

St Peter's School

St Peter's Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 7DD

Inspection dates

2–3 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Decisive and rigorous action has been taken to address all safeguarding concerns at the previous inspection. As a result, safeguarding is now effective, and leaders are tenacious in their actions to keep pupils safe.
- Against a backdrop of significant challenges, the headteacher and his team have been unrelenting in improving the provision for pupils at St Peter's School. Consequently, this is a school that is improving strongly and sustainably over time.
- Effective leadership throughout the school and from its governance, including the academy trust, has secured continued improvements, most notably in science, middle leadership, teaching, achievement and behaviour.
- Leaders have tackled historical underperformance relentlessly. Better teaching led to significant improvements in overall achievement, and across a number of subjects, in 2016.
- Leaders' work with other stakeholders around children who are missing from education is remarkably thorough and diligent. Vulnerable pupils are well monitored and supported.
- Children looked after are particularly well supported. High-quality care and guidance mean that these pupils attend school regularly, behave, and achieve well.
- The sixth form continues to build on its many strengths identified in the previous inspection. Achievement, teaching and pastoral care in the sixth form are securely good.
- High-quality careers advice and rising achievement mean that more pupils are securing high-quality next steps in their education and training. This includes higher numbers of pupils going on to apprenticeships and university.
- Although standards continue to rise, outcomes are not yet securely good for disadvantaged pupils, most notably boys. There are still gaps in their knowledge and skills as a result of previous weaker teaching.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continues to improve, although some guidance to staff is not sharp enough to ensure that these pupils make consistently strong progress.
- A significant minority of parents are critical of the quality of the school's communication, especially when they have concerns.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, especially boys, so that it is securely good, by:
 - continuing to secure high-quality teaching through key stages 3 and 4, which plugs gaps in pupils' knowledge from their previous weaker teaching and/or lower starting points
 - sharpening the monitoring, intervention and support for pupils at key stage 3, so that it has maximum impact on their achievement.
- Ensure that staff receive precise guidance about how to meet the needs of, and raise standards for, specific pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities but do not have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Further develop the positive communication with parents, especially those parents who have concerns, so that they are clearer about what the school is doing to support their child.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's unwavering integrity has ensured that school improvement is deep-rooted and systematic. Staff, leaders, governors and the trust work collectively together, with a clear understanding of their respective roles and accountabilities.
- Together, these leaders and staff have ensured that St Peter's School has overcome an entrenched historical culture of abysmal behaviour, low aspiration and poor performance. Standards in behaviour, teaching and achievement have risen considerably, and these improvements are being sustained.
- The headteacher and his team have worked with tremendous resilience to improve the quality of safeguarding. Leaders have embedded more rigorous monitoring, provided higher-quality training, created additional administrative capacity and exhibit greater tenacity in their work with the local authority and other stakeholders. Safeguarding is now not only effective, but a real strength of the school.
- The curriculum meets a variety of different pupils' needs, aspirations and interests, while also retaining its breadth and balance. The previous curriculum structure, and weaknesses in certain subjects, limited pupils' choices and options. All pupils can now access a full 'EBacc' curriculum, should they wish to do so (the English baccalaureate is a government performance measure). This includes increasing numbers of pupils, including the most able, who are achieving well in the triple science subjects.
- Leaders ensure that they revise and refine the curriculum so that it truly meets the needs of pupils. In particular, those pupils who are vulnerable to permanent exclusion access the school's 'strive' curriculum. This curriculum offers additional lessons that are bespoke to pupils' individual interests, for example hairdressing and engineering. Leaders have created this provision on site, so that the safeguarding and quality of provision for these pupils are monitored even more effectively.
- More pupils are actively participating in the ever-expanding extra-curricular provision in the school, including those who are disadvantaged. Trips, visits and speakers enable pupils to undertake new experiences and develop their wider interests. The 'music school', led by the passionate music staff, and associated school choir are especially popular among pupils.
- Leaders use the additional Year 7 catch-up funding that they receive effectively, especially, but not exclusively, for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, the 'nurture' curriculum is helping a small number of pupils who have very specific special educational needs and/or disabilities to develop much-needed literacy, numeracy and social skills, very effectively.
- The Cam Academy Trust has provided valuable support in raising standards. Trustees and advisers ensure that the school has the necessary capacity to drive forward further improvements. The work of the trust's director of education has been systematic in supporting staff to improve and in mentoring middle leaders. It has also provided trustees and governors with valuable information about the school's provision.
- Leaders are rigorous in seeking 'critical friends' to help them review the quality of the provision in the school. They use their school improvement partner, moderate work

with other local schools and take part in networking and review work with schools in the trust. These evaluations are studied meticulously by the headteacher and his leaders, and actions are taken to effectively improve provision wherever required.

- Leaders' work is maintaining the good standards in teaching, learning and assessment identified in the last inspection. Despite significant difficulties in recruitment, leaders continue to 'grow' their own staff and leaders through training and development. The trust's own training programmes for teaching, assessment and leadership are also furthering teachers' skills and practice in the classroom.
- Leaders are working successfully to better engage parents. Parental engagement at important events is increasing year-on-year, and parental feedback from these is generally very positive. Any concerns raised by parents are taken seriously, and often lead to the headteacher seeking an external independent review of particular aspects of the provision, so that he can act quickly to address any potential problems.
- Nonetheless, a significant minority of parents have more negative perceptions of the school and/or do not feel that the school communicates well enough with them when they have concerns.

Governance of the school

- Governors have sharpened their work around safeguarding to ensure that all the recommendations made at the previous inspection have been met securely. Governors have used their own visits, the daily updates and external weekly audits to ensure that leaders have acted swiftly to secure detailed evidence about the safety of pupils.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision well. They are passionate about the provision for local young people in the community. They visit the school regularly, speak to numerous different stakeholders and use this information to challenge leaders and the trust over the provision in the school. The chair of governors is a frequent visitor to parents' evenings, where he actively seeks the views of staff, pupils and parents, and questions leaders over his findings.
- Governors are instrumental in the strategic development of the school. For example, following the much-improved outcomes of 2016, governors identified the need to give more pupils opportunities to achieve the highest grades. Consequently, they have appointed a senior leader to review the experience of the most able pupils in the school, including those who are disadvantaged, and are co-planning the strategic direction of her work.
- Governors have worked hard since the previous inspection to develop even more rigour around their work to champion the voice of disadvantaged pupils. They have commissioned an external review of the use of pupil premium funding, to identify potential weaknesses in their work, and have acted quickly on the recommendations of the review. The additional funding that they receive is being allocated with increasing effectiveness and is now routinely monitored for its impact.
- Governors have provided the right level of support to assist, and add, necessary leadership capacity following the previous inspection. For example, they have created a new post in the senior team with responsibility for pupil premium, especially at key stage 3. Through regular visits and reviews, governors continue to sharpen the impact of this work even further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders and staff have worked diligently to ensure that safeguarding is effective. Leaders have quickly implemented more rigorous systems for monitoring and referring pupils. These systems are reviewed on a daily basis, to ensure that the school is meeting the needs of the large numbers of pupils who require additional support and care.
- Staff have worked industriously to ensure that written records are maintained and updated appropriately. Records now clearly show the various actions taken by leaders and the follow-up when referrals are made to the local authority. School leaders use these records to liaise very effectively with all necessary external agencies.
- Leaders have ensured that the significant caseload that they face is well delegated and line managed, so that, while pupils are well supported, there are no staff who are overwhelmed or inundated. Additional personnel employed by leaders now support the ongoing work of the team to support pupils, and to keep the vast number of written records up to date.
- Staff training is high quality and routinely updates them in the most recent up-to-date guidance, as well as local intelligence. For example, the school has recently undertaken more training with its staff on child sex trafficking, given the subject's high profile both nationally and regionally. Staff are very knowledgeable on these vital safeguarding matters and are making more frequent and higher quality referrals when they are concerned about a pupil's welfare.
- The curriculum is very thorough in teaching pupils to protect themselves, both in the community and online. Leaders are proactive in looking out for the most recent new apps or online games where pupils may be at risk. They use this information to run additional lessons and assemblies, invite guest speakers, or liaise with external agencies, to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Leaders use the opportunities to follow up with information and guidance to parents.
- Leaders have acted vigorously to address the issues in the previous inspection about their work with children missing from education. Leaders have become an active voice in the local authority, tenaciously chasing the whereabouts of any children missing from education. The school goes 'the extra mile' to secure the safety of young people.
- The highly effective work of leaders since the previous inspection has led to numerous requests from other schools and external agencies for guidance and support around safeguarding. The school now champions best practice in safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are typically good across all key stages, with some that are better, including in the sixth form.
- Teachers have a thorough understanding of their subject and the national expectations about what pupils should know and understand in the different key stages. Teachers use this knowledge to plan effective learning experiences and assessments, which

allow pupils to develop new knowledge and skills and practise these over time.

- Teachers make good use of a range of resources, including those online and different technologies and textbooks. In a Year 7 music lesson, pupils were using music editing equipment confidently to erase 'dirty audio' and create a 'sale-worthy' piece of music. Pupils explained enthusiastically that this type of technology helped them to understand other things about music, especially composition and the impact of different types of instrument.
- Most teachers ensure that pupils learn from their mistakes. For example, in a number of mathematics lessons, across year groups, pupils were consistently being asked to re-address some of the previous errors that they had made in their learning. Pupils said that this helped them to improve.
- Staff work hard to meet the needs of the least and most able pupils. For example, the individual support from teachers and teaching assistants given, over time, to a number of lower-ability pupils in their Year 11 English lessons is ensuring that they are making rapid progress from their starting points. Equally, in a Year 11 science lesson, a group of the most able pupils were given individual guidance about their examination responses. This was allowing them to really understand what they needed to improve on.
- Most teachers' questioning challenges pupils to think through their answers and develop their skills of analysis. In a Year 9 history lesson, pupils were being challenged to think about the motivations of the opposing sides in the English Civil War and to constantly explain the reasoning behind their answers. The teacher also skilfully asked pupils to interweave their previous learning about the witch hunts in the seventeenth century, to enhance their understanding of how society was feeling during this period of time.
- Teachers have very positive relationships with pupils, based on respect and learning. Pupils are very clear on what is expected of them. Poor behaviour, which was all too apparent in the past, is now very rare. Pupils make the most of their learning time and respond to staff instructions quickly and appropriately.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils at St Peter's are well mannered, respectful and considerate towards each other and staff. They express themselves confidently. They hold doors open, are courteous and are increasingly proud of their achievements.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. Despite the extensiveness of the school site, pupils say that teachers and staff are always visible and 'around if you need them'. Pupils say that the school teaches them how to stay safe online and in the community and that they have confidence in staff to support them if, and when, they need it.
- High-quality and intensive pastoral care means that the most vulnerable pupils get support when they need it. Pastoral year teams contain numerous well-trained staff who know pupils well and use this knowledge to pre-empt any problems or provide

additional support that pupils might need. Pastoral support plans are used to guide those few pupils who, on occasion, exhibit poorer behaviours to use strategies to develop their own self-discipline and learn better mechanisms to deal with difficult situations.

- The support and care for pupils in the 'nurture' provision mean that those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given the right emotional and social support, as well as academic provision. These pupils are becoming increasingly able to be active members in their lessons and around the school, as they develop more social skills and confidence.
- Leaders' determination that no pupil should fail has led to the creation of the school's 'strive' programme this year. The 'strive' programme provides a bespoke curriculum for the small number of pupils who are vulnerable to permanent exclusion and is having considerable successes with the vast majority of them. A number of pupils in key stage 3 are successfully reintegrating back into mainstream provision, while key stage 4 pupils enthusiastically acknowledge that this provision has been vital in keeping them in education. Pupils in this provision are achieving relevant qualifications in subjects like health and social care and hairdressing. They are securing post-16 education or training which is closely linked to their ability and aspirations.
- The work of the designated team for children looked after is meticulous. Pupils' attendance, behaviour, well-being, achievement and future are very well monitored. Weekly mentoring ensures that these pupils have a consistent support system within the school. Consequently, most children looked after are attending school, behaving and achieving well. Work with external agencies and social care to ensure the safety and well-being of these pupils is exemplary. The team's leaders continue to work with subject leaders on sharpening these pupils' academic targets.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is calm and orderly. The school reception celebrates pupils' many successes. Almost all pupils move sensibly around the site and are clear on staff's expectations about behaviour. Pupils say that behaviour has improved considerably over the last few years and that they enjoy school. Litter and graffiti are virtually non-existent. Pupils are proud of their school and look after it.
- Pupils arrive punctually to school and lessons with positive attitudes, have the right equipment and are ready to learn. Pupils' behaviour in the classroom and their attitudes towards learning are good.
- Most pupils are motivated to do well, show pride in their work and have higher aspirations for their future. Although some are less confident, most pupils are able to express their views and ask for help when they need it. Pupils follow instructions well and settle to work quickly.
- Pupils say that most pupils behave appropriately and that staff do not tolerate poor language, or inappropriate behaviour. Pupils say that it is very safe to be different and that they actively respect the differences that people have. They say that bullying is very rare, and that staff deal with the few incidences quickly and effectively.

- Leaders' and staff's persistent efforts to secure better behaviour are resulting in lower levels of fixed-term exclusions. There have been no permanent exclusions for three years, and the use of fixed-term exclusions is falling quickly, especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- The attendance of pupils is improving, although it is not yet at the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is increasing quickly. This is as a result of the dogmatic work of school leaders in chasing poor attendance, and of the support given to parents by the school's pastoral team.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Although, historically, the achievement of pupils in the school has been poor, results in 2016 showed significant improvement.
- Pupils made progress that was broadly in line with the national average, while non-disadvantaged pupils made progress that was significantly above the national average. High-quality leadership and better teaching, identified at the previous inspection, secured these improvements. However, leaders have identified that results for disadvantaged pupils were disappointing.
- Pupils achieved well in a range of subjects in 2016. Pupils' progress in English, humanities, languages and most notably in mathematics led to higher attainment for the majority of pupils. In a number of subjects, some prior attaining groups such as the least able in English and mathematics made progress that was significantly higher than other pupils nationally.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, was still significantly below the national average, although there were slight improvements in their average point scores. Current pupils' progress is improving securely and these pupils are starting to make more progress. However, leaders acknowledge that pupils, especially boys at key stage 3, still require more time and consistently high-quality teaching to help them catch up following previously poor teaching and, for many of them, weaker starting points on entry.
- Progress in science is improving across the key stages. In 2016, overall progress was broadly in line with that nationally, although not enough pupils accessed, or achieved well in, double science. Almost all current pupils are accessing at least two science qualifications. The additional teaching capacity provided to the science team by the trust has ensured that teaching standards across the key stages are rising considerably.
- Most pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an EHC plan access the right support and relevant technologies to make effective progress in lessons. However, for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, without an EHC plan, support is not always specific enough to help them make rapid progress. The support plans that staff use to guide their planning do not yet give consistently sharp advice about the specific actions that would bring rapid progress for these pupils.
- The small number of most-able pupils in the school are making better progress and

achieving higher standards. School leaders have identified that these pupils, especially those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, need to make more rapid progress if they are to attain the highest standards by the end of key stage 4. Increasing numbers of pupils are accessing three sciences and achieving well in these subjects.

- Improvements in the achievement of pupils and in the quality of information, advice and guidance are ensuring that pupils are securing better post-16 provision. The numbers of pupils who are accessing next-step progressive courses, in schools, colleges and through apprenticeship, are consistently rising. Higher numbers of disadvantaged pupils are securing high-quality provision, and they are catching up to the national average for other pupils quickly.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Good teaching, high-quality leadership and monitoring, and targeted intervention led to steady improvement in the sixth form outcomes in 2016. This remains a strong and improving provision in the school.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students well. Students access provision which enables them to study a range of A level and vocational provision, as well as resitting their English and/or mathematics should they need to. Leaders are increasingly reviewing this curriculum to ensure that students are not only ready to study in higher education or secure appropriate apprenticeships, but also ready to work within the local industries at more skilled levels.
- Students have made better progress year-on-year in the sixth form. The overall progress in academic subjects that students made in 2016 was in line with the national average, while in applied subjects this was above the national average. Disadvantaged students' progress was broadly in line with the national average, although not as strong at AS level. Current school information would indicate that these outcomes are going to continue to rise steadily.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, with some that are better. Teachers know their subject content and examination specifications well, and plan lessons which ensure that students deepen their knowledge and apply this knowledge to various forms of examination response.
- Where there are larger numbers of students on courses, teachers provide good opportunities for students to debate and discuss their learning articulately and with confidence. On occasion, this is more challenging where there are fewer students in the class, and leaders acknowledge that further training could help staff to be more confident in developing this aspect of their practice.
- Students who resit their English and mathematics are given access to regular timetabled lessons with subject specialist staff, and this is helping many students to improve their grades in these subjects. In 2016, a higher proportion of students improved their grade than nationally, most notably in English. However, leaders are clear that the national averages are not an aspirational enough measure for their students. They continue to review their provision to look at even more effective ways to ensure that students achieve well in these resits.
- Personal development and welfare in the sixth form are very good. Students feel well

supported and cared for. They take active roles of responsibility in the school, such as leading the 'SLT' (student leadership team) and the school talent show, while also undertaking charity work and supporting younger pupils on their transition to the school from local primary schools. They are taught how to stay safe and healthy, in the community, online and in the wider world. These articulate, confident and caring young people are very well prepared to be active adults in Britain.

- Students are well prepared for their next stages in their education, training or employment. Information, advice and guidance, both internally and externally, meet the varied needs of students. Increasing numbers of pupils are accessing work experience and/or work-related learning which is appropriate to their courses and aspirations. Leaders are working hard to increase these opportunities. Consequently, more students are getting on the right course, succeeding, and achieving highly appropriate next-steps in their future destinations.

School details

Unique reference number	137248
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10025972

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	993
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	118
Appropriate authority	The Cam Academy Trust
Chair	Mark Goodridge
Headteacher	Christopher Bennet
Telephone number	01480 459581
Website	http://www.stpeters.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	office@stpeters.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 July 2016

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection in July 2016, the school changed from being a single academy trust into a multi-academy trust. It is now part of The Cam Academy Trust.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is slightly smaller than an average secondary school. The school also has a

sixth form.

- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities with a statement of special educational needs or an EHC plan is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities without a statement or EHC plan is below the national average.
- The school does not use alternative provision. The school runs its 'strive' programme on site for a small minority of pupils who have challenging behaviour who would normally be vulnerable to permanent exclusion.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is significantly lower than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 54 lessons across all three key stages. Some of these observations and learning walks were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and staff. Inspectors also met with the chief executive office and the director of education for the trust, as well as the chair of governors for the local governing body. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with another governor.
- Inspectors scrutinised work in English, mathematics, history, geography, French, art and science.
- Inspectors also scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school’s own self-evaluation, the school development plan, minutes of governors meetings, safeguarding records, pupil progress information and school policies and procedures. The lead inspector also used evidence gathered from the first monitoring inspection in November 2016, which resulted in a letter on the Ofsted website.
- As this inspection began as a monitoring visit, there were no formal surveys completed by parents, pupils or staff. Consequently, inspectors used existing evidence on Parent View (Ofsted’s online survey), which partially included evidence from the previous inspection.
- To ensure that a balanced view of views was considered, inspectors spoke informally and met formally with a large proportion of pupils across the key stages. Inspectors also identified and contacted a number of parents by telephone to ascertain their views on the school. Furthermore, inspectors questioned a number of staff across the school about the provision.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Paul Larner	Ofsted Inspector
Shân Oswald	Ofsted Inspector
David Hutton	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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