

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Devizes

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126401
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315532
Inspection date	10 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Jon Palethorpe

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	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Baker
Headteacher	Sandy Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Bath Road Devizes SN10 2AP
Telephone number	01380 722816
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Peter's is a small primary Foundation School. The school serves the north ward of Devizes. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The school has a higher-than-average percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The pupil population is more mobile than average, which often has a negative impact on the school's academic results. The school has four classes, with pupils grouped according to age, ability and, occasionally, maturity. After many years with a stable staff, the past three years has seen a significant turnover of staff owing to promotion, retirement and several teachers taking maternity leave.

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. It does some important things well. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because pupils are well cared for. Pupils' comments such as, 'Teachers make us feel safe', and 'I can speak to anybody if I am worried', show that pupils appreciate the care given to them. The curriculum is another area of strength, in particular the opportunities for enrichment. There is a variety of extra curricular clubs and activities, and a good range of visits and visitors, including residential visits to support pupils' academic and personal development. Themed weeks such as science, book and healthy eating weeks successfully motivate pupils and help to make learning fun.

In spite of many staff changes in the Foundation Stage, the children settle quickly into school, with particularly good support from the teaching assistants. Children quickly gain confidence and get off to a satisfactory start to their learning. Most pupils throughout the school are now making satisfactory progress. The previous legacy of underachievement has been tackled successfully. This has enabled most pupils to reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and are supported effectively, enabling them to make good progress. Some higher-ability pupils are still not reaching the higher levels. Care must be taken in interpreting national curriculum test results, as the cohort sizes are small. The high percentage of pupils with special needs and high pupil mobility have both had a detrimental effect on the school's performance.

There have been enormous difficulties in staffing during the last two years that have had a negative impact on teaching and therefore pupils' progress. Strategies are now in place to minimise any disruption to learning. A more stable staffing situation enables teachers to take on more responsibility for subjects and to lead development. Teaching is satisfactory and sometimes better. Nonetheless, insufficient use of assessment data means that teaching is not always matched closely enough to the wide range of pupils' needs in each class. As a result, few pupils reach standards above those expected for their age. The focus on writing has been successful, with standards already rising. Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, the monitoring and evaluation processes across the whole school, including at governing body level, have not been sufficiently rigorous in bringing about the necessary improvements. For example, lesson observations tend to describe lessons rather than evaluate them. Plans are in hand to develop this aspect, with more teachers being trained in subject leadership, and governors trained in monitoring and evaluation. Many parents are very pleased with the school, but a significant minority find communication difficult. The school does attempt to communicate with parents, but not always successfully. Given the recent changes and improvements seen in pupils' achievement, teaching and in the curriculum, the school has a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with lower skill and ability levels than expected. They make satisfactory progress so that by the start of Year 1 they reach standards that are slightly below those expected. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and quickly learn to share and take turns because of effective support from the teachers and experienced and competent teaching assistants. They have satisfactory opportunities to explore, investigate and discover together and achieve satisfactorily in all the other areas of learning.

Reception children are placed in a class with Year 1 pupils and on some occasions receive the same tasks, which do not always meet their specific learning needs. Staff plan an interesting range of activities, but the outdoor area is not as exciting for the children as the indoor classroom. However, the school is implementing plans to develop a more stimulating outdoor environment. After some previous staffing disruption, the current staff work well together. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the personal and learning needs of young children. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Children are well cared for and they have increased chances to select their own activities and resources.

What the school should do to improve further

- Check that teaching is always closely matched to all pupils' needs to accelerate their progress and raise standards in literacy, numeracy and science.
- Improve teachers' use of assessment information to plan work, especially for the higher-ability pupils, to improve the quality of teaching.
- Ensure that senior leaders' monitoring and evaluation are more rigorous, and more clearly focused on raising standards and improving achievement.

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 in reading, writing and mathematics are slightly below average at the end of Year 2, largely because few pupils reach the higher Level 3. However, this represents satisfactory progress, given their starting points. This halts a steady decline in standards and progress since 2004. In particular, standards in writing in Year 2 have improved dramatically since last year following the school's focus on writing across the curriculum. Evidence shows that most pupils reach average standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, but higher-ability pupils do not achieve as well as they could, especially in mathematics.

There is evidence of underachievement last year, especially for higher-ability pupils at the end of both Years 2 and 6. In part, this was due to the very high turnover of staff, a high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and high pupil mobility. To overcome these concerns the school has put in place a number of strategies to improve the situation. Consequently, pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a good understanding of how to live a healthy life. They say they like 'Huff and Puff' and 'Wake and Shake' and all the sports clubs. They try to eat healthily, for example with fruit for snacks. Pupils feel safe, and older pupils happily care for younger ones. They say that they like school, and there is nothing they would like to change. Despite the fact that a significant number of parents felt that behaviour required improvement, the inspection team found no evidence to support this. In fact, pupils were well behaved, kind and courteous. Pupils themselves said that a few children could be naughty, but did not feel that this was intimidating or bullying and felt if they were being bullied, they would know who to turn to for help. Pupils

make a good contribution to school life. The school council has helped to improve playtimes with equipment and they have planned book and toy sales. Older pupils enjoy being buddies to younger ones. Satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills and good personal development prepare pupils soundly for their next stage of their education. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school identified the need to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of life in multicultural Britain, and has put in place successful initiatives to raise awareness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Typically, lessons are characterised by thorough planning, which includes different work for pupils with different abilities, and clear lesson objectives. Teachers engender good attitudes and behaviour. Discipline is rarely a problem because teachers forge positive relationships with pupils and ensure that they know what is expected of them. Pupils are involved well and contribute effectively to class discussions. Interactive whiteboards are used well to display information and motivate pupils. Teaching assistants have provided some continuity during periods of high turnover of staff. They are used effectively by the school, particularly to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for the teaching of French and Spanish. However, on occasions, teachers could make better use of them at the start of lessons while they are talking to the whole class. There are some occasions when assessment data are not used sufficiently in planning work for different abilities, which means that some higher-ability pupils are insufficiently challenged.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Interesting links are made between subjects, enabling pupils to apply their skills learnt in one subject area across the curriculum. For example, science week involved English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT), and the development of pupils' personal skills through working together. Homework topics encourage parents to become involved with the pupils' learning, and often require research, particularly on the Internet. Teachers have reviewed the curriculum carefully to ensure that it is adjusted to cater for the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes. Mostly this is effective, although on some occasions there is insufficient challenge for higher-attaining pupils. Intervention programmes successfully target pupils' needs, enabling lower-ability pupils to make good progress. The school works well with other agencies, particularly to improve provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and with the secondary school for sports provision. The school's personal, social and health education programme is good and effectively promotes pupils' ability to keep safe and understand issues around healthy living. Valuable support is obtained from the school nurse and the Life Education Van to deliver these programmes. The school provides pupils with a good range of extra-curricular activities that are appreciated and enjoyed, including a girls' ICT club. Good work in personal development has led to the Healthy School Award. Working towards the Global Schools Award has been very effective in raising awareness of cultural issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Despite the fact that many teachers are new to the school, they already have a good knowledge and understanding of the pupils and of many families, and provide good pastoral care. This is having a positive impact on pupils' personal development and progress. One parent said, 'St Peter's is a caring and safe place', and pupils say that their teachers are kind. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety are rigorous. Improved links with outside agencies, such as Social Services, ensure that pupils and families quickly receive support if needed. Good assessment data are in place to track pupils' progress. As many staff are new, some are more successful than others at using assessment information to match work to pupils' capabilities. This is particularly so for higher-ability pupils. Many pupils know their targets and take pleasure in using the display to show what they have achieved. Marking varies throughout the school. Some clearly shows pupils how they can improve, while other marking is simply supportive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has worked very hard to overcome the many staffing and governors' difficulties over the past three years. She is now building a team around her that is beginning to support her in taking the school forward. All leaders, including governors, are aware of the school's deficiencies in the past and are implementing strategies for improvement. All staff work well as a team, with support from the local authority, with the same vision for school improvement. This is beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. The roles of the subject leaders have been limited because of frequent staff changes. Leaders now receive training and are becoming more proactive in developing their subjects and raising standards through monitoring and evaluation. There has been some difficulty in recruiting governors. This seems to have been addressed successfully through the proactive work of governors. They are receiving training from the local authority and have a much clearer idea of their roles and responsibilities. They are supporting the school well and are beginning to monitor, evaluate and challenge. This, together with senior leaders' monitoring and evaluation, is giving the school a realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. A significant number of parents feel that the school does not communicate effectively with them. Inspectors found that communication was taking place, but there was some scope for improvement.

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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 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	3
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	3

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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

11 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Peter's C of E VA Primary School, Devizes SN10 2AP

Thank you for helping us so much when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out about what you do. We found that the school is providing you with a satisfactory education, and that it does some important things well.

Your personal development and well-being are good. This is because the school takes good care of you and helps you to grow up as caring and sensible young people. We are particularly pleased that you get on so well together. We know that some pupils do misbehave on occasions, but we saw you being very sensible and well behaved in class and in the playground. You have a good understanding of the importance of keeping yourself healthy by eating sensibly and taking exercise. We saw you enjoying your physical exercise and eating healthy snacks.

You have a good curriculum with lots of things that make it exciting and fun, such as your science week and book week. The teaching you receive is satisfactory and you make satisfactory progress as a result. Pupils who find learning more difficult get good support and make good progress.

We have asked the school to do some things to help you more. We have asked them to help you reach higher levels in English, mathematics and science. To achieve this, we have asked teachers to make sure that the teaching is always matched closely to your needs, and to use your assessments to do this. We have also asked them to ensure school leaders, teachers and governors keep a closer check on how well you are doing so that you can reach those higher standards.

You can help by always working hard. Thank you once again for your help. It was lovely meeting you.

Yours sincerely

Jon Palethorpe Lead inspector



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