

St Peter and St Paul Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104810
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	308675
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Kevin O'Brien
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Reid
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Derwent Road Haresfinch St Helens Merseyside WA11 9AT
Telephone number	01744 678640
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school serving a mixed area in terms of its social and economic profile. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average, as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and all speak English as their home language. The school has Investors in People status and holds the Healthy Schools award. The headteacher was appointed 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 and St Paul is a good school that has made significant progress since the last inspection. It is a happy community, where pupils are friendly, caring and supportive of one another. Parents are very appreciative of the school's work. One comment, which typified many, is 'The school has a great community feel - I would recommend it to anyone.' Many parents commented on the 'approachability of all staff', and are confident that they are kept fully informed of their children's progress.

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are below the level typically expected for their age. They make good progress during the Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with standards that are broadly average. Pupils continue to make good progress to reach standards that are generally above average by the end of Year 6. The school has recently introduced excellent systems for assessment, data analysis and tracking of pupils' progress, which have helped teachers to gain an accurate understanding of how well individual pupils are working. The impact of this initiative can be seen in the improvement in pupils' achievement, as shown by the most recent national test results.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe in and around the building. They are confident that there is always someone to talk to if they have any concerns. They have a secure understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. Behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school, and pupils have very good attitudes towards learning. They value friendships and play sensibly together. They enjoy their fundraising work and are proud to represent their school in the local community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is promoted very effectively through links with the church, and also through a series of 'themed weeks'. As a result of this work, pupils gain an excellent understanding of a range of different faiths and cultures.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and this leads to pupils making good progress. In most lessons, teachers maintain a good pace, which leads to pupils being fully engaged with their learning and motivated to succeed. Work is assessed consistently well throughout the school, and pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and activities are not always well matched to pupils' needs. In such lessons, pupils can find it difficult to maintain enthusiasm and interest, and progress slows as a result. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all pupils. Events such as themed weeks and a range of popular lunchtime and after-school activities form a good variety of enrichment activities, adding interest and extra enjoyment for pupils. Systems for pastoral care are very good, and pupils are provided with good quality support throughout the school. The work of support staff is particularly effective in meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Academic guidance is of outstanding quality, due largely to the detailed and sophisticated tracking systems, which enable teachers to set challenging targets that are then shared with pupils.

Leadership and management, at all levels, are good. The headteacher has established a strong team approach among all staff, and governors carry out their roles and responsibilities well. The school is well placed to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school forms valuable links with parents and this, together with the thorough induction arrangements, helps children to settle quickly into the Reception class. Despite the fact that they enter the school from a variety of pre-school settings, they soon make friends, treat each other and adults with respect and become happy learners. Teaching assistants form a very valuable part of the teaching team and good procedures are in place to ensure that care and welfare have a high priority. Staff interact with children using discussion and questioning well in order to stimulate children's learning. Strong emphasis is placed on children's personal development, which is good. Teachers' planning and assessment take account of children's individual needs well, and all areas of learning are covered. The recent addition of an outdoor area is being developed well. Children make good progress, so that by the end of the Reception year they have reached levels expected for children of their age. Their transition on to Year 1 is then well planned, ensuring that the curriculum meets the emotional and academic needs of all children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is all at least good, particularly in relation to pace and challenge.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' standards at the start of Year 1 are broadly in line with the national average. They make good progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach standards that are generally above average by Year 6. Standards by the end of Year 2 are slightly above average overall. The most recent assessments show an improvement in pupils' standards in writing, which are significantly above the national average. At Key Stage 2, pupils' standards overall are similar in English, mathematics and science. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels is lower in English than in mathematics and science. Results in the 2007 national tests show that pupils' achievement improved significantly in comparison with recent years. All groups of pupils make similar progress. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, owing to the effective support provided across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school because 'the staff work hard to help us, and teachers make lessons fun.' They form good relationships with each other and with adults, and collaborate well. They show confidence, courtesy and a willingness to engage in conversation with visitors. Pupils have a good sense of how to live healthily, and this is reflected in the meals and snacks that they choose at school. Pupils act sensibly and safely, and are not concerned about bullying. They are particularly aware of issues relating to safety when using the Internet. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils are rightly proud of the contribution they make to the wider community, for example through carol singing in the shopping precinct and the local care home. As they mature, pupils take responsibility for others through the school council. This, along with their acquisition of good basic skills, prepares them well for their future education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know pupils well, and good relationships are evident in all lessons. Planning is of consistently good quality. The recently introduced systems for marking and assessment have supported all teachers in giving good quality feedback to pupils across the school. Teaching assistants and other support staff make a very good contribution to learning. In the majority of lessons, teachers maintain a brisk pace and are successful in ensuring that pupils remain motivated and keen. Activities are designed to provide challenge to individuals and effectively develop understanding. In a minority of lessons, however, the pace of learning is too slow, and work does not always challenge and stimulate pupils. This limits their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well organised and provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of other subjects. There are good links between curriculum areas and cultural development. For example, a recent project on Spanish culture not only resulted in pupils producing some high quality artwork and learning about Spanish dance and food, but also linked well with the Spanish language work that forms a regular part of their studies. Curricular provision for gifted and talented pupils is currently being developed. The curriculum is enhanced through a good range of enrichment activities, as shown in some very good work carried out recently as part of a themed week on Judaism. Pupils enjoy participating in a variety of extra-curricular activities, including sporting and musical clubs, as well as French.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school takes exceptionally good care of all its pupils. They trust staff and turn to them if they are troubled or upset, confident they will receive sympathy and support. Parents and carers find staff approachable, and work closely with school staff to support their children's progress. Arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' academic progress and personal development are excellent. The practical guidance pupils are given through their targets and teachers' marking is highly valued, and has already had a positive impact on achievement. Support for vulnerable pupils is very good, and the school works well with outside agencies. Statutory requirements for child protection are fully in place. All health and safety arrangements are up-to-date, including risk assessments, which ensures that pupils work and play in a safe environment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Within a relatively short space of time the headteacher has introduced and established very effective systems for assessing and tracking pupils' performance. These, linked in with a commonly adopted approach to lesson planning, have helped staff to plan pupils' progress effectively across all years, and have contributed to the recent improvement in achievement.

Teaching and learning are monitored by senior managers on a regular basis. Middle managers, such as subject leaders, have recently developed their roles, for example by visiting classrooms to observe lessons. A strong approach to teamwork by all staff has successfully been fostered over the past year. The school has a secure overview of its main strengths and areas for development. Governance is good. Governors are strongly committed to the school and are fully aware of its current position, partly through their involvement in the self-evaluation process. They are active in helping the school to raise standards further by setting ambitious yet achievable targets.

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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for making my colleague and me feel so welcome in your school. We really enjoyed talking to you, hearing your views and watching you learn.

St Peter and St Paul is a good school with some outstanding features. You all make good progress throughout your time at the school. We were very impressed with the way that you spoke to us. You were polite, well-mannered and confident. We also thought that your behaviour was good, both in lessons and around the school grounds. It was really good to see you all playing and getting on so well together, and we were very pleased to hear you talk about how you care for each other. In fact, your school is a very caring place, and this is one of the really excellent things about it. You told us that there is always someone to talk to if you are worried about anything, and we agree that the adults in school are always willing to help and support you. The way that your work is assessed and your progress is tracked is excellent, and because of this the teachers know exactly where each one of you is up to with your work, and what you need to do next. They are then able to tell you all about this, and we know that you listen to them carefully and read what they have written in your books.

You told us that there are lots of different activities for you to enjoy. Some of you are doing really well with your recorder playing, and it is great that so many of you enjoy singing in the choir. We thought that the art you produced for the Spanish week was fantastic, and the displays on Judaism were lovely too.

You told us that almost all of your lessons were interesting and good fun, but you do not enjoy them so much when you are asked to do activities such as copying out. We agree that most lessons are good, but we have suggested that the staff look at ways of making all of the lessons interesting for you. You have an important part to play, by listening carefully at all times and by letting the teachers know if any of the work is too easy for you!

We are very pleased that you are proud to be pupils at St Peter and St Paul, and we wish you well for the future.