

St Margaret Mary's RC Primary School Manchester

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105533
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	360975
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Pat Kime HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin Hogan
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Cunningham
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2009
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Introduction

When the school was inspected in 2009, it was judged to require special measures. Since then inspectors have visited the school each term to check on its progress in tackling its weaknesses.

This inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of the Interim Executive Board, staff, pupils and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including records of pupils' progress and the school's improvement plan.

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

- The extent to which the school has the capacity to drive its own improvement.
- Whether the improvement in attainment, seen at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010, is being sustained.
- Pupils' attainment in writing.
- Whether the issues for improvement raised at the last section 5 inspection have been resolved.

Information about the school

St Margaret Mary's is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Around 17% of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. For about half of these pupils English is an additional language but very few are at an early stage of learning English. There are 87 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception). From September, these children have been taught in a self-contained unit created from their previous separate classrooms.

Responsibility for governance of the school remains with the Interim Executive Board with which the local authority replaced the governing body in October 2009. The part-time executive headteacher continues to lead the school. This arrangement is in place until the end of the current school year. Three new teachers, including a deputy headteacher, joined the school this academic year.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The school has improved a great deal in the last year. All the issues for improvement from the 2009 inspection have been dealt with, most of them well. The executive headteacher has driven the improvement, with the support of the Interim Executive Board and local authority staff. She has maintained a relentless focus on improving teaching, raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, and keeping a close watch on pupils' progress. Staff have worked hard to meet these high expectations.

The impact of everyone's efforts is seen in the dramatic improvement in pupils' attainment in 2010. Last year's leavers attained above-average standards in English and mathematics, after three years of below-average attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. The improvement in attainment in Year 2 last year was even greater. Here standards lifted from well below average to broadly average. However, all through the school, attainment in writing lags behind that achieved in reading and mathematics. Pupils' work in lessons and in their books shows that most pupils are working at least at a broadly average standard. This represents good progress because they have had to overcome a legacy of previous underachievement. Pupils' good achievement is the result of teaching that is predominantly good and good additional support for pupils at risk of underachievement. Pupils learn most successfully in the lessons which move along at a good pace; where expectations are high; where they have good opportunities to assess their own learning; and where there is a good variety of activities, including judicious use of information and communication technology (ICT). Learning is slower when teachers talk at length, leaving pupils with insufficient time to put what they have been taught into practice and work independently.

The school has understandably focused its efforts, successfully, on raising attainment in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. The curriculum has not been a priority and it remains satisfactory. It covers all that is required but is not yet tailored to pupils' interests and the school's individual context.

Spiritual, social and moral development are good. Pupils are well-behaved and they have good relationships with each other and the staff. These strengths contribute to the school's orderly and caring atmosphere and the high degree of racial harmony. Pupils are well-cared for and supported at school. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory.

The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Senior staff have a good grasp of the school's current position and where improvement is still needed and the development for the current year is sound. However, to date, the school has relied on considerable external

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support to make the necessary changes. The local authority replaced the school's governing body with an Interim Executive Board which is still in place, though there is a sound plan for transfer of responsibilities from this board to a new governing body for the school. It is essential that this happens as soon as possible. The executive headteacher has been at the school since October 2009 on a series of short-term arrangements. Her position is now secure for a full school year but greater stability of leadership is needed for longer-term development planning. The recent appointment of a deputy headteacher is a positive step to strengthen the senior team but, in the main, capacity at middle leadership level requires development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the school's capacity to drive its own improvement by:
 - establishing a governing body to take over from the Interim Executive Board by September 2011
 - securing arrangements for the long-term headship of the school
 - developing the skills of middle leaders to contribute to school improvement.
- Further improve the quality of teaching so that all is at least good by:
 - ensuring that explanations and instructions are clear and concise and that pupils spend the bulk of lesson time actively involved in productive work
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of independent learning
 - ensuring that all pupils have sufficient opportunities to evaluate their own progress and benefit from clear guidance about the next steps for their learning
 - making more use of ICT to enhance learning.
- Raise attainment in writing all through the school by:
 - providing a wider range of contexts and purposes for pupils' writing in English and across the curriculum
 - ensuring that pupils' individual targets and the writing tasks set are pitched to be appropriately challenging for all pupils.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment has improved greatly in Key Stages 1 and 2 and the gap between girls and boys has been largely eradicated by the end of Key Stage 2. In English and mathematics, most pupils are working at least at the standard expected for their age and a good number exceed this. Given how far pupils had fallen behind in the past, these standards represent good achievement. Nonetheless, right from the start of Year 1 through to Year 6, writing is not as good as reading and mathematics. In well-taught lessons, which the majority of those observed were, pupils were industrious. They made good gains in their learning and were pleased with their achievements. For example, in Year 1, a lesson

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based on a familiar story, enabled pupils to make good progress in using descriptive language. In Year 6, pupils showed a good understanding of the characters in the novel they are studying. They described how one of them might be feeling at a key point in the story and justified their descriptions by reference to the text. The teacher pushed their understanding on when she asked them to consider the same scene from the perspective of a contrasting character. In mathematics in Year 1, the pace of learning was brisk and many pupils were already tackling demanding work, adding up coins to make 10p and counting money in 10s.

Pupils normally start Key Stage 1 with broadly average attainment and staff are determined they will, as a minimum, reach the level expected for their age and there is a very good range of additional support to help those who find it hard to keep up or who have particular learning difficulties. Consequently, there are no significant differences in achievement between groups of pupils. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress as well as their classmates and the more-able are exceeding age-related expectations.

Pupils' good attitudes to learning and good behaviour support their learning well. Pupils have a good understanding of the choices involved in a healthy lifestyle and they know how to keep themselves safe in and out of school. The attendance rate has improved and was broadly average last year.

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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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

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How effective is the provision?

The pupils' good progress shows that they benefit from good teaching. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching varied from outstanding to satisfactory but was mostly good. Typically, teachers have good relationships with pupils; they have clear objectives for learning in each lesson and make pupils aware of these; they deploy support staff effectively and manage their classes well. The potential of ICT to aid learning is seldom utilised effectively. Pupils' work is marked regularly but short-term targets set are not always precise enough to focus pupils' efforts.

The most effective lessons were characterised by:

- high expectations with good challenge for pupils at all ability levels
- very skilled questioning that helps pupils to think through their ideas and involves them in evaluating their own learning
- a good variety of activities to consolidate new learning
- careful assessment of what pupils are learning during the lesson
- purposeful, well-focused discussion among pupils

When teaching was no better than satisfactory its effectiveness was reduced mainly because teachers talked for too long, yet did not provide clear explanations and instructions. Consequently, pupils' attention slipped, they were not all sure what to do, and they had too little time to practice what they had been taught. At times, expectations were not ambitious enough to accelerate pupils' progress and work was not tailored to match the range of pupils' abilities.

The curriculum covers all that is required, with the emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills, and personal and social education. It is enriched with some visits and visitors. After-school clubs, including drama, ICT and sports, have recently been introduced. Some adjustments have been made to match the curriculum to the needs of boys and of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In general, however, the curriculum is not customised to make it relevant for pupils and there are limited opportunities for pupils to use and develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Standards of day-to-day care are good, with safe routines established well. Staff know the pupils well and take appropriate steps to overcome any barriers they may face to learning or full participation in school life. The arrangements for transition through school and on to secondary education are good.

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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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The executive headteacher continues to provide outstanding leadership and she is supported well by the Interim Executive Board. She has been the driving force behind the school's improvement over the last year. She taken robust steps to improve the quality of teaching and has created a culture in which staff are supported but also held to account for the progress pupils make in their classes. Targets for pupils' attainment and rates of progress are now challenging but achievable, though, for some, more could be expected in writing. Much improved systems have been introduced to keep close track of how well pupils are doing. However, these improvements have been dependent on temporary arrangements to support the school. The capacity of the school's own staff to take on the improvement agenda is satisfactory. The deputy headteacher has established himself quickly. He has grasped the school's position and is backing the executive headteacher well. The roles of other staff with leadership responsibilities have developed considerably and these staff are keen to contribute to the improvement agenda. At present, however, not all staff at this middle leadership level have the skills or school-wide view needed to do so fully effectively.

The Interim Executive Board fulfils the responsibilities of governance well, drawing on its members' relevant expertise. It has worked with the local authority to plan for transition to a governing body. It is mindful of the need to provide for stability and stronger development planning, by securing longer-term arrangements for the headship. The Interim Executive Board ensures that statutory requirements are met, for example, in relation to safeguarding pupils which is attended to well. Community cohesion is promoted soundly through the school's ethos and its links with the local community and developing global links. The school itself is a socially and racially harmonious community in which everyone is valued.

Parents and carers feel welcome in the school and have become more involved in its life and work. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, many parents and carers work alongside their children at the start of the school day. Homework diaries have been introduced to help parents and carers to support their children's learning. However, there are no formal arrangements to enable parents and carers to contribute to decision making.

The school promotes equality of opportunity well. Through its Catholic ethos it teaches the importance of valuing every individual. There is ambition for pupils and good support is provided to enable all to achieve. Furthermore, there is much unobtrusive support for vulnerable pupils and families who may be facing difficulties.

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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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage unit provides a good education and good standards of care in a rich and welcoming environment. When children join the Nursery, they can usually do what is typical for their age, though this year's intake is an exception with attainment that is lower than average. Children make good progress overall in the Early Years Foundation Stage and, by the end of Reception, attainment is above average in most aspects of their learning. They do particularly well in their personal and social development, and their early reading and mathematical skills. Their early writing skills and physical skills are below average. Provision for writing has improved this year with more frequent direct teaching and more opportunities for writing built into play settings, like the hospital and the construction site.

The children greatly enjoy learning from the wide range of appealing, often imaginative, activities indoors and out. These are planned very carefully so they all promote effective learning and offer a good balance of children's choice and adult direction. The children develop independence and good concentration and they have good attitudes. Staff check children's progress carefully in all areas of learning.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has managed the transition from separate classes to a single unit very well and the unit is operating efficiently. She sets high expectations and maintains a very good overview of the provision and the quality of teaching. Staff are deployed to best effect. They know exactly what is expected of them at all times and they have time to join children's play in ways that enrich learning.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The parents to whom the inspectors spoke were almost all happy with their children's progress and thought the school has improved recently.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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.



18 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret Mary's RC Primary School, Manchester, M40 0JE

Thank you for welcoming Mr Byrne and me when we inspected your school recently. I am writing on behalf of us both. We enjoyed our time at St Margaret Mary's and we learned a lot about how well you are doing at school from talking to you and observing your lessons. This letter is to report our judgements to you.

You will know that the school has been in 'special measures' and has been getting extra help to improve your education. I am delighted to tell you that it has improved so much in the last year that it is now satisfactory and no longer needs special measures.

You are taught well in most lessons and you are now making good progress in your learning all through the school, though you could still do better in writing. The adults take good care of you, helping you to grow up well. We were pleased to see how well you all get along together, how much you know about healthy lifestyles, and all you do to help at school and in your local community. Your behaviour is good and that helps lessons run smoothly.

Mrs Cunningham has played a very important part in your school's improvement. I know that you, too, have all risen to the challenge. You might not know much about the Interim Executive Board and the local authority but they have also helped the school a lot. It is now time for the school to carry on improving without extra help. We have agreed that it needs to have its own governing body and a headteacher who can lead it for the next few years. We have also asked the school to make sure that all the teaching is at least good. I am sure that you will have good ideas to help the school keep on getting better and you will be able to suggest them through the school council.

We wish you all well for the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your learning at St Margaret Mary's.

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime

Her Majesty's Inspector

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