

Inspection of St Margaret's Church of England Academy, Bowers Gifford

London Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon, Essex SS13 2DU

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Clare Crosbie. This school is part of The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Emma Wigmore, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Charlotte Little. There is also an executive headteacher, Becky Fairhead, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Margaret's is a warm and friendly school. From Nursery, pupils are happy to come to school. They look forward to the exciting learning that staff prepare for them, especially their history lessons.

'Be safe, be kind and be ready' are the new behaviour expectations that pupils are proud to share. They know how to keep themselves safe and who they can talk to if they have worries or concerns.

Pupils are kind and caring towards each other. On some occasions, pupils do experience some unkind behaviour, which can lead to low-level behaviour in class. This is dealt with quickly by the school. Pupils know what bullying is and that it can happen. They trust the adults in the school to 'sort things out'.

Staff changes have meant that pupils have not had consistency in their learning. This is no longer the case. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils learn a well-balanced and sequenced curriculum that helps them to do more in their learning. As a result, pupils achieve well and talk enthusiastically about what they have learned.

Pupils attend various extra-curricular activities. They enjoy their lunchtime play where they can participate in art activities, sports games and building activities.

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

The school has experienced a turbulent time, with changes in staffing and leadership. This has now been stabilised. Staff feel well supported by the school. The trust and the school leaders have worked rapidly to improve the school. Communication with parents about their child's education is improving and school leaders are continuing to work on this.

The school has implemented a clear and concise curriculum that sets out what pupils will learn from the early years. Recent changes to the curriculum have ensured that staff better understand and implement the high expectations that the school has set out. This means pupils experience a curriculum that builds their knowledge and understanding over time. In some instances, staff do not always know the curriculum well enough in some subjects to adapt their teaching. This means that some pupils do not access what they need and they develop gaps in their learning.

Reading has been prioritised across the school. Children in Nursery develop their storytelling skills with enthusiasm, especially when retelling the story of a bear hunt. The youngest pupils receive high-quality phonics teaching from Reception. Staff check pupils' understanding closely. Any pupils not keeping up with the programme are identified quickly and receive the support they need to achieve. Older pupils benefit from a rigorous reading curriculum that develops the main skills of reading. Pupils enjoy reading a range of different texts. They are confident in applying their reading skills to other areas of the curriculum, such as history and geography.

The school has processes in place for identifying pupils with additional needs. Staff are skilled at supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff know pupils well. They ensure that pupils get the right support to access the curriculum. The school ensures that pupils with SEND are supported in all areas of school life so that they can achieve well.

Pupils enjoy school and, as a result, attendance is positive. Pupils who find arriving at school on time challenging are well supported. Pupils look forward to the 'early bird' week when they can earn rewards for being on time. The school works closely with families and external agencies to ensure that pupils' attendance is improving.

Pupils have a strong understanding of the school's values, including respect. They behave calmly and respectfully when moving around the school. In lessons, most pupils are focused on learning and are keen to learn. They know that they must try their best, but this high expectation is not always reinforced by some staff. This is also the case for some children in Reception. On some occasions, when pupils display low-level behaviour, staff are not always quick to correct this. This means that some pupils are not focused and distract others from their work.

The range of school trips, visits and experiences helps pupils learn about the wider world around them. They learn about being different and what it means to make a difference in the world by using your voice for change. Pupils in Year 6 have many responsibilities and they enjoy these. However, pupils in other year groups would also welcome the opportunity to be responsible and champion school subjects such as sports and mathematics.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some cases, staff do not always have the subject knowledge they need to adapt the curriculum effectively for pupils. This means that some pupils are not learning the intended curriculum and have gaps in their learning. The school needs to ensure that all staff teach the curriculum effectively.
- On occasions, some pupils' behaviour distracts them and others from being focused on their learning and trying their best. Staff are not always quick at setting high expectations for positive attitudes to learning. The school needs to ensure the high expectations for behaviour are set consistently to ensure that pupils are focused on their learning and proud of their work and achievements.

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	143453
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10345464
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Caroline Haynes
CEO of the trust	Emma Wigmore
Headteacher	Clare Crosbie
Website	www.st-margaretsacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust.
- The school has closed its provision for two-year-olds.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2024.
- The school has undergone significant change in staffing over the last academic year.
- The school has a Christian character and ethos. It is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford. The last inspection of its religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, was on 18 May 2023. The next inspection will take place within five years.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the head of school and other leaders, including those from the trust.
- Inspectors also met with leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND, behaviour and attendance and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the trust board, the CEO and members of the school intervention board.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Nerrissa Bear, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Cox

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024