

Inspection of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School

Trench Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 9NG

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

All pupils are warmly welcomed into this inclusive, friendly school. Parents and carers appreciate the school's community atmosphere, which helps pupils to feel secure and valued. The school's religious values provide a structured framework for pupils and staff. Staff expect pupils to do their best and they are not disappointed. Pupils value education and are enthusiastic learners. They behave exceptionally well throughout the school day. Lunchtimes are sociable occasions when pupils enjoy catching up with friends or joining in with a club.

The curriculum makes an exceptional contribution to pupils' personal development and to their enjoyment of school. Pupils develop a strong sense of their responsibility for others. During the inspection, for instance, some of the older pupils took good care of the younger pupils during a discussion with an inspector. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and are confident about expressing their opinions. They are clear that bullying is unacceptable. Some of the older pupils commented, 'We will not tolerate bullying of any kind. If it happens, we go straight to a teacher and it's sorted out'. Records indicate that prompt action is taken by leaders if any concerns about bullying arise.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's broad and balanced curriculum supports pupils' learning well. By the end of Year 6, pupils are securely equipped with the academic knowledge and personal skills needed to be successful in the next stage of their education. Leaders took swift action to address any gaps in pupils' learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has ensured that pupils are well placed to achieve ongoing success.

Leaders are entirely committed to ensuring the best for all pupils, regardless of ability or background. Their high aspirations are shared by all members of staff. The school's work to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is exceptional. Pupils with SEND are highly valued and respected members of the school community. The special educational needs coordinator is extremely knowledgeable about pupils' individual needs. She works closely with staff to ensure high-quality support for pupils. Pupils with SEND make consistently strong progress and participate fully in all aspects of school life.

Pupils behave sensibly and maturely. They listen to their teachers carefully during lessons and work quietly, so that everyone can get on with what they need to do. The school is particularly successful in its support for those pupils who have struggled in previous schools. Carefully focused support ensures that these pupils settle into school and learn well. Staff know pupils very well and understand their difficulties. They respond calmly and sensitively when pupils are finding school hard. Pupils speak maturely about improvements in their behaviour since joining the school.

The early years curriculum supports all aspects of children's learning well. Strong relationships, clear routines and engaging activities help children to settle into school. They get on well together, making friends as they play and learn. During the inspection, for instance, a group of children chattered to each other happily as they worked together to build a bridge. Leaders are now rightly focusing on ensuring clarity about how learning in other year groups builds securely on what children have learned in Reception Year. They have made a good start. The curriculum is clearly sequenced from the start of Reception Year to the end of Year 6 in subjects such as phonics, physical education (PE) and history. Leaders are now rightly focusing on securing the same clarity in other subjects, such as science and mathematics.

The school's well-established phonics programme equips pupils with confidence and reliable reading skills. Staff are knowledgeable about how to teach phonics and do so well. Leaders assess pupils' progress regularly, checking how well pupils are learning and making adjustments to the reading curriculum where needed.

The contribution the school makes to pupils' personal development is exceptional. Pupils are eager to learn and attend school regularly. They develop a keen sense of justice and personal responsibility. During the inspection, they spoke, for example, about the importance of losing graciously during sports events. Pupils are well prepared for life in the United Kingdom. They learn about a range of world religions and have regular opportunities to consider and discuss differing views, such as whether the Benin Bronzes should be returned to Nigeria.

The recently appointed principal has quickly won the trust and respect of pupils, staff and parents. One parent commented, 'I wouldn't have my child anywhere else.' The executive principal, trustees and members of the executive governing committee are knowledgeable about the school's work. They provide effective support and challenge for school leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Regular safeguarding training ensures that staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding policies and procedures. They are alert to pupils' safety and well-being and report any concerns quickly. Leaders take suitable action, working constructively with parents, and agencies such as children's services, where appropriate. Recruitment procedures are well established and include all checks required to ensure staff's suitability to work with children.

Personal safety is a key element of the school's personal, social and health education programme. This starts from the moment children start school, when they learn, for example, the importance of privacy when using the toilet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is well designed and coherently sequenced from the start of Reception Year to the end of Year 6 in subjects including phonics, PE and history. As a result, it is clear what is taught in each year group, how this builds on what pupils have learned before, and how this will support pupils in future learning. However, this is not the case in all subjects. Leaders know, for example, that there is insufficient clarity about how the early years curriculum contributes to subsequent learning in subjects such as mathematics and science. They have already begun work to strengthen this aspect of the curriculum and have suitable plans in place to support further development. Leaders should continue with these plans.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	141156
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10211780
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	395
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Powis
Principal	Fiona Oubridge
Website	www.stmargaretclitherowschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The principal was appointed in September 2022. The executive principal was appointed in November 2021 and oversees three schools in the trust.
- The school is a Roman Catholic school with a Christian ethos. The most recent denominational inspection of the school took place in March 2018.
- St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy school in August 2014. When its predecessor school, St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, executive principal and other senior leaders. They spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the executive governing committee, including the chair. She also met with the chief executive officer, the school improvement adviser and three members of the academy committee, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science, history and PE. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking with subject leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds pupils' knowledge over time. The lead inspector also listened to a pupil reading to a member of staff.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to gather their views of the school. They also spoke with pupils in lessons, during breaktimes and around the school.
- Inspectors assessed the school's culture of safeguarding throughout the inspection. The lead inspector reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records. She also checked the single central record.
- The views of staff, parents and pupils were gathered through a range of sources, including Ofsted's surveys and discussions.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Anne Allen	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Parker	His Majesty's Inspector

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