

St Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113492
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	338185
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Watson
Headteacher	Kevin Norris
Date of previous school inspection	3 April 2007
School address	Brentford Avenue Whitleigh Plymouth PL5 4HD
Telephone number	01752 217010
Fax number	01752 770947
Email address	admin@st-petersrc.plymouth.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. Approximately 50% of the time was spent looking at pupils' learning. The inspectors visited 17 lessons and 11 teachers were observed. The inspectors also attended two assemblies, observed break and lunchtime activities and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents. They looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of children's progress. The provision and planning for pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities were evaluated. In addition, 60 parental questionnaires, 4 staff questionnaires and 87 pupil questionnaires were analysed.

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

- the children's skills and needs on entry and whether progress is equally as good for all groups of pupils
- the school's efforts to raise standards in mathematics and science, especially the performance of more-able pupils
- the degree to which a new senior management structure is sufficiently established to sustain areas where there is effective provision and to bring further improvement following a period of instability in staffing.

Information about the school

This is a small school where the number of pupils who join or leave the school part way through their primary education is higher than normally seen. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average overall, but varies from year to year. Their needs include speech, language and communication difficulties. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Quality Early Years Provision, Investors in People, Activemark and Healthy School awards. At the time of the inspection the headteacher was leading two schools on a temporary basis. The school had suffered instability in staffing over the previous year, including at senior staff level.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Peter's is a good school. The experienced headteacher has provided effective stewardship through a difficult period of staff change. With renewed staffing stability this term, the school has settled well. Senior managers, including governors, work well together. Pupils' progress is tracked accurately and provision is monitored thoroughly. The information gathered underpins a good process of self-evaluation, which enables the school to tackle the right priorities and to plot effectively the future direction of the school. This process represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Strengths in the teaching and learning of English, especially in developing the pupils' speaking and listening skills, and in the staff's outstanding care, guidance and support for the pupils, remain secure. The pupils' very good speaking and listening skills are now being used, with increasing success, to accelerate their progress in mathematics. Together, all these factors demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

In keeping with the school's ethos, the staff's excellent pastoral care includes outstanding support for vulnerable pupils and their families. Pupils' good attendance is assured by a welcoming environment, good links with parents and pupils' enjoyment of school. The pupils' good behaviour and enthusiastic contributions to learning, support their expressed view that they feel safe at school and show that their welfare is safeguarded effectively. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles well in response to the good range of clubs provided for them.

From varying levels of skill that are often below those normally expected of their age, especially in early literacy and calculation skills, children make good progress in Reception, and this firm foundation is built upon well as they move through the school. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is above average in English and broadly average in mathematics and science. These standards show that most pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those arriving from other schools. In science, however, more-able pupils are not always challenged to extend their skills of research and independent enquiry. Challenging questioning and lively discussions, especially when pupils share ideas with partners, are key elements of the good teaching and learning seen across the school. The quality of pupils' recorded work in English, and increasingly in mathematics, truly reflects their ability. In some other subjects in Years 3 to 6, while pupils enjoy a good range of activities, their skills are not developed in a consistent way. This is because skills are not practised and consolidated, for example, by using computers, across the curriculum. In science, pupils' recorded work does not match the standard of knowledge and understanding evident in their oral responses.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the pupils' achievement in science by the end of Year 6, especially for pupils of high ability, by:
 - providing more time for pupils to record their work
 - placing more emphasis on helping pupils to interpret, draw conclusions and make suggestions for improvement or further enquiry.
- Further improve the curriculum in Years 3 to 6 over the next two terms so that pupils develop their skills more progressively across the range of subjects by:
 - researching topics which link subjects together cohesively and which connect with their own interests and experience
 - using and developing computer skills more regularly to undertake and present their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Visits to classrooms confirmed that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who join the school part way through the year or in different year groups, achieve well. All pupils, including those of high ability, also enjoy their work and make particularly good progress in English to reach above-average standards. In lessons in Year 2 and Year 4, for example, pupils developed their comprehension of various texts by openly expressing their ideas. Pupils are increasingly progressing well in mathematics. Teachers develop the pupils' understanding of mathematical vocabulary so that learning objectives are clear. This was seen, for example, in Year 6, where by presenting decimal problems initially as words, the teacher secured the pupils' understanding. As a result, progress for all pupils is accelerated. In science some pupils, particularly the more able, clearly show good understanding in their oral responses, but still have difficulty producing good quality, analytical, recorded work. Across the school a significant number of pupils excel in singing and in sports.

Pupils enjoy school, as seen in their enthusiastic choir singing and their eager oral responses in lessons. One pupil wrote, 'I would like to tell the inspector that I love my school.' Pupils behave well, and those needing support with their emotional difficulties respond positively to well-timed, encouraging adult support. Through discussion, the pupils contribute well to each other's learning. They welcome the increasing opportunities to take greater responsibility, for example in the school council. The pupils' good adoption of healthy living is evident in their high participation in sports clubs and in their knowledgeable discussions about a balanced diet. Their very good spiritual and social development was illustrated beautifully as they sat in respectful awe and interest listening to the remarkable stories of Simon Weston, who visited the school during the inspection. The school acknowledges that it does not always do enough to promote the pupils' awareness of Britain's multicultural community and has plans to address this within curricular development. By the time pupils leave the school, their good

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communication skills and social skills prepare them well for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school's very caring ethos is reflected in the warm relationships between staff and the pupils. From the moment they first start school children feel valued because they are treated as individuals and their ideas are respected. The school's targeted support for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs has resulted in significant improvements in their behaviour, and inspectors observed that all pupils contribute well to their learning in lessons.

Teachers and their skilled assistants continually encourage pupils to express and evaluate their ideas, in class and group discussions, and with each other in pairs. This promotes learning very successfully because pupils are keen to share and refine their ideas with each other and to do well together. These methods are increasingly used in mathematics. This was seen, for example, in a lesson in Year 5 where pupils were very effectively encouraged to show their understanding of 'perpendicular' and 'parallel' by 'signing' and saying and repeating them out loud. Other typical strengths in all classes

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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include close individual support from teaching assistants and good use of interactive whiteboards to capture the pupils' interest. At times, whole-class discussions continue for too long and the match of challenge presented to pupils of differing ability slips. In some subjects, science, for example, prolonged discussions further limit the time for pupils to work independently and to write thoughtfully about their findings.

The curriculum includes a strong emphasis on the discrete teaching of literacy and, increasingly, numeracy skills. A good range of extra-curricular clubs and events successfully promote the pupils' healthy lifestyles, enjoyment and caring relationships. In Years 3 to 6 these activities are not drawn together to best effect in progressively developing pupils' skills, across subjects. In addition, pupils are not always given sufficient time to undertake research by using computers or to record their work in other subjects as well as they do in English.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The experienced headteacher gives a strong lead in promoting the caring ethos of the school. Having steered the school forward through a period of staff change, he has introduced an effective team approach to senior leadership. Even though the headteacher continues to have temporary responsibility for two schools, the new leadership and management team share an ambitious vision and are quickening the pace of improvement. All pupils, regardless of ability or background, are treated equally. Pupils are keen to say that there is no discrimination and that the school treats them fairly. The governing body meets its statutory obligations, including safeguarding requirements, to good effect. Governors also play an important role in sustaining good links with parents and in promoting the supportive values evident throughout the school. Self-evaluation is good and targets for improvement are suitably challenging. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has been improved, not least because of a successfully sustained promotion of pupils' speaking and listening skills and strengthened management of pupils' behaviour. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. The school and local communities are supported well through sporting events and charitable activities, including those associated with the school's faith community. Global aspects are covered appropriately through activities such as Australia Day, Spanish club and the teaching of French. The school also contributes to national charities such as 'Red Nose Day', but leaders and managers recognise that

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promoting the national aspect of community cohesion as a part of curricular improvement remains a 'work in progress'.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children clearly enjoy school because staff develop excellent relationships with them and with their parents. The staff assess the children's progress and get to know them well to ensure that teaching and learning are effective. As a result, the children develop particularly good speaking and listening skills and make good progress across all six areas of learning. Children also make good gains in developing self-confidence in response to the excellent way that caring staff safeguard their welfare. Good leadership and well-trained staff ensure that children benefit from a good blend of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children themselves. They encourage role play very effectively within the vibrant, well-equipped area and, for example, children enjoy their time and extend their communication and social skills as 'princes and princesses' in the 'castle'. A small but secure outdoor area also enables children to choose and to move freely between indoor and outdoor activities. The children enjoy regular story-times, but occasionally whole class sessions do not engage all children, especially those of lower ability, to equally good effect.

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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

Most parents are happy and have full confidence in the school. Additional written comments on questionnaires, typically reflecting the views of the very large majority, included, 'A small, friendly school which cares for the whole child', and 'the school promotes a sense of community and respect for others that assists the learning process.' A small minority of parents raised concerns about how the school manages unacceptable behaviour and takes account of their suggestions. A few parents also expressed concern about the headteacher temporarily taking lead responsibility for two schools. Inspectors examined these issues carefully. They concluded that the staff have strengthened the way they support pupils with emotional and behavioural needs and manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Inspectors felt that staff are responsive to parents' suggestions. Inspectors also noted the school's newly strengthened senior management team, which, by supporting the headteacher well, is sustaining good leadership and management while he is required to lead two schools.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Peter's RC 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 166 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	52	27	45	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	20	33	35	58	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	28	34	57	6	10	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	33	29	48	6	10	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	21	36	33	55	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	28	32	53	7	12	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	30	38	63	2	3	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)	18	30	34	57	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	35	28	47	6	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	32	21	35	11	18	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	23	31	52	12	20	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	30	28	47	8	13	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	40	29	48	5	8	0	0

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.



Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Peter's RC Primary School, Plymouth, PL5 4HD

Thank you for your warm welcome. Thank you, too, for the help you gave us during the inspection, especially the members of the school council and the group of Year 6 pupils. You told us that you feel safe and care about each other and that you enjoy a good range of clubs. We were very impressed by your respect for your teachers and by the exemplary care you receive from the adults who work at the school. We agree with most of you and your parents that St Peter's is a good school.

These are the other things we liked best.

- Your progress and achievement are good. Many of you develop very good speaking and listening skills and some of you excel in sports and singing.
- Staff take excellent care of you and make sure you are safe.
- Teaching and learning are good, especially in English. There is an increasing amount of good teaching of mathematical language and this is helping you to make better progress in mathematics.
- You are being shown how to grow up as sensible, caring, healthy young people.
- The headteacher and senior staff have strengthened the way they work together and are helping you to achieve more.

To help the school to improve further, we have asked the headteacher, governors and teachers to do two things:

- help you to achieve better in science, especially those of you who learn more easily, by giving you the time to improve the way you record and reflect about the findings of your investigations
- improve your learning and skills in Years 3 to 6 by giving you more time to research and complete well-presented pieces of work based on interesting topics which link subjects together.

You can help by making sure that whenever you write, you give your very best.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter

Lead inspector

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