



Margaret Wix Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117188
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280009
Inspection dates 17 January 2006 to 18 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. John Paull LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Oaks
School category	Community		AL3 6EL
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01727759232
Number on roll	141	Fax number	01727759233
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev.Jeremy Follett
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Mark Welch

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 17 January 2006 - 18 January 2006	Inspection number 280009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Margaret Wix Primary School is situated in the outskirts of the cathedral city of St Albans. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage, although the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased and is above average. A small number of them are believed not to speak English at home. The number known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs is average and two have a statement of entitlement. Socio-economic circumstances and attainment on entry are average. Between its last inspection and this one, the school passed through a difficult period related especially to the recruitment of a headteacher. This affected confidence in the school and affected the numbers on roll.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that it provides a satisfactory education and shows many strong signs of improvement after a difficult period. Satisfactory value for money is achieved. However, many systems of management are recent. While their effectiveness is satisfactory, not enough time has passed for their full use and effectiveness to emerge at all levels of management. Nevertheless, the start is very impressive. The headteacher has a particularly astute understanding of how to identify and rectify weaknesses. Strongly supportive partnerships are beginning to be forged between the staff, pupils, parents and the local authority, contributing to a good capacity to improve and a revitalised confidence amongst pupils and parents. A parent commented that the new headteacher has made 'a carrot approach school, not a stick.' Another added, 'It's not negative here'. Inspectors agree. Pupils' progress is now satisfactory, although it is improving faster in older age groups. This feature is apparent in Year 6 national test results, which have risen sharply in the last two years and indicate considerably higher standards than those in Year 2. This links to the quality of teaching, which is satisfactory overall, although the pace of learning and challenge are weaker in Years 1 and 2. Personal development is good throughout the school. The quality and standards of the Foundation Stage are good. Care, guidance and welfare of pupils are effective. Good teamwork amongst the staff is producing a wealth of ideas for improvement amongst everyone involved, including governors. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and has secured better resources and standards in information and communication technology (ICT), and recently in English by Year 6.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the rate of learning and the degree of challenge in work set for pupils are more consistent, especially in Years 1 and 2, thereby increasing overall rates of progress and standards. - Ensure that the new systems for monitoring the school's performance are fully understood and used whenever relevant at all levels of management.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Standards are average, although this was not the case as recently as 2003. Year 6 national tests indicate a strongly improving trend in pupils' performances since then, and especially so in the latest year. This picture is evident in the school's own data and in what was seen in the classrooms. Analysis shows that, after Year 2, pupils make considerable progress in English, mathematics and science. While the school is justifiably pleased with its improvement, there is clear understanding that performance should be even better. The school's new monitoring systems show that progress is not occurring as rapidly in Years 1 and 2. Results at the end of Year 2 are indeed below average in reading, writing and mathematics but these pupils made satisfactory progress from a level of knowledge

which is below expectations. Standards could be higher in Year 2. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is good. Very good leadership from the headteacher, and increasingly from other levels of management, has begun to address this issue effectively. New systems for raising performance that have been successful in older classes are being introduced elsewhere. New targets, more closely related to pupils' ages, are being set. Further up the school, realistic targets of this kind are met. Similar patterns of achievement are found amongst pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language. Pupils with learning difficulties and other disabilities are catered for effectively and often make good progress towards their own targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They have good attitudes to their work and behave well. Attendance is satisfactory and is carefully monitored. Many pupils are proud to receive awards for good attendance. However, a small number of parents do not fully co-operate with the school's drive to reduce absence and improve punctuality. Pupils feel safe and their views are regularly sought. They are pleased about how their ideas of the use of computers and the types of book that are needed in the library have resulted in action. Through the school council they are able to take an active part in the running of the school. They assisted in the recruitment process of the headteacher and have contributed effectively to the school community, raising money to pay for playground equipment and books. They respond well to the increasing opportunities to pursue their own ways of learning and for additional responsibilities as they progress through the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respond well to opportunities to think reflectively. During science, Year 6 pupils sat in silence for several moments when their teacher pointed out how amazing it was that the sun's gravity affected the earth over millions and millions of miles. Pupils work and play together amicably; they are interested in other cultures and know the difference between right and wrong. They know many ways of staying safe and healthy, and are developing skills in ICT, literacy and numeracy that will help them in their future careers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory, although good lessons were observed in several classes, particularly in older age groups and in the Foundation Stage. This follows the pattern of progress that pupils make through the school and reflects the school's own monitoring. Where the quality is less effective, it is often because pupils outside the teacher's main focus group are not involved fully on what they are supposed to do. The pace of learning is then slower. This difficulty is associated with work that is not always hard enough to challenge and sustain their interest. In the Foundation Stage,

staff have a very good awareness of the needs of young children, and their imaginative planning enables children to enthuse about learning. Concentration is often at a high level. Children of Reception age, for example, were very keen to show an inspector what they could do. Planning is often good. Systems to assess work are much improved and where teachers understand fully how to use the information provided, targets and success criteria are shared clearly with pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English receive good amounts of support and their progress is as good as that of others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Planning for all subjects including religious education meet legal requirements. The staff are keen to make their teaching interesting, and visits and visitors are often used well to this effect. The previous weakness in ICT has been addressed satisfactorily. In the Foundation Stage, provision in all areas of learning meets the needs of young children well. Individual targets are used well to adapt work for pupils with learning difficulties. However, adaptations of the curriculum to provide work of suitable difficulty for all pupils are not consistently made. Improvements in monitoring and evaluation are beginning to address this feature. Opportunities to include teaching about personal development are taken effectively, although often in informal situations as they arise, rather than in formal lessons. Planning for literacy and numeracy has improved considerably with the recent introduction of an intensive programme supported by the local authority.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

It is good that the whole staff have the pupils' interests so much at heart. Pupils know that they will be listened to if something untoward happens. One pupil who recounted an incident to a prefect was told, 'I think you should tell your teacher that. They'll do something, but they only can, if they know'. Many pupils were very supportive of their school, telling inspectors that bullying is rare and that incidents are dealt with quickly. Systems to ensure safety, including those for Child Protection, are in place and updated well. Parents told inspectors of their confidence that their children are well looked after. They are very impressed with the headteacher's knowledge of and care for their families. Recent systems, introduced to monitor progress more effectively, are building up information well, although their uses at all levels of management are not yet fully established. Nevertheless, parents are involved and given information openly. Pupils, including those with special needs, are appreciative of invitations to attend consultations and reviews of their work. They feel that knowing what their parents are told helps to understand what to do next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, although the headteacher is proving to be a very able leader. He has very quickly united the whole school community behind a vision of working together as a team to raise standards. The determination of governors to support and secure improvement is another good feature. This new direction requires the development of strong senior leaders who will manage at all levels and stages of the school's work. A new leadership team was set up for this purpose at the beginning of 2005. Self - evaluation and effectiveness are good. Systems to provide better information about pupils' personal and academic development have been introduced and much training is underway. Owing to the newness of these developments, their impact on standards is not yet fully apparent. Nevertheless, an Investors in People citation supports the school's self-evaluation that a very good start has been made and teamwork is indeed praised as already a strong feature. Inspectors agree that this has had a positive impact on increasing rates of progress, although not yet consistently. The school's accurate self-evaluation again includes all these points and its future plans reflect them convincingly, contributing to the inspection judgement that the capacity to improve is good. For example, much improved performance management now links effectively with plans to raise standards. Management of provision in the Foundation Unit and of special educational needs is good, including arrangements for liaison with local agencies and other services.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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 for being so welcoming when Mrs Parrish and I visited your school. We think that your work and progress are satisfactory. We were very pleased that so many of you told us that you enjoy school and want to get on well. We thoroughly enjoyed being in your school and coming to your lessons. We were very pleased that so many of you (and your parents) think that Mr Welch and your teachers have good ideas to improve your school. We agree with you about this. What we like most about your school: - the standard of your work is improving - you think about what you are taught and are willing to be surprised and amazed by it - your prefects and the school council do a lot to help the school to run smoothly - your teachers help you to feel safe and sound. What we have asked your headteacher, the staff and the school's governors to do next: - make sure that all of you learn your work and reach your targets as quickly as the older children - make sure that new ways of checking how well your school is getting on are used equally well by all your teachers. We hope that you will always be proud of your school and wish you well in the future.