



St Margaret Ward Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106359
LEA Trafford
Inspection number 277538
Inspection dates 27 March 2006 to 28 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Sarah Drake CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cherry Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Sale
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Cheshire M33 4GY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 969 9852
Number on roll	184	Fax number	0161 912 3663
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Miss Anne Risdon
Date of previous inspection	14 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr A Ratchford

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Margaret Ward is a small school. It is set on a council estate to the south of Manchester but, as a church school, serves a community more widespread than its immediate surroundings. Above average numbers are eligible for a free school meal. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies considerably between year groups but overall is smaller than average. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Margaret Ward provides an excellent quality of education for its pupils. They achieve exceptionally well to reach above, and sometimes well above, average standards at the end of Year 6, having entered the school with below average skills in all areas of learning. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Every child matters to all staff, who know pupils very well as individuals and offer them the exceptional levels of care and support that help them flourish. High quality provision in the Foundation Stage establishes an excellent basis for pupils' further learning. Outstanding teaching and excellent use of assessment ensure that individuals' needs are identified swiftly and very well catered for. This underpins their rapid progress. Pupils are eager to learn and they rise well to the challenges set by teachers. The rich, innovative curriculum excites their interest and allows pupils of all abilities to extend their skills very effectively.

Outstanding leadership and management have helped the school make excellent progress since the last inspection. Standards have risen particularly well. All those involved in the school, including governors, have a very strong sense of direction and work closely as a team in the best interests of pupils. The school provides excellent value for money. It uses its resources, including the goodwill of parents and every part of the cramped accommodation, to very good effect. Whilst accurate in its evaluation of the quality of its care and pupils' personal development, it was too modest about the overall high quality of its provision. The school has excellent capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to analyse its strengths and weaknesses carefully, take effective action to tackle weaker areas and ensure that new practices are embedded consistently across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They consistently reach above average standards, although their skills on entry to the nursery vary from below to well below average, with particular weaknesses in communication and personal development. Very few have average or above average skills. In the rich Foundation Stage environment, children make rapid progress in all areas of learning. By the end of the reception year, the great majority are working within the expected levels for their age, but few reach or exceed them.

In the 2005 statutory tests, Year 2 pupils attained broadly average standards in all areas, with particularly strong performance in writing, although fewer than average achieved the higher level in reading or mathematics. Year 6 pupils reached well above average standards in mathematics, science and reading. They attained above average levels in English overall due to their weaker performance in writing. The pupils made excellent gains in their learning from the standards they reached when in Year 2,

placing the school in the top 3% nationally for pupils' achievement. It reached its challenging targets and greatly exceeded these in the numbers achieving the higher levels in mathematics and science. The small size of each year group leads to some variation, but the trend has been above average over the past five years. All groups of pupils make very good progress and achieve equally well, with boys catching up well in Key Stage 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The great emphasis placed on this in the Foundation Stage bears rich fruit throughout the rest of the school. Pupils' zest for life underpins their enjoyment of learning and the warm community spirit that characterises the school. Nursery pupils eagerly shared their excitement at the developing roots and shoots of beans. Older pupils proudly explained why they needed to make a profit at the Fair Trade stall which they ran at the recent parents' evening. Through staff's clear guidance and good example, pupils gain a strong sense of right and wrong, and of how to make good choices. Their appreciation of their own and other peoples' culture is exceptional. Pupils confidently voice their opinions and take on responsibilities. Excellent relationships abound.

Attendance levels have risen well since the last inspection and are now above average. Pupils clearly enjoy being at school. Their behaviour is excellent because the whole environment supports collaboration and thoughtfulness. Pupils are aware of others' needs and act safely and sensibly. They engage in energetic games at playtime and many opt for the salad bar at lunchtime. With their love of learning and mature personal skills, pupils are very well equipped for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. It meets pupils' needs particularly well and ensures that the school achieves high standards. Lessons are brisk and teachers engage pupils' interest through thoroughly planned, stimulating work. Their skilful questioning prompts pupils to develop their ideas and work hard. They set a very high level of challenge for all pupils, including the gifted and talented, while providing timely support for those who need it. Highly effective behaviour management creates an excellent learning environment. Resources are used imaginatively. For example, during a mathematics lesson, information and communication technology (ICT) was used to very good effect to support the learning needs of pupils at an early stage of learning English. The increasing attention paid to different ways of learning and the use of, for example, mind maps and talking partners help pupils to remain focused while trying their hardest.

Excellent teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants ensures there is always a strong learning ethos. The recently introduced 'swap around' lessons, in which several year groups learn together to develop problem solving and textual analysis skills, are showing very good signs of success. In these, the skilled teaching assistants play a prominent role.

Teachers use information gained from the outstanding assessment procedures particularly well to set learning targets and inform lesson planning. Their helpful marking gives pupils very clear guidance on what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent. It fully meets the needs of all pupils and pays very good attention to their personal education. There is outstanding provision for those who need extra support and for the gifted and talented. For example, in response to parental requests, a bird watching club now runs for pupils who have a strong interest in science. Literacy and mathematics are very well promoted through, for instance, art and history as well as design and technology. Several modern foreign languages are taught. Teaching assistants make an outstanding contribution to enrichment activities because several are very skilled in certain areas. Provision in ICT is much improved since the last inspection and pupils now have many chances to develop their skills. Excellent community links make a significant contribution to learning. An opera singer regularly works with the choir, for instance, and free musical instrument tuition is also available. Many educational visits and extra activities further enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. This is confirmed by pupils and parents, one of whom wrote: 'I couldn't ask for a more friendly, supportive and caring school'. Procedures to ensure child protection and health and safety are rigorous and staff are well informed about policies. The school guides pupils' awareness particularly well. Much work, for instance, has been done regarding healthy living, drugs education and road safety through excellent community links.

The school's rewards systems have a highly beneficial impact on attendance, behaviour and achievement. For example, the celebratory Wonderwall is used to very good effect. Pupils have clear learning targets, which they understand, in English and mathematics. Often, pupils suggest these themselves. Work is marked regularly and comments give helpful guidance on how to improve. Excellent support in lessons and from outside specialists ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or for whom English is an additional language can achieve as well as others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership and management ensure that the school provides high quality education for its pupils. Rapid progress since the last inspection means that pupils now achieve exceptionally well, both academically and personally. The headteacher provides a very clear lead and is skilled at bringing the best out of all members of the school community. The senior management team is dynamic, well informed and analytical of the school's performance. Subject leaders, including highly skilled teaching assistants, are fully accountable for standards in their areas and regularly monitor teachers' planning, lessons and pupils' work across the school. Governors, too, are very knowledgeable, well organised and rigorously hold the school to account. They fulfil their role of critical friend exceptionally well.

Development planning is collaborative and firmly based on evaluation of how well current provision is helping pupils to achieve. Detailed assessment data underpins the process. All those involved are aware of their responsibilities and of the progress being made during the year. Current school practice reflects its priorities very well. Actions to tackle weaknesses in science led to remarkable improvements; the current focus on developing writing skills is also proving to be effective.

The school's inclusive ethos enables each individual to achieve and grow both academically and personally. Its partnership networks greatly enhance its provision. Parents' views are taken into good account, for example, leading to an extra meeting to discuss their children's progress. Consequently, they hold the school in equally high esteem. The school runs very smoothly and shrewd financial management ensures resources are used to best advantage.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for welcoming us so warmly to your school. You greatly helped the inspection because you were so willing to talk openly with us. We agree with you that St Margaret Ward is one of the best schools and would like to share with you what particularly impressed us.

- Children in the nursery and reception classes have a really good start to their education.
- Your excellent behaviour and friendly relationships mean that you have a happy school.
- Your skilled teachers and teaching assistants give you high quality guidance and support so that you make very good progress in your learning and, by the end of Year 6, reach above average standards.
- Teachers organise very interesting things for you to do and question you well so that you think hard about what you are learning.
- Your 'swap around' lessons successfully help you to develop your skills in a different way.
- Staff take very good care of you so you feel relaxed in school.
- You enjoy taking part in everything the school has to offer and are keen to add your own contributions to the community.
- Your headteacher, senior teachers and governors understand very well what needs to be done and work closely with all staff to make sure that the school is constantly improving.

All we have asked the school to do next is to keep on paying very good attention to your needs and adjusting what it offers you to make sure that you continue to achieve so well. Your job is to continue to work hard and enjoy learning.