

St Peters Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105069
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	324151
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	157
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 P Gordon
Headteacher	Mr P Sherry
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Peter's Way Noctorum Prenton Merseyside CH43 9QR
Telephone number	0151 6778438
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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 school serving an area where social deprivation is higher than average. The number of pupils in receipt of free school meals is much higher than average. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also much higher than average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups and very few at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of Reception only. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy Schools Award, Activemark Gold and Artsmark Silver awards.

There is a privately managed pre-school playgroup on the school site. This provision was inspected separately and will receive a separate written report.

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's Catholic Primary is a good school and an enjoyable and supportive place for children to learn. The overwhelmingly positive comments made by parents confirm the school's commitment for both care and learning. Parents typically say, 'St Peter's is a warm and caring school, both I and my children feel like part of a family'.

The children's skills at the start of the Reception class are generally well below average, with communication, language and social skills being particularly weak. By the end of Year 6 pupils gain standards that are broadly average. They make good progress in Reception and continue to do so in Key Stages 1 and 2. The pupils' progress in developing their communication skills is particularly good. The school's very effective focus on developing pupils' skills in speaking and listening starts in Reception and continues throughout the school so that, by the end of Year 6, pupils express their views fluently and confidently. This has a significant impact upon their achievement across all subjects of the curriculum.

The attitudes of all pupils to learning and to life in school are very positive; they enjoy school and their behaviour is exemplary. They take pride in their achievements and talk animatedly about their learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school works purposefully to develop community cohesion locally and has been particularly successful in involving parents and carers in their children's education. This is evident in pupils' positive attitudes towards school and their awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and staying safe. Pupils readily take on responsibility and play an important role in improving their school; for instance, through the school council and their work in helping younger pupils in the Reception and in the playground. As a consequence, they are well prepared for the next stage in education and the wider world.

The quality of teaching is good and leads to good achievement. Effective questioning by teachers challenges and extends pupils' thinking, but opportunities to explore ideas for themselves and work independently of the teacher are too limited. The tracking of pupils' progress is effective. The quality of support for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. Consequently, these pupils make good progress and are able to participate fully in whole class activities alongside their classmates. An outstanding feature of the school's provision is the way it supports reading through tailored reading support for the individual. This promotes a love of reading very effectively and improvements in standards since the scheme was adopted are remarkable. Marking is regular and encouraging but its quality is not consistent across the school. Pupils are not always given clear enough guidance about how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management are good. The senior leaders of the school have an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The school has acted effectively to arrest and reverse a dip in standards over the last three years. However, at present monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning procedures, although effective in ensuring all pupils make appropriate progress, are restricted to the senior leaders and do not involve middle managers sufficiently to allow for detailed planning and continued development. The governing body is well informed and works closely with the school, for instance to improve attendance. Effective improvements since the previous inspection in the development of pupils' use of spoken English, rates of attendance, as well as the continued rise in standards over the last two years, are a clear

indication of the school's good capacity to improve further. Pupils' good progress and personal development show that the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Very close links with families help to ensure that children settle in quickly in the Reception class and start learning straight away. In personal development and language, children's starting points are particularly low, and overall their skills are well below the levels typical of children of their age. As a result of the emphasis on speaking and listening and role-play activities, their progress is good. Progress is especially rapid in the areas of personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. Despite this good progress, by the end of the Reception Year, children still do not attain the levels expected for their age. The curriculum is planned carefully and adapted sensitively to children's needs. Resources are freely available and independence is promoted well. In a literacy lesson, for example, children were able to match the written names of animals to pictures and also dress up as pets and other animals.

Staff observe children closely to establish their preferences and also assess their achievements, making sure that they have plenty of opportunities to choose between the different play activities. Children become aware of themselves as individuals, learn to share and take turns and respect others. Teaching is good. Staff work together closely to support learning and promote well-being. The outdoor environment is satisfactory and improving steadily. The children's health and welfare are given a high priority. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well, with a clear focus on continuous improvement, based on secure self-evaluation and knowledge of each child's needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their initiative, take responsibility for their own learning and to develop as independent learners.
- Improve the consistency and effectiveness of marking across the school to support pupils' understanding of their own learning.
- Involve middle managers more effectively in monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning in order to raise standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Despite the good foundation provided in the Reception Year and pupils' eagerness to learn, they start in Year 1 with levels of attainment well below those expected for their age. Currently, they make good progress through Key Stage 1 and standards by the end of Year 2 are below average in reading, writing and mathematics. This good progress is maintained so that by the end of Year 6 school data and inspection evidence shows that current standards are close to the national average in English, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement in relation to pupils' starting points.

In the 2008 national tests at the end of Year 6, standards in English were broadly average; they were above average in science and below average in mathematics. These results contributed to an improving trend and current standards also indicate further improvement by the end of Year 6. Improvements have been made because of more effective use of the pupil tracking

system and better-targeted intervention strategies, such as the highly specialised reading support for individual pupils. School data and inspection evidence show that standards are continuing to improve.

Action taken by the school to improve pupils' writing and their use of spoken English is proving successful and this is having a positive impact upon their achievement across all subjects. Similarly, the school's use of reading support is very effective not only in enabling pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make the same good progress as their classmates but also in raising pupils' self-esteem and their confidence in themselves as effective learners.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are very polite, thoughtful and well mannered. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good overall. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and can easily put themselves in someone else's shoes. Pupils are very eager to learn, listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles, for example they talk enthusiastically about healthy eating and their participation in sports is very good. Their awareness of how to stay safe is good. Pupils' contribution to the community is good. For example, the school council has made significant contributions to developing the outdoor resources and healthy eating options at lunchtimes. Older pupils act as play leaders and monitors and help younger ones at lunch and break times. However, opportunities to use their own initiative are more limited. Pupils also make a valuable contribution to the wider community through fundraising for charity and the choir. Pupils are well prepared for their economic future and value the chances they have to learn about the world of work and money matters. Attendance is below average although the school has made good improvement in the overall rate since the last inspection.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

At the start of lessons teachers explain to pupils the objectives for the lesson, so they know what is expected of them. Teachers demonstrate new ideas clearly so that pupils rapidly understand. Relationships in the classes are usually excellent and pupils listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. Questioning is used effectively to support and extend learning and pupils are regularly challenged to explain to others how they have solved problems. Teachers plan lessons well so that activities are appropriate, engage pupils and are well sequenced so that pupils build effectively on previous learning. Assessment information is used effectively in lesson planning so that resources and activities are usually well matched to pupils' needs and capabilities. Teaching assistants provide skilful support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling these pupils to participate successfully in whole-class activities and make the same good progress as their classmates. Pupils are regularly given the opportunity to explore ideas initially with a partner and, as a result, they are confident and keen to share their ideas with a wider audience in whole-class discussion. When pupils are given the opportunity to work in small groups independently of the teacher and to explore ideas for themselves, they respond positively. However, opportunities for them to do this are limited and too often activities are over-directed by the teacher.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their education because there is a good balance of activities for their academic and personal development. The school has made good improvements to provision since the last inspection by extending opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. The use of information and communication technology is recognised as needing further development to support learning. The school is aware of this and has plans in place to address the matter. The programme for personal, social and health education is good and prepares pupils well for the wider world. For example, there are lots of opportunities to learn about caring, respect and teamwork. Pupils' experience is enriched through the creative arts, including music, and also through opportunities to learn Spanish and French. Educational visits and visitors make a significant contribution to learning. Pupils recently went to Liverpool Cathedral and also the City Learning Centre. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of sporting opportunities and from coaching by specialists. Both boys and girls enjoy the street dancing tuition provided by a specialist teacher. The older pupils have the opportunity to take part in a residential course at an outdoor pursuits centre in Wales.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Staff are committed to promoting the welfare of all pupils and this is reflected in the strong pastoral care. Arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are in place and reviewed regularly. Current government safeguarding requirements are met. Procedures to encourage regular attendance and excellent behaviour are very strong and pupils value the certificates and prizes they receive for improvements. The quality of support for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. The school has good links with outside agencies to remove barriers to learning and with partner institutions and families to ensure a smooth transition from one stage to the next. Although academic guidance is generally good and pupils are aware of their targets, marking does not always inform pupils about how well they are doing and the next steps they must take to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very clear direction, which is focused on raising standards. Actions taken by the school to eliminate underachievement over the last three years and to raise standards in English and mathematics have proved successful. The downward trend in standards has reversed as a result. Similarly, issues from the last inspection have been tackled successfully. Challenging targets, based on the analysis of the pupils' attainment and progress, are used effectively to raise standards. Detailed meetings with class teachers, based upon assessment information, ensure staff are accountable and that curriculum planning matches pupils' needs and capabilities well. Systems to track pupils' progress are used effectively so that appropriate intervention can be provided for all pupils whatever their individual needs. However, at present although school systems for bringing about improvements in standards are effective, they are restricted to the senior leaders, and middle managers are insufficiently involved to allow for their input into development planning. Good links exist with partner institutions and outside

agencies to support the school's work. The school works purposefully to develop community cohesion locally. Indeed the school works very well indeed with parents and carers to enable them to support their child's learning and to promote their well-being. The school is an active member of the church community and ensures that the pupils have a clear understanding of a global community. They are active in supporting charitable church links with other distant areas. Governors are supportive and are beginning to take on their role of challenging the school more effectively. Both parents and children appreciate the commitment of the leadership to equal opportunities and the elimination of discrimination; they say how well adults at the school know individual pupils and meet their needs.

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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 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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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

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	3
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	1
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	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**

Inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Prenton, CH43 9QR

On behalf of the inspectors I would like to thank you all for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. Your behaviour is excellent and we all noticed how well older pupils care for younger children.

I'm sure you will be interested, but not at all surprised, to know that I think your school is a good one. The care and support you receive are good and help you do your best. But I think that sometimes you are not told clearly enough how to improve your work so I have asked the school to make sure you all know how well you are doing and understand how to do even better. The standards you achieve are broadly average and you all make good progress. Teaching is good and your lessons are interesting. This helps you to achieve well. I saw how well you worked with each other to solve problems and explore ideas for yourselves in some lessons. Therefore, I have asked the school to make sure that you have more opportunities to do this.

Teachers have been concentrating on helping you to improve your English and mathematics recently and this is proving successful. Standards are improving steadily and you make good progress in English, mathematics and science. You make particularly good progress in speaking and I was impressed by the confident way you explained your views. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress because of the excellent support they get in lessons and through specific support to help them with their reading. Younger children in the Reception class also make good progress and enjoy their learning.

The school is well led and managed and you all play an important role in improving the school, for example, through the school council. I think that you can all achieve even better if teachers in charge of English, mathematics and science are more involved in checking your progress and helping your teachers to plan their lessons, so I have asked the school to make sure this happens. You can help by making sure you continue to attend regularly.

I wish you every success in the future and hope you continue to enjoy your learning.