

St Peter's School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 117140 |
| Local Authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 326534 |
| Inspection date | 22 September 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Keith Sadler |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 270 |
| 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 | 46 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs J Turberville |
| Headteacher | Mr Michael Connell |
| Date of previous school inspection | 3 October 2005 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Cottonmill Lane St. Albans Hertfordshire AL1 1HL |
| Telephone number | 01727853075 |
| Fax number | 01727868842 |

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|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Age group | 3–11 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). In addition, the following issues were investigated:

- What are the key features that lead the school to gain such exceptionally high standards?
- How well do the children in the EYFS achieve and is their achievement strong across all areas of learning?
- Do all child protection and safeguarding arrangements comply in full with regulatory requirements?

Evidence was gathered from the school's analysis of pupils' progress, a scrutiny of samples of their work and observations of pupils in lessons. Discussions were held with staff, governors and pupils. In addition, the responses of parents' questionnaires were analysed and their comments taken into account. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Peter's is an average sized primary school. It has one-form-entry, though there are two classes for Year 1 pupils. It is very heavily oversubscribed. The EYFS consists of a Nursery class, which children attend on a part-time basis, and Reception class. There is childcare provision for children to stay for lunch and the afternoon session. This operates every day during term time in the Nursery class accommodation. It is not managed by the governing body.

About a fifth of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, in line with the national average. A significant number of minority ethnic groups is represented in the school, the largest of which is of Bangladeshi heritage. Twenty-eight pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. The school has gained the following awards: Investors in People, Healthy Schools and Sports Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding in both their personal and academic development. They are outstandingly well prepared for their move to secondary education. Pupils reach exceptionally high standards at this school, which is exemplary in almost all respects. Inspirational leadership, excellent teaching and care, guidance and support provide the bedrock on which pupils thrive in their learning. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and pay tribute to the whole staff team for their excellence in helping their children develop. They are rightly effusive in their praise of the school's overwhelmingly supportive family atmosphere where all the adults and pupils support each other. When one school councillor commented, 'We make sure that everyone is happy at our school', others were unanimous in their agreement. There is a deep-rooted sense of community and pride. This extends to the outstanding links and partnerships that the school has with the local community and also with a school in Ghana. The school council is very active and involved in important decisions about the school. For example, the council played an important role when the new deputy headteacher was appointed last term. In addition, they have a very keen sense of responsibility and thoroughly relish the many opportunities available for them to help and support others by being playground buddies and helpers. They also keenly support charities and raise considerable amounts of money.

Relationships are excellent, behaviour is outstanding and pupils are immensely proud of their school. Attendance is excellent and reflects how well pupils enjoy coming to school. They have a highly developed understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe. All staff take the utmost care to support pupils and to ensure that they thrive. All safeguarding and child protection regulations are met in full.

Even though children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those typically found, they make good progress in the EYFS and by the time that they leave the Reception class, most children attain the expected learning goals. Progress accelerates in both Key Stage 1 and 2, and pupils of all backgrounds and abilities achieve exceptionally well. Standards are above average in national tests for Year 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Because teaching is outstanding and the school tracks meticulously the progress of each pupil in all subjects, any children in danger of dropping behind in any subject are quickly identified and action is taken. In consequence, progress rockets in Key Stage 2 and by the time that they leave the school, standards are consistently and exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science, with a very large number of pupils gaining the higher level.

The outstanding quality of teaching stimulates the pupils' interests and curiosity. Teachers plan lessons exceptionally well to ensure that the interesting and innovative activities that are set provide high challenge to pupils of all abilities. Their explanations are of the highest order and they question pupils exceptionally well. Classrooms are a hive of quiet industry in which pupils concentrate exceptionally well and work hard to meet the challenging tasks set.

A further key strength lies in the way that pupils are helped to understand what is expected of them in lessons and in units of work. Targets are made very clear and pupils talk eloquently about the success criteria. In addition, they help each other by checking their work in books against these targets. Marking is excellent and academic guidance outstanding. Excellent support is provided in lessons for pupils in the early stages of learning English, so they quickly develop their confidence in communicating with others. In addition, there is very effective

support for individuals and groups who need additional help with speech, language and communication difficulties, as well as reading and writing, offered by support staff.

The curriculum is outstanding. Teachers are skilful in ensuring that subjects are linked together to make learning meaningful. A myriad of opportunities is presented for pupils to research and to apply their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in the themes studied. Learning is further enriched by focused events such as the international week that is currently being planned. The school's strong links with a local independent secondary school also broaden opportunities. Two classes visit the school for specialist teaching each week. Currently, Year 5 and 6 are having design and technology and science lessons which enhances learning particularly for pupils who find learning easier. Music and arts activities have been considerably extended since the previous inspection. Specialist music teaching enriches opportunities for children, and very many take up the opportunity to learn to play an instrument.

All these things don't happen by chance! The headteacher is fundamental to the school's success. His leadership and management are exemplary. He has engendered the highest quality of teamwork and all the adults' views are valued. As a consequence morale is high and all are clear about their contribution to the school's success. His vision is shared by the highly effective governors who support and challenge the school very well. Together with the headteacher they are determined to continue to improve the lot of the pupils by constantly seeking to fine tune the excellent provision. Self-evaluation is outstanding and the school has a detailed and thorough understanding of its provision and pupils' progress. Teachers with subject responsibilities play an important role in monitoring provision in their areas. The highest standards and exceptionally rich provision have been maintained and built on since the previous inspection and the school demonstrates an outstanding capacity for yet further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. For example, children like learning about what plants need for growth because practical activities are used well. This is because children's learning and welfare are given a very high priority. They settle quickly into school life because parental knowledge is used successfully. Children's personal development is excellent because staff form very effective relationships with the children and manage them thoughtfully. Their behaviour is outstanding and they are very keen to learn. Children from all backgrounds play harmoniously together. They adopt healthy lifestyles effectively because they eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise. Children achieve well and standards are in line with national expectations by the end of the Reception year. This is because staff successfully help them to develop key skills. There are good opportunities for children to choose both inside and outside activities because resources are organised well. However, the staff's planning for the outside area is not always as detailed as it is for inside. Assessment activities are carried out well. Books and folders successfully record children's learning journeys and development in all areas. Assessments are carried out regularly but the next learning steps for children to make are not always recorded in detail. The leadership of this stage of education is good. Teachers with responsibilities throughout the school carry out careful checks of provision and children's progress, and this leads to the identification of appropriate key priorities for development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure weekly planning for the Nursery and Reception classes sets clear objectives for all outside learning activities.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| 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

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| How well do learners achieve? | 1 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 1 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 1 |

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

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| 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 | 1 |

The quality of provision

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| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 1 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 |
| 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**

23 September 2008

Inspection of St Peter's Primary School, St Albans, AL1 1HL

Thank you so much for making us welcome and for talking with me when we visited your school. We enjoyed finding out about St Peter's. Please would you also thank your parents for sending the questionnaires back.

We agree with you and your parents that yours is an excellent school in all respects. Your work is of a high standard and your achievement throughout the school is outstanding. We were very impressed with the way that you use so many skills across all your subjects. We enjoyed looking at the many displays of work that helped to show the wide variety of things that you are taught. Your teachers have excellent skills and they help you to learn exceptionally well. They plan interesting and exciting activities for you, and we can understand why you all love lessons and learning.

Your behaviour is excellent, you have very positive attitudes to each other and we were very impressed how well all of you get on together. You have an excellent understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Your headteacher and all the other adults involved in leading and managing your school do an excellent job. They make sure that you receive the best possible education.

We have asked your school to do one thing. This is to make sure that in their planning, staff in the Nursery and Reception have clear objectives for learning and play outside the classroom.

Once again, thank you for your help. We know that the staff will help you to keep doing your best.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector