

Inspection of a good school: St Margaret's C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School

School Road, Orford, Warrington, Cheshire WA2 9AD

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

St Margaret's C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Margaret's, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), love learning and achieve well. This is because leaders have established many successful ways for staff to respond to pupils' interests, needs and development.

From Nursery through to Year 6, pupils make many friends. They conduct themselves proudly, such as when meeting with visitors. Pupils behave themselves because they understand what leaders and staff expect of them. They see respect modelled well by leaders and follow their example. The school is mostly calm, except for when the sound of pupils' keen steel-drumming lessons echoes around the building.

Leaders deal with bullying effectively, including issues that may arise online. Pupils said that they feel safe at the school. They feel able to speak to staff about their worries.

Pupils experience many enrichment activities and develop their wider knowledge. For example, they learn about their responsibilities for the planet as global citizens and to respect diversity. Pupils benefit from many different educational trips, visitors and two residential. They relish activities as varied as making bread around a real fire and learning about Antarctica from a real explorer. Pupils profit from taking part in a wide range of extra clubs, such as choir and curling. All pupils in Years 4 and 5 learn to play the violin and some excel at this.

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

Leaders have established an ambitious and meaningful curriculum for pupils. They make sure that pupils with SEND are identified quickly and accurately so that adaptations can be made so these pupils can fully access the same curriculum as other pupils. In the early years, most of the leaders' curriculum is also well thought out, building a foundation for later learning. Beginning in the Nursery, staff engage children in lots of meaningful talk.

Children experience the joy of hearing many well-chosen books, stories and rhymes read to them often by staff.

Senior and subject leaders have thought carefully about the curriculum. They judiciously use educational research, as well as outside experts, to develop their own and staff's subject-specific and general teaching knowledge. Leaders at the school guide, support and inspire staff to be well informed about what information to teach to pupils, when and why.

Teachers exude passion and knowledge about the subjects that they teach. They use their understanding of how pupils learn to shape their teaching. For example, teachers help pupils to build on their previous knowledge when learning new information.

In classrooms, low-level disruption among pupils is brief and infrequent. This means that staff can focus on teaching pupils and supporting their learning.

In key stages 1 and 2, teachers carefully use assessment strategies to check what pupils know and can do. Staff skilfully help pupils to understand those aspects of the curriculum that they find difficult. However, in the early years, staff make too much use of unhelpful assessment criteria to review how well children are learning rather than linking assessments to the intended curriculum. This means that some of the leaders' curriculum in early years is not as well developed as it could be. Leaders also expect early years staff to provide them with regular assessment data about children's achievement. This approach has limited value and adds to the workload of staff. Nevertheless, despite these weaknesses, children and pupils mostly achieve well. They become keen, knowledgeable learners.

Leaders and staff celebrate the pleasure of reading and owning books, for pupils and adults. Teachers and teaching assistants introduce pupils to the work of a rich selection of authors, poets and playwrights. Staff expose pupils to exciting new worlds through the books that pupils select from the thoughtfully resourced and arranged school libraries. Older pupils spoke of the thrill of discovering unusual words in their books, such as 'ungloved', 'jaunty', 'fronds' and 'ennui'.

Leaders ensure that staff have the training that they need to understand and teach leaders' chosen phonics programme. Teachers and teaching assistants carefully identify pupils' reading knowledge. They teach next what pupils need to learn. Staff identify pupils who fall behind the pace of the phonics programme and provide them with extra help. Leaders' skilful leadership of early reading means that most pupils master the basics of reading securely and quickly.

Leaders and staff make certain that pupils are prepared for the opportunities and responsibilities of life in modern Britain and further afield. For example, pupils take on roles of responsibility in the school parliament. They work with leaders to improve life at the school. Other pupils formally support their peers, for instance as anti-bullying ambassadors or sports crew at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Teachers and teaching assistants feel valued and respected by leaders. Teachers said that they have a reasonable workload.

Governors have worked effectively with an external consultant over a prolonged period to refine their work. Governors skilfully support and challenge leaders' work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are alert to any changes in pupils' comments, appearance or behaviour that might suggest they are at risk of harm. Leaders make sure that they and staff are well informed about local and national safeguarding risks to pupils. They ensure that staff are well trained, for example about online safety. Leaders make certain that concerns about pupils' well-being are shared promptly with other agencies.

Leaders and governors carefully assure themselves that pupils are safe at the school. They take their responsibilities seriously, for instance making sure that the school's digital systems have effective cyber security.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not ensure that staff make enough use of the school's curriculum when assessing the abilities of children in the Nursery and Reception classes. Also, leaders expect staff in the early years to provide unnecessary internal data each term about children's achievement. This approach means that staff risk missing how well children learn leaders' intended curriculum. Leaders should make certain that staff use the curriculum to assess what children know and remember and then to decide what to teach children next.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2013.

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	131349
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10268822
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	472
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anne Elphick
Headteacher	Christopher Metcalfe (executive headteacher)
Website	www.st-margarets.warrington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not use alternative provision for pupils.
- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Liverpool. The most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in December 2016.
- Leaders provide a breakfast club and an after-school club for pupils.
- Leaders provide a Nursery class. In addition, the school's governing body runs a second Nursery class on site offering 16 part-time places for three-year-olds. This provision is operated under community powers of section 27 of the Education Act 2002. Some children attend both Nursery classes.
- The school provides 'The Smile Centre', a training and meeting venue in a separate building close to the main school site. The premises houses EY428545 Little Bears playgroup that is separately registered and inspected by Ofsted.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector completed deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. He discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited learning activities, spoke with pupils and reviewed examples of pupils' work. The inspector also visited both Nursery classes.
- The inspector listened to some pupils read to staff.
- During both days of the inspection, the inspector met with leaders. These discussions included early years, SEND, behaviour and leaders' provision for pupils' personal development.
- The inspector spoke with some parents and carers. He reviewed parental responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including the free-text responses.
- To understand staff's experience of working at the school, the inspector met with several teachers and teaching assistants. He considered responses from staff to an Ofsted survey.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils, including pupils with SEND. He asked about their participation in extra learning activities at school. The inspector considered pupils' views about behaviour and bullying. He reviewed the 96 responses from pupils to an Ofsted survey.
- To evaluate safeguarding, the inspector spoke with leaders, staff, parents and pupils. He reviewed examples of leaders' records, including their checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school.
- The inspector met with five governors, including the chair of governors.
- To further understand the work of the school, the inspector spoke with representatives of Warrington local authority and Liverpool Diocese and with a school improvement partner.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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