

St Margaret's-at-Cliffe Primary School

Sea Street, St Margaret's-at-Cliffe, Dover, CT15 6SS

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- This is a school that has improved since the previous inspection and now provides an outstanding education for its pupils.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is very ably supported by a talented assistant headteacher and skilled leadership team. They have high expectations for staff and pupils and motivate staff to give their best for the benefit of the pupils. This leads to high-quality teaching and outstanding achievement.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well academically and personally. They develop as well-rounded individuals who enjoy learning and are happy, confident and excited by all their experiences at school. This is reflected in their above-average attendance.
- All groups of pupils make outstanding progress from their different starting points. By the time they leave the school, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is well above national levels. All pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, achieve exceptionally well.
- Teaching is outstanding. Expectations are high and teachers provide pupils with exciting and motivating activities. As a result, pupils develop a love of learning and want to do well.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education.
- Children get an outstanding start to school in the early years because of excellent teaching, care and leadership. Leaders have correctly identified the need to develop the very spacious outdoor area further.
- The areas studied are rich and stimulating and offer pupils a wealth of opportunities to use and extend their literacy and numeracy skills as well as many exciting experiences in music, art, sports and computing. They are enriched very effectively with additional activities, trips and clubs, all of which provide pupils with memorable learning experiences.
- Pupils uphold the school's values exceptionally well and this makes an outstanding contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and their attitudes to learning are exemplary, which makes a very important contribution to their excellent achievement.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that they are very well looked after.
- Governors are exceptionally well informed and very effectively challenge all aspects of the school's work as well as providing support. They have made sure they have the skills and information to do this very effectively.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 19 lessons, some of them jointly with the headteacher or assistant headteacher. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work, looked at books, listened to some pupils reading and observed pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and other staff with key leadership responsibilities. Discussions took place with pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including: the school’s own check on its performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan, information on pupils’ progress; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at 33 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View; the school’s own survey of parents and carers; and spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also took into account 20 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joanna Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after. In 2014, there were too few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 to comment separately on their achievement.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Provision is made for the early years in a Reception class, which the children attend full time.
- There is a daily breakfast and after-school club managed by a private provider and, therefore, not included in this inspection.
- There is a nursery on the school site, which is managed by a private provider and, therefore, also not included in this inspection.
- The school is part of the 'Deal Learning Alliance', an informal cluster of schools that share good practice and check one another's work, as well as combining to make the most of training for staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Carry out the plans to develop the outdoor area in the early years to provide an increased range of opportunities and experiences for children in all areas of learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is committed to providing the best possible learning experiences for pupils. All leaders and staff and the governing body share her strong ambition.
- The school is a calm, orderly and purposeful place with a culture of high expectations from senior leaders for staff and pupils. As a result, teaching is excellent, pupils achieve exceptionally well and their behaviour is outstanding.
- The school has rigorous and highly effective systems for managing the performance of teachers. The quality of teaching is checked regularly. Leaders base their decisions on teachers' pay and promotion on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Challenging targets are set linked to pupils' progress and teachers know they are accountable. Where any weaknesses are identified, appropriate support and training are provided and improvement is expected to meet the school's high standards.
- Senior leaders are highly skilled in using the wealth of information they collect to channel their work to ensure the best outcomes for pupils. Leaders have an accurate understanding of how well the school is doing and where it can improve further.
- Middle leaders, including subject leaders, are highly skilled and knowledgeable in their areas and fulfil their roles very effectively. They make an extremely valuable contribution to school improvement and provide excellent guidance and support to colleagues.
- The school works very effectively with other schools in the 'Deal Learning Alliance'. This partnership adds considerably to the school's capacity for sustained improvement and innovation through the links made between leaders and staff.
- The school provides a rich and broad range of subjects and gives pupils an excellent grounding in reading, writing and mathematics. The daily programme is designed to fire the imagination and interest of pupils. Learning is relevant and fun and provides a memorable range of exciting and stimulating experiences.
- The pupils' learning is very effectively enriched with a wealth of additional opportunities, including many trips and a wide range of clubs. For example, pupils spoke with great enthusiasm about their trip to the battlefields and cemeteries in Belgium as part of their history study on the First World War. They said, 'It helped us appreciate a little bit what it must have been like more than just reading about it in a book'.
- Subject areas and the school's values make an excellent contribution to promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils live up to and very effectively promote the school's values of equality, responsibility, endeavour, confidence and collaboration as reflected in their attitudes and conduct at work and play. Pupils learn about and have respect for differences in faiths, cultures and backgrounds. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain as the school values foster a culture of respect and tolerance for all. Leaders ensure pupils understand British values, such as democracy and mutual respect, and the need for rules in school and the wider community.
- Staff foster excellent relations throughout the school community and beyond. There is a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and pupils learn without fear of discrimination of any kind. Leaders check that all groups are making the best possible progress.
- The pupil premium for disadvantaged pupils is used very effectively to provide extra support so that pupils achieve as well as others in the school and other pupils nationally.
- Pupils' health and well-being are of high importance to the school. The school's arrangements for spending the primary physical education and sport premium very effectively contribute towards this. The expertise of a skilled sports coach helps to develop the skills of staff and pupils. Pupils have high levels of participation in sports and take part in a range of competitive events and an increased range of after-school sports clubs.
- All staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe and secure. The arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are very well established and effective and all statutory requirements are met.
- Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school's work. They support the school in a variety of ways. The active parents', teachers' and friends' association makes a valuable contribution to pupils' experiences at school. For example, the association funded a Year 6 trip during the inspection. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the day of activities, including cycling and fossil hunting. One pupil commented, 'It was really fun and I learnt that fossils are fascinating, which I didn't know before.'
- The local authority recognises the strengths of the school and provides it with a small amount of support which is effective.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors know the school very well. They share the ambition of the headteacher and senior leaders to provide the best for the pupils. The governing body is very well organised and effective. Governors keep their skills up to date through regular training and ensure that they bring a range of skills and expertise to best serve the school. Governors are very well informed about the school by the headteacher and senior leaders and their own visits and analysis of data. They check information about pupils' progress and hold leaders to account for all groups of pupils. They have an accurate understanding of how well the school performs in comparison with other schools nationally. Governors have a good awareness of how additional government funding is being spent and the difference it is making to pupils' achievement, health and well-being. Governors have an excellent understanding of the quality of teaching. They fully support the headteacher in expecting nothing less than good or better teaching, tackling any underperformance and ensuring that pay progression is linked to pupils' progress. They ensure the school's high level of performance is maintained by setting the headteacher challenging targets each year. Governors constantly review their own work to ensure that they are fully effective in holding the school to account for its performance and providing the correct balance of support and challenge.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This makes a significant contribution to their learning and outstanding achievement. Pupils are a credit to their school and their community. They are friendly, confident, articulate and very well mannered. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are excellent and mutual respect is shown by all. Pupils' conduct is exemplary in and out of lessons, including at break and lunchtimes.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to school and learning. They respond extremely well to the strong work ethic promoted by staff and want to do well. One pupil commented, 'They push you to the limit' and another added, 'That's good for us because you end up being able to do things you didn't think you could do.'
- Pupils are proud of their school and appreciate the family atmosphere and the friendships they make. They enjoy all aspects of school life, which is reflected in their above-average attendance. Almost all parents agree that their children are happy at school. Older pupils enjoy their responsibilities, such as being monitors and buddies, and take them seriously and make a considerable contribution to the smooth running of the school day.
- Pupils and almost all parents who responded to Parent View and the school's own survey agree that pupils are well behaved.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say they feel very safe and most parents agree that their children feel safe and are well looked after.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations as they learn about a wide range of aspects about staying safe, including road safety and 'stranger danger'. The school is diligent in ensuring that pupils, staff and parents are very much aware of e-safety issues.
- Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying in school. They are very aware, however, that bullying can take different forms and are completely confident that should any issues arise in school, staff would deal with them quickly.
- All staff are extra vigilant in supervising pupils on the playground while the school waits for work to take place to secure the perimeter fencing and main gate. The plans for this work are well underway. The buildings are safe and secure and all visitors are properly checked.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in their books shows that, over time, much teaching is outstanding. Excellent teaching enables all pupils to make outstanding progress regardless of their different starting points. Lessons are very well planned and engage and inspire all pupils so they are highly motivated and develop a thirst for learning.
- Teachers' expectations are very high and they provide work for pupils that is challenging and stimulating.

Consequently, pupils attain above average standards and make excellent progress.

- The excellent relationships between teachers and pupils mean that pupils are confident to take risks in their learning and 'have a go'. They know that their opinions and efforts will be valued. At the same time, teachers ensure that any misconceptions in learning do not go unchecked.
- Reading and writing are taught exceptionally well. Teachers provide pupils with an excellent range of opportunities to use and develop their skills across a range of subjects as well as in English lessons. For example, Year 6 pupils used writing and research skills on the internet to enhance their study of the Mayan civilisation. This promoted outstanding progress. Year 3 pupils followed up their trip to Dover Castle by writing an 'estate agent's brochure' to 'sell' the castle and made excellent use of their persuasive writing and their computing skills to produce some high-quality work.
- The teaching of mathematics is equally effective. Pupils are supported by excellent resources and purposeful learning in real-life situations to solve mathematical problems. They are constantly encouraged to explain their thinking to promote their reasoning skills and apply their learning in different contexts.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is of a consistently high quality because it gives excellent pointers for pupils to improve. Pupils are given time to respond to teachers' comments and are very clear about the next steps in their learning.
- Teachers and pupils use technology and striking displays extremely well to support teaching and learning. For example, 'working walls' display work in progress and provide pupils with very useful prompts and reminders for learning. Classrooms are very tidy, attractive and stimulating. Teachers are very good role models for pupils to take pride in their work, which is very well presented.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together. This ensures that all pupils have the appropriate challenge and support that they need to make excellent progress. As a result, the teaching and support for disadvantaged pupils and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are outstanding and ensure that their needs are exceptionally well met.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The progress of current pupils throughout the school, and in all subjects, is outstanding. High proportions of pupils are making rapid progress and achieving better than would be expected. The school provides excellent equality of opportunity for all pupils and so all groups make excellent progress.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected level by the end of Year 2 in 2014 was above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has been significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics for the past three years.
- Pupils' current work and the school's information on pupils' progress shows that standards are on track to improve further by the end of the year.
- Pupils currently in all year groups are making excellent progress. The proportions making the expected and better-than-expected progress are much higher than found nationally last year.
- Currently the most able pupils throughout the school are challenged extremely well and so are making excellent progress. Notably, the proportion reaching the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in all subjects is on track to improve considerably and be well above last year's national average.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check (the sounds that letters represent) was well above average. Pupils use their phonics skills very well to help them read and spell unfamiliar words. Pupils continue to develop a range of reading skills and by Year 6 can use higher-level skills of inference and deduction to ensure a depth of understanding of the texts they read. Reading for enjoyment is promoted well across the school.
- The very small number of disadvantaged pupils make outstanding progress compared to other pupils nationally and from their individual starting points. Their achievement is similar to that of their classmates in the school. Small numbers prevent commentary on the attainment of the Year 6 disadvantaged pupils in 2014.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make rapid and sustained progress because their needs are exceptionally well met in lessons and through the extra support they receive.
- Pupils achieve extremely well across a range of subjects. They reach high standards, for example in art and music, and apply their excellent physical skills and teamwork to a range of sports.
- Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education both academically and in their personal development. They develop as well-rounded individuals with enquiring minds who are confident and have high aspirations.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- Children start in the Reception Year with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age in all areas of learning and particularly in listening and attention, understanding and speaking. They are given an excellent start to school and make outstanding progress. By the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is well above the national average. Many children achieve above the expected levels. As a result, children are exceptionally well prepared to continue their education in Year 1.
- Arrangements for children joining the school are very effective. There are excellent links with the on-site nursery that the majority of children attend as well as with families whose children attend other settings. This helps children settle quickly and happily into school routines and expectations for learning and behaviour. Parents of nursery children greatly appreciate the opportunity to spend time in the Reception class with their children to help them have a smooth transition into school life.
- Teaching is outstanding. Children are highly motivated and develop a love of learning and curious and enquiring minds. They learn and play exceptionally well together through rich, meaningful and stimulating experiences. Staff make very good use of information about children's progress to keep their learning moving forward as rapidly as possible.
- Staff consistently challenge children in a caring and supportive way and are very responsive to their needs and interests. There is an appropriately strong emphasis on fostering independence and confidence. Children are confident to ask questions and learn to take considered risks in their learning and play.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding because expectations are high. They develop very good social skills and learn to share and listen to each other.
- The leadership of the early years is very effective and there is a strong emphasis on teamwork. Children's safety, health and well-being are given very high priority. Staff establish consistent routines and procedures to keep children safe and children understand these very well. There are excellent links between home and school throughout children's time in the early years.
- The early years classroom is very well resourced and provides an interesting and motivating environment for children. There is a very spacious outdoor area which children enjoy very much. Leaders have correctly identified the need to develop this area to provide an increased range of opportunities and experiences for children in all areas of learning.

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	118495
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	448822

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Nightingale
Headteacher	Helen Comfort
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 October 2009
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