

St Peter's Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118576
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	312998
Inspection date	11 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Gavin Jones

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lawrence McVeigh
Headteacher	Nicole Caulfield
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2003
School address	Holcombe Road Delce Rochester ME1 2HU
Telephone number	01634 843590
Fax number	01634 819878

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Peter's is a smaller than average infant school in a very densely populated area of Rochester. Due to the high percentage of rental accommodation, mobility is high. A recent and sudden fall in roll, which is beyond the control of the school, has caused considerable concern.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'My child has thrived at St Peters' is a sentiment noted in a number of completed questionnaires. It is a true reflection of this good and effective school that takes children, who often enter school with below average standards, and provides them with an education that lets them achieve well.

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, where teaching and the curriculum are well in line with some of the best practice. A comment in the parents' questionnaire noted, 'My daughter enjoys every day.' The school helps children with both their social and academic skills and this is built upon in both Year 1 and Year 2. The fact that there are mixed aged classes does not hamper progress, as the headteacher has ensured that the good curriculum caters for all children in all classes. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, with one parent noting, 'My child can't wait for each school day.'

It is the excellent quality of the headteacher's leadership and management that has ensured pupils make good progress and has created the very good ethos for learning that can be seen throughout the school. It is this ethos and outstanding pastoral care which accounts for the excellent social and moral development noted in pupils. Not only does the school ensure that pupils make good progress in their personal development but, by the use of a very good and sophisticated tracking system, all adults know exactly what progress individual pupils make and how best they can be supported. The school has rightly noted that writing needs improving further and that boys are lagging behind girls in some aspects of their work. Teachers set targets for pupils, both individually and in groups. Whilst pupils understand many of these targets, they themselves are not encouraged to track their own progress by using these targets. The school's self-evaluation processes are good and clearly highlight the school's strengths and areas for development. The school then sets about providing action plans for further improvement. It has very recently gained the Activemark for its promotion of physical education and healthy lifestyles. Pupils respond well to both and they are clear what constitutes healthy food. Governors are very supportive of the school and well informed, not only by the headteacher but by their own monitoring of work. The school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Although attainment on entry to the school, for the current cohort, is in line with that expected for their age, several previous year groups have been below this level on entry. Children make good progress in the Reception class and are achieving well. As a result, by the time they move to Year 1, the vast majority are reaching the recommended goals for the areas of learning. This is due to the good teaching they receive based on a good understanding of the Foundation Stage requirements. Effective daily planning incorporates a good range of directed and child initiated activities. Teaching assistants are well trained and support learning effectively. There is a clear emphasis on speaking and listening, together with laying the foundations of good phonic knowledge. Ongoing assessments give a clear picture of how individual children are progressing, although there needs to be more accurate analysis of attainment on entry to gauge children's progress through the year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, especially for boys.

- Involve pupils more productively in using their targets and checking on their progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to Year 1 varies due to the small year groups and widely differing proportions of pupils with learning difficulties, but for those now in Years 1 and 2 it was below average overall, especially in aspects of language and personal and social development. Good progress is evident in Years 1 and 2, as teachers build on the good foundation laid in Reception. Pupils achieve well, but do better in reading and mathematics. By Year 2, standards are broadly in line with those expected for their age, although slightly below in writing. The school has rightly identified writing as a pressing issue, together with raising standards for boys who lag behind girls. The more able pupils achieve well because they are given challenging work. In the same way, pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because their needs are identified accurately and they receive good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good but there are some outstanding features. From a low starting point, pupils' social skills develop well from year to year. Pupils really enjoy their work and their attitudes are positive. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school and supports learning well. Pupils are polite and helpful and are happy to discuss their school with inspectors. They talk about strong relationships with adults in the school, whom they clearly trust. Whilst pupils' social and moral development is excellent, spiritual and cultural development is good. Most pupils attend regularly and overall attendance figures are improving, although a small number of parents still insist on taking their children out of school for holidays. Pupils have a very strong understanding of keeping safe and know the value of a good diet and taking exercise. Pupils have an excellent understanding of their community, which starts in the school, where the school council is a very good avenue for 'Pupil Voice'. Pupils relate very well to their local area, the church, and their cluster of schools. Through fundraising, their sense of community gains a more national and international feel. Further improvements in basic skills would better prepare them more for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is effective, as shown in the good progress pupils' make. Good quality planning, with clearly defined outcomes, ensures a consistent approach through the school. Activities are challenging and meet the needs of all learners. Lessons are lively and well paced and take good account of different learning styles. Teaching assistants are very well briefed and, as a result, they provide good additional support, mainly for pupils with learning difficulties. Effective questioning techniques probe pupils' understanding and reinforce new learning, making pupils think and explain their ideas. Although every class has an interactive whiteboard, these are not yet fully exploited in lessons in order to enrich learning. Whilst pupils are given individual and group targets, these are not used to track progress in lessons and pupils are not sufficiently involved in checking their own progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and planned well to meet the needs of all pupils, especially in the mixed age classes, where the school plans the curriculum over a two year cycle. Planning shows clearly that work can be adapted to meet the specific needs of the less and more able pupils in each year group. The curriculum is enriched by special events such as Around the World week, which also contributes well to pupils' cultural development. The school's strong philosophy of inclusion is reflected in the good provision for pupils with learning difficulties. Visitors from different faiths and sections of the community enrich pupils' awareness of social and cultural diversity and the strong focus on personal, social and health education contributes well to their personal development. The school offers a good range of clubs, some of which take place in Golden Time, whilst there is further enrichment through the good links with the local secondary school in music and physical education. The use of information and communication technology, as a tool for learning, is underdeveloped.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is excellent. The overall good level of care, guidance and support given to pupils makes a significant contribution to their progress in school. Parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for, with one parent saying, 'My child is cherished.' Procedures for safeguarding children are effective and pupils say they feel safe at school. The school places good emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles, which effectively ensure that pupils have a good understanding about healthy diet and exercise.

The good procedures for assessment and tracking of pupils' academic work lead to sensible targets being set for pupils in literacy and numeracy, even though these are not always used sufficiently well in lessons. The school is aware of the need to refine its initial assessments in the Foundation Stage. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is effective, ensuring that quite a number achieve the nationally expected levels for pupils of their age. The regular marking of work helps pupils to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher has shown excellent leadership and has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. She has a very clear vision that she communicates well to staff at all levels. This high quality leadership has enabled the school to cope well with staff changes and the restrictions of the small site. Mixed age classes are well organised and there is a strong commitment to raising standards. There is a common sense of purpose pervading the whole school and teachers and their assistants work very well as a team. The school takes the views of all of its stakeholders very seriously and this is shown by the many comments made by parents about the excellent communications between home and school. At the same time, the school works exceptionally well with outside agencies, other schools, and the local authority to support further improvements. Subject leaders for English, mathematics and science show good management skills. Other subjects are being led and managed by the whole staff, but are not yet at comparable levels of management to that of the headteacher or the core subjects.

Governors are very actively and productively involved in the life of the school. They have looked at the quality of pupils' work and have shadowed pupils during their school day. Attendance remains an issue, although the school has done a very great deal to try to improve it.

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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	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

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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

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 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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Peter's Infant School, Rochester, ME1 2HU

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed coming in to your lessons and looking at your work. We particularly enjoyed talking to the school council and some members of the Caring Crew about the school.

These are some of the things that we are most pleased about.

- You thoroughly enjoy school and look forward to coming each day.
- You work hard in lessons and show interest in your work.
- You are well behaved, polite and helpful to each other and to adults.
- All the adults in the school look after you exceptionally well and help you feel safe and stay healthy.
- Because teachers teach you well, you make good progress in your lessons and achieve well.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well and the teachers and governors give her good support.

To make sure the school keeps improving, we have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to think about:

- finding ways to help you reach even higher standards in writing, paying special attention to the boys
- helping you find ways of understanding your targets better and trying to see yourselves what progress you are making towards them

You can help to make things better by continuing to try hard in your lessons, especially with your writing. You can also look at your targets and see how well you can work towards them.

Yours sincerely

Gavin Jones Lead inspector