



St Margaret's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113232
Local Authority Torbay
Inspection number 289555
Inspection date 6 March 2007
Reporting inspector Laurie Lewin

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Barewell Road
School category	Community		Torquay
Age range of pupils	4–11		TQ1 4PA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01803 327090
Number on roll (school)	332	Fax number	01803 322168
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mary Walton
		Headteacher	Rob Breeze
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most other primary schools. Most of the pupils are White British, with a small number from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. Pupils are drawn from the immediate surrounding locality, which is noted as having some families who live in very challenging circumstances. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above the national average, as is the proportion with statements of learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also above average. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language and a few of these require support as they are at an early stage of learning English. The school has a specialist support unit that caters for pupils with hearing impairment, including those who are profoundly deaf. There is a separately run nursery on the school site. Children starting school in the Reception classes show attainment that is below, and sometimes well below, the expected levels. The current headteacher started at the school in January 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. It has been revitalised by the vision, drive and enthusiasm of the current headteacher during his two years in post. As a result, the rate of improvement, which is satisfactory overall since the last inspection, has accelerated to a good pace in recent times. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they attain broadly average standards. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage because of strong provision. Most of them reach the expected levels by the time they start Year 1. Results in national tests and the school's own assessment records verify that progress across the rest of the school is satisfactory. However, there are clear signs that this is beginning to pick up as a result of improvements in teaching. Teaching is now good across the school, having improved as a result of better use of assessment information to guide lesson planning and the setting of targets for pupils. The assessment systems are new and the school rightly recognises that there is still scope for refining the use of the information even more to help speed up pupils' progress. This is particularly the case for higherattaining pupils who do not always progress as rapidly as they could. The school has strong care, support and guidance systems and staff cater sensitively for the needs of all individuals. This strong provision results in pupils showing good personal development and good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils have an excellent knowledge about how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Those spoken to show much enjoyment of school and they are proud of their achievements, especially in sports. Teachers and teaching assistants are particularly good at encouraging pupils and helping them to feel confident. Pupils' enjoyment stems from the good curriculum provision, with its wide range of extra activities. Also pupils appreciate the fact that teachers make big efforts to make lessons and activities as much fun as possible for them. The school's good leadership and management ensure that staff and governors accurately evaluate current performance and make good quality plans to support further improvements. A particularly clear and significant recent improvement at the school is the strengthening of the senior leadership team. There is a strong commitment, energy and enthusiasm evident within this new team. Alongside the recent improvements to teaching, curriculum provision and pupils' achievement, this means that the school has good capacity to continue the current rapid pace of improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers make the fullest possible use of assessment information to make their lessons even better and to increase the precision of targets set for pupils.
- Ensure that higher-attaining pupils are always given work that challenges them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement has improved as a consequence of improvements in teaching and is now satisfactory overall. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards are average. Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes and progress well in all areas of learning. Most of them succeed in reaching the early learning goals by the time they start Year 1. Although national test results show that standards by the end of Year 2 have been drifting downwards in recent years, this has been securely addressed by recent improvements in teaching. Work in lessons and in pupils' books show they are now on track to achieve average standards by the end of Year 2. Similarly, all the signs in pupils' work in lessons and in their books point to a strengthening in pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6. In particular, the past weaknesses in science work have been securely addressed so that pupils are on course to achieve average standards this year. Higher-attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they could do. The school rightly links this up with the need to sharpen the targets for these pupils and to ensure that work given to them is consistently challenging. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities progress well because of the good support they receive, as do pupils who speak English as an additional language and are at the early stages of learning English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

'We're the best! we get lots of good activities I can't wait to go back to school at the end of the holidays!' These were just a few of the comments from pupils that showed their enthusiasm for and enjoyment of school. Pupils say they feel safe at school and have absolutely no qualms about talking to a member of staff whenever problems arise. They are exceptionally sensible about eating healthily and taking exercise. They behave well, show good manners and concentrate hard in lessons. Pupils know that their views are valued by staff. The work of the school council, the wide range of responsibilities given to them and their fundraising involvements give pupils a good understanding about how they can play a strong part in contributing to the immediate and wider community. They gain a solid range of basic skills in lessons to help gear them up for future success. However, there remains scope for broadening their expertise in areas such as handling budgets and gaining knowledge of how businesses work. Although pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good overall, the school is correct in identifying the need to deepen pupils' awareness and understanding of how people from other cultures live. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are now good across the school; this has been an area of particular improvement in recent times and a key factor in pupils' improved achievement. At the heart of this improvement has been the recent introduction of a good system to record and track pupils' progress. This has given teachers a much clearer overview of how pupils are getting on and enabled them to tighten up their lesson planning. However, the systems are new and the school is now rightly working to increase the precision and consistency with which the assessment information is used, in order to ensure that all groups and individuals are given tasks in lessons that precisely match their needs. In this respect, staff know there is a particular need to ratchet up the level of challenge in activities provided for higher-attaining pupils. The impact of improvements made to teaching has yet to be fully realised in the school's results. However, the palpable enthusiasm for learning in the lessons observed and in talking to pupils reflects how securely the processes for accelerating pupils' achievement are now installed. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported across the school and especially good support is given for pupils with hearing impairment to ensure they are fully involved in all classroom activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good quality new accommodation and strong provision for the Foundation Stage children help them settle quickly and easily into school life. Much is done to enrich pupils' learning throughout the school through an impressive range of extra activities, trips, visits and visitors. Pupils and their parents particularly appreciate this aspect of the school's provision, which clearly gives a significant boost to pupils' enjoyment of school. The school has a very well ingrained programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education which strongly promotes pupils' personal development. Pupils spoken to said they enjoyed this work and felt ... 'it helps us to solve problems both in and out of school'. The school has good initiatives in place to help establish better links between subject areas, but recognises there is still much scope for improvement in this area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The provision for pastoral care, support and guidance of pupils is a strength of the school. It ensures that all pupils, no matter how severe their difficulties, are fully encouraged. Arrangements for counselling, nurturing and supporting pupils with particular needs are well established. Teaching assistants play a key part in this strong provision and show wide-ranging skills and a good ability to work in a flexible way to enhance the support and guidance for individuals. The school is vigilant in safeguarding

pupils' safety, and all procedures including those for child protection are rigorously followed. Sound procedures are in place to help guide pupils' academic progress. However, the school rightly identifies the need to make even better use of its assessment information to increase the precision of the targets set to help pupils improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since taking over at the school two years ago, the headteacher has helped staff freshen up their approach and build on existing strengths. He has created an atmosphere in which staff now work together as an enthusiastic and committed team, well focused on driving initiatives forward. This has moved the school out of a period in which the quality of its provision and pupils' achievement were not improving rapidly as they could do. Well focused action plans and energetic work by the staff, and particularly by the senior leadership team, have ensured that the school is now fully on track. Areas of weakness in pupils' work and in the school's results have been carefully analysed to help find ways for teachers to ratchet up pupils' achievement. There is much evidence from pupils' work and in lessons that this process is well underway. However, the school has rightly pinpointed that intensifying its use of performance data and assessment information is the cornerstone to sustaining its drive for improving achievement in the future. Governors and staff work well together in formulating plans for development. This, alongside the strong links the school has forged with all partner organisations, bodes well for the school sustaining a good rate of improvement in the future.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed coming to visit your school. Thank you for making me so welcome and helping me during the school's inspection. I think the school is doing a satisfactory job at the moment, but is improving rapidly. In particular, I think that the staff are especially good at making sure you enjoy your time in school. Here are some other things I noticed.
- You are making sound progress so that you reach the levels expected of you.
- Your behaviour is good. You work with lots of enthusiasm in lessons and get on well with all of the staff.
- I was very impressed by how much those of you I spoke to know about the need to keep yourselves fit and healthy. You have an excellent knowledge in this respect and do an impressive amount of activities to help you keep fit.
- You like your teachers and say that they are good at making the work enjoyable in lessons. You are right! They do a good job.
- You get a lot out of the good range of extra activities that the school provides for you.
- The school does a good job of taking care of you so that you always feel safe.
- Your school is well led and managed so that it keeps improving, and your headteacher, the staff and the governors work well together. I think that your teachers are right to look at how they can make even more precise use of the information they gain about your progress, so that they can design even better lessons and targets to help you improve. I have also suggested that they look at ways of making sure that those of you who manage tasks easily are always given work that continually pushes you to do better.