

St Margaret's Church of England (Aided) Junior School

Seaview Road, Morwenna Park, Bideford, Devon, EX39 1EL

Inspection dates 3–4 July 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching has varied over time and has not been consistently effective across the school to secure pupils' good achievement, and to ensure that they attain or exceed expected standards by the end of Year 6.
- Actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and additional support given to pupils have not been operating long enough to overcome inconsistencies in pupils' previous learning by the time they leave the school.
- Mathematics is not yet taught with sufficient consistency across the school. In particular, learning activities do not always match the pupils' abilities and stimulate their interest well enough to sustain their full engagement in learning. This is especially the case for lower ability pupils.
- Pupils are not always required to respond fully to teachers' marking, limiting its impact on quickening their progress.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to extend and practise their numeracy and problem-solving skills in other subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- A committed leadership team, driven by newly appointed senior staff and supportive governors, has unified the drive to develop the school and is strengthening teaching and accelerating the pace of improvement.
- All staff at St Margaret's provide high quality pastoral care for the pupils, including several with very complex needs. This is much appreciated by the parents who also value the way their children are kept safe and are treated equally.
- Behaviour is good, and the school nurtures a culture of respect among pupils. Real-life topic work and computer links with other schools promote pupils' enjoyment of school and their good attendance.
- In response to an increasing amount of good teaching, the proportion of pupils making at least expected and often better than expected progress is growing rapidly, especially in speaking and listening, and more recently in writing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 18 lessons and the inspectors were accompanied by the headteacher and deputy headteacher during several of these observations.
- The inspectors observed morning playtime and lunch breaks and also attended an assembly.
- Meetings were held with members of the school council and many other pupils were spoken to during lessons and breaktimes. The inspectors met with governors and a representative of the local authority and the lead inspector had a separate telephone conversation with another representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors held meetings with school staff, including senior leaders.
- The inspectors took account of 27 staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors also took account of 29 parents' responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection and also received a letter from a parent. One of the inspectors also spoke informally with a number of parents.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own data on pupils' progress, school improvement planning, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, local authority checks of provision and pupils' progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Laurie Lewin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This junior school is broadly average in size.
- Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average. This includes a high proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs, especially in the current Year 6, having arrived over the past two years from other schools.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is above average and includes a majority of pupils who also have special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which sets out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher commenced their duties at the school in January of this year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - teachers using checks of pupils' achievements more precisely to match the level of work to pupils' differing needs and abilities
 - sustaining a brisk pace and level of challenge in lessons, so that all pupils remain fully engaged and involved in their learning
 - ensuring that pupils respond to teachers' marking of their work and make the required improvements.
- Raise pupils' achievement and attainment by the end of Year 6, especially of lower ability pupils in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that planned learning activities stimulate pupils' interest and build in a step-by-step way on previous learning
 - more frequently developing pupils' numeracy and problem-solving skills in a practical way across the range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Over time, pupils' rates of progress through the school have varied and data of pupils' attainments at the end of Year 6 and observations of the learning of some pupils in mathematics, especially pupils of lower ability in Year 6, show that overall achievement still requires improvement.
- Pupils' skills on entry generally match those normally expected, but the school's own checks of pupils' skills show that they vary significantly at times. For example, on entry, skills of the previous and current Year 6 groups were below expected levels.
- As a result of better teaching now across the whole school, pupils' progress in English, especially speaking and listening and writing, continue to positively improve. This was seen during lessons, for example in English in Year 5, when pupils' confidently explained their ideas about 'The Gardener' using a wide range of descriptive vocabulary. A scrutiny of pupils' writing also shows the improving complexity and grammatical accuracy of their sentences.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics, especially in Year 6, is typically not as good for those who find mathematics difficult compared to those with more ability. This is because work is not always matched closely enough to their interests and ability. As a result, some lower ability pupils respond less positively in lessons and are not secure in their basic number skills.
- Pupils generally make good progress in reading and benefit from secure teaching of phonics (sounds of letters) in Years 3 and 4, which enables most pupils to tackle new words effectively. Older pupils show interest in books and stories and talked enthusiastically about various characters to show their improving understanding of the texts.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those arriving from other schools, receive additional support from caring adults and make good progress in developing self-esteem and extending their ability to learn with others. Academically they make similar progress as their peers in relation to their starting points.
- Earlier identification and additional support of the needs of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding have quickened their progress in most year groups across the school, significantly narrowing the achievement gap in English and mathematics with other pupils. However, given some previously inconsistent progress, the gap over the past two years at the end of Year 6 has been closing more slowly and remains at about one term's progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because its quality has varied too much over time and has led to gaps in pupils' learning, especially in mathematics.
- Teaching is improving now, but has not been sustained long enough at the consistently good level needed to enable pupils to make up for lost ground and achieve well.
- Teachers develop interesting topics across the range of subjects, for example a coastal project, and use these well to advance pupils' writing skills. However, opportunities are missed to help pupils extend and apply their numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Speaking and listening, reading and writing are now generally being taught well. For example, in a good lesson in Year 4, the teacher questioned the pupils effectively to tease out their ideas and then extended their understanding by encouraging them to act out their ideas by assuming the character of Ancient Greeks.
- Teachers and teaching assistants manage behaviour effectively and carefully include disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in their lessons. Teachers are also improving the way they check pupils' progress and are increasingly providing additional adult support, including for pupils in receipt of the pupil premium, when pupils need it most.

- All teachers have also improved the way they present learning objectives to the pupils since the previous inspection, and there is a positively shared focus on involving pupils in evaluating for themselves how well they are doing. For example, in another good lesson in Year 3, the teacher and her capable assistant skilfully explored the pupils' phonic knowledge of words beginning with 'W', and this led to many pupils eagerly searching for more words by themselves.
- Expectations of more able pupils have been raised and staff are now encouraging these pupils to work more independently and think for themselves. In mathematics, for example, more able pupils are rising well to the variety of challenges presented to them.
- On occasion though, teachers do not provide work that is appropriately matched to pupils' needs. As a result, the pace of learning slows and pupils are not engaged in tasks which interest or motivate them. This is more often the case for pupils of lower ability in mathematics leading to no better than adequate progress.
- Similar inconsistencies are evident in teachers' marking. While marking is used well to praise pupils for their efforts and to give pupils advice about what to do next, too often pupils are not given the time or opportunity to respond and advance their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils continue to behave well in and out of lessons.
- At times, particularly when learning is fun, as during a Samba percussion session or when talking with interest about 'Gifts' from St Margaret's that they will take to secondary school, pupils' behaviour is outstanding. On occasion though, when the quality of teaching dips, some pupils lose interest and their attention slips.
- Supported by high quality care, those pupils with behavioural needs respond well and relate warmly toward to others. In general, pupils enjoy sharing ideas with their partners and this is a positive aid to learning in most lessons.
- Pupils show good levels of sensitivity and respect for one another. They are generally proud of their achievements, as seen in the 'sharing assembly' performed for parents.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of the different forms that bullying can take, for example e-safety, cyber bullying and racial abuse. They confidently report: 'We feel safe here. There is no bullying, just occasional disagreements, which are rapidly sorted out, either by other pupils acting as 'playground buddies' or by staff.'
- Pupils on the school council are proud of the funds that they have helped to raise, for example for a pupil in Pakistan and for their school, and show a good understanding of school policies and procedures. Staff, parents and inspection observations confirm these views and show that the school's consistent expectations of caring relationships are helping the pupils to develop the social skills needed to support their future education.
- Attendance continues to be above average, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school and the strong partnership between home and school.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders have worked effectively to develop a shared vision for improvement during a period of significant staff change. The restored morale of staff is now seen in their unanimously supportive responses in the staff questionnaire.
- Uplifted by the new headteacher's promotion of teamwork, staff and governors are demonstrating their full support of the headteacher's drive to raise standards. As a result, this is an improving school.

- Underpinned by established procedures and by good links with parents and outside agencies, staff continue to provide high quality pastoral care for the pupils, which safeguards their welfare and keeps them free from discrimination.
- Continuing skills in supporting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs reflect the school's unwavering commitment to equal opportunities. These are now being strengthened by earlier identification and support of pupils' needs to quicken their progress.
- Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium are also benefiting from more purposefully planned additional adult support, either of individuals or within groups, and the achievement gap with other pupils is closing.
- All areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection have been fully addressed and, for example, clear learning objectives now support an increasing amount of good teaching across the school.
- Good promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the development of more relevant topic work to make even better use of the school's coastal location also show the school's capacity to improve further.
- School leaders have sharpened the way they check the quality of teaching. They use the information gathered to manage the performance of teachers including evaluating their salary progression to bring improvement. This is already becoming evident in pupils' improving communication and learning skills. However, these improvements have not been sustained long enough to fully lift pupils' achievement and, for example, plans to improve the teaching of mathematics, especially for those with lower levels of ability, have yet to be fully implemented.
- The local authority now provides effective support, in strengthening checks of school performance and aiding the headteacher in developing the senior leadership team.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors work effectively and sustain strengths in financial management and safeguarding pupils' welfare. Over the current academic year, governors have taken full advantage of training opportunities and, for example, have improved the way they check the performance of the school at first hand. Information gathered during frequent visits to classrooms in conjunction with carefully explained data of pupils' progress from the headteacher have provided a more accurate picture of how teaching impacts on pupils' learning. Governors now know how school data of pupils' achievements compare with the national picture, where the school is strong and what needs to be improved. As a result, for example, governors ensure that additional staffing funded by the pupil premium grant is being used effectively to narrow gaps in pupils' previous learning. In recent terms, governors have also played a key role in the appointment of new staff and work closely with the headteacher to make sure that teachers' responsibilities, training opportunities and salary progression aid steps taken to tackle the priorities in the school development plan and raise pupils' achievements.

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	113453
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	401370

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Crossman
Headteacher	Claire Cole
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 June 2010
Telephone number	01237 473569
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