

St Peter's RC High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131880
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	341240
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Chambers HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	859
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr S Ansbro
Headteacher	Mr John McNerney
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 38 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including 133 parental questionnaires.

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

- whether the improvements in GCSE results in 2008 and 2009 are sustainable, given the progress of current students
- what the school is doing to eliminate apparent gaps in performance of different groups and whether it is effective
- the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, and whether the school has an accurate view of them
- how well the school's specialist status is contributing to learning and achievement, the curriculum and the community.

Information about the school

St Peter's RC High School is an average-sized secondary school, with slightly more boys than girls on roll. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both well above average. Roughly 45% of students are White British, 20% are of Black African heritage and smaller proportions are from a wide range of other backgrounds. More students than normal have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Approximately half of the students, over three times the national average, are entitled to a free school meal. Many more students than normal join the school at times other than the beginning of Year 7. The school has specialist status in business and enterprise and holds a number of awards, including the Investors in People, Sportsmark, ICT Mark and Healthy Schools.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St Peter's is an outstanding school, where students from a wide range of backgrounds achieve well. Since the last inspection, students' attainment has risen dramatically. Unvalidated data show that the impressive rise in GCSE results in 2008 has been sustained in 2009; moreover, the school's tracking data suggest that these higher results can be sustained in 2010 with a group of students who entered the school with considerably lower prior attainment. This improved attainment has been achieved alongside improved attendance and reduced exclusions. These factors, together with the school's good processes for self-evaluation and action planning, demonstrate outstanding capacity to improve.

Students who left in 2008 entered the school with below average attainment in their Key Stage 2 tests. Their results at GCSE were broadly average, which represents good progress and achievement given their starting points. This good achievement is the result of the good teaching and excellent care, guidance and support that the students receive. The innovative curriculum meets the needs of the students extremely well and also makes a strong contribution to their positive achievement.

The quality of teaching is good overall, but is variable. In many lessons, teachers' effective explanations and examples help students to meet challenging expectations. Opportunities to discuss ideas and work in pairs and groups contribute to students' positive engagement and enable them to be more fully involved in their own learning. In weaker lessons, teachers take insufficient account of the different abilities within the class and lesson objectives focus on tasks to be completed rather than the intended learning outcomes; on occasions, teachers give students too few opportunities to be actively engaged in their learning through organised discussion or practical activities. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school, including the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Staff share a common sense of purpose and work very effectively together to overcome barriers to learning, and to effect and sustain improvements. For example, a whole-school initiative to improve students' literacy has led to improved standards and contributed to large increases in the number of reading books being borrowed from the school library. The drive to improve provision has led to school managers being very flexible and willing to try new ideas. However, the evaluation of many of these initiatives is based on impression rather than data and managers have not fully evaluated the impact of the school's actions on outcomes for students.

The school's specialist status has contributed to the school's success through enabling the school to offer a broad range of vocational options and cater more closely for

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individual interests. It has also helped students to develop their cross-curricular skills, such as working well in a team. Examination results in two of the lead subjects, business studies and information and communication technology (ICT), are particularly good and are above national averages. 'Business and Enterprise' days for pupils in local primary schools have proved extremely popular, and the provision of evening classes on, for example, basic ICT skills and Entry to Employment has made a clear contribution to the local community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standard and improve the consistency of teaching by ensuring that:
 - lessons take more account of the different abilities within the class
 - lesson objectives focus on learning rather than tasks to be completed
 - opportunities for active learning are more widespread.
- Evaluate more clearly the impact of initiatives on outcomes for students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment is average, with 49% of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2008. This measure, broadly sustained in 2009, demonstrates the dramatic improvement in standards achieved since the last inspection, when 24% attained the same measure. Students enjoy their lessons; they learn well particularly when given opportunities to discuss ideas and work in pairs and groups. They respond well to activities that capture their interest or stir their emotions. Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in their lessons and achieve well. Evidence from lesson observations and the school's monitoring data show that the school has successfully addressed the previously different rates of progress of students who receive free school meals and those who do not. Similarly, the underachievement of students who were having support for their learning, notable in the 2008 examination results, is no longer apparent, and this group now progress well. Students for whom English is an additional language, including those at an early stage of learning the language, are very well supported and, as a result, they make good, and in some cases outstanding progress.

Students are very confident in the school's processes for ensuring their safety. They know who they can turn to if they have a problem and believe that school staff respond very well when any incident of bullying occurs. Students have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle: large numbers take advantage of the healthy options available at lunchtime and choose to participate in physical activities after school. Students demonstrate a wide range of workplace skills that contribute to their future well-being, and only small numbers of last year's leavers are not in employment, education or training. Students respond well to the school's many activities that promote business and enterprise skills, they make good progress in their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and also attend well. However, a few students exhibit half-hearted attitudes

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to punctuality, particularly when moving between lessons.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with the school's caring Christian ethos contributing to students' spiritual and moral development effectively. Different groups of students mix well, both in lessons and around the school. The majority of students behave well in lessons, and students' questionnaires confirm that most students in the school agree. A small minority exhibit challenging behaviour but generally respond well to the school's processes for managing behaviour.

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	1
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?

Although there is more variation than would be expected, the overall quality of teaching is good. Students enjoy positive working relationships with teachers and those who support learning. Teachers' high expectations help students to respond positively to a range of well-planned tasks. In the best lessons, very clear learning objectives with success criteria enable students to recognise what is expected and what they need to do to improve their work. Teaching is lively and support is timely, well placed and helpful in accelerating learning. In weaker lessons, some activities lack challenge, relevance or

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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interest, and as a result small numbers of students lose concentration. The quality of teachers' marking varies, but in examples of excellent practice, teachers give clear advice on how students can improve their work.

The excellent curriculum is well designed and caters very well for the range of needs, interests and abilities of students in the school. It is a key factor in students' raised attainment, above average attendance and below average exclusions. The school is at the forefront of innovative curriculum practice, providing an unusually broad range of applied courses in Key Stage 4 and flexible support for basic skills, early language development and for students at risk of exclusion. The curriculum for Years 7 and 8 has been developed appropriately to focus more on the development of skills. Where students engage in work that crosses subject boundaries, it is particularly effective in developing literacy skills; planned activities in several subject areas provide a stimulus for students to develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. The trips, visits and visitors that are a frequent addition to the curriculum enhance learning by providing students with memorable experiences. For example, the recent visit that some students paid to the World War One trenches in France and Belgium was used effectively as a focus for a range of learning activities in school.

The excellent care, guidance and support that the school provides help those students new to the school, including those with little or no English, to settle in quickly. Students feel very well cared for. Support for the vulnerable students is particularly strong and involves school staff with appropriate expertise as well as outside agencies. School managers are particularly proud that the school's extensive efforts to drive up attendance have been successful in raising attendance to above the national average; these measures have also reduced considerably the proportion of students who are persistently absent from school.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders' drive for improvement has been very effective in many areas of the school, including raising achievement across a range of areas and improving attendance. Middle managers are supportive of the school's senior leaders and play their part fully in developing the curriculum and improving the quality of teaching. This very inclusive school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion. Senior leaders have analysed its context and taken appropriate actions particularly at the local level,

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but the impact of its actions is not evaluated fully. The governing body plays an appropriate role in supporting and challenging the school's leaders. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and take advantage of opportunities for increasing their expertise through further training. The school engages well with parents and carers through its website and through newsletters, and parents feel that their views are listened to. However, school leaders and the governing body could do more to seek formally the views of parents. The school promotes equal opportunities well and tackles discrimination effectively. It analyses examination results to identify differences in achievement of different groups of students and has successfully reduced gaps in performance.

The school has good procedures for ensuring the safety of students, including all appropriate checks on staff, and keeps meticulous records. The school works extremely well with outside agencies to support the welfare of its students. In addition, the school is part of a very active collaborative with six Manchester secondary schools and the two Catholic sixth form colleges. Regular collaboration at department level helps to share good practice and provide good value for money, for example, enabling subject areas to buy in a day of consultancy from a chief examiner.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

A relatively small number of parents contributed their views to the inspection team through the parental questionnaire. A very large majority of replies indicate positive views of the school in all categories. Parents' belief that the school provides a safe

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environment supports the inspection team's view that the school gives strong support to the welfare of its students.

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 High 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 133 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 859 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	49	62	47	4	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	49	37	79	59	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	63	47	58	44	10	8	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	41	71	53	6	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	46	35	78	59	7	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	34	77	58	6	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	24	85	64	9	7	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)	47	35	74	56	5	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	27	89	67	5	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	57	43	61	46	10	8	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	25	83	62	11	8	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	50	38	79	59	2	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	41	72	54	3	2	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.



24 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Peter's RC High School, Manchester M12 4WB

You will recall that recently, together with four other colleagues, I inspected your school. Thank you to all of you whom we met; you were very polite and helpful, and gave your views very openly. This letter is to tell you about what we found.

You will be pleased to hear that we judge St Peter's to be an outstanding school. One reason for this is the school's examination results which have risen so impressively since the last inspection; another is the range of courses on offer that suit your needs so well and help you to feel so positively about school.

You achieve well because of the good teaching that you receive, together with additional guidance such as the advice you get on how to improve. The school's outstanding care and support help you to feel that staff care about your progress and welfare. Most of you behave well and we were impressed that your attendance has improved; however, some of you could do more to improve your punctuality to lessons.

The headteacher has high aspirations for your achievement and these are helping the school to become more successful. In order to improve the school further we have asked him, the staff and governors to:

improve teaching further so that more lessons take account of the different abilities within the class, lesson objectives have a better focus and you have more opportunities to learn in an active way

evaluate more clearly the impact of initiatives on your progress and welfare.

You can play your part in making St Peter's an even better school. Continue to work hard and to take advantage of all the support that is on offer.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Chambers

Her Majesty's Inspector

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