

St Margaret's Church of England Junior School

Orchard Street, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent, ME8 9AE

Inspection dates 3–4 December 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well. Progress in reading and writing has improved substantially since 2012 and is now above average.
- Preliminary 2013 results suggest that attainment at the end of Year 6 was above average. It improved significantly in reading and writing. Some more-able pupils attained the higher Level 6 in mathematics and in writing.
- Teaching is generally good. Literacy is promoted well across all subjects. The quality of marking is good, with helpful comments on how pupils can improve their work.
- The broad curriculum enriches pupils' lives, with good opportunities in music, art and sports activities.
- Leaders, governors and staff make regular and rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress. This contributes positively to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors support the school tirelessly. They get very involved with the analysis of test results and ensure that leaders put resources and systems in place for standards to rise even higher.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils love coming to this school where they feel that they learn well and make good progress. Attendance is above average.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding. Although it caters for different ability groups, it does not always encourage disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those of lower ability to try harder tasks.
- Progress in mathematics, although improving, has not done so as rapidly as it has in reading and writing, especially for lower ability pupils.
- Teachers do not always check that pupils understand the exact meanings of mathematical vocabulary.
- There remains a gap between the attainment of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding and other pupils in the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons, five of which were carried out jointly with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher. They also carried out an extensive scrutiny of pupils' work books jointly with the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the senior management team, with a number of subject and other leaders, with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to pupils, parents and carers to see how they feel about the school in general. They also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at the relevant documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan and policies regarding behaviour and attendance, and the safeguarding of all pupils.
- Inspectors examined the most recent government data on the attainment of pupils in the school and the school's systems for checking on pupils' progress through the school year.
- In addition, inspectors took account of the responses from 16 parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 186 responses to a survey of parental satisfaction carried out by the school in February 2013.
- Responses from 27 members of staff to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Mina Drever, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Vanessa Tomlinson

Additional Inspector

Peter Lacey-Hastings

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average junior school, with marginally more girls than boys.
- The majority of pupils are White British, with about one fifth representing other ethnic groups. Very few come to school speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of additional government funding (the pupil premium) is above the national average. In this school the grant is provided for pupils entitled to free school meals and looked after children.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs at school action is well above the national average. The proportions of those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below the national averages. The proportion of pupils looked after is below the national average.
- Children enter the school at age seven, in Year 3. Most of them come from the infant school which is located on the same site.
- The proportion of pupils joining the school at other than the usual time is well above the national average. Although most of the pupils enter the school at the start of Year 3, quite a few enter throughout Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is a member of a consortium of 10 other local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding, and further improve achievement especially in mathematics and for pupils eligible for the pupil premium, by:
 - setting more demanding work to disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils of lower ability and raise the expectations of what these pupils can achieve
 - making sure that pupils clearly understand the meaning of the mathematical language associated with mathematical concepts.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well from their different starting points, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Over the last three years, progress has improved substantially in reading and writing. Progress in mathematics is slower than in reading and writing.
- The preliminary results for tests at the end of Year 6 in 2013 show that attainment at Level 4 was substantially above the national average in reading and writing. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 6 in writing and mathematics was also above average.
- Pupils' work books show that pupils make good progress, especially in literacy. For example, this term, in less than three months, Year 3 pupils moved from writing in a simple style at the start of September to using powerful verbs and adverbs by the middle of December. In guided reading they went from looking for 'ch' words in a text to choosing three key elements in a story in the order they appear.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because they are well supported with appropriate intervention programmes of language learning.
- Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding make good progress from their starting points in Year 3. Preliminary results for tests at the end of Year 6 show that they achieved better results than other pupils in the school in writing. However, they did not score so well in reading and mathematics, with results on average a quarter of a National Curriculum level lower than their peers. This term they have made good progress, in line with other pupils, in each year group, and in some cases they made better progress than other pupils.
- Pupils who join the school after Year 3 make good progress, although some of them do not get such good test results at the end of Year 6 as other pupils. This is because they have a lot to catch up on in a relatively short time.
- In some lessons, the disabled and pupils with special educational needs, as well as those of lower ability, make slower progress because they are not stretched beyond what they can do easily, to see how much more they could achieve. Although teachers provide different activities for each ability group, the tasks are not always challenging enough to stretch them beyond their comfort zones.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is well structured and well planned. This contributes to pupils' good progress in reading and writing from their different starting points, including pupils in receipt of the pupil premium, disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils make less progress in mathematics because not enough thought is given to promoting a thorough understanding of mathematical language. As a result, this stops pupils from fully understanding some important concepts. For example, some pupils did not understand the term 'perimeter' when working. Other pupils did not understand exactly what was meant by the word 'estimate'.
- However, teachers and teaching assistants monitor pupils' understanding more thoroughly in reading and writing. As a result, learning and progress in these areas move on at a faster pace. This is also the case in other subjects such as information technology, music and history.
- Teachers use resources to good effect so that pupils enjoy and have fun with their tasks. For example, clips from the opening scenes at the London 2012 Olympics inspired and motivated pupils to create dance movements in a Year 5 physical education lesson. Background music supported further progress in the arrangements of the dance movements.
- Literacy is promoted well across all areas of learning. High standards of spelling and sentence construction are expected in all written work. Work books are marked consistently and regularly.

Marking engages pupils in written dialogues with teachers so that they know how to improve their work. One more-able pupil explained clearly, and with appropriate grammatical language, what the teacher's written comments meant and how she had improved her sentence construction as a result of it.

- Teaching is not outstanding because it does not stretch pupils enough beyond what they can do, and because the teaching of mathematical language is not clear enough for pupils to understand it properly for them to make better progress in mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are courteous around the school and polite towards one another and adults. They like coming to this school, as a result of which attendance is above average. This is because the school engages very well with parents on the importance of their children's regular attendance at school.
- The good relationships among pupils result from effective school actions. For example, 'cluster groups' from different classes come together each week to explore assembly themes. This helps younger pupils feel safe and older pupils see the need to care for younger ones. In addition, collective values are emphasised through personal, social and health education. Points for classes are awarded for showing responsibility in, for example, keeping shared areas tidy, such as the cloakroom areas.
- Pupils show a positive attitude to learning in lessons because teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and pupils respond to this in a very mature way. Disruption of learning is uncommon. Rare, minor incidents are well managed by teachers and other adults. This allows pupils to make good progress in learning during lesson time, especially in reading and writing and other activities in topic work.
- Pupils are happy in this school and feel very safe. They like the positive atmosphere in the school because they know teachers and other adults will make sure that they are safe. Their parents have confidence in the school's stringent safeguarding procedures.
- Pupils understand all forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, because the school runs effective e-safety programmes for children and their parents. Pupils say that bullying around the school is extremely rare. They know that staff will deal with any incidents very effectively.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because pupils, at times, display signs of disengagement in lessons when tasks and learning are not challenging enough, or when they have not fully understood what they need to do. This is especially the case in some mathematics lessons, when pupils are trying to learn new concepts and have not fully understood the language associated with them.

The leadership and management are good

- Governors, senior and middle leaders and all staff share a very ambitious vision to provide outstanding education to the pupils of this school. There is good capacity in the senior management team for this to become a reality.
- These goals are communicated clearly to parents and pupils who take pride in striving to make good progress. Parents are invited to workshops so that they understand how the school works with the pupils and can support their children in their school work, for example in phonics work to help progress in literacy.
- Senior leaders and middle leaders monitor teaching and learning very rigorously and regularly. Professional development for teachers and teaching assistants is well organised, closely based on needs identified by lesson observations and linked directly to raising standards. The rigorous self-evaluation and the school development plan are closely linked and identify the right priorities for improvement, especially in raising standards in mathematics. As a result of these measures, pupils have made good progress in reading and writing, while progress in mathematics is improving.

- The creative curriculum enriches pupils' lives and their learning in innovative ways. Singing plays a major part in their development, with all pupils encouraged to learn a musical instrument. The school choir has gained a reputation for high standards of singing. Visits to the theatre and museums, involvement in charitable events and international links with schools in Malawi and Uganda, are open windows onto a culturally diverse world very different to the one these pupils inhabit.
- The Christian values of the school provide a strong platform from which pupils study and learn to respect other people's religions and beliefs. Time dedicated to collective worship allows pupils to reflect on moral values which are shared by all religious and cultural groups. A recurring theme is that of trust, which helps pupils to feel very secure.
- The pupil premium funding is spent on carefully selected intervention programmes and their impact on learning and progress is minutely checked and recorded. This helps pupils in receipt of this funding to make progress in line with other pupils. Equally, the educational and emotional needs of disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who enter school with little or no English are accurately identified and supported appropriately so they too make good progress.
- The new government funding to develop physical education has been used to recruit a sports coach and a swimming coach to enhance the already effective sports provision. Pupils engage eagerly and with enthusiasm in competitive sports within the school and with other schools. The many sports clubs in school are very well attended.
- Partnerships with other schools work well. Headteachers and senior staff observe teaching in one another's schools. This is having a positive impact on raising standards at St Margaret's. Work with the infant school next door focuses on establishing a smooth transition for pupils from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in the junior school.
- The school meets the government's requirements for safeguarding.
- The local authority supports the school well on the basis of any needs identified by the school leadership.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors systematically challenge the school's leadership through its sub-committees. They are well skilled at identifying the areas for improvement in the school and play a full part in the school's self-evaluation and school development plan. They hold the headteacher to account for pupils' achievement and his performance management is strictly linked to pupils' progress and attainment. The governors check that the pupil premium funding is spent well and question the appropriateness of intervention programmes based on their own research of what works and what does not work in improving learning. They keep a keen eye on the school budget and ensure that it is spent for the benefit of pupils' achievement. They approve pay increases for teaching staff based strictly on results.

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	118699
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	426673

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Julia Clarke
Headteacher	Mr C Paul Gabbett
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 November 2010
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