

# St Margaret's Church of England High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104720
<b>Local authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	377118
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 April 2012–1 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Jacqueline Rothery

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,014
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Ricketts
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Dennison
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Aigburth Road Liverpool L17 6AB
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 4271825
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Jacqueline Rothery  
Chris Griffin  
Denah Jones  
Jim Bennetts

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 35 lessons taught by 35 teachers. Two of these lessons were observed jointly with senior members of staff. A further six short observations were conducted to evaluate the quality of provision for targeted groups of students. Inspectors held meetings with senior staff, middle leaders, three members of the governing body and groups of students. They also analysed the questionnaires returned by 153 parents and carers, 234 students and 44 staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and considered a range of documentation, including self-evaluation and improvement plans, performance data, minutes of the governing body meetings, and safeguarding records. In addition, they scrutinised a sample of students' books.

## Information about the school

St Margaret's Church of England High School is a boys' secondary school of average size. The school has a sixth form, which includes a small number of girls. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. Most students are of White British heritage and there are very few students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students supported at school action plus and those who have a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The school draws from a wide area. It has specialisms in languages and technology. Awards include International Schools' Award, Healthy School status and Sportsmark. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and achievement is good. There is pride in the school shared by all members of the school community and students. The school is not yet outstanding because the quality of teaching is still good overall, there is a lack of rigour and reliability in the school's use of its tracking data and achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory.
- Achievement is good overall. Attainment is well-above average. Following a dip in 2011, students are now making good progress in line with their starting points. Reading, writing and communication skills are particularly strong and underpin the good progress that students make.
- The quality of teaching is good overall. Inspectors saw much good and better teaching. There is some satisfactory teaching but none that is inadequate. Teachers have good subject knowledge, relationships are positive and students are keen to learn, though there are missed opportunities for students to direct and extend their own learning.
- Behaviour is good. Students are exceptionally polite, respectful and courteous around the school. Corridors and classrooms are orderly and calm. Attitudes to learning are positive. Most students say they feel safe. Attendance is high and there is little bullying.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are clear about the priorities for improvement; they drive these effectively and successful outcomes are being secured. The good and improving quality of teaching has a positive impact on learning. Performance management systems are robust and targets are effectively linked to priorities for improvement. Capacity for further improvement is good, though there is further work to be done on the use of school tracking data.
- The sixth form is satisfactory. Good leadership and management are ensuring that achievement is satisfactory and improving, though the monitoring of the quality of teaching and the sharing of good practice are not developed fully.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - ensuring that lessons actively involve students and provide them with effective opportunities to be independent in their learning.
- Ensure rigour and reliability in the collection and use of the school's tracking data in order to address any weaknesses or inconsistencies in students' progress.
- Improve achievement in the sixth form by:
  - monitoring the effectiveness of teaching more closely and sharing good practice so that all lessons match the quality of the best.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

In their responses to Ofsted questionnaires, almost all parents and carers indicate that they feel their children are making good progress at the school and are supported in developing their skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. Inspectors' findings support these views.

In lesson observations, good progress was observed with little variation across different subjects and different groups of learners, including disabled students and those with special educational needs. Most students enter the school with prior attainment which is above the national average. At the end of Key Stage 4, their attainment is significantly above the national average. In 2011, weaker progress in a number of subjects led to a dip in attainment. This has been addressed and evidence in lessons, in work scrutiny and in the school's monitoring indicates that achievement is good. In the sixth form, achievement is satisfactory and, though there is some variation across subjects, improvements are being made.

Students are enthusiastic and engage well in lessons. They are confident, fluent readers who will readily volunteer to read aloud and discuss their reading. For example, in a Year 11 GCSE English lesson, boys read poetry with feeling and sensitivity, then shared their thoughts with one another in groups, exploring fully the shades of meaning in the language used. This is a strong feature across the school, as is the quality of their writing. Inspectors saw many examples of carefully constructed extended writing in a variety of subjects. Students are willing to take responsibility and to present their views and findings to different audiences. The good development of these skills has a positive impact on their learning and progress across all key stages.

### Quality of teaching

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel that their children are well taught. Inspectors found that the quality of teaching has improved over time and is good with some examples of outstanding practice. This is across all stages.

Teachers demonstrate high expectations, based on their consistently good subject knowledge. This ensures work is well matched to examination and assessment criteria. In the very best lessons, consistently high expectations are conveyed, such as the sharp focus on grade A\*/A criteria in a Year 10 Electronic Products lesson. The students display a secure sense of confidence in their teachers' skills. This, combined with consistently good support and relationships, has a positive impact on students' development of knowledge and understanding, motivating them to learn well. Feedback in lessons is good, though there is some variation in the helpfulness of marking across different subjects. Good examples of carefully targeted constructive feedback, linked with appropriate praise, were seen in English books.

The most effective lessons include high levels of challenge which deepen students' learning. For example, Year 10 boys responded positively to translating complex phrases from a weather forecast from English into French, using a range of tenses. In the most successful lessons, work is pitched at appropriate levels and teachers engage well with students; they encourage and empower students to learn effectively and independently. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are often well supported through teachers' use of resources and guidance from support staff.

In less effective lessons, students have opportunities to work in pairs and groups but these are limited on occasions and roles within groups are often insufficiently defined. Questioning at times lacks variety and too often focuses on recall, eliciting short explanations. There is not enough use of open-ended, probing questions. Opportunities for independent work are often missed.

Literacy skills are developed well in lessons and across the wider curriculum; for example students are given time to read in tutor time. Strong social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is evident throughout the school, for example, in lessons, assemblies, collaborative projects, trips and the excellent use of display.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students are typically considerate, respectful and courteous in lessons and around the school site. Most students say they feel safe and in their responses to questionnaires, parents and carers confirm this, although for a small number of disabled students and those with special educational needs there were some concerns about access around the site. Students are clear about how to keep themselves safe. Although some bullying occurs, including racial and homophobic bullying, incidents are rare and school procedures are effective in dealing with them. Questionnaires returned by parents and carers include many positive comments about the good level of care that the school provides. Responses to the questionnaire show a higher level of concern about disruption to lessons compared with other aspects of the school's work, including behaviour overall. Inspectors found that students respond well to the school's behaviour management procedures and lessons generally proceed without disruption.

In lessons, students work cooperatively together in pairs and groups. When given the opportunity, they collaborate well and support one another's learning. They display enthusiasm and confidence, with good levels of engagement and participation. Many are keen to share their views. Their positive attitudes to learning make a good contribution to their improving achievement.

Attendance for all students is above average and exclusions are low. The school effectively monitors absence and exclusions by individuals and groups, and strategies put in place to address any issues have a positive impact. Students are punctual to lessons.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is well established and provides clear leadership for the school. He is respected by the school community, and staff, parents and carers and governors consider the school to be well led. Members of the governing body cite the headteacher's ability to manage change as a strength, together with 'mutual close working'. They point out that he is trusted.

Good relationships are evident at all levels within the school and the school is a cohesive, harmonious community, yet the culture is aspirational, with a strong drive for improvement. Senior leaders and governors, supported well by the local authority, evaluate accurately the school's strengths and weaknesses. Actions to bring about change are having a positive impact in improving outcomes for students. Capacity for sustained improvement is good. For example, the investment in staff training and coaching to improve the quality of teaching can clearly be seen in the increasing proportion of teaching judged as good or better. After a decline last year, achievement is improving.

Middle managers are increasingly held accountable for the performance of their areas. They value strongly the support they are given by senior leaders. Whole-school data systems for tracking students' achievement are in place, though there is insufficient rigour in the collection and use of such data to target and address any underperformance quickly and effectively.

The well-planned curriculum has a positive impact on progress and achievement and is appropriately matched to the needs and aspirations of students. It is well placed to meet forthcoming Key Stage 4 requirements; all students gain an accredited qualification in a language. Courses such as 'Learning for Life' are valued by students and contribute well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The range and breadth of the curriculum, combined with some outstanding extra-curricular provision, successfully promotes equality of opportunity for all students and ensures that they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. All students take up further education, employment or training.

The sixth form curriculum offers a wide range of courses as the school is a member of the Faith Partnership, a collaborative of five schools, plus the City Community College, offering over 30 courses for students. Retention rates are high. Good leadership and management of the sixth form are ensuring that choices are carefully matched to students' needs. Leaders and managers are aware of the need now to monitor more closely the effectiveness of teaching and sharing of good practice in order to improve further the quality of teaching in the sixth form.

The governing body demonstrates ambition, loyalty and commitment. It holds the school to account, providing support and challenge. Procedures for safeguarding are effective and meet all the statutory requirements. In their responses to questionnaires, parents and carers indicate overwhelmingly that they would recommend the school. Students endorse this very directly by saying that St. Margaret's is, 'absolutely the best school', providing them with a 'good education'.





## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



2 May 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of St Margaret's Church of England High School, Liverpool, L17 6AB**

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited you recently and, in particular, our thanks go to those students who met with us in meetings and around the school. We enjoyed talking to you, listening to you, looking at your work and watching you learn.

We found that St. Margaret's is a good school, providing you with a good education. We were very pleased to observe your excellent conduct, the respect you show towards one another and your willingness to learn. We found your courtesy towards us exemplary. You tell us you feel safe in school and we can see clearly how much your good behaviour contributes to that. Your achievement is good and your willingness to learn plays a large part in that success.

You tell us that you are taught well. We agree and we know that your headteacher and other leaders in the school, including the governing body, are determined to improve teaching further and ensure that you achieve the best you possibly can. We have asked them to ensure that your teachers share good practice about the best lessons, particularly in the sixth form, that they actively involve you in your own learning and that they keep a close check on all of you and step in quickly if you are not performing well.

You can all play your part in these improvements by working as hard and as enthusiastically as you do now and continuing to fully support your school's ambitions for you.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Rothery  
Lead inspector

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