

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111370
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	310582
Inspection date	28 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Mark Madeley

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	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rosemary Kenny
Headteacher	Mrs Susan McWilliam
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Hillock Lane Woolston Warrington Cheshire WA1 4PQ
Telephone number	01925 815314
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement and standards; their personal development and well-being; the quality of teaching and learning; the quality of academic guidance; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's records of pupils' progress. Policies, attendance and financial data were reviewed and observation of the school at work, as well as interviews with the chair of governors, staff and pupils. The views of the parents were canvassed via a questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average but pupil numbers have grown steadily since the previous inspection. The pupils are almost all of White British heritage. Most live in the immediate area of the school but approximately one quarter travel from other parts of Warrington. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is below average. However, the school has an above average proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational need. The proportion of pupils who start school other than in the Reception class is higher than usual. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspector agrees with the views of the school, parents and pupils that this is a good school. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding as are the care, guidance and support given to each and every pupil. Every parent who returned a questionnaire praised and offered their whole-hearted support for the school. This, coupled with the very effective links with local schools and support agencies, shows that the school makes excellent use of its partnerships for the benefit of its pupils. Consistently good teaching helps all pupils, including those with LDD achieve well. By the end of Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are usually significantly above average. Standards in science are particularly high because pupils confidently plan and skilfully carry out their own experiments from an early age. There was a slight dip in standards in 2007 because the year group was very small and a few pupils had only just joined the school from abroad. Senior managers have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Pupils' progress is reviewed regularly and the information is used to set challenging targets that are generally met. The issues from the previous inspection have been addressed. In particular, governance has improved significantly and good management has maintained the above average standards reached by the pupils in both Key Stages 1 and 2. These factors indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further. It gives good value for money.

Pupils really enjoy school, the lessons, the staff and their friends, and this enjoyment is reflected in their excellent attendance. Their behaviour is good and can be exemplary. For example, during a Key Stage 2 assembly a pupil read a wonderful poem about the impact of bullying and as she read there was total silence. However, sometimes, pupils lose concentration during teachers' lengthy introductions. The good curriculum also plays its part. The new initiative, called the 'creative curriculum', develops pupils' skills. Year 6 study 'Macbeth', for example, and use their enquiry, research, publishing, drama and art skills very effectively. However, this work started this term and the school has yet to evaluate its impact on pupils' learning. Additionally, the school offers pupils an excellent range of clubs, many of which help them stay active, and visits to places of educational interest.

The school has achieved Healthy School status and it is clear from the pupils that they have an extensive knowledge of how to stay fit and healthy. They also know that occasional treats, like a fizzy drink or a sweet are fine, but as one said, 'Have too many and it will really wreck your teeth!' Playtimes are active and the play-leaders do an excellent job of introducing games to the younger pupils at lunchtime. The school has achieved Activemark status for the quality of its sports programme. Pupils look forward to these activities in order to exercise further and are very proud of the school's recent successes, for example, in cross-country running. They have an excellent understanding of what is not good for them too. For instance, they know that some medicines are good for them if they are ill and others are not.

This is a very happy school where everyone is valued as an individual. 'There's no bullying here because we are all friends,' is the view of most pupils; this was mirrored by parents' written comments about the 'community feel' in the school. Amongst many other justified compliments, the pupils and parents describe the staff as 'caring', 'helpful' and 'always available.' Safeguarding procedures are in place. Information to parents is outstanding, giving ample detail on pupils' progress as well as providing information on how parents can help their child at home. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what they are trying to achieve because they know how the target-setting system works. Teachers' marking helps them to improve their work further.

From five-year-olds who confidently carry the register to the office to older pupils who organise charity fundraising activities, pupils are very helpful around school. The school council is elected by the pupils and is very active in representing their views. Pupils are very keen to help others, for example, they helped to send a sick local boy to Germany for an operation. All pupils take care of their environment. Cloakrooms are tidy and displays of work are very well looked after. Pupils are active in the parish and often entertain local people, to strawberry tea, for example.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next school. They have visited the high school quite frequently, for example, to use their computer suite, and so know it well. The three residential visits build pupils' social skills and their confidence levels so that they can flourish in new surroundings. Many have even developed their marketing skills to raise money for charity, for example, by organising a cake sale.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are very happy in the Foundation Stage and are making rapid progress. They enjoy both the adult guided and play-related activities. They enter school with standards which are in line with age-related expectations. By the time they join Year 1 standards are above average in all six areas of learning because teaching is good. There are particular strengths in children's social development. The school has identified relative weaknesses in the calculation aspect of mathematics and mark-making and is working effectively to improve these two aspects of children's learning. Children's independence and curiosity are encouraged and they quickly become very confident learners. Activities such as the 'Autumn Walk' and the recent tea party develop social skills well. Children's literacy skills are promoted very effectively. A positive feature is the way that boys are encouraged to 'have a go' at writing in role play. For example, a garage was set up outside and children could only ride the bikes if they filled out an 'MOT' certificate. Occasionally, children's attention wanders a little when instructions take a long time to deliver. The Foundation Stage is effectively managed and assessment data are used well to plan the next stage in a child's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate the impact on pupils' learning of the recently introduced 'creative curriculum'.

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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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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?	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**

Inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Warrington, WA1 4PQ

I enjoyed my recent visit to your school because you made me feel so welcome, whether it was at the cake sale, in class or during lunchtime - thank you all very much. You talked enthusiastically about your school and all that it offers you. I agree with you and your parents that it is a good school. It helps you make good progress in English, mathematics and science and equally as important it encourages you to become responsible future citizens. Your headteacher and the governors are doing a good job for you. Good improvements have been made to the building and high standards have been maintained since the last inspection. You told me that the staff work hard for you all the time and I agree. The quality of teaching and learning is good and every member of staff is, 'willing to go the extra mile' to care for you and to help you learn. Excellent examples of this are the three annual residential visits in Years 4, 5 and 6 that they take you on. Not many schools do this for their pupils. You have an outstanding knowledge of how to stay safe and how to stay fit and healthy. The wide range of very successful sports clubs plays an important part in this. I thought that your understanding of how the target setting system worked was outstanding too.

Your headteacher and her staff have a good understanding of the school and they all agree that they want it to be even better in the future. I have asked them to do one thing which will improve your learning further.

- Find out how successful the new 'creative curriculum' has been in helping you learn at the end of its first year.

You can play your part in making your school even better by continuing to be so supportive of each other in the classroom and outside. You should be very proud of all that the staff, governors and you have achieved. Your school is a really special place and nothing is more important about it than all of you. I wish both you and the school all the very best for the future.