

# St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School

Rotheram Avenue, Luton, Bedfordshire LU1 5PP

**Inspection dates**

9–10 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Until recently significant staff turnover has slowed leaders' ability to raise standards in teaching sustainably. As a result, older pupils still have gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching, learning and assessment is not good because some teachers still require support to secure consistently effective teaching, assessment and outcomes.
- Some teachers do not consistently plan learning, or provide effective guidance, that allows pupils to made good progress over time.
- Some adults do not yet have high enough expectations about the quality of pupils' writing and presentation. On occasion, pupils are not being supported to develop appropriate letter formation.
- Teaching of mathematics is not yet ensuring that pupils are building confidence over time to apply their knowledge and skills to different challenges and types of question.
- Attendance, although improving, is not consistently high enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, governors and the trust, are securing rapid improvements in the school's provision. Leadership and management, behaviour, personal development and well-being and the early years are securely good.
- The headteacher is expertly supported by a highly skilled senior and middle leadership team. In particular, their support for teachers ensures that teachers are beginning to develop and improve their practice.
- Leaders have devised a creative and engaging curriculum that meets the needs of pupils, and entuses them with their learning.
- Pupils behave well and treat one another with respect and courtesy. The school is a harmonious learning environment.
- Pupils are very well cared for and enjoy taking active responsibilities in the school.
- Good teaching and provision in early years ensure that children enjoy learning and make a good start to their primary school life.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further refine and embed leaders' monitoring of standards in key stage 2, to ensure that pupils are being supported precisely enough to attain and progress well by the end of Year 6.
- Ensure that leaders build on the current work to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - teachers and adults use a precise understanding of what pupils know and can do to provide work, and specific guidance, that allows pupils to make good progress over time
  - teachers provide more frequent opportunities in mathematics for pupils to apply their knowledge to more complex questions and achieve higher standards
  - there are high expectations and appropriate support to raise standards in pupils' writing, spelling, punctuation, grammar, and letter formation.
- Continue to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence so that it is at least in line with the national average.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders, including the trust and local governing body, have an accurate and realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher is very well supported by a highly effective and skilled leadership team. Together, they all have high expectations and a clear vision for school improvement. They resolutely make decisions based upon what is best for the children and pupils at St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School. As a result, the leadership of the school is a strength and the school is improving rapidly.
- Leaders effectively ensure that the school's curriculum provides a breadth and balance of learning opportunities and builds on pupils' experiences and interests. St Margaret of Scotland's bespoke 'blueprints' creative curriculum has been well developed and thought through and takes fully into account the unique needs of the school's pupils.
- Leaders and governors make sure that the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used well to provide training that successfully supports teachers to improve the quality of PE lessons. The spending is well informed by pupils, who are given a forum to tell leaders what they think will help them become fitter and healthier. There has been an increased uptake of clubs and sport opportunities. This work has contributed towards the school's recent application to achieve the Silver Sports Mark.
- St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School is a fully inclusive school. Work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a clear strength. Pupils, staff and governors show high levels of respect. All adults fully support the school's vision to prepare pupils well for life in school, in the community and in the wider world. Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is developed effectively through the curriculum and pupils are being well prepared for adult life. For example, in Year 6, their books show that they have been working on developing an understanding of stocks and shares and what this means in the business world.
- St Albans Catholic Academy Trust (SACAT) support the school effectively. They work efficiently and collaboratively with leaders and provide a wealth of advice, support and professional challenge. This working partnership has contributed towards helping leaders to improve the provision at St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School.
- Parents and carers are generally positive about the work of the school and in particular the strength and approachability of the teaching staff. One comment summarised many, saying: 'We love the level of teaching and engagement. I wonder how they do it! Children never seem to want to miss school. Kudos to all staff. They are amazing!'
- Leaders use targeted funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively and as a result it is having an increasingly positive impact on their achievement. The school's assessment information aligned with disadvantaged pupils' work indicates that differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally are diminishing.
- The deputy headteacher leads inclusion well and ensures that the additional funding is used carefully to make a positive difference. Effective training and support helps additional adults intervene successfully and aid pupils' learning in lessons and when

working in small groups. Leaders frequently check the difference that additional support and teaching makes to pupils' progress in learning. Furthermore, staff work closely with a range of external agencies to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are starting to make better progress from their differing starting points.

- Senior leaders demonstrate a clear focus on improving teaching and use an efficient system to manage the performance of teachers. This is ensuring that leaders effectively hold teachers to account well for the pupils in their care. For example, all staff appraisal targets are explicitly linked to how teachers can improve their practice and how well pupils achieve.
- Staff receive relevant, purposeful training within the school, local partnerships and within the trust schools. Leaders put in place more intensive, individualised support and professional development when they are required. This approach is helping to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Despite initial difficulties to recruit and retain permanent staff, leaders have now successfully secured a permanent staff team. They are working with staff to bring more steady and sustainable improvements to teaching, learning and assessment.
- All staff value the help they are given by leaders to improve their practice. This is reflected in the Ofsted staff questionnaire, where all staff overwhelmingly agreed that they are supported well. This is particularly the case for those many teachers on the staff who are new to the profession or who are a short way into their teaching career. This is demonstrated through the newly qualified teacher induction programme created by leaders to ensure that teachers access high-quality support, advice and training. As a result, teachers are making a positive start in the early stages of their career.

## **Governance of the school**

- The trust have worked hard with the governing body to make sure that they are trained well and are fully aware of their governor statutory duties and responsibilities.
- Governors are well informed about the life of the school, pupils' outcomes, the quality of teaching and the impact of leaders. This is also because, in addition to being well trained, they visit the school regularly and receive informative reports from leaders at all levels. The governing body has a wide set of skills and uses them appropriately to ask challenging questions to bring about further improvements.
- The governing body focuses on the school's priorities and on holding senior leaders to account. Scrutiny of governor paperwork demonstrates that governors require leaders to provide a wide range of secure evidence of the impact of their work to improve standards, in particular the aspects they know need to improve quickly.
- The governing body have an accurate knowledge about the quality of teaching and ensure that any pay awards for teaching staff are linked to the progress made by pupils.
- Governors monitor the impact of the additional funding for pupil premium, the PE and sport premium and additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to ensure that it is spent effectively to improve pupils' outcomes.
- The trust and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective, for

example by effectively overseeing and monitoring the school's record of employment checks.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The trust's chief finance officer ensures that appropriate checks are made on staff before they start employment. This is checked by leaders. Visitors to the school are informed about safeguarding arrangements on arrival and the induction for staff is thorough so they are aware of their responsibilities to safeguard all children and pupils.
- Leaders work effectively with outside agencies and parents to ensure that pupils are supported and safe. This work is well led by the learning mentors and family workers, who ensure, under the watchful eye of the deputy headteacher, that the most vulnerable pupils are given additional support and time so they feel safe and secure.
- Staff receive comprehensive training and regular updates on different aspects related to safeguarding. As a result, staff are knowledgeable about a wide range of aspects of safeguarding, including the prevention of radicalisation and extremism.
- Pupils are unanimous about feeling safe. Their books show that the curriculum helps them to understand how to stay safe. For example, in Year 4, pupils are taught to be aware of online protocols in order to stay safe on the internet. Pupils say that 'they value the support staff give them' and they know all adults at the school will make sure that they are well cared for.
- Parents believe their children are safe at the school. They say that: 'Children are happy and enjoy going to school every morning and this provides confidence to us that our children are safe and well looked after.'

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because teaching is not yet securing good outcomes for pupils in key stage 2, in particular those pupils who have experienced more staffing turbulence previously and require additional support to catch up with their peers nationally.
- Although there is evidence that pupils are given opportunities in mathematics to develop fluency, solve problems and apply what they know, pupils are not given sufficient chance to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts. Too often, pupils do not secure an understanding specific mathematical skills and are not given time to develop, practise and extend their knowledge and understanding. Consequently, pupils do not make the progress over time of which they are capable.
- The teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation is variable across the school. While aspects are being taught often, teachers do not consistently expect and check that pupils are applying this knowledge and their skills to their writing. This is resulting in pupils repeating the same mistakes and not being able to identify when they have made errors in their sentence construction, spelling and punctuation. Consequently, pupils' progress in their writing slows.

- For the younger children and pupils, the teaching of phonics and early reading skills takes place routinely and has been improved through well-targeted staff training. Children in the early years and in key stage 1 use their understanding of letters and the sounds that they make to work out unfamiliar words. Heightening the profile of reading has been a focus and this is starting to become more evident in key stage 2. Reading is now a more regular occurrence, with an emphasis on comprehension and enjoyment of reading. The school library is a popular, well-resourced area that is being used more consistently.
- Leaders' progress meetings with teachers make sure that teachers' planning is focused upon eradicating the legacy of underachievement and supporting the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is starting to help these pupils to make better progress than previously.
- The focus on pupils achieving greater depth in their learning is starting to make a difference. Most-able pupils are being challenged more often and this is starting to ensure that they make better progress, and is particularly the case in their reading skills, for example the more complex texts they access and the expectations to develop their inference skills and apply their views to what they are reading.
- Leaders have ensured that their own planned curriculum is starting to develop pupils' understanding and skills across a range of subjects. For example, in an art lesson, pupils were deepening their knowledge of shades and tones of colour in painting. In an English lesson, pupils applying their historical knowledge accurately when writing a newspaper report about the Viking invasion at Lindisfarne.
- Staff have established good working relationships with pupils, and as a result, pupils show respect and want to learn in lessons. Pupils routinely use the prompts and reminders displayed in classrooms to help them with their learning. Teachers celebrate and promote achievement through displays of the pupils' work and a high level of praise and encouragement.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well cared for. They demonstrate attitudes that are considerate, empathetic and respectful of the views of others. Underpinned by the Christian ethos of the school and through assemblies and classroom teaching, pupils are taught about prejudice, equality and being inclusive of others, regardless of their background. Pupils have a secure understanding of important values. This is preparing them well for their adult life.
- Pupils' social, emotional health and well-being is clearly a high priority in the school. Pupils' varying needs are identified and quickly considered so all pupils feel confident and ready to learn. For example, in the 'ready to learn' room, effective social, emotional and mental health support provided by the learning mentors is having a positive impact on pupils' self-esteem and behaviour. During the inspection, a calm and respectful session was observed, where a group of pupils were working on the qualities required when listening to the views of others.

- Staff have developed strong, trusting and positive relationships with pupils. These contribute to pupils feeling safe and happy in school. Pupils say that bullying does not happen and leaders' records confirm this. Pupils are confident that, should they have any concerns, they can talk to a trusted adult and the problem will be dealt with effectively.
- Pupils enjoy taking on roles of responsibility within the school. They say that it makes them feel 'trusted and responsible'. Roles they are particularly proud of include being 'faith ambassadors', listening to and supporting pupils in the school's 'prayer room'; librarians, especially helping younger children to find books to read; and being 'family heads', who are pupils who role model and lead for the three school 'families' of St Clare, St Bernadette and St Francis. These opportunities help pupils to understand what it means to be a responsible citizen.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils work hard in lessons and concentrate well. Attitudes to learning are highly positive. Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy their time in school.
- School records show that incidents of poor behaviour in the classrooms are rare. When and if they do occur, effective strategies are put in place to support pupils with any challenging behaviour, so that learning is not disrupted. This includes effective use of 'the learning zone' and the school's 'ready to learn' room.
- Pupils' conduct around school in breaktimes and lunchtimes is positive, and pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils play together harmoniously and are well looked after during these times.
- Although pupils' attendance is currently below the national average for primary schools, it is improving. This is because leaders are diligent when implementing attendance procedures, and give attendance a high profile. The system for analysing attendance is effective. The support of the family workers is helping to improve the attendance of pupils, including pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, who find it difficult to attend school regularly.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Leaders have successfully ensured that staffing is now stable and inadequate teaching has been eradicated. As a result, progress and attainment has improved in the early years and key stage 1. Although key stage 2 has been slower to improve, the books and assessment information show that current pupils are now beginning to make better progress, with an increasing number of pupils working at or closer to age-related expectations.
- In 2017, attainment in key stage 1 was broadly in line with the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of key stage 1 pupils attaining greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. The school's current assessment information, aligned with pupils' books, shows that there is likely to be an improvement in these outcomes, both at expected and greater depth in 2018.

- Key stage 2 attainment and progress outcomes in 2017 were below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Careful identification of specific needs in the current Year 6 cohort is reflecting positively in the current assessment information. Currently, in key stage 2, some pupils' progress is still not swift enough to close gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills from key stage 1. However, inspection evidence shows that current Year 6 pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics compared to previous years.
- Pupils acquire secure phonics skills in the early years and key stage 1 because the teaching is systematic and thorough. This is reflected over time in the Year 1 phonics screening check, whereby the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard has been consistently at national average or above. Teachers are beginning to build on this in key stage 2. However, this is not yet well enough developed and consequently spelling remains a priority for leaders to improve.
- Appropriate and carefully considered spending of additional funding ensures that the emotional, social and behavioural needs, as well as the academic needs, of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are met very well. This group of pupils are progressing better from their starting points because of individualised support and carefully planned programmes of interventions. Although improving, over time the progress made by this group of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics remains variable.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving. Their achievement is closely monitored by senior leaders. Leaders have a precise understanding of how well individual disadvantaged pupils are doing. Consequently, if any disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, are at risk of not achieving as well as they could, appropriate support is put in place immediately. Although this is securing better progress, to catch up with pupils nationally leaders are aware that disadvantaged pupils must make increasingly accelerated progress.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are effectively supported from a young age. The teaching and learning emphasis on language acquisition and development is resulting in this group of pupils catching up quickly from their lower starting points. This is particularly the case if they attend the school's early years from the start of their primary education.
- School assessment information shows that a higher proportion of current Year 6 pupils are now likely to reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave in 2018. As a result, they are now being better prepared for the next stage of their education than pupils previously.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years provision is led and managed well. The leader has a clear vision and understanding of good early years practice. The provision is constantly evaluated to ensure that the children have many opportunities to develop and apply the skills and learning characteristics that they need. Adults constantly amend their planning to meet the needs of children. A great deal of emphasis is placed on ensuring that the children get off to a good start in early years and are well prepared for Year 1.
- The strong emphasis on creating a caring and nurturing environment is evident from



the very positive relationships adults have with children, and children have with each other. Staff consider strong relationships with parents as being crucial in establishing future positive attitudes to school life and encouraging parents to take an interest in their child's learning.

- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year increased in 2016 and 2017. The early years leader uses information about children's progress effectively to provide activities that meet their individual needs. As a result, children make good progress from their individual starting points, which are, over time, typically lower than those expected for their age.
- The quality of teaching in early years is good. Children are provided with opportunities to develop their communication and language through real-life experiences, practical activities and role play. For example, children were motivated by a letter from baby bear, from the story of 'Goldilocks and the three bears', wanting the instructions to make porridge. They went on to explore the language and vocabulary to write the recipe and think about what the features of a written recipe are so they had a model for their own writing. Additionally, they made the porridge too so they gained the practical experience upon which to base their writing.
- Children feel confident when making good attempts to read well in the early years because of the quality of phonics teaching. The focus on language acquisition is reaping rewards, particularly for children who speak English as an additional language.
- In the Reception classes, children are given regular opportunities to write, particularly when they learn in sessions led by the adults. In addition, a range of motivating and stimulating free-choice activities encourage children to write when they play and learn independently.
- Routines are well established and children's behaviour is good. Adults are quick to provide support to children to help them understand the importance of being polite and treating one another with respect. Children play together well and are motivated to learn.
- Staff support children well during indoor and outdoor activities. This leads to at least good progress for all. They consistently ask challenging questions that enable children, including the most able, to think deeply about their learning. There are occasional instances whereby children are not as focused as others during unsupported times. Adults have implemented specific individual targets and do strive to ensure that these times are limited and not detrimental to the children's learning.
- Children enjoy their time in the early years. A love of learning is fostered and children behave well, forming positive relationships with adults and their classmates.
- Staff are vigilant in keeping children safe. The school meets all of the statutory welfare and safety requirements for the early years.

## School details

Unique reference number	142263
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10046647

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	578
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Moore
Headteacher	Gabrielle Somes
Telephone number	01582 723430
Website	<a href="http://www.stmargarets.luton.sch.uk">www.stmargarets.luton.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@stmargarets.luton.sch.uk">admin@stmargarets.luton.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The school became a part of the St Albans Catholic Academy Trust in September 2015.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The percentage of pupils whose first language is not, or believed not to be, English is above the national average.
- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.

## Information about this inspection

- Learning was observed in all classes, including where pupils learned in small groups such as in the 'ready to learn' room. The majority of learning was observed jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Additionally, the deputy headteacher joined the lead inspector for a learning walk around the school. Leaders also joined inspectors to scrutinise a wide range of children's and pupils' books.
- The lead inspector met with two trust representatives, including the chief executive officer, and also held a meeting with two members of the local governing body, one of whom was the chair of governors.
- Inspectors met with the assistant headteacher, phase leaders and the mathematics and English subject leaders.
- Inspectors observed other aspects of the school's work, such as assemblies, small-group work, learning in the 'ready to learn' room and the 'learning zone'. The lead inspector also met with the family workers and visited a 'stay and play' session.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. In addition to this, inspectors took account of 25 responses to the Ofsted free-text system and 25 responses to the Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also took account of the school's most recent parent view survey.
- Inspectors took account of 47 responses to the staff questionnaire and spoke with a cross-section of staff to discuss their views of the school and how they have been supported.
- The inspectors examined a full range of documents, including information about pupils' progress, school improvement plans, information about teachers' performance and external views of the school. They reviewed the contents of the school's website and closely scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jacqueline Treacy	Ofsted Inspector
Kay Leach	Ofsted Inspector

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