

St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

London Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon, SS13 2DU

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress and consequently their achievement requires improvement.
- Although improving, teaching requires improvement as it is too variable.
- In some lessons, work is not closely enough matched to the abilities of pupils, particularly the more able.
- The outdoor area in the Reception does not provide children with sufficient range or challenge, particularly in mathematics.
- The attendance of some pupils is below average.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to work together because teachers often spend too much time giving guidance and direction.
- Subject leaders' roles are underdeveloped and they do not effectively check pupils' progress or teaching in their areas.
- Governors have not been effective in holding the school to account for the achievement of pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has a clear idea of how to improve the school, and has not been afraid to make difficult decisions. As a result, this is an improving school.
- Recent and effective management of teachers' performance has led to improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Pupils currently in the school are beginning to make better progress in English and mathematics due to more careful understanding of their needs.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and most enjoy their lessons.
- Pupils at risk of underachievement are clearly identified and given extra support.
- The positive approach to the care and support of pupils and their families are strengths of the school's provision.
- Leaders work well with the local authority to support the school and move it forward.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, of which 10 were joint observations with the school's senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to classrooms to observe pupils, their work and other activities at lunchtime and in the playground. A selection of pupils was heard reading.
- Meetings were held with two different groups of pupils; the Chairman and four other representatives of the Governing Body; parents and carers; school staff, including the leaders in charge of English, mathematics, special educational needs, and the Early Years and Foundation Stage; and a representative of the local authority.
- There were not enough responses from parents or carers on the Parent View website during the inspection to indicate parents' satisfaction with the school, but a recent school survey of parents taken this term was analysed and contacts with parents at the start of the school day were considered.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked carefully at numerous documents, including checks on teaching; reports for governors' meetings; information relating to support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and pupils supported by the pupil premium; and policies and records relating to pupils' achievement, attendance, punctuality, behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also reviewed the safeguarding arrangements in the school.

Inspection team

David Cousins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Godfrey Bancroft

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average primary school.
- While most of the pupils are of White British heritage, higher numbers of pupils than average are from minority ethnic groups. A few pupils are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is similar to the proportion found in most schools. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Fewer pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals than in most schools. These pupils are supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- There have been recent changes in the leadership of the school. A new headteacher started at the school in January 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, so that pupils make consistently good or better progress by ensuring that:
 - outdoor activities in the Reception class are more varied and challenging, particularly in mathematics
 - pupils are set work which is neither too easy nor too hard
 - teachers reduce the time taken to introduce lessons, so that pupils have more time to work independently
 - teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to talk together about what they are learning and discuss their progress
 - pupils are given clear steps to success that focus on what they are going to learn rather than what they are going to do.
- Improve rates of attendance for some groups of pupils by working more closely with parents, carers and outside agencies so that pupils do not miss out on the improved teaching in the school.
- Develop the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors by making sure that:
 - the leaders of different subjects and age groups in the school develop an understanding of pupils' performance and the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility, so that they can play a full role in bringing about improvements
 - governors develop their understanding of how well the school works and become less dependent on information provided by leaders, for example by using published performance data or by talking with teachers directly
 - an external review of governance is undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because standards remain below average in Year 6. In 2012, results at the end of Year 6 were below average in English and mathematics. Standards have improved slightly this year but remain below average. Over time, pupils have not made fast enough progress. In particular, although more-able pupils attain average standards, they are capable of more.
- The school's focus on improving reading and the teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) has led to improvements in reading, with many pupils now reaching average levels. Pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, achieve well in learning to read.
- Most pupils start at the school with skills which are below those expected for their age. They make sound progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the time they start Year 1, standards of attainment remain below average, especially in mathematics and writing skills.
- The gap in progress between boys and girls is closing and boys now make similar progress to girls. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson, for example, a focused session on writing a newspaper article about a boxing match encouraged both boys and girls to discuss their ideas and then they wrote about this effectively.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective additional help in lessons and in small groups. Progress for these pupils has improved and is now good across the school, and these pupils are beginning to catching up with other pupils.
- Pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium now benefit from extra adult support in lessons and smaller class sizes. In some year groups and subjects, these pupils make good progress, but progress is mixed across the school. In Year 6 in 2012, pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium were over two terms behind other pupils in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The school's self-evaluation shows that the quality of teaching over time has been too inconsistent and, while inspection evidence confirms that it is improving, too much teaching still requires improvement.
- In weaker lessons, teachers set the same work for the whole class and do not adapt work to match the ability of individual pupils or groups. Their expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes not high enough.
- Systems for sharing what lessons will be about are not always focused on what pupils will learn and frequently only set out what pupils will do. This means pupils are not clear about the new skills they will acquire and are not sure how they will know when they have been successful in a lesson.
- Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to talk together about their learning and too

much of lesson time is spent by teachers asking questions or giving instructions. This reduces the periods that pupils can work on their learning.

- The best teaching reflects a better understanding of the way different groups learn and this provides more challenging and faster-paced sessions. In these sessions, teachers' good understanding of effective teaching skills is an important reason why pupils' work is improving. For example, a religious education lesson on facing difficult decisions used pupils' fast-paced discussions and skilful questioning well, and this resulted in high levels of challenge and work on the topic.
- Reading is given a high priority across the school. The teaching of phonics is now more effective, so that by the end of Key Stage 1 many of the pupils read at expected levels. Older pupils enjoy reading and talk about the range of books they have read. The high quality support of the adults in classrooms results in children developing good attitudes to reading and improving their word recognition skills.
- In Reception, teachers and other adults plan opportunities to develop children's use of language and other key skills appropriately. The outdoor area does not provide sufficient challenge or range of activities to help children make better progress in mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils respond willingly to adults' instructions and are keen to please. They are polite and well mannered when speaking with visitors to the school and to each other.
- Pupils play well together, forming good friendships with different groups in the school. They say there is little bullying and any that occurs is dealt with effectively by the adults in the school who care for them well. They also value the presence of playground leaders from Year 5 who help to resolve minor disputes. This demonstrates that the school fosters good relationships between pupils and contributes well to their moral and social development.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example when crossing the road or walking to school. They have a sound understanding of the dangers of the internet but do not recognise that their mobile phones are not as safe as the school's internet and how to avoid the risks this presents.
- Parents are overwhelmingly happy with the school and they are clear that things have changed for the better. In the past, there have been concerns about pupils' behaviour but the evidence seen confirms the rapid improvements that have taken place. One parent summed up their feelings in a recent survey: 'Our daughter is growing into a lovely little girl. We believe this is to do with St Margaret's.'
- School leaders have been effective in improving pupils' punctuality and attendance through effective communication and imaginative rewards. However, the attendance for specific groups, for example pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium, remains too low and this means they do not always benefit from the improvements in learning in the school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership requires improvement because, until recently, the actions taken by leaders, managers and governors have not had a strong enough impact on improving the achievement of pupils. As a result, rates of progress have been inconsistent and the attainment of pupils has not risen quickly enough.
- The headteacher recognises that weaknesses remain in the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement. She has worked since her appointment to tackle these issues and this is making a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Some subject and other leaders make checks on the quality of teaching through visiting classrooms and checking on pupils' books. However, the majority have not paid enough attention to whether pupils are making sufficient progress when monitoring their subject.
- The focus on holding teachers increasingly to account through observing teaching and checking on pupils' books has recently been sharpened. Nevertheless, teachers are not yet sufficiently involved in the analysis of data about pupils' progress and how this may help them improve the learning in their classes.
- In the past, monitoring procedures were not used systematically to inform senior leaders and governors whether improvements had been successful and this has restricted the progress of some pupils across the school.
- Until recently, pupil premium funding had not been used to ensure that pupils who are eligible make sufficient progress. However, changes in the quality of support for these pupils means that they are now attaining standards which are similar to the other pupils in the school.
- The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and pupils have effective opportunities to take part in a range of events, such as after-school clubs, educational visits and visitors.
- The local authority has provided good support to help strengthen the leadership of the school through assisting in the appointment of the new headteacher. It has also provided effective programmes which are improving the quality of teaching in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - With the guidance of the new headteacher, governors are beginning to have an improved understanding of pupils' performance and of the impact of teaching in the school. This means that they are starting to be able to hold the school to account and to ask appropriate questions using data. Their lack of first-hand knowledge about the school's performance has meant they have not been able to judge the school's effectiveness independently. As a result, they have not ensured that staff were set sufficiently challenging targets or monitored the impact this has on the achievement of pupils. However, they are now aware that they need to be more involved in monitoring the link between the achievement of teachers' targets and the decision to reward good teachers to ensure that the school achieves value for money. Governors now check that pupil premium funding is spent appropriately on providing additional support for targeted pupils but have yet to measure its effect. The governing body recognises it must support and challenge the headteacher if the school is to meet the targets of improving children's achievement and supporting improvements in the quality of teaching in the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	115150
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	405568

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Aldene Derrick
Headteacher	Emma Wigmore
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2010
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