

St Peter's Church of England Aided School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113553
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325845
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Karl Sampson HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs H Morgan
Headteacher	Mr M A Perry
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 March 2006
School address	Quarry Lane Heavitree Exeter
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at its development plan, its analyses of students' progress and attainment and other aspects of its performance. Inspectors also considered the views expressed in 423 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The achievement of all groups of students, particularly girls and gifted and talented students.
- How well the school meets the needs of all students, including the more vulnerable, so that all are able to succeed.
- The quality of teaching in the school and the features which promote enjoyment and help students to make the best possible progress.
- The effectiveness of senior and middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Information about the school

St Peter's Church of England Aided School is a larger than average comprehensive school serving the town of Exeter and surrounding area. Almost all students are of White British heritage and the percentage from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English is much lower than the national average. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is also well below the national average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. These include students who have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) or who have social, emotional and behavioural issues. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is slightly below that found in other schools nationally. The school was redesignated as a languages specialist school in 2007.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Peter's Church of England Aided School is a good and improving school. It has developed considerably since its last inspection and is well placed to make further progress. The school is well led by a headteacher who has a clear vision for the school's future. As a result of good leadership and management there is sustained improvement in many aspects of the school's work. Accurate self-evaluation provides staff and governors with a clear understanding of the school's strengths and where improvement is required. Effective actions have resulted in progressively higher and now above average standards, good student achievement, and good teaching and learning. Governors provide a good level of support and challenge for the leadership team. They know the school well, including areas for further improvement. Targets are now challenging and performance monitoring is increasing in its rigour across the whole school. Overall, students make good progress in their learning regardless of their background, starting points or learning difficulties.

The good quality of care, guidance and support provided for students has a positive effect on their personal development which in some aspects is outstanding. The behaviour of students is excellent, they are polite, enjoy their education and make an extensive contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. There is a shared sense of pride amongst those who work and learn here. Students develop as mature, confident, responsible and caring members of this inclusive community and are developing a good range of skills to help them progress to further education or the workplace when they leave school. One parent summarised the views of many as follows: 'St Peter's is friendly, caring and an enjoyable place to learn. It provides fantastic opportunities for the children.'

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and improving because of effective monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle leaders and a sharp focus on improving classroom practice. Senior leaders are making good use of strong subject leaders to improve practice across other areas and are supporting teachers well with a range of professional development. There is some outstanding teaching which enthuses and engages the students through creative and imaginative teaching, challenging learning activities, probing questioning and constructive feedback which enhances students' learning. However, the quality of teaching is not yet consistent across the school and within departments and as a result learning and progress are not yet as good as they could be. Another area highlighted by inspection activity as inconsistent is the quality of day-to-day assessment through subject specific verbal

and written feedback.

The school's specialism has been instrumental in the development of the school, leading curriculum expansion, increased participation in languages and an excellent range of partnerships and enrichment opportunities. The specialism makes a first-rate contribution to student's outcomes, development and enjoyment of school life. The specialist school status has been used expertly to reach out and respond to the needs of local as well as international communities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the best practice in the school so that all teaching is good or better by July 2010 and the proportion of outstanding lessons is increased to at least 40% by July 2011. It should improve further its teaching by:
 - ensuring assessment information is used consistently to plan learning experiences which provide high levels of challenge for students in all lessons
 - ensuring consistency in the use of day-to-day assessment so that all students understand the subject-specific actions that they must take to improve their work
 - ensuring all lessons enable students to develop learning styles which actively engage them in reflecting upon their learning and progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the vast majority of lessons students make good progress and enjoy their learning. This is particularly so when the work is carefully planned to match their ability levels and when they are provided with opportunities to explain their thinking. Students' progress is carefully monitored in these lessons and verbal feedback is used skilfully to enable students to reflect effectively upon their learning and progress. Consequently, students are attentive in lessons and behave well.

The results that students achieve in GCSE examinations are above average and rising, with consistently strong performance across most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Results in mathematics demonstrate a strong trend of outstanding achievement and this was supported by the exceptional progress that inspectors observed in mathematics lessons. A number of students are successful in attaining the highest grades in English language, English literature and mathematics. However, the school is aware that this pattern is not repeated across the other subjects and has appropriate plans in place to address this through the further development of teaching, learning and assessment. The school's latest analysis of performance for 2009 suggests that students are on track to achieve their challenging targets by the end of this academic year.

Progress and attainment have improved since the last inspection, partly as a result of improvements to the quality of teaching and the curriculum, the use of assessment

data to inform lesson planning and a good range of sharply focused student support programmes. No group significantly underachieves because the school works hard with individuals to provide good academic support and guidance. As a result, all groups, including vulnerable students and those who find learning a struggle, make good and in some cases, exceptional progress.

Students enjoy school and confirm that they feel safe and secure. Attendance is above average and punctuality has improved markedly in recent years. Behaviour is outstanding and the care and respect students show for adults and fellow students is impressive. A real strength of students' personal development is the outstanding contribution that they make to the life of the school and its wider community. For example, they lead the development of younger students in sport, dance and learning, act as language ambassadors, take a full part in community service and raise considerable monies for charitable causes. Students have excellent opportunities to reflect and explore spiritual, moral, ethical and social issues and the languages specialism has enriched their opportunity to appreciate diverse cultures and faiths. There are strong links with a school in Malawi and the impact and importance that the students' current work is having on the global community is celebrated in assemblies and through informative and stimulating displays around the building. Students have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy life and eagerly take up the wide range of opportunities they have through extra-curricular and competitive sports. As a consequence of good personal development, students flourish in an environment that embodies a strong sense of community, responsibility and inclusion.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

The school has worked effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection, and the majority of lessons are now good or better. The most successful lessons are well planned to meet individual needs, have a clear focus on what is to be learned and are infused with a high level of challenge. As a result, students are well motivated, fully engage with the lesson and are often involved in assessing and reflecting on their own work to consolidate learning. The use of skilful targeted questioning to assess students' understanding and challenge their thinking is also a key feature of lessons. When this happens students respond enthusiastically and make good and sometimes exceptional gains in their learning. Teachers' high expectations and enthusiasm, effective use of new technologies and a variety of opportunities for students to work individually and collaboratively are other notable strengths in teaching. Occasionally, assessment information is not used well enough by teachers to plan challenging activities and insufficient opportunities are provided for students to reflect upon their learning and progress. In lessons where these features were apparent, progress is satisfactory.

Recent changes to the monitoring and tracking of students through the sharper use of assessment information have strengthened the school's ability to support students at risk of underachieving. For example, the deployment of high-quality learning mentors to help some students in danger of underachieving has been very successful. However, there is variability in the quality of verbal and more particularly written subject-specific feedback on students' progress across and within subjects on a day-to-day basis. Where it is good, teachers make it clear how work should be improved and clearly correct any misunderstandings, but sometimes assessment is irregular and superficial and this does not move students on in their learning. The school is currently developing its systems to support school leaders and teachers in ensuring that improvements continue and become more deeply embedded.

Students speak proudly of the school's languages status and recognise the opportunities it offers through curriculum choice, enrichment activities, international links, partnerships and community involvement. There is secure breadth and balance in Years 7 to 9 and provision in Years 10 and 11 includes a good range of subjects and vocational options. Although not yet fully embedded there are a number of emerging strengths in the development, planning and evaluation of the curriculum to raise student aspiration and achievement. This has been particularly evident in the recent development of the gifted and talented programme allowing the study of early GCSE and AS levels in some subjects as well as the innovative Year 7 thinking curriculum based around the 'Habits of Mind'. The formal curriculum is enhanced by an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits. There is a good take-up of activities and over 350 students are involved in international visits each year.

A range of personalised programmes of learning provide good support for all students, especially those who are more vulnerable. For example, there is a nurture group for the more vulnerable Year 7 students that supports their entry to the school and Year 8 students work alongside Year 7s as peer mentors. Pastoral staff work closely and collaboratively with a range of outside agencies to ensure that support is tailored to individual need. Students with learning difficulties are helped considerably by the additional support they receive. The school counsellor and school chaplain contribute to students' emotional well-being and an increasing number of

opportunities exist to support parents' involvement with learning. Good provision is in place to support students' options choices at Year 9 and procedures to assist students in making choices post-16 are well established. Students and parents say they are pleased with the information, advice and guidance that the school provides.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, staff and governors demonstrate high expectations of students in relation to their academic and personal development. Leaders at all levels share the same vision for improvement and there is clarity of purpose and direction leading to increasing accountability and good outcomes. There is an ethos of teamwork and collaboration amongst staff who are now successfully engaged in raising standards and improving achievement for all. A number of key staffing changes at senior and middle level have enabled a sharper focus on developing teaching, learning and assessment and have been a strong feature in securing the school's improvement since the last inspection. The monitoring of the school's work has become more rigorous and is now clearly focused to bring about continuous improvement. In particular, the school's judgements about the quality of teaching and learning are accurate and perceptive. Senior leaders are well aware of the need to strengthen the use of data and assessment information by middle leaders to manage improvement, and to improve the consistency of teaching and assessment among teachers.

The school development plan provides clear direction and focus for improvement. This has led to concerted action to sharpen subject leadership, improve the quality of teaching and learning, and implement challenging targets and better systems for tracking students' progress. Consequently, leaders and managers generally have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of further development. The school's capacity to improve is good. The school is developing its monitoring and evaluation to ensure that greater consistency is achieved across and within curriculum areas.

The school is an inclusive one, and promotes equality of opportunity strongly through effective policies and procedures to ensure that outcomes and experiences for all students are positive. Outstanding partnerships with a range of outside organisations are used very successfully to support students' learning and well-being. Safeguarding procedures, including risk assessments, are secure and regularly reviewed. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. It is promoted well at a local and international level but is not as strong from a national perspective as students lack a sufficiently deep understanding of the cultural diversity of contemporary Britain. Plans are in place to develop further the school's work in this area.

The governing body plays a full role in the development of the school, providing a good balance of support and challenge. Governors ensure that the school provides good value for money, with standards rising, provision improving and good outcomes overall.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and many wrote to inspectors to say how delighted they were with the way that the school was led and managed and the quality of the education and care provided by the school.

The majority of the small numbers of criticisms were offered constructively and where inspectors agree that these concerns are indeed issues, they are included in the main body of the report.

A small but significant minority of parents expressed concern about communication with the school. Inspectors recognise that any lapse in communication is a concern for those involved but consider that the school works hard to communicate with parents and act upon their views.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Peter's Church of England Aided School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 423 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 978 parents and carers registered at the school. This represents a very high response rate with 43% of parents and carers returning their questionnaires.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	214	181	23	2

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



12 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Peter's Church of England Aided School, Exeter, EX2 5AP

We very much enjoyed meeting you on our visit to your school. Thank you all for welcoming us so warmly and special thanks to the student guides who helped us find our way around the school. We found your school to be good overall and I would like to share with you our key findings.

The school has worked really hard since the last inspection to improve how well you achieve in your time at school. The school's tracking, target-setting and clearly focused support programmes enable you to achieve good outcomes overall. You enjoy coming to school because you are well cared for, have a good range of curriculum opportunities and are well taught. Your headteacher leads the school well, and is ably supported by other staff and the governors. You told us that you valued the efforts of the staff in your school and you know how well you are doing in most of your subjects. Not all teachers, however, tell you exactly what you need to do to improve and how to take the next steps in learning. We saw some excellent day-to-day assessment but it is currently too variable across the subjects.

You particularly appreciate the positive benefits that the languages specialism has brought, along with a varied enrichment programme and wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. They support your good and in some aspects outstanding personal development and you take full advantage of them. You told us you feel safe and we think your behaviour in and around the school is outstanding. You are polite, courteous and go out of your way to support each other and make a positive contribution to the life of the school and wider community. Overall, you have good opportunities to develop personally and academically.

We have identified three areas to make your school even better. We have asked that the school's leaders ensure:

- they continue to work with teachers to make teaching even better
- teachers use assessment information to provide you with well-planned and more challenging learning activities which engage you more actively in learning
- teachers consistently provide you with the best possible feedback, both verbal and written, so that you always know how to improve.

You can certainly help the teachers with some of these things. Thank you once again for your help during our visit and good luck with your work in the future!

Yours faithfully

Karl Sampson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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