

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110473
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337509
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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 of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alex Temple
Headteacher	Miss Amanda McCluskey
Date of previous school inspection	0 November 2006
School address	Prospect Road Marlow Buckinghamshire SL7 2PJ
Telephone number	01628 472116
Fax number	01628 488123
Email address	office@stpetersrc.bucks.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, attended assemblies, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the chair of governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information, pupils' books, pupil records and improvement plans. The team received and analysed 99 parental questionnaires, 109 responses to the Key Stage 2 pupil survey and eight responses to the staff questionnaire

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

- how well the school enriches and extends the pupils' experiences and challenges their thinking
- the extent to which pupils understand how to improve their learning, and their involvement in assessing their work and that of others
- how effectively pupils develop and use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills

Information about the school

This is a below average sized school in which no pupil is eligible for a free school meal. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has risen to over one fifth, although no pupils are at an early stage of learning English. There are proportionately less pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities than nationally, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Most of these pupils are currently in Year 6 and include pupils with visual impairment. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class which they were attending only in the morning at the time of the inspection. The school has been awarded the Active Mark and has gained Healthy School status.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school's effectiveness has slipped since its last inspection. This is largely because the actions to tackle areas for improvement identified then have not been sufficiently rigorous and, over this period, the pupils' rate of progress has slowed. The children's good start in Reception is not being built on consistently across the rest of the school. Although test results have followed a rising trend at the end of Year 2 in recent years and have been significantly above average at the end of Year 6, this is much to do with above average starting points at the beginning of Year 1. Pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory rather than good.

While the majority of teaching moves pupils' learning forward at a good rate, this is not always the case for everyone. There are several reasons for this. Teachers do not consistently engage pupils or help them to take responsibility for their own learning. They do not always extend the thinking of the large number of more able pupils or provide them with the opportunity to develop their own lines of enquiry. By contrast, pupils who need extra help with their learning receive effective guidance from skilled support staff and experience tasks that are adapted closely to their individual targets. Their progress also benefits from the expertise and support of external agencies. This enables these pupils to make good progress.

Teachers make learning more interesting by linking subjects and providing a vehicle for them to develop their writing in a wide range of contexts. There have been some improvements in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) over recent years, but pupils report that they do not have frequent and regular opportunities to hone and utilise their skills across all subjects. The school adds considerably to the pupils' experiences through a wide range of enrichment activities.

Attendance levels are high and reflect the school's constructive links with home. Parents are pleased with the school. One summed up the views of many when writing, 'I am very happy with not just the achievements but also the overall commitment that the staff make to their pupils. I feel privileged that my child can attend this school.'

Monitoring has become more systematic since the last inspection and is now a more integral part of the role of subject leaders. Nevertheless, the school does not use the evidence gained to judge the extent to which its work is benefiting the pupils' academic and personal development and how it could be improved. One consequence of this is that planning is not based on clearly defined priorities and is not an effective tool for bringing about rapid and sustained improvement. This gives the school satisfactory, rather than good, capacity for further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move learning forward more rapidly and develop the pupils as independent learners by:
- identifying the characteristics of good and outstanding learning and how these can be promoted by teachers
- adopting strategies that engage pupils more so that they can take greater ownership of their learning
- providing frequent and carefully planned opportunities for pupils to use new technologies to extend their learning.
- Focus school evaluation and development priorities on the impact of actions on outcomes for the pupils by:
- establishing a cycle of self-evaluation that involves all stakeholders and is based on rigorous monitoring processes
- tracking the pupils' progress more frequently and taking rapid action if they are not achieving their targets
- identifying criteria against which to judge the effectiveness of the school's actions.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Year 6 test results show that most pupils reach, and the large majority exceed, standards expected nationally by the time they move on to secondary school. Standards in reading are higher than in writing. Improving writing is a matter the school is tackling by encouraging pupils to write in a wide range of subjects and contexts, although it is too early to see significant improvements. The school's own assessment data shows pupils are making satisfactory progress in the core subjects, with some variations between subjects and year groups. This is confirmed by the evidence from lesson observations undertaken during the inspection. Pupils work at a steady pace in lessons. They develop and apply their skills at an appropriate rate but are not always clear about how to move their learning forward more rapidly.

The pupils say they enjoy school and particularly the additional activities provided for them. The school's warm and welcoming ethos helps pupils to develop tolerance and understanding. The pupils are confident, articulate and polite. They feel safe because as one put it, 'The school sorts out problems quickly and fairly.' The good behaviour in lessons of most pupils contributes positively to their learning. The vast majority act sensibly and with consideration towards others, responding with little fuss to their teachers' expectations. This is not the case for all, as some pupils pointed out in their questionnaire responses. A few pupils take time to settle to tasks and are not always keen to challenge or extend themselves.

The pupils are developing a good understanding of wider issues, especially those affecting the environment. The focus on encouraging a balanced diet and regular exercise means they are fully aware of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The pupils are helped to understand how to behave safely and cope with risks posed in their everyday

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lives, such as through indiscriminate use of the internet. They have a voice in school developments and play a major part in the life of their faith community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The majority of lessons are well taught, particularly when teachers focus on how to move the learning of individual pupils forward rapidly. In these lessons, activities are varied and pupils benefit considerably from sharing their thoughts with others. This helps to involve them fully in all aspects of a lesson. In the satisfactory lessons, by contrast, teachers do not involve pupils sufficiently and so they become passive learners. Questions do not probe their thinking and they are not consistently challenged to explain the reasons for their answers. Although work is set at different levels, this does not get to the heart of how to challenge the thinking of more able pupils and move their learning forward at pace. The school's aim for learning to become more personalised is not being realised quickly enough and pupils are still not frequently involved in assessing the quality of their work or that of their peers.

The pupils' experiences are enriched by a wide range of activities to extend their

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

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learning. These are much enjoyed by the pupils and are a highlight of their school life. The close partnership with local secondary schools and the expertise of other providers broaden the opportunities for pupils in many areas, including sport, as reflected in the Active Mark award. The pupils value greatly the range of educational visits planned to extend their learning

Pupils are now much more aware than at the last inspection of how well they are doing and the steps they can take to improve their learning. Pupils mostly understand their targets for improvement in writing and mathematics. Marking identifies where a piece of work needs improving but does not always provide clear guidance on how this can be achieved or link this to an individual's targets.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 and other school leaders are ambitious for the pupils, but have not always focused their action on how changes to provision can bring about improved outcomes for the pupils. Pupils are set quite challenging targets at the start of each year. Nevertheless, the majority fail to reach them because their progress has only recently started to be more rigorously checked and action taken if they fall behind. This is one reason why the progress of the majority is only satisfactory. Teachers are supported to raise their performance, but improvements have been patchy because they do not always focus on what makes for better learning for all pupils.

Governors support school developments, but are not sufficiently involved in checking on its performance or challenging it to tackle weaknesses when they arise. They have limited involvement in helping to shape the school's strategic direction. The school's view of its qualities and what it needs to do to improve, as reflected in its self-evaluation document, has not changed substantially since its last inspection. One result is that improvement planning is not effective in moving the school forward as rapidly as needed.

The school has well-organised arrangements for safeguarding the well-being of the pupils and to ensure that those working with the pupils are properly vetted. Governors take their responsibilities in this area very seriously and monitor closely the impact of policy in this area. The school is a happy, harmonious and cohesive community in which pupils of all backgrounds feel safe and secure. The school is successful in ensuring that barriers to learning are reduced for pupils who find learning difficult. As one pupil wrote,

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'They give every child in school help when they need it.' Staff and governors understand the school's context and participate in activities to support pupils and their families. Nevertheless, plans to promote community cohesion are very new and yet to be fully implemented. This includes helping the pupils to gain a greater insight into the wider national and global community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The youngest children have a good start to their school life in Reception. They make good progress from skills on entry above those expected for their age. By the time they move into Year 1, the vast majority have reached, and most have exceeded, the goals expected of five-year-olds. Key skills of literacy and numeracy are particularly refined by this stage and children make great strides forward in their personal development.

Good progress is based on a stimulating learning environment and a good balance of carefully planned activities both inside and outdoors. The outside classroom and its use to stimulate children's learning is an improvement since the last inspection, but scope remains for this to be developed into an even more exciting area for learning. The team of adults work closely to ensure that children learn a wide variety of skills based on a clear understanding of what they already know and can do. Their independence is encouraged so that the children become confident at initiating activities and developing their own ideas. They collaborate well with others and enjoy selecting resources to extend their learning.

The children feel safe because their welfare is at the heart of the work of the staff team.

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They enjoy physical activity and appreciate the contribution of fruit and vegetables to a healthy diet. They understand the boundaries for their behaviour and act in a kind and considerate manner towards their classmates. This means that they can learn and develop in a calm and purposeful environment. Close links with home help the children to settle into the class and its routines.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

With few exceptions, parents are happy with all that the school tries to do for their children. The inspection team found evidence to confirm their positive views about how the school keeps their children safe, helps them to be healthy, promotes their smooth transition from one stage to the next, and supports their children if they have specific learning needs. By contrast, the inspection team could not support parental views that teaching is good or that the school is well led and managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Peter's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 205 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	56	22	22	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	55	56	24	24	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	46	29	29	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	40	33	33	1	1	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	50	51	25	25	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	43	31	31	5	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	44	35	35	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	44	44	32	32	1	1	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	38	37	37	2	2	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	30	35	35	7	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	33	38	38	3	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	42	42	36	36	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	55	23	23	1	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Marlow SL7 2PJ

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers take good care of you. You also take good care of each other. Your attendance is excellent. Well done. You behave well and those who have special jobs, such as members of the school council, carry out your duties responsibly. Thank you for sharing your views with us.

The youngest children get off to a good start in Reception and make good progress in the development of a wide range of skills because of the interesting ways activities are provided. The rest of you make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6. Most of you reach the standards expected by the time you leave in Year 6 and the large majority exceed this level. You are learning the skills you need for the future and finding out how to be mature and responsible people. This is because you have interesting things to learn.

Your headteacher, other staff and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. The two things we have asked them to do are to:

- move learning forward more rapidly by getting you to take greater responsibility so you can become more independent
- make sure that all the new ideas they introduce really benefit your academic and personal development.

I am sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make these improvements. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to show such pride in your school and enthusiasm for learning.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

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