

St Margaret's Church of England Academy

Aigburth Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L17 6AB

Inspection dates 13–14 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders, managers, trustees and governors are ambitious for all students to achieve as well as they can in this good and improving school.
- Attainment and overall progress have continued to improve since the academy was founded in 2012.
- Between Years 7 and 11, the vast majority of students make good progress. In 2014, a large majority of students gained five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics. This proportion is much higher than average.
- School leaders focus sharply on improving teaching and have implemented effective programmes for professional development that have contributed to teaching being good overall. The quality of teaching is rarely less than good; sometimes its impact on students' achievement is outstanding.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well because the support they receive is matched well to their needs.
- The pupil premium funding is used well to promote higher achievement for disadvantaged students.
- Overall, the most able students are challenged to achieve well and an increasing proportion attains higher grades.
- Students enjoy coming to the school and a very large majority behave well. Students confirm that they feel safe and well cared for. Students' safety is assured by effective systems and skilled staff.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, social and cultural development well. Volunteering and charitable work are only two of the strands in a comprehensive programme.
- Students and parents are extremely positive in their view of the school.
- The school is led by a dedicated principal, vice-principals and senior team. Their commitment to further improvement is unwavering.
- The sixth form is good. Leaders are closely attentive to the individual needs of students. Students are taught well and expertly advised about the next steps in their education and careers.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Given their starting points in the school, students can achieve even better GCSE grades.
- Sixth form students do not achieve enough high grades.
- Teachers' assessment is not always accurate enough to ensure that all students are presented with the best level of challenge. Marking does not always provide students with the advice they need to improve their work. Students do not always implement suggestions for improvement made by teachers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons, a number jointly with senior and middle leaders. There were also shorter visits to classrooms. In addition, inspectors examined students' work, sometimes jointly with school staff.
- Inspectors examined records that included those for student standards, performance management, behaviour and safety, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and other members of staff in a variety of roles.
- A meeting was held with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, vice-chair and two other governors with specific committee responsibilities. The Chair of the Governing Body is also a member of St Margaret's Academy Trust. There was also a meeting with a representative of the Diocese of Liverpool.
- Inspectors met representative groups of students from each key stage and with a group who were members of the student council.
- Inspectors considered 80 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and also took account of the school's own surveys of parental opinion.
- Inspectors evaluated the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for members of staff.

Inspection team

Paul Copping, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector
Linda Foley	Additional Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Margaret's converted to a single academy trust on 1st October, 2012. When its predecessor school, St Margaret's High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- St Margaret's is a secondary school of average size.
- The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs is very low compared to the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium, is low compared to the national average.
- Most students are of White British heritage. Compared to other schools, an average proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- Sixth form students are taught in a consortium, the Faiths Partnership, including St Margaret's and three other schools.
- In 2014, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further, including in the sixth form, to be outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the best practice is shared as widely as possible so that levels of challenge to students are always well-judged and any occasional lack of engagement or perseverance minimised
 - improving the use made by teachers of assessment data in the planning of their teaching
 - continuing to improve marking so that it always provides the most useful advice for students on how to improve their work
 - carefully checking so that students are always obliged to make a full response to, and implement suggestions for, improvements identified in teachers' marking.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Trust members and governors of the academy, the principal and vice-principals have sustained a trend of improving standards in students' progress and attainment since its founding in 2012. Their targets for further improvement are ambitious and reflect their belief that the proportion of students achieving better GCSE grades can be increased with further improvements to teaching. Several school leaders and key middle leaders are recently in post, but there is an impressive unity and clarity of purpose, under the decisive direction of the principal and vice-principals, in setting ambitious targets for school development.
- Senior leaders implement the school's improvement plans with equal drive. They have improved the management of students' performance data, so that challenging targets may be set more accurately. They are placing increasing demands on middle leaders and teachers, but staff opinion is unanimous in grasping the reasons for increased expectations and wholly subscribing to them.
- Middle leaders play an increasingly significant role in monitoring the quality of teaching and the progress being made by students. The impact is not yet consistent across all teaching, but represents significant further improvement.
- School leaders have implemented a very substantial programme of training to improve teaching. There is now an increasingly effective emphasis on performance management as identifying best practice in the school that may then be shared for the benefit of all. This is continuing to improve the levels of challenge offered to students.
- A developing focus on judging the quality of teaching by the progress made by students has given school leaders more precise information about the most effective practice. This is used to ensure that teachers' progress on the salary scale closely reflects the impact of their teaching on students' progress. Teachers' work is carefully appraised. Decisions about meeting their training requirements are made judiciously, balancing the needs of individual members of staff with the priorities for development identified by the school.
- Leaders have accurately assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the school and formulated plans for improvement. For example, actions are planned in detail to continue to improve the quality of marking and the response made by students to it, and to increase the proportion of high grade passes in the sixth form.
- The school actively pursues equal opportunity for all students. Pupil premium funding is carefully targeted so as to make the most impact. Innovative decisions have been taken, including funding additional voluntary tuition outside the school day. Disadvantaged students identified as likely to benefit, are offered this opportunity and it has contributed to the closing of gaps in achievement across the school.
- The curriculum is well matched to students' needs. English and mathematics are prominent across subject areas. The new literacy initiative introduced by the school is a particular strength and accelerates the growth of reading skills, as well as the breadth of reading and its enjoyment. By the end of Year 11, a very large majority of students have developed good skills in literacy and numeracy and are well equipped to progress to the next stage in their education or to employment and/or training.
- A weekly "Learning for Life" form period is one valuable strand in a comprehensive programme that broadens students' horizons and equips them to appreciate other faiths and cultures as well as to manage personal choices about education and careers. The school's own faith status is used well as a starting point for preparation for life in modern, democratic Britain. The emphasis on volunteering for charitable purposes – systematically organised by the school – builds an appreciation of different people's needs and encourages active citizenship.
- Students are given good quality careers education and advice to ensure that choices for courses and future destinations are balanced and realistic.
- The school's exceptional sporting facilities are used well to provide students with a broad range of extra-curricular opportunities and they take full advantage. Combined with a full programme of cultural visits, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted well. Students are involved in activities to a high degree that require cooperation, emphasise equality of opportunity and good relationships. The school counters discrimination proactively and effectively.
- Safeguarding in the school is effective and arrangements meet requirements. Liaison with the local children's safeguarding board and other relevant agencies is undertaken whenever necessary. Cooperation with the partner schools in the sixth form consortium is close. The exchange of necessary information is detailed and regular in order to ensure the safety of students.
- Parents are very positive in their views of the school. They believe their children are well taught, make good progress and achieve well.

- The trustees of the academy and the diocesan authorities have commissioned the local authority to provide advice and guidance and to monitor standards. This is delivered well and provides valuable information to governors and school leaders to assist them in raising standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors pay very close attention to the quality of teaching. They are well informed about the actions the school is taking to improve standards further and are fully involved in the shaping of increasingly ambitious plans for improvement.
 - The governing body includes members with a wide range of professional skills. Their oversight of the progress students make and the standards they achieve is informed by a good understanding of national data in comparing their school to others. They recognise a need to acquire further skills to increase their ability to challenge leaders on the basis of analysing performance data independently and this is in hand.
 - Governors are provided with summary reports that allow them to ensure that teachers' advances on the pay scale are determined by their performance in relation to the quality of progress and attainment reached by their students.
 - Governors monitor school spending decisions closely. They assure themselves that pupil premium funding and Year 7 'catch-up' are allocated properly and revisit those decisions regularly in order to check that the positive impact made is at least that which they expected.
 - Governors are regular visitors to the school and those with specific responsibilities check meticulously on their areas.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students are proud of their school. Their welcome to visitors is impeccable and reflects their confidence and security in the school. Students adhere strictly to the uniform rules and are respectful of their building and its facilities. The environment is litter- and graffiti-free.
- Students conduct themselves well in the public areas of the school. For example, the etiquette for queuing to purchase snacks at break time is observed strictly, despite this requiring a long wait.
- School records show that there are few racist and other serious behavioural incidents. The school is making rapid progress in improving the overall culture of the school, so that name-calling is recognised, even by younger students, as hurtful and damaging. Students are very confident that members of staff are quick to deal with any problems and that they are certain to be resolved.
- Attendance continues to improve and is above average.
- The overwhelming majority of students arrive at lessons eager to learn. In a few lessons, students do not apply themselves fully, failing to persevere and complete tasks to the best of their ability. This occurs, typically, where the level of challenge for students has not been judged accurately. A few students do not respond fully to the marking of their work and fail to act upon the suggestions for improvement made by their teachers. This is more prevalent where marking is insufficiently detailed or the response of students has not been checked on adequately or frequently enough.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Members of staff are mindful of students' needs and are appropriately trained. Close links are maintained with outside agencies that can advise and support school staff.
- The work of the school to equip students with the skills to evaluate and avoid risk is effective. The school's pastoral programme is well organised and includes significant roles for church, form periods and assemblies. The range of external speakers has been wide. Online risks are covered with the same thoroughness as is basic guidance for safety in travelling to and from the school where students are advised to avoid isolated travel.
- Students are unequivocal in their view that they are safe in school. They are confident that the adults around them are approachable and well able to advise and support.
- Governors visit regularly and check on the safety and care of students as a prominent part of their attention to standards.
- Parents confirm via the Ofsted questionnaire and the surveys of opinion undertaken by the school that they are very confident that their children are safe and well cared for.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching is good and improving. A well-planned drive to share the best practice in the school amongst all teachers is still at a relatively early stage, but benefits are apparent across all subjects. The quality of teaching and use of assessment to plan work at the right level vary to some extent. This is not a case of there being a weaker subject or subjects, but of variability in how successfully teachers are implementing new requirements.
- Most teachers plan lessons that are stimulating and engaging. Students' positive attitudes to learning are utilised by teachers to give them increasing responsibility to follow personal lines of enquiry and to think more deeply about the answers they give. Teachers' expectations of their students are generally high. For example, Year 7 students were required to build an electronic circuit in design and technology. This was an ambitious task that enthralled students.
- Reading, writing and mathematical skills are taught well and are given prominence across the curriculum.
- Teachers have implemented the school's literacy strategy with vigour: key concepts and vocabulary are prominently featured in lessons in different subjects. As a result, achievement in reading improves rapidly after students join Year 7.
- Students' writing improves at a good pace. Extended pieces of writing are not confined to English. In art, for example, students' folders feature reflective pieces of writing as part of their preparation for assignments. The formal aspects of writing, including grammar and punctuation, are taught well. From Year 7, students are given ample opportunities to write in different styles.
- In mathematics, calculation skills are secure. As part of a drive to improve still further the proportion of students making more than expected progress, the school is increasing the emphasis on problem-solving and investigation.
- In a very large majority of lessons, relationships are supportive and productive. Students are trusted to take a leading role in their lessons and to lead discussion in, for example, religious studies, when they have particular knowledge or experience valuable to others.
- Overall, teachers assess students accurately and plan lessons that are well judged to provide good challenge for students at all levels. For this reason, the most able, disadvantaged students and those with disabilities or special educational needs learn well. There is a very small number of lessons in which insufficient account is taken of the different needs of students and tasks do not provide challenge to all consistently. In such lessons, too little use is made of the information about students' prior progress.
- Similarly, marking provides increasingly helpful advice to students, but the quality is not yet entirely consistent. In a small amount of students' work, marking is too infrequent or not sufficiently detailed to provide sufficient guidance for the best rate of improvement.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- Students start Year 7 with standards that are typically above average and make good progress through the school. The proportion attaining five good GCSEs is high and increasing. Improvement has been sustained since the founding of the school.
- In English and mathematics, the proportions of students making expected progress from their starting points are high. Underpinned by a very successful, whole-curriculum literacy initiative, students' fluency in writing across different genres increases at a good pace. Responses to questions are frequently full and draw on wider reading. In mathematics, students make good progress in fluency, problem-solving and reasoning.
- While the proportions of students making expected progress in English and mathematics are high and improving, there is the potential for even higher proportions to be achieved, given students' starting points.
- Achievement is good across the full range of subjects. For example, students work in German with high degrees of personal initiative as they master tenses. In physical education, Year 10 students make very rapid progress as they study the role of nutrition in athletic performance. In geography, students engage very sensitively with the difficult topic of death rates in the United Kingdom and quickly grasp the related questions of health policy.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive support that is exactly matched to their individual needs; consequently they achieve well.
- The most able students achieve well overall. However, the highest level of challenge for this group is not systematically present and so even higher grades are not always achieved.
- The very small number of students of minority ethnic background and the few students who speak English

as an additional language make good progress. Any additional support they require is promptly supplied and well judged to support their achievement.

- Disadvantaged students make good progress. In English, the gap between the progress they make and that of other students in the school is rapidly closing. Disadvantaged students in the school make progress as rapidly as that for other students nationally.
- In mathematics, disadvantaged students make good progress. Those making expected progress are in line with the national average for other students; within the school, the gap between disadvantaged students and others is rapidly closing.
- Disadvantaged students attain grades in GCSE English that are in line with the average for other students nationally. They attain at a level one grade lower than the other students in the school. In mathematics, disadvantaged students attain half a grade higher than is the average for other students nationally. They attain a little under a half a grade below other students in the school.
- Decisions in respect of early entry to GCSE examination are made with due diligence and there is no negative effect on students' attainment.
- The school identifies those at risk of falling behind accurately and early. Resources are used efficiently – including the Year 7 'catch-up' funding – in order to provide effective interventions to improve reading, writing and numeracy. Typically, students progress well and deficits in learning lessen.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The sixth form is good. The leadership of the sixth form tracks students' progress with detailed attention to information about students' prior attainment and aspirations. The knowledge of students' individual needs is thorough and this facilitates planning for the curriculum and teaching.
- Safety is secured by efficient and well-maintained systems that enable staff to check carefully on the care of students. Close liaison is maintained with the three other schools in the Faith Partnership group, so that a close overview of the progress of those students attending courses taught elsewhere is maintained.
- Students behave well. There is a strong culture of volunteering in the sixth form. Students expect to take a leading part in the school and are very visible and positive role models for younger students. They fully appreciate the significance of them being senior members of the community.
- Teaching is good. Further effort to increase challenge in order to achieve the highest grades is being made, in common with the rest of the school. The initiative is planned thoroughly and supported by a full programme of staff training.
- Achievement is good overall. In 2014, AS grades improved on the results for 2013 and A-level results improved on grades overall. Standards for AS level were broadly in line with the national average. A-level attainment was half a grade below the national average. Too few students achieve the high A*, and A grades.
- The curriculum of the sixth form has been greatly broadened by participation in a consortium with another three schools. This has permitted very small numbers, down to a single student in some cases, to opt for subjects, thus giving a very wide choice to students.
- Attendance in the sixth form is good.

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	138850
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	461781

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	997
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Oliver
Headteacher	Stephen Brierley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0151 427 1825
Fax number	0151 427 9430
Email address	admin@stmargaretsacademy.com

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

