

St Margaret's CofE (C) Junior School

Knutton Road, Wolstanton, Newcastle under Lyme, ST5 0HU

Inspection dates 27–28 March 2014

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- As a result of teaching that is good and sometimes outstanding, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Their attainment by the end of Year 6 is usually well above average, especially in reading and writing. Pupils are very well prepared for secondary school.
- Leaders responded decisively to a dip in the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in mathematics in 2013. All pupils, including the more-able, are doing well in mathematics this year.
- Pupils supported by pupil premium funding do as well or better than their classmates.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Staff go to great lengths to nurture the particular talents of individual pupils.
- Pupils respond enthusiastically to the rich and vibrant curriculum and the extensive range of additional activities. Pupils are excited about learning.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. They are respectful, thoughtful individuals.
- Attendance rates are well above average.
- Leaders and governors have high expectations. Teachers are given effective support to develop their teaching skills. This ensures that the school's good performance is maintained.
- Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They support and challenge the school's leaders to maintain good performance and to improve further.
- The school's work to ensure pupils are safe is excellent.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders do not use assessment data sharply enough to inform future plans about where extra support for pupils should be targeted.
- The improvement plan does not set out a strategy to ensure that the school's effectiveness rapidly becomes outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 parts of lessons: several were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Other informal visits were made to classrooms to look at displays of work and pupils' books.
- The inspectors listened to pupils reading and spoke to them in class and at break and lunch times. They met two groups of pupils to talk about their experiences of school.
- Members of the inspection team met with the headteacher and other members of staff, a representative of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. They also looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the plan for improvement, information about pupils' current attainment and progress and minutes of meetings of the governing body. The school's documents relating to protecting children and keeping them safe were closely examined.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 38 parents as expressed in the on-line survey (Parent View) and in the responses to a questionnaire that parents completed at a parents' evening held during this inspection. Inspectors also spoke informally to parents at the start of the school day and read a letter submitted by a parent.
- During this inspection, the inspector asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Linda McGill, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janet Bird

Additional Inspector

John Pitt

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Margaret's Junior School is similar in size to the average primary school. It operates on two sites, separated by a residential road.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding to support the learning of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is smaller than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and supported by school action is below the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs and who receive some external support (school action plus) or who have a statement of special educational needs is also below the national average.
- The large majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. About five per cent of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- A private nursery and a club for children before and after school share the school site. These are not managed by the governing body and are inspected separately.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to move rapidly towards becoming an outstanding school, leaders at all levels and governors should:
 - identify exactly where adjustments are needed in teaching and take steps to make sure that all becomes as effective as the very best
 - revise the plan for improvement so that it focuses more closely on the actions that will boost pupils' achievement even further
 - ensure the plan for improvement includes measurable targets that will help gauge the success of action that is taken
 - analyse and use information about pupils' attainment and progress more effectively to make sure that extra activities are targeted precisely on where they are most needed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress during their time at St Margaret's and by the end of Year 6 their attainment is usually well above average, particularly in reading and writing. This is because teaching is typically good and because pupils have very positive attitudes in lessons and are keen to participate and do well.
- The proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in mathematics dipped last year, because some more-able pupils did not make as much progress as they should have done. Leaders and staff took rapid and decisive action to identify the reasons and to make sure it does not happen again. As a result of teaching that is better focused on areas of relative weakness, such as solving problems expressed in words, all groups of pupils including the more-able, are currently making good progress in mathematics.
- When pupils start at St Margaret's, their attainment overall is above average, based on assessments at the end of infant school. The Year 3 teachers also assess attainment levels in reading, writing and mathematics. They consider this along with the results of the assessments at the end of Year 2 to establish a clear baseline from which progress can be measured. In all year groups, pupils are making good progress and attainment is above or well above what is expected for pupils' ages. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to everyone else.
- Pupils are enthusiastic readers. They read and are read to every day at school and most read daily at home. Teachers use a range of methods to make sure that those who may struggle with reading are helped to catch up, including going back to basics and teaching the sounds that letters represent. Currently in Year 6, every pupil has reached or exceeded the level expected for their age in reading.
- Pupils are also confident writers. Their writing is helped by the emphasis that is given to reading, which boosts their vocabulary, and to speaking and explaining ideas in lessons. During this inspection, pupils in one class were learning about personification in poetry. Challenged by the teacher to write a poem representing their classroom, one boy contributed, 'the walls shriek with learning'. He made a good point; displays in classrooms include some good examples of pupils writing at length about topics that have caught their imagination.
- There are no gaps between the attainment and progress of pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding and that of their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress from their starting points, especially in reading. This is as a result of work that appropriately suits their needs and the support and guidance they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils' physical well-being and participation in sports have a high priority at the school. Pupils recently won a local cross-country running competition and a good number of pupils attend after-school sports activities. Additional funding through the Primary Sports Programme is being used well to enhance the teaching of dance.

The quality of teaching is good

- Over time, teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning and helps them make good

progress. Teachers present topics in a lively and challenging way that engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm. In a history lesson, for example, pupils examined pictures of objects and artefacts used by the Ancient Egyptians. They made well-reasoned hypotheses about what the items might be made from and used for. The teacher progressively revealed more information in the form of written clues that helped pupils develop their thinking and draw their own conclusions.

- Teachers expect pupils to think deeply and to explain their reasoning using technical vocabulary where appropriate. Their questions probe pupils' understanding and help them to know where to adjust the lesson if necessary. Teachers give pupils time to think and develop their ideas. It is a notable feature of lessons that the pupils listen intently to the teacher and to one another and show great interest in what is being discussed.
- Pupils are taught in ability groups in English and mathematics. Within these groups, teachers adjust tasks and activities so that they match pupils' needs, but this is not always done with sufficient precision to make sure that everyone learns at a suitable rate. Occasionally, instructions are too complex. This means that pupils may struggle with work that is too hard for them or grapple with activities that they do not fully understand.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They work well with individuals and groups, and confidently teach the whole class where required. One teaching assistant leads 'fresh start' booster sessions in reading and writing that provide good support for pupils who need it.
- The classrooms are bright and well organised. They abound with books and displays of pupils' work in a wide range of topics. They also contain prompts and information to which pupils can refer when working. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide pupils with feedback on how well they have done and what they need to improve upon. Sometimes, but not always, pupils write their initials to show they have read and understood.
- When asked what they liked best about school, a group of pupils responded straight away, 'our teachers'. They explained how their teachers take a personal interest in how well they are doing and expect the best of them. They said that they thoroughly enjoy their lessons and love coming to school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- In lessons and around the school, pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, their love of reading and their thirst for knowledge all make a strong contribution to their progress. Pupils treat one another and their teachers with respect and courtesy. No matter who is leading the lesson, be it teacher, teaching assistant or supply teacher, pupils are attentive and eager to learn.
- Pupils, their parents and staff all have very positive views about behaviour. Pupils said that once in a while friends will fall out, but will quickly make up again. Other than that, they had no worries about bullying or name-calling of any kind. At playtimes pupils are lively and energetic. They play sociably together. They also have space to be quiet and to reflect; at one playtime a small group of pupils were absorbed in watching a bee that had landed on a flower. As soon as the whistle blows for the end of playtime, pupils instantly stand still and walk inside quietly when asked.
- The school's work to keep pupils' safe is outstanding. The pupils have an extensive knowledge of ways to keep themselves safe when using the internet or a mobile phone, helped in no small

part by the school's pro-active approach in teaching them to recognise potential dangers. Each class has an e-safety monitor who advises classmates on how to deal with cyber-bullying and other hazards. Pupils are well aware of the pitfalls of social networking sites.

- Moving between the two buildings is managed very well. Pupils are carefully supervised when crossing the road.
- Pupils' attendance is well above average. During this inspection, only four out of 253 pupils were not in school because of illness. Pupils are punctual in the morning and many stay for clubs and activities at the end of the day. Exclusions are rare.
- Pupils' well-being and welfare are taken very seriously. The headteacher and staff pursue every avenue to make sure that pupils' needs are met.

The leadership and management are good

- The school's leaders have high expectations for the pupils, both academically and in their personal and social development. They ensure that pupils are prepared very well for their next steps. Former pupils are used as role models; pictures of ex-pupils who have achieved highly in their GCSE examinations are displayed in the entrance hall, as is a wealth of trophies for success in sports and other competitions. The school's ethos is one of respect and teamwork between pupils and staff at all levels.
- Senior leaders know the strengths and areas for development in the practice of individual teachers. Formal observations are supplemented by informal drop-ins to lessons. Leaders provide support and guidance for teachers to improve their practice, including by observing one another, and scope for them to increase their roles and responsibilities. However the precise steps needed to move all teaching to outstanding have not been highlighted. Teaching assistants are encouraged to go on to further study.
- Teachers are set challenging targets as part of their performance management. Leaders have not shied away from tough decisions when individual teachers have not met the standards that are expected of them. Progression through the pay scales is not automatic.
- Subject leaders play an increasingly strong part in sustaining good standards. They have a secure knowledge of their subjects and work well with colleagues in the classroom to improve teaching and to strengthen assessment. This has led to the maintenance of good achievement in reading and writing and ensured that more-able pupils now do as well as they should in mathematics.
- The school's plan for improvement is based on an accurate understanding of areas of strength and where improvement is needed. However, it tries to do too much and includes actions across a range of subjects and activities. While the actions within it are appropriate, they are not sufficiently prioritised. There is not a clear sense of the strategic direction the school intends to take if its effectiveness is to become outstanding. There are too few targets against which progress can be charted.
- Similarly, a good deal of information is collected about pupils' attainment and progress. It gives a good picture of the performance of individual pupils and of cohorts. However, it is not analysed succinctly in order to precisely inform decisions about where extra support is most needed.

- Parents are strongly supportive of the school's work. The school does a good deal to keep parents involved in school life and informed about their children's progress. However, technical difficulties mean that the school's website does not include all of the information that it should. The website does not show the school at its best.
- The school's arrangements for the recruitment and vetting of staff, and for making sure children are protected and kept safe meet requirements.
- The local authority, until recently, adopted a light-touch approach to its engagement with the school. The school's leaders were very much left alone; they were not challenged to move the school on or asked about the steps they were taking to become outstanding. Just under a year ago, the school was allocated a new link adviser. The adviser has worked well with the school both to validate their self-evaluation and to assist with assessment. The headteacher has found this support useful. The school continues to use the local authority's clerking services for governing body meetings and staff attend subject update meetings and they speak positively about these activities. Services provided by the local authority are not the first port of call in other aspects of the school's work, however. There is some lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the different parties involved in promoting school improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body brings a range of skills and expertise that supports the school very well. Governors do not hesitate to ask questions and seek explanations; they clearly held leaders to account as they discussed the fall in attainment in mathematics last year in some detail. They also ensure that the school's finances are carefully managed.
 - The headteacher provides governors with an open and honest evaluation of the school's work, including how well pupils are doing academically and the quality of teaching. Governors discussed the information on the school's data dashboard (available on the school's page on the Ofsted website) in some depth. They supplement written information with first-hand evidence gained by visits to school. Governors are fully involved in decisions about teachers' performance management and rewards.
 - The governing body makes sure that decisions regarding the spending of additional funding such as the pupil premium and the sports funding are leading directly to benefits for the pupils.

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	124268
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	444001

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	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Charles Freeman
Headteacher	Andrew Black
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2011
Telephone number	01782 297760
Fax number	N/A
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