

St Peter's Catholic School

Horseshoe Lane East, Guildford, GU1 2TN

Inspection dates 13–14 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Good, often outstanding, teaching allows students to make exceptional progress.
- GCSE results are consistently well above the national average, including in English and mathematics. The proportion of students achieving the top grades is high, and rising.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are extremely well cared for and many make outstanding progress as a result.
- Actions to promote reading and improve students' literacy and communication skills are well planned, innovative and effective.
- Students enjoy learning together, are proud of their school and behave impeccably towards one another and adults.
- The headteacher communicates a calm determination that students at St Peter's will achieve and experience the very best. He and his senior leaders have focused determinedly on developing high-quality teaching and learning within a caring community.
- The sixth form is good and students make above-average progress by the end of their A-level courses.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 45 lessons, six jointly with senior staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff, students, representatives of the governing body and of the local authority school improvement service. They also held telephone discussions with leaders of off-site, alternative curriculum provision.
- The inspection team scrutinised documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, reports written by local authority officers, external consultants and governors, and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 117 parents who had responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection, and of other parents who wrote to the inspection team. They also took account of the views of 63 staff who returned inspection questionnaires.

Inspection team

Christine Raeside, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Blanchard	Additional Inspector
John Collins	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Thomas Gibson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Peter's is a slightly larger-than-average Catholic secondary school.
- The intake is predominantly White British; about one fifth of students comes from minority ethnic backgrounds and about 8% speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for support from pupil premium funding is much lower than average. This is money provided to schools by the government for students known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority, or students who are the children of families in the services.
- The proportion of disabled students or with special educational needs supported at school action is about half the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is slightly above average.
- Fourteen students in Years 10 and 11 attend courses at Guildford College and two at Spectrum Leisure Centre.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teachers enable students to make exceptional progress in more of their lessons, by:
 - allowing them to take responsibility for their own learning more often, rather than awaiting direction from the teacher
 - asking searching and probing questions, so that students think deeply, reflect on their learning, and draw their own conclusions
 - allowing time in lessons for students to reflect and act upon advice the teacher has given them about how to improve their work
 - developing students' ability and confidence to articulate and express their thinking clearly, in increasingly sophisticated, standard English.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or better is consistently well above the national average and has risen steadily over the past three years.
- Students join the school with higher-than-average attainment and make strong and sustained progress throughout their time there, so that final results have remained high and continue to improve. More students make and exceed the expected progress in English and mathematics than do so nationally.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers in lessons. In the best lessons, they make exceptional progress because teachers and other adults plan activities to match their specific learning needs closely.
- In 2012, students eligible for support from pupil premium funding achieved an average GCSE point score that was significantly above the group's national average. They also made better progress in English and mathematics than nationally.
- High attainment and excellent progress are sustained across groups of students who belong to minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language.
- Students are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education, or for employment, because their basic skills in English and mathematics are very well developed. They also benefit, in all year groups, from exceptionally strong advice and guidance about future education and career pathways. As a result, virtually everyone proceeds to higher education or employment.
- Early entry for GCSE mathematics is to be introduced in 2013. This will be targeted at students likely to gain in confidence from securing a grade C early, with guided re-sits to secure higher target grades as necessary.
- All students attending alternative placements in 2012 completed their courses successfully. Timetables are carefully structured around a core of English, mathematics and science. As a result, students achieve well, with a good balance of GCSE and work-related qualifications.
- Students in the sixth form achieve very well, especially by the end of A-level courses, when their progress since joining is significantly better than average. The achievement of students on AS-level courses is not quite so good.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Students excel because much of the teaching is outstanding. The best lessons are planned to allow them to take responsibility for their own and one another's learning. They do this by leading discussion, asking thoughtful questions and by applying what they learn to make rapid gains in understanding.
- In a drama lesson, Year 10 students concluded that piercing social satire can make an audience feel 'violated'. In music, Year 8 students assessed one another's final performances respectfully and accurately. In both cases, carefully planned teaching, with just the right amount of direction, elicited sophisticated and thoughtful responses.
- There is a highly-developed culture of self- and peer-assessment, enhanced by students' excellent behaviour and mutual respect. In a French lesson, students involuntarily demonstrated delight at a member of the class giving an excellent answer to a difficult question.
- If teaching is good, rather than outstanding, it is sometimes because learning is more teacher directed than it needs to be. First answers are accepted and the lesson moves on, losing the opportunity to probe and develop thinking further or to encourage students to make links in their learning beyond the classroom.
- Students often answer questions well, but are not always required to develop their answers fully or to iron out 'casual' aspects of spoken language, which would be unsuitable for use in an examination or other formal context.

- Teachers mark work regularly and constructively. They follow the school's marking policy consistently. The best marking has an obvious influence on students' continuing work, often helped by teachers giving them time to read, think about and then practise using the advice in their books. There remains some marking that is more focused on surface features or on effort and has less impact on improvement.
- The best teaching encourages reflection and thought about other cultures and experiences. An outstanding religious studies lesson gave students insight into aspects of Judaism, enriching their appreciation of diversity.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour is exemplary. Students' conduct towards one another, and towards staff and other adults, is polite, respectful and considerate. The school's strong ethos of mutual care and respect underpins this. Students are proud of themselves and their school and they demonstrate this through their smart appearance.
- Lessons are enhanced by highly positive attitudes to learning. Students rise to intellectual challenge. They make productive use of time to discuss their learning and compare ideas.
- Students feel extremely safe at school. Parents also overwhelmingly express confidence in the school's safety and care of their children.
- Bullying is rare. Students are very well informed about different types of bullying and have confidence in school leaders to deal with any problems that arise swiftly and effectively. This was reinforced during the inspection by an assembly about cyber bullying.
- Exclusion is uncommon, although it is used to uphold the school's expectations of equality and respect on the very rare occasions when intolerant or discriminatory attitudes emerge. Case studies of vulnerable students show that the school has supported and managed their challenging behaviour extremely well, so that they remain in school and succeed.
- Attendance is above average and persistent absence low.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's determination to lead the school to become outstanding has been clearly communicated to all members of its community. The drive for excellence is shared by leaders at all levels and many communicate a genuine passion for what they do. There is no hint of complacency.
- The school's self-evaluation is shrewd. There is a sharp focus on high-quality teaching and learning in all of its evaluation and planning. External partners have been used effectively to complement school leaders' evaluations of performance.
- The school's core values are reinforced everywhere in displays, but there is genuine adherence too. The importance of persisting with good literacy habits, for example, is explicitly linked to the core value of resilience. One parent commented that their child would leave St Peter's with 'the sense of social responsibility that will help him make the right choices in life'.
- The school has developed a coherent approach to whole-school literacy, which is helping to reinforce good writing and communication skills for all, as well as tackle barriers to literacy amongst a small number arriving with low reading ages. A particularly innovative aspect of this is the development of the 'Literati' – students who take responsibility for teaching their peers literacy skills during tutor time. Assemblies, such as one on employers' expectations of good literacy skills, supplement this.
- Subject choices are appropriately focused on a GCSE core, complemented by well-managed, work-related qualifications, such as motor vehicle maintenance. Students benefit from a very wide range of additional activities and are able to excel in sport and the arts. They develop their sense of social responsibility through fundraising activities and a keen understanding of fair trade. Their understanding of democracy is enhanced by student-run elections.

- Parents overwhelmingly recommend the school and almost all who responded to the inspection questionnaire said that they feel well informed about their children's progress. 'One Place', a single central record of every student's achievement and progress, accessible to parents electronically, makes an outstanding contribution to this. The only concern expressed by a parent was that the inspection would not last long enough for inspectors to hear about the full range of excellent opportunities open to her son!
- The sixth form provides a highly supportive environment in which students thrive. Teaching is often outstanding. School leaders are aware of anomalies in the outcomes of some courses and are actively working to secure a more even profile of high achievement. Tracking and predictions for 2013 indicate that they are succeeding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a strong grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors hold the headteacher firmly to account for its performance and have a good understanding of how to interpret and challenge student assessment information. Governors' visit reports show that the governors are checking the impact of middle leadership carefully. The governing body has supported the headteacher in challenging poor performance and in withholding pay awards for teachers who have not met their targets or made a sufficient contribution to the life of the school. Equally, governors seek to reward and develop talent by making sure that committed staff have access to leadership opportunities. All safeguarding requirements are met and governors are actively involved in monitoring the safety and well-being of vulnerable students. Governors manage the budget appropriately and have tackled a historic deficit robustly. They monitor and review the use of pupil premium funding to make sure it has maximum impact on student achievement and are involved in decisions about its deployment.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	125276
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	403574

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1087
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Honeysett
Headteacher	Robert Guinea
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 February 2008
Telephone number	01483 534654
Fax number	01483 306571
Email address	info@st-peters.surrey.sch.uk

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