

St Margaret's Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118699
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	358424
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheena MacDonald HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	352
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Clarke
Headteacher	Paul Gabbett
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. The inspectors observed the school's work; they visited assemblies, 24 lessons or parts of lessons which accounted for all the teaching staff, and held discussions with the headteacher, senior leadership team, representatives from the local authority, governors, parents and pupils. The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including safeguarding policies, monitoring and assessment information, curriculum overviews, case studies relating to a sample of pupils and pupils' books. They considered the responses to questionnaires from staff, pupils and 128 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

Levels of attainment and pupils' progress, and whether the recent rise in attainment is being sustained consistently across the school.

The quality of teaching and learning and, in particular, whether the challenge and pace in lessons across all classes are good enough to ensure sufficiently rapid progress for all groups.

The use of assessment and whether targets for progress are sufficiently challenging.

The effectiveness of leaders, including governors, in self-evaluation and monitoring to identify needs, set challenging targets and drive improvement.

The effectiveness of the revised systems and procedures to ensure pupils' safety.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most junior schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage and there is a very small, but increasing, number of pupils from minority ethnic communities, a few of whom are at the early stages of learning English. The school has a very high proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, speech, language and communication difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school runs a breakfast club each morning. The school was judged to require a notice to improve at its last inspection.

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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Rapid and effective action has been taken to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection and the school is now providing a good education for its pupils. Issues around safeguarding were dealt with immediately and a thorough review of the systems and procedures means that these are now rigorous and effective. This is confirmed by the very positive responses of parents and pupils who believe that children are happy, safe and well cared for. The school is a harmonious and welcoming community. Pupils' behaviour is good and their attitudes to learning and to all aspects of school life are very positive. This is reflected in their outstanding attendance and enthusiastic participation in all school activities. Pupils' personal development and well-being, which were judged to be strengths at the last inspection, have been successfully maintained.

The quality of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, is much improved and is now good. Intensive self-evaluation identified areas where improvements were required and the school has taken rigorous action to bring about necessary changes. A sharp focus on improving pupils' learning has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils are making good progress, and attainment, which has been broadly average in the past, is rising. The school is well aware that these improvements need to be sustained and strengthened.

During the inspection, most of the teaching and learning were good and no inadequate lessons were observed. Lessons are consistently well planned with clear objectives and a good match of activities to meet the needs of different ability groups. The use of assessment during lessons and in marking is good and, in some classes, this has been taken a step further with excellent and increasing examples of pupils responding to marking and evaluating their own learning. The quality and targeting of specialised support and catch-up activities, such as one-to-one support, are very effective. In a small number of lessons the pace of learning slows because of lack of clarity about the lesson objectives and too little time allocated for pupils to produce sufficient independent work. Only a very few lessons were observed where the learning was outstanding; in such lessons, pupils were given many opportunities to use their own ideas and be inspired by the learning.

The curriculum is well planned and adapted to meet the needs and interests of pupils. There are examples of good practice where links are made across subjects such as English and history, as seen in the Year 6 writing lessons which built on pupils' understanding of life during the Second World War. There is further scope to develop this so that the curriculum becomes even more relevant, interesting and exciting. Although the pupils have opportunities to learn about countries elsewhere in the world, their understanding

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and appreciation of the cultural diversity in the United Kingdom and the local area are more limited.

The school's leadership team, together with the governing body, has been transformed over the last year. The last inspection caused them to take a long hard look at what needed to improve. They overhauled the systems of responsibility and accountability, strengthened team-working, refined the use of assessment information, raised expectations and, as a result, the performance of leaders, teaching staff and pupils has significantly improved. This demonstrates that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have a clear understanding of the learning objectives and plan activities which sufficiently involve and challenge all pupils
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use their initiative, develop independence and enjoy their learning.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum by:
 - developing stronger links between subjects and making the curriculum more exciting and interesting
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to learn about and develop their understanding and appreciation of the cultural diversity within the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Throughout the school, pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. For several years pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 was broadly average with occasional peaks in different subjects. Both attainment and progress dipped in 2009. Effective actions taken since then, to improve teaching and learning and the quality and use of assessment, have resulted in an improving picture in both attainment, which in 2010 was above the national average, and in progress. Overall attainment remains satisfactory because of the need to ensure consistently raised levels over time. A current and appropriate focus in the school's plan is to maintain the pace of improvement and, in particular, to raise attainment in writing.

Work in lessons and in books shows that pupils are making consistently good progress and that they take a pride in their achievements. Pupils' good behaviour, positive relationships and respect for others make a strong contribution to their learning; they work well together and strive to do their best. Well-matched activities, good quality input from teaching assistants and sharply focused group teaching support the good progress, especially of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English. Although enthusiastic and keen to contribute their own ideas, there are missed opportunities in lessons to fully involve all of the pupils and to enable them to develop their own ideas.

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Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and live healthy lives. The latter is supported by their high participation rates in the many physical and sporting clubs. They make a strong contribution to school life with many, particularly older, pupils taking on a wide range of responsibilities to help the smooth running of activities such as acts of worship and organising charity events. They are confident, articulate and know that their views are taken seriously. Pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development is very evident in their willingness to look after and cooperate with each other. They demonstrate a good understanding of the needs, and celebrate the achievements, of others. Pupils are prepared well for their future lives. Their basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), are developing well.

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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Positive relationships and high expectations of both learning and behaviour are typical across the school. Teachers' lesson planning is consistently good with clear objectives and, in most lessons, teachers use effective questioning which clarifies the objectives, builds on earlier work and extends the learning. There are good examples of well-planned higher-level questioning such as that seen in a design and technology lesson where pupils were formulating hypotheses about materials for shelters. In the very best lessons, such as a Year 6 ICT lesson on animation, the pupils are excited by the learning, have opportunities to make decisions, apply themselves to the tasks enthusiastically and show good levels of

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concentration and independence. These features are not so evident in most lessons, and, although good progress is made, the school is aware that the next step is to provide more opportunities for pupils to use their own ideas and initiative. In the few lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, teachers and pupils are not clear about the learning goals or pupils are given insufficient time to produce sufficient quantity and quality of work. Teachers' marking is consistently good; it is clearly linked to the lesson objectives and generally gives pupils good guidance in identifying next steps for improvement. Pupils are increasingly involved in responding to the marking and in evaluating their learning against success criteria for each lesson. Individual targets are generally understood and effectively used by pupils and teachers.

The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs and interests of particular groups, for example through planning activities which match the different ability groups in classes and providing 'boy friendly' topics to engage the high numbers of boys in some classes. Additional support in lessons, well-organised small group work, for example dyspraxia support, and one-to-one sessions are well focused to meet the different needs of pupils. There are some good links that enable pupils to cover different subjects, for example history and English, in the same lesson, making the learning more relevant, in-depth and interesting; the school is aware of the need to expand this approach and to liven up the day-to-day curriculum further. A strength of the curriculum is the provision of enrichment activities such as visits and visitors and a wide range of well-attended after-school clubs. The quality of provision for music, physical education and ICT is good and there are good opportunities through the mixed-age cluster meetings for personal, social and moral development. Provision to improve pupils' understanding of cultural diversity is less well developed.

The school places a high priority on caring for and supporting pupils. Systems to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils are rigorous and effective. Pupils with social, emotional and learning needs and potentially vulnerable groups of pupils are well supported and make good progress. The school's assessment and review procedures are effectively used to track and analyse the achievements of these pupils and to target additional support such as counselling, individual and group work. Good use is made of external expertise, such as colleagues from a nearby special school, to develop staff's understanding and ability to support pupils effectively. Steps to encourage regular attendance are very successful and the very well-organised breakfast club provides a welcoming, healthy and positive start to the day.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders provide good leadership and are successfully driving improvement. The development of team-working and greater emphasis on shared responsibility and accountability across the leadership team has supported the drive for consistency and encouraged open and in-depth evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. Accurate self-evaluation has resulted in a sharply focused plan of action which is rigorously implemented and the impact on pupils' achievement regularly evaluated. High, shared expectations are evident in the rigorous, detailed monitoring and analysis of assessment information, lessons and pupils' work. Training, coaching and team working have all contributed to a good understanding among the staff about how to improve the quality of teaching and learning and how to use assessment information to better inform day-to-day teaching and learning. There is shared understanding and commitment to ensure that all pupils meet their challenging targets.

The school's promotion of equal opportunities is good. It knows its pupils and the different groups well and monitors achievement, encourages participation and adapts provision to identify and tackle differences in attainment between groups. Action is taken to reduce barriers, such as providing additional access to computers for pupils who may not be able to access them at home.

The arrangements to secure pupils' safety and well-being have been fully reviewed, training is up to date and governors are rigorous in carrying out their responsibilities. A recent local authority audit judged that these arrangements are now good and inspection evidence confirms this.

The school's good relationships with parents are confirmed by the positive responses of parents to questionnaires. There are good systems to keep parents informed and to help them better support their children's learning, such as providing the weekly homework on the school's website. The school takes the concerns of parents very seriously and acts on their ideas, for example providing English language sessions for Turkish parents. Relationships with other partners are also very effective and strong links with groups such as local secondary schools, Medway business partnership, and the School Food Trust make a positive contribution to the pupils' all-round achievement, particularly in enhancing the curriculum and the support for vulnerable pupils. Overall, the school promotes community cohesion well, with good outcomes in most of the different aspects. The British Council connections enhance pupils' understanding and appreciation of European communities. The school rightly identifies further work is required in promoting pupils' understanding of the diversity of British society.

The governing body is supportive and knowledgeable. Experienced governors have supported the induction of the high number of new governors and many have undertaken a wide range of training in the past year. As a result, they are well able to interrogate the school's data, ask searching questions and hold the school to account during their regular, focused meetings.

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are happy with all aspects of the school. Of those who responded, almost all believe that their children enjoy and are safe in school, They feel well informed, well supported and believe that the school meets their children's needs. There were many positive remarks about the school, most of which were general comments about how happy the children are and, in individual cases, commenting on the high quality of support and care. Although there were few negative responses, the largest number of these related to the effectiveness of the school's approach to unacceptable behaviour although no specific comments were written about this aspect. During the visit, inspectors found that behaviour was well managed. The few negative written comments covered various issues and there was no trend or pattern.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Margaret's Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Junior 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 128 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 352 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	63	32	36	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	53	39	43	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	46	51	40	44	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	51	40	44	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	53	38	42	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	49	41	46	5	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	46	44	49	4	4	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)	42	47	39	43	3	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	46	45	50	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	34	46	51	5	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	38	48	53	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	44	49	39	43	3	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	57	35	39	3	3	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



5 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret's Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Junior School, Rainham, ME8 9AE

You will remember that some inspectors came to your school recently to see how well you were all doing. Our special thanks go to those groups of pupils who gave up their playtime to talk to us. Everyone told us that St Margaret's has improved and is now a good school where you are happy and do well. We agree with you. Well done!

When your school was last inspected it was given 'a notice to improve'. Immediately, the school leaders improved the systems for making sure you are safe. All the staff have worked hard to improve the quality of their teaching and your learning. As a result, most lessons are good now and you are making good progress. Last year's Year 6 pupils did well in their end-of-year tests so that they achieved above average results. This was not the case in the past so your school needs to keep on improving so that you all do as well as possible.

You are enthusiastic, considerate and well behaved. Nearly all of you come to school every single day and that means you can take full advantage of all the many opportunities your school has to offer. Your teachers plan good lessons and try to make sure the work is matched to suit you. They mark your work really carefully and we could see some of you are beginning to use the success criteria really well so that you know how well you are doing and what you need to do next. Your headteacher, school leaders and the governors are doing a good job in seeing what needs to be done and then making sure everyone does it!

So that you can all achieve even better I have asked your teachers to make sure everyone is clear about the objectives for each lesson and give you plenty of opportunities to use your own ideas more, get more involved and have more fun in lessons. I think you can do even better if they give you more challenges! I have also asked them to make stronger links between the different subjects and give you more chance to learn about the different cultures and communities that make up the United Kingdom.

You can do your part by thinking hard and making suggestions about how your school might improve further, by listening to what your teachers and other pupils are telling you, and by doing your best!

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

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