

Margaret Wix Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117188
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379372
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Page
Headteacher	Jennifer Moles
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2009
School address	High Oaks St Albans AL3 6EL
Telephone number	01727 759232
Fax number	01727 759233
Email address	admin@margaretwix.herts.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	3–4 October 2011
Inspection number	379372

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 19 lessons led by ten different teachers and practitioners. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's improvement plan, leaders' monitoring records and pupils' work. Questionnaires from staff, pupils in Key Stage 2 and from 68 parents and carers were analysed and their responses taken into account.

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

- Inspectors analysed pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 and whether current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain their targets.
- They explored the reasons why levels of attendance are below average.
- Inspectors considered whether the pace of learning is sufficiently brisk and work suitably challenging for all groups of pupils.
- They looked at the role that teachers with responsibilities play in the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Information about the school

Margaret Wix is smaller than most primary schools. It is situated on the northern outskirts of St Albans and most pupils live near to the school though an increasing number live in other parts of the city. About half the pupils are White British and the rest come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. An average number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is also average. Most of these pupils have learning difficulties.

The school has commenced a breakfast club and an after-school club from the start of this term. This is managed by the governing body, and was included in this inspection. In addition, there is a pre-school, St Michael's, on the school site. This is not managed by the governing body and is subject to separate inspection.

A new headteacher commenced at the start of the current term. The school has gained a number of awards including Investors in People status and has also achieved national Healthy Schools status.

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

Margaret Wix provides a good education for all its pupils. As a result, they are very happy in school, thoroughly enjoy learning and achieve well. The excellence of the pastoral care and support provided and the consistent reinforcement of moral values means that pupils' personal development is good. Pupils work hard and take a pride in their successes. They behave well, and pupils from the wide range of differing backgrounds get on well together. In the past, levels of attendance have been low and the numbers of pupils that are persistently absent have been high. However, due to robust and effective systems attendance is now average and the level of persistent absence reduced considerably. Nonetheless, lower attendance amongst some pupils acts as a brake on the progress they make. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive and many made positive comments about how pleased they are to have chosen the school for their children. These are summarised by the parent who wrote: 'My daughter was bullied at her previous school but she loves it here. It has a real family feel. Every teacher has invested so much in her learning and I have seen her flourish.'

All groups of pupils achieve well. From starting points that are below expectations on entry to the Nursery and Reception classes, they make good progress in all year groups. By the time that they reach Year 6, attainment is above average in reading and writing and is average in mathematics. The number of pupils gaining the higher level in English is above average because the school has worked hard to ensure that the more-able pupils make particularly good progress. Senior leaders are keenly aware that progress in mathematics needs to be accelerated in order to match that of reading and writing. At present, overall attainment is held back because pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use and apply their well-honed calculation skills to solve practical problems in mathematics. The school has successfully closed the gap in the attainment of pupils in reading and writing. Previously, there was some under-performance in writing particularly amongst the boys but this is not now the case. This is because staff have made revisions to the curriculum to ensure that topics and themes chosen are of particular interest to boys. Boys talk excitedly, for example, about the topics on castles, dragons and pirates. These well-chosen projects are complemented by good use of literacy and numeracy in other subjects.

Teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now consistently good with a small minority of lessons being outstanding. Teachers manage classes well, establish clear routines and have high expectations of work and behaviour. They ensure that lessons are invariably conducted at a brisk pace and

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

they are skilled at ensuring that tasks are matched well to pupils' learning needs. The good quality curriculum provides pupils with interesting and memorable experiences which contribute well to their learning and enjoyment of school. Despite a well-planned programme for information and communication technology (ICT) being in place, pupils' skills in ICT are not always effectively enough developed because some teachers miss opportunities for making use of ICT in the classrooms.

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher is already much admired by pupils, staff, members of the governing body and parents and carers. As one parent wrote, 'The new head is focused and passionate. She has settled in very quickly and efficiently.' She has built successfully on the many leadership and management strengths in place before her arrival. The strengthening of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to its current exemplary level has been a key to improving progress and provision. The headteacher ensures that the whole staff team work closely together to strive to further improve provision and achievement. Raised attainment and initiatives to improve aspects of provision, coupled with to clear educational direction and the fostering of effective teamwork, demonstrate the school's good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of learning from good to outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge in practical situations
 - ensuring that all teachers maximise the opportunities for pupils to use ICT in lessons.
- By September 2012, build on the robust arrangements now in place to lift attendance to above average levels by targeting the lower attendance of some.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils achieve well in both their personal and academic development. Progress is good in all year groups and pupils enjoy their time in school regardless of background or starting points. Their learning is greatly helped by teachers frequently setting activities for pupils to work in pairs or collaboratively. For example, in a good Year 6 mathematics lesson when pupils were learning to calculate the perimeter of compound shapes, the teacher constantly asked pupils to work together to solve challenging and well-founded problems. She then asked those that grasped the concept quickly to act as a teacher to their friends. Pupils say that they enjoy working in pairs and in groups, 'Because it helps me to think clearly myself.' In most lessons seen, pupils' progress was at least good. These findings support the school's comprehensive data and pupils' current work which show that all groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well. Year 6 pupils are on track to attain their challenging targets. The work of a minority of pupils in Year 5 is already at the expected level at the end of Year 6 in both English and mathematics. Pupils who

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

Speak English as an additional language are provided with good programmes when they first start to develop their English and are supported well in class. As a result, they learn English quickly and make progress at the same good rates as their classmates. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. Those that have moderate learning difficulties are given manageable but challenging work to match their particular needs. Consequently, they make good progress.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident that adults will look after them and deal with any problems that arise. Their good behaviour in class and around the school strongly supports their learning. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school community through their care and friendship for each other as well as through the many jobs that older pupils undertake very responsibly. The school’s strategy of having ‘family groups’ successfully enables all pupils in the school to make a contribution to strengthening their input into school decisions. It has been influential in bringing about changes in routines in the school and also determining which charities will benefit from school activities. Pupils’ good understanding of the need to conduct a healthy lifestyle is evident by the gaining of Healthy Schools status. Pupils join in exercise enthusiastically. By the time that they reach Year 6, pupils develop into thoughtful and confident young people. Their good inter-personal skills when linked to strong literacy skills and average mathematical and ICT skills means that pupils are prepared appropriately for the future in school and beyond.

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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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

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

Teachers prepare lessons thoroughly. Their assessments of pupils’ work are rigorous and comprehensive and the ensuing information is used well to ensure that activities are matched well to the varying levels of learning needs present in each class. Activities are interesting and generate the pupils’ enthusiasm for learning. This is further aided by teachers creating a positive classroom atmosphere and establishing warm working relationships with their pupils. Questioning is used well to check pupils’ understanding and teachers ensure that pupils do make progress. Teachers’ marking of work is of high quality. Comments are detailed and helpful and invariably focus well on the stated learning objectives. Critically, teachers are particularly skilled at identifying next steps in learning for pupils. Pupils say that they value the comments made because it helps their learning.

The curriculum continues to be of good quality and there are some significant strengths. Links between subjects, which adds relevance and meaning to learning, are generally developed well. This is particularly the case with literacy skills and this ensures that pupils with additional language needs receive extensive support and interventions. Pupils commented on how much they enjoyed the Roald Dahl day during the week before the inspection when all the staff and pupils were dressed as a character from his books. However, opportunities for developing pupils’ ICT skills are sometimes missed in lessons. The school successfully ensures that the curriculum caters for both the academic and personal needs of individuals and groups. The curriculum is enriched by focused curriculum weeks and themed days and the locality is used well to support and enhance learning as is the local church and the city centre and St Albans Abbey.

The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support are at the heart of the school’s aims and contribute exceptionally well to the pupils’ well-being. Support for the few pupils who find it difficult to behave consistently well is highly effective as is that to pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. The recently appointed family support worker is an example of how the school is continuing to strengthen its care and securing tangible improvement in attendance. This has taken significant determination especially to reduce most of the persistent absence and the school is ambitious to ensure that all have good levels of attendance. Stronger care and support arrangements are also evident in the nurture group. In addition, parents and carers are fulsome in their praise about the new high quality breakfast club and after-school provision.

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	1

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

How effective are leadership and management?

A clear vision and ambition for improvement has borne fruit since the previous inspection. The school has been driven forward systematically and developments in tracking progress and monitoring and evaluation procedures have contributed well to the school’s improving effectiveness. The senior leadership team is effective and the new headteacher has skilfully carried forward the strong improvement momentum in the short time that she has been in post. She shares a clear determination with senior leaders and the governing body to further improve the school. There is good teamwork from all in pursuing common goals, and teachers with subject responsibilities make a valuable contribution to the wide ranging and highly effective procedures in place to check provision and progress. Information derived from evaluation of lessons is used well to support the highly effective school improvement plan and has been key to substantial improvements in teaching and learning. The school’s good teamwork and school management are recognised in the award of ‘Investors in People.’ The school promotes equality of opportunity well and the performance of different groups is rigorously analysed. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

Governance is good. The governing body ensures that regulatory requirements are met and has ensured that pupils are kept safe. Members of the governing body have a good understanding of the school’s strengths and development needs and this enables them to provide both support and challenge to senior leaders. The school provides a highly cohesive community. Good attention is paid to both celebrating the many different ethnic groups and faiths present in the school through the curriculum. This supports the pupils’ understanding of the national and global dimension of education. A recent link with a school near Lusaka in Zambia is already providing a focus for both raising money to support the school and learning about life in the locality.

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	1
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	3

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

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

There are effective induction arrangements for children, particularly those that join the Nursery. This enables them to settle quickly into the school. Even though they had been in the school for a few weeks, children have already gained an understanding of the routines of the Nursery or Reception classes. The children are helped to enjoy their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they are cared for with sensitivity and their welfare and well-being is placed at the heart of the school’s provision. Although most children enter with skills and abilities that are below average, particularly in their literacy and language skills, they make good progress and this results in a majority of children attaining the expected learning goals on entry into Year 1.

Lively teaching ensures that activities are vibrant. In both the Nursery and Reception classes, children learn to listen attentively, share toys and take turns. The staff provide well-resourced opportunities for children to explore the world around them, and to develop their language and number skills. As a result, children enjoy learning, and their curiosity, independence and concentration are developed well. In an effective session in which children were learning some initial sounds for example, the sensitivity of the teacher benefitted the children who were learning words that start with ‘f’. Because the teacher used a good range of resources, which children had to choose from a box, they were fascinated by the sound and they learned well.

The classrooms benefit from being well-resourced. However, the outside area, though spacious and used well, has some resources that are out of date. The curriculum provides a good balance between activities that are led by the adults and those that the children select for themselves. Staff provide sensitive and well-targeted support, based on a good knowledge of the children. Assessments are thorough and provide a good platform for staff to ensure that children’s development is recorded effectively. The enthusiastic staff work closely as a team and are led well by the knowledgeable Foundation Stage Unit leader.

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

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school with many making positive comments about how pleased they are to have chosen the school for their children. They are unanimous in their support in a majority of responses to the questions. In particular, they say that their children enjoy school, that the teaching is good, and overall, they are happy with what the school provides for their children. There were no areas of significant concern.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Margaret Wix Primary 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 182 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	69	21	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	68	22	32	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	33	49	31	46	2	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	50	29	43	3	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	43	63	24	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	32	47	32	47	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	51	32	47	0	0	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)	34	50	30	44	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	30	44	36	53	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	49	30	44	1	1	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	46	31	46	0	0	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	31	46	36	53	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	48	71	19	28	0	0	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 October 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Margaret Wix Primary School, St Albans AL3 6EL

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school. Yours is a good school. You told us that you really enjoy lessons and learning and we can see why! Your teachers make lessons interesting and they plan lots of interesting activities for you to do. This helps you to make good progress in your learning. We particularly enjoyed listening to your accounts of the topics and themes that you are enjoying.

You told us that your school is a very happy place and that the adults look after you well. We agree with you, and so do your parents and carers. We were impressed by how well you get on together. Your behaviour is good, you have a good understanding about being healthy and also you feel safe in school. We think that your new headteacher is doing a good job and she is helped well by all the staff. They are always checking on how well you are doing because they want you always to do as well as you can.

Even in a good school like yours there are things to improve. We have asked your headteacher to make sure that your teachers make sure that your learning gets even better by giving you more chances to undertake practical mathematical activities. We have also asked that you have more opportunity to use ICT in lessons. We know that many of you come to school regularly but we think that attendance can be improved even more. We have asked the school to work on this with some of you. You can all help by making sure that you always attend unless you are poorly.

We really enjoyed our time in your school. Thank you for taking time to talk to us and watch your lessons. We hope that you continue to find your time in school enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**