

St Peter's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104801
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	324106
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Denise Shields

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	246
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Flitcroft
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Birley Street Newton-le-Willows St Helens Merseyside WA12 9UR
Telephone number	01744 678630
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Peter's Church of England Primary School is an average sized school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, a few are from minority ethnic groups. Eligibility for free school meals is lower than average but rising steadily. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. There are more girls on roll than boys and as a result, there is an unequal gender balance in some year groups. A Reception Class and a mixed age Reception and Year 1 class form the school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision. There is a breakfast club and after-school club on site, which is privately run and did not form part of this inspection.

The school has gained several awards including Sports England Activemark, Healthy School's Award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Since the previous inspection a new headteacher has been appointed and there have been significant changes in staff in Years 1 and 2.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding, such as the extensive partnerships with the local parish and a wide range of organisations, which have a significant impact on pupils' all-round education. Care, guidance and support are exceptionally good and underpin the outstanding quality of pupils' personal development. 'The pastoral care and guidance my children experience at St Peter's is excellent and nurtures their thirst for knowledge,' is a view that encapsulates those of many parents. The curriculum is good. The range of opportunities provided beyond lessons has improved since the previous inspection and is now very good. For example, the enrichment afternoons provide opportunities for pupils to take part in a very good range of activities that include sport, cycling proficiency and textiles. The choices were suggested by pupils and these experiences develop their interests and talents very well. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and this is reflected in their well above average attendance. They relish the responsibilities they have and carry these out in a diligent and mature manner. Their behaviour is excellent; they respect each other and develop very good relationships. Their understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles is very impressive. Even the very youngest children comment, 'you should choose carrots for your snack because they are better for your teeth than lots of chocolate biscuits'. Pupils demonstrate outstanding young citizenship. They regularly support charities both at home and abroad and help younger pupils to play safely, through the school's buddy system. Their knowledge of life in a multi-ethnic society is growing.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and management and has established a clear vision and determination, shared by all staff, to bring about improvement. With the recently established senior leadership team she ensures that the needs of pupils and staff are securely at the heart of everything that is done. The inclusion of pupils, whatever their background, ability or particular need is given high priority. There is a strong sense of teamwork amongst the newly appointed curriculum teams and their contributions to evaluating the work of the school are steadily developing. The curriculum teams have started to check some aspects of subject areas, but they do not check on the progress pupils make. As a result, they cannot be certain of the standards pupils attain and where improvement may be required. Nevertheless, school self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. It is linked well to future development planning. The firm action that has been taken to bring about improvement has had measurable success. For example, the school recognised that the achievement of more able pupils, by the end of Year 6, had dipped in 2007 and so took successful action. School data indicate that in 2008 the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who attained the higher level in the national tests rose significantly to above average. The school also recognised that standards in literacy and mathematics by the end of Year 2, whilst broadly average, had steadily declined over previous years. Inspection evidence confirms that, as a result of the revised programmes introduced to teach letters and sounds, progress has speeded up and achievement in reading and writing has risen for all groups of pupils. However, inspection evidence also shows that improvement has not been as rapid in mathematics, and that achievement and progress in this subject are not as strong. Improvement identified as being necessary during the inspection in January 2006 has been dealt with well and together with recent developments demonstrates the school has good capacity to improve further.

Teaching and learning are of good quality. Very clear academic guidance is given to all pupils. Secure and friendly relationships exist in all classes and pupils are not afraid to ask for help if

they should need it. Consequently, pupils' achievement is good. Children start Reception with skills that are broadly typical for their age. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 6, they attain standards that are above average. Pupils who find learning more difficult and those with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, because of the sensitive support they receive together with work that is carefully tailored to their specific needs.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress and achieve well, particularly in personal and social development and early reading and writing. By the time they transfer to Year 1, the vast majority reach the national expectations in all areas of learning and some exceed them. The welfare of children is promoted extremely well.

Classrooms and the outdoor area are safe, happy and secure areas. The school works very well with parents and successfully encourages them to become involved in their children's education. Personal and social development are excellent. All adults take time to get to know each child and their individual personalities. As a result, children trust them and settle to new routines quickly. Behaviour is extremely good and children are enthusiastic about learning. They quickly learn to take turns, share equipment and cooperate with each other. The curriculum is good. Early reading and writing skills are given high priority and are taught effectively. This lays a good foundation for the development of children's future basic literacy skills. A good range of activities is planned inside and outdoors, where children can choose activities themselves or take part in adult-led tasks. Very occasionally, adults do too much for children and at times, when children select activities themselves, adults do not always quickly grasp the learning opportunities. As a result, sometimes children's learning slows and the development of their independence is restricted. The EYFS is well led and managed and teamwork is strong. Assessment is detailed and thorough. A close check is kept on how well children are doing and this contributes well to children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement in mathematics at Key Stage 1.
- Develop the role of the curriculum teams in checking the quality of provision and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. School data clearly indicate that by the end of Year 6, standards are above average, with a larger proportion than average attaining above expected levels. In recent years, standards by the end of Year 2, although broadly average, have declined. The schools newly introduced approaches to teaching letters and sounds have reversed this trend. These are thoroughly enjoyed by pupils because adults make learning fun. Visual clues and simple rhymes and songs engage them and progress is rapid. Pupils are very proud of their achievement and spontaneously applaud when a pupil correctly spells 'nation' and comments, 'that's a very tricky word to spell'. Inspection evidence indicates that by the end of Year 2, standards and achievement in reading and writing have risen, but are weaker in mathematics.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in relation to their specific starting points and achieve well. This is because support programmes, for example, in

reading and writing, help from teaching assistants and work that is well matched to their ability, support their learning effectively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social awareness is outstanding. They develop excellent social skills, are self-confident and very enthusiastic about their school. Pupils state confidently that bullying and racism are very rare. 'Everyone just gets along with each other, if you have a problem you can talk to an adult', is a comment made by many. Pupils have a very good understanding of global citizenship gained through a strong link with a school in Uganda. However, their awareness of life in a multi-ethnic society is less well advanced; the school has clear plans to address this. Pupils have a keen awareness of how to stay safe, fit and healthy. They play and socialise together extremely well. Older pupils, in particular, care extremely well for those younger than themselves. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the parish community and are actively involved in fund-raising and church events. They make an equally impressive contribution to the school community through the school council. Pupils are proud that their views are taken into account and feel they have made a difference to school life. Above average standards in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) give them a good start to their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are of good quality. Harmonious relationships are a consistent strength of lessons. As a result, pupils try hard and are generally fully engaged in activities. Strategies to accelerate pupils' learning through talking with partners, for example, are used well. Teachers make good use of resources, including ICT, to help pupils make connections in their learning. Generally, lessons proceed at a good pace and humour is often used to good effect. However, occasionally, teachers talk for too long and pupils' learning slows. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the work of groups, and help pupils who find learning more difficult and those with additional difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve well. Sometimes, during the introduction to lessons, however, their contribution is less effective. Teachers' marking is consistently thorough in all classes and provides very good advice to help pupils improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is carefully organised. The school has started to link subjects together in themes, with greater emphasis on the development of pupils' key skills. Although in the early stage of development, this approach is already providing more meaningful opportunities for pupils to write at greater length in a range of subjects, but, it is too early to judge the impact on raising standards. Success, however, can be seen from revisions to the curriculum in Years 5 and 6, where pupils are grouped by ability, this has resulted in a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining above expected standards this year. The impact of a strong and very effective focus on personal, social, emotional and health education is seen in confident, articulate and polite pupils. Opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities beyond

lessons, such as French in Years 2 to 6 and clubs such as 'Gods Gang', a faith club, are much improved since the previous inspection and make a very good contribution to raising pupils' self-confidence and esteem.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care is outstanding. The vast majority of parents are appreciative of the support their children receive and hold the school in high regard. Teachers know pupils very well and the quality of relationships is very strong. Pupils confirm this by their comments that they feel valued, safe and very well cared for. Arrangements to safeguard pupils fully meet requirements. Health and safety and welfare arrangements are very good. There is good support and guidance for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good systems are in place to identify pupils' needs and to set appropriate targets for learning. Extensive links with a range of organisations are used very effectively to support pupils who experience difficulties in their lives and this often extends to their families, too. Academic guidance is extremely effective. Ways of involving pupils in assessing their own progress have improved considerably since the previous inspection. All pupils are clear about the learning targets they have to reach and confirm they help them to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work effectively as a team. With the good support of the recently assembled senior leadership team, they have gathered an accurate picture of the school's performance and the changes that need to be made to secure future improvement. They are particularly well supported and challenged by competent governors who are not afraid to ask challenging questions and hold the school to account. Careful self-evaluation is closely aligned to school development planning. Leaders confidently make the necessary adjustments to school practice in order to raise standards. For example, changes to the curriculum in Years 5 and 6 to provide more challenge in work for more able pupils and new arrangements to teach letters and sounds in EYFS and Years 1 and 2 have had a measurable impact on achievement and standards. A robust system to track pupils' progress has recently been developed and is being used well to identify and tackle any underachievement. The school makes good use of challenging targets to help raise standards. However, the curriculum teams are newly appointed and are not yet fully involved in checking pupils' progress. This means that, at present, they have a limited role in driving forward improvements. The school has identified this as an area for improvement. It has good arrangements to train and develop staff. Teachers value these opportunities, in particular, those who are newly qualified. The school's extensive partnerships with the parish community and external agencies help raise the quality of pupils' education and ensure that those in need of extra help are well supported.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

I would like to thank you very much for your help when the other inspector and I visited your school. We enjoyed our visit very much and were disappointed that we could not join you to watch the performance of *Sleeping Beauty*, but are glad that you all enjoyed it so much. Now I would like to share with you some of the judgements we made.

St Peter's is a good school and some parts of its work are outstanding. This means that it is doing some really good things to help you.

- All the staff take excellent care of you and help you to be safe and healthy.
- You try very hard with your work, really enjoy learning and behave extremely well.
- Your teachers make your lessons interesting and show you very clearly how to improve your work.
- You have lots of opportunities to take part in activities beyond your lessons.
- By the time you leave school at the end of Year 6 you reach standards that are above average.

To make your school even better I have asked your headteacher and governors to help pupils in Years 1 and 2 reach higher standards in mathematics. Your headteacher works closely with the governors to help plan what needs to be improved. I have asked your school to help teachers in the two curriculum subject teams to check closely how well you are all doing, so that they, too, can help to plan improvements.

You can help, too, by continuing to try your very best, working hard and trying to reach your learning targets.

With best wishes to you all