Inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School

West Ridge, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 1UJ

Inspection dates:	6 and 7 February 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Early years provision	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Catherine Vedamuttu. This school is part of Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership, a multi-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Annemarie Whittle, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Michael Powis.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Peter's Catholic Primary School as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school and the roles they play in making it a great place to be. They feel safe here and are overtly welcoming to newcomers. The school's values of faith, love and respect are understood by pupils and clearly matter to them. Poor behaviour is rare. Problems are solved quickly because staff act when they need to.

Inspectors' discussions with pupils and visits to classrooms showed high degrees of motivation to achieve well. Pupils told inspectors that teachers are patient and kind, especially when pupils get things wrong. Staff are equally positive about the pupils in their care. Pupils know this and respond positively when things get tough because they trust staff to help.

Leaders at all levels have a clear vision for what the school should be for its pupils. This vision is lived day in, day out, and is not just an aspiration. Expectations are high. Staff are ambitious for all pupils, no matter what their background or barriers to learning may be. The result is a happy school where pupils are nurtured and achieve well, meaning that they are well prepared for their move to secondary school when the time comes.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

This is a good and improving school. Recent changes in the senior leadership team have been managed well by those in positions of governance. As a result, the school has maintained its forward momentum, and its Catholic ethos continues to shine brightly.

Members of the local governing committee are passionate about their roles and are committed to their work in supporting pupils and staff to be their best. Pupils attend school regularly. Ofsted's staff survey was overwhelmingly positive. New curriculum leaders are finding their feet. More experienced members of staff gladly share their knowledge and expertise. Curriculum subject networks across the multi-academy trust also help share good practice, while officers from the trust provide expert support and challenge in all aspects of the school's work.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do well here. Children in early years with emerging additional needs are quickly identified, and support is put in place swiftly. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View are also positive about this aspect of the school's work. Staff are keenly aware of pupils' needs. Classroom visits showed staff adapting teaching sensitively to support disadvantaged pupils, including a sizeable proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

The school's curriculum is stable yet evolving, meeting the needs of pupils well. Its roots grow steadily from early years. Subjects such as geography and art have well-sequenced trajectories that start in Reception with clear end-points in Year 6.

Teachers know what pupils have learned before. Staff in early years have a good understanding of what children will learn in Year 1 and beyond. Curriculum planning also supports pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds positively. Aspects such as key vocabulary and the important knowledge pupils should know and understand are clear to staff. Consequently, pupils in danger of falling behind are identified quickly and supported appropriately.

The school's programme to teach pupils to read is well established. Staff benefit from access to appropriate resources and ongoing training. However, despite some strengths, teaching of the school's phonics programme is inconsistent. Some fundamental requirements are not as secure as they should be. This includes children in Reception, where provision is otherwise strong across other areas of learning.

The school has recently introduced a different approach to teaching mathematics. Staff are positive about the changes. Classroom visits showed most pupils enjoying success in their work, with little variation in the way staff are teaching the subject. This was also the case in Reception, where children enjoy their mathematics work both in and outside the classroom.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. The school's Catholic ethos underpins all aspects of this, while the wider curriculum supports pupils' growing knowledge of the world around them. Older pupils have a good grasp of equality and diversity and can relate these to their lives in and out of school. Educational visits help cement their understanding of citizenship and staying safe. Pupils talk fondly of theatre trips to see Wicked and Oliver Twist. Others remember what they learned when visiting a local castle. Their informed discussions about ethical issues linked to their learning in geography showed inspectors that pupils are increasingly capable of thinking for themselves and are not afraid to consider opposing views, even when these clearly differ from their own.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff deliver the school's early reading programme as securely as they might. When this is the case, the quality of phonics teaching is inconsistent. This means that some pupils at the early stages of reading do not benefit from the expert phonics teaching they need. Leaders should ensure that the school's phonics programme is delivered with the highest degree of fidelity possible in all phases of the school and by all staff who teach pupils to read.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141471
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256324
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Powis
CEO of trust	Annemarie Whittle
Headteacher	Catherine Vedamuttu
Website	www.st-peters-sittingbourne.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy in October 2014 when it joined the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership. There are currently 26 schools in the partnership, all of which are part of the Archdiocese of Southwark.
- A local governing committee provides aspects of governance for the school, as defined in a scheme of delegation.
- The headteacher and the assistant headteacher took up their substantive posts in September 2023.
- As a Catholic school, the school's most recent denominational inspection took place in April 2023.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as teaching and support staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing committee, accompanied by four other governors. He also met with the chief executive officer and director of primary education of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector heard some pupils read to a familiar adult. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Anne Allen	Ofsted Inspector

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