

Inspection of a good school: St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Ipswich

Bolton Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 2BT

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 May 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Margaret's is a warm and inspirational place to be. Pupils accept and value each other for who they are. They deeply respect and show kindness to everyone, no matter their background.

Pupils know staff will go to great lengths to support them. Staff form highly nurturing relationships with pupils. This gives pupils the complete confidence to share their feelings and worries. This helps keep pupils safe, as staff always follow up on concerns.

Teachers have the highest aspirations for what pupils should learn and provide highly personalised support for their needs. Pupils achieve the best possible standards. Those who are new to the school, get an extensive range of support to help them settle quickly.

Pupils find lessons highly engaging. They want to participate. This means that they behave well and focus on their learning. Pupils learn all about what treating people well means. This is a natural part of the school culture.

A treasure trove of enrichment opportunities is available. For example, pupils have opportunities to perform at Snape Maltings Concert Hall and participate in Victorian workshops at Christchurch Mansion. All of this helps enrich their learning experience well beyond the classroom.

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

The school has a highly ambitious curriculum offer. For example, leaders have worked with experts to ensure that the computing curriculum builds exceptional depth to pupils' knowledge of coding. The teaching of the curriculum is of a consistently high standard. Specialist music teaching, for instance, supports pupils to be highly confident in musical performance. Recently, pupils performed an opera performance at the Northgate Arts Centre.

The school has subject leaders that are experts in what they do. Subject leaders have the time to train staff. This means that teachers have a strong subject knowledge. In lessons, teachers regularly check what pupils know. They give pupils precise guidance and support with what they need to improve. Consequently, pupils achieve extremely well. They produce consistently high standards of work.

Pupils become confident readers. Staff have a firm understanding of how to teach phonics, right from early years. Pupils who join the school with little experience of speaking English receive highly effective support to catch up quickly. As pupils progress through the school, they read a range of high-quality books and texts. Teachers skilfully use these to ensure that pupils develop depth in their comprehension ability. Pupils show their detailed understanding in class discussions and through their writing.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from a highly inclusive school environment. The school goes to great lengths to include those with the highest levels of need. There is specialist support for non-verbal pupils. The use of signing and symbols means that non-verbal pupils are enabled to communicate. Staff skilfully use the sensory room to meet pupils' specific needs.

Children in early years follow firmly established routines. They know how to listen on the carpet and work considerately with others. They enjoy engaging activities as part of a highly stimulating curriculum. These build on and cement the learning their teachers introduce. Children develop exceptional communication skills because adults model conversation so well. For example, children can explain in detail how dinosaurs are now extinct and that you can now only see them in a museum. All of this helps prepare them very well for key stage 1.

Pupils behave with tolerance and respect because these are embedded in the school's values. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently. They provide effective support so that pupils with social and emotional needs learn to manage their feelings. Consequently, school is a pleasant place to be, where learning is not disrupted. Pupils like school and so attend well.

The school has ensured that being a mutually supportive community is at the heart of personal development. This extends well beyond the school gates. The school has established mutually beneficial relationships with organisations such as the local church. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is extensively promoted through assemblies, school events and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils value the extensive range of wider opportunities to suit all interests. These include residential

visits, mastermind competitions, sports festivals, workshops and visits from external speakers.

The school is a mutually supportive environment. Staff genuinely care about each other's well-being. They value the thought leaders give to policies, such as assessment, so that workload is manageable. Governors know the school well, and they challenge and support school leaders effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 October 2014.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	124782
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10323687
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	421
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Wilson
Headteacher	Jo Gunn
Website	www.stmargaretsipswich.org
Date of previous inspection	22 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in September 2021 and has been at the school since 2017.
- The school is part of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. The headteacher is also a Reverend. The school's most recent inspection of its religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, was in January 2020. The next section 48 inspection will be within five years.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider of education.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- To discuss governance, the inspector met with the chair of governors, the local authority standards and excellence officer and a representative sample of governors.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, special educational needs coordinator, designated safeguarding leads, behaviour and personal development leads, school subject leaders and staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector spent time in early years and spoke with children and staff there. He also considered the curriculum in some other subjects, including PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE), music and art.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at playtime and lunchtime.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. The inspector considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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