it.

Pupils have a good sense of community. They respect each other's work in lessons and help each other. The school council actively pursues issues to improve aspects of the school and pupils show concern for the wider community through fund-raising for

charities and good causes. Most pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. The vast majority feel safe and free from bullying. Sport is a strong area and pupils in Year 10 gain confidence from visits to primary schools to coach football and also talk to children about how to live healthily. The development of work-related and other useful skills is outstanding and the vocational and basic skills courses that have developed from the school's specialist status do much to help pupils prepare for further education, training and employment.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good and a significant proportion is outstanding. The school has invested energy and resources in developing methods to meet the different learning styles of its pupils and these are having a positive impact in lessons. For example, teachers are good at telling pupils exactly what they are expected to do in lessons and this helps them make sense of their learning. Pupils enjoy most of their lessons and, because there is mutual respect between teachers and pupils, learning takes place in a harmonious atmosphere. In an outstanding performing arts lesson, for example, the sheer joy and total engagement of the pupils reflected the boundless enthusiasm of the teacher. Sustained challenge and high expectations enabled pupils to achieve the highest standards and make exceptional progress. In most lessons, pupils experience a range of approaches and this helps to sustain their interest, so that they can acquire new knowledge and skills. In a minority of lessons, pupils are not encouraged to share their ideas and teachers' questioning does not involve a wide enough number of pupils.

A strong feature of most lessons is the way that teachers use assessment to keep a check on how well pupils are doing. In these lessons, pupils are aware of their targets and of their progress towards them. However, teachers' marking is inconsistent and does not always provide pupils with enough information on what they need to do to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding and fully meets pupils' needs. Imaginative and bold strategies within the Pathfinder initiative enable pupils to follow programmes that are tailored to meet the wide range of different needs. For example, pupils speak highly of being able to start their vocational and GCSE option courses at the beginning of Year 9. They also say that they have many opportunities, both in class and in the six computer rooms, to use the latest technology for their personal research. There are strong connections with other institutions and, along with business and enterprise status, these have resulted in increasing opportunities for enterprise activities and the promotion of work-related learning. There are effective arrangements to meet the

needs of pupils who experience difficulties with literacy and numeracy skills. These include the well attended basic courses for Year 7 in the library each morning.

The school provides pupils with a wide variety of sporting, creative and educational activities outside the normal school day. These are well supported by pupils and make a valuable contribution to their learning, their levels of enjoyment and their personal development.

The strength and popularity of the curriculum are such that it is playing a major part in improving standards and attendance rates, with the result that an above average proportion of pupils now progresses to further education, to follow both academic and vocational programmes.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. Parents rightly believe that induction procedures are excellent and that their sons and daughters feel safe, secure and confident from the day they arrive at St Peter's. As one said: 'My son has only been here for a few weeks but in that short time he has grown to love it!' Pupils feel that they can turn to adults for help with both their personal and academic difficulties. Procedures to ensure health, safety and child protection are in place and are reviewed regularly. Personal development is monitored particularly well through an excellent pastoral support system involving senior staff, form tutors and outside mentors. The school has very strong links with outside agencies, such as Connexions, and pupils from Year 7 benefit from visiting the careers library which is run by youngsters in Year 10. There are also comprehensive tracking procedures to guide pupils with their academic work.

Inclusion and the raising of aspirations lie at the very heart of the school's work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, vulnerable pupils, children in the care of the local authority, those with English as an additional language, asylum seekers and travellers receive excellent support from teachers, teaching assistants and mentors. This ensures that they make good progress. For example, English for Beginners lessons take place daily in the Diversity and Inclusion Room and pupils learn to converse in the new language very quickly.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational and he is supported by an outstanding senior team. They have seen the school through a very difficult period and their work has resulted in a strong sense of teamwork and pride in what has been achieved. The management of the rapid increase in cultural diversity has been very impressive and, as a result, the school is a harmonious environment, in which pupils of all races and cultures get on well together.

Parents are very supportive of what the school offers and comment that teachers support their sons and daughters with high levels of care and sensitivity.

Governance is good and governors are heavily involved in the work of the school. They are not only willing to support the leadership but also to question it when the need arises. Decisions taken are based on the views of all stakeholders and on a careful and reflective consideration of progress in all areas of school life. Subject heads lead their areas well but their monitoring has not led to consistently good marking in all subjects.

The school has moved forward markedly since the last inspection, particularly in relation to pupils' behaviour and attitudes, their attendance and results in GCSE and vocational courses. It has outstanding capacity for further improvement because performance in all areas of school life is evaluated accurately and as a matter of routine.



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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
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**

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited St Peter's recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you. St Peter's is a good school and we know you are very proud of it.

Here are some of the good things about your school

- You make good progress in your lessons and results in examinations are getting better and better.
- You behave well and get on well with your fellow pupils. St Peter's is a well ordered school and you look after each other.
- Teaching is good and your teachers are very concerned to make sure that you do as well as you can.
- The care, support and guidance that the school offers you are excellent and it means that everyone can do well.
- You have an outstanding range of subjects you can study for examinations and you have many opportunities to prepare yourself for more study or for the world of work.
- Your headteacher and other senior staff are excellent leaders and know exactly how to make St Peter's even better.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Work with you to make standards even higher.
- Give you more advice in your books and files on how you can improve your work.

Thank you once again for making such a helpful contribution to the inspection. We enjoyed watching you learn.