

St Margaret's Church of England (Aided) Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113453
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	289635
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	227
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Crossman
Headteacher	Mary Davis
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001
School address	Seaview Road Morwenna Park Northam Bideford EX39 1EL
Telephone number	01237 473569
Fax number	01237 423455

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Margaret's is an average sized junior school. The school's catchment area is relatively disadvantaged. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Margaret's is a good school which already has significant strengths in some aspects of its work. Over the past few years the headteacher's inspirational leadership and determination that the school will provide a high quality education for pupils has driven forward improvement which is evident in all areas of the school's work. She is especially well supported by the senior leadership team and governors. All staff share her vision for the school and are working hard to achieve this. Parents recognise the school's success and as one typically commented, 'I can honestly say my child is happy at St Margaret's. I know he is getting a good rounded education and I'm extremely pleased with the progress he has made.' Leadership and management are good overall and subject leaders are increasing their effectiveness in monitoring school development. The work of the governing body is outstanding. In particular their liaison with parents and the local community brings considerable benefits to the school.

Underpinning the school's success are the effective systems in place for monitoring and evaluating its work and pupils' progress. These ensure both staff and governors have a very clear picture of how well the school is doing and allow strategies to be put in place to eradicate weaker aspects. This has led to good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to improve further.

Personal development is excellent. The school has created an exceptionally good climate for learning so that pupils' attitudes to their work are outstanding and support their learning especially well. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils know they are listened to and their opinions are valued. They have excellent relationships with their teachers and one another and are growing in confidence and maturity. They willingly accept responsibility and show care and concern for others.

The curriculum is good. It is rich and relevant and seamlessly links subjects together giving pupils many opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The programme for personal, social and health education is excellent. Outstanding enrichment activities including a wide range of visits, visitors and clubs enthuse and motivate pupils.

Based on effective planning, teaching and learning are good and some is excellent. Activities are interesting and well matched to the level at which pupils are working, challenging them to do even better. A very positive feature of learning is pupils' involvement in assessing their own or their partner's work which encourages their progress well. However, teachers place too much reliance on worksheets which do not always allow pupils to plan and record their work, limiting the progress they make.

Pupils achieve well and standards are above average overall. Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and ICT. where standards are above average. Progress in science, although improving, is satisfactory because in the past less emphasis had been placed on developing pupils' investigation skills. Standards in science are average. Due to exceptionally good provision for art and music pupils make very good progress in these subjects and standards are very high.

Care, support and guidance are good. The school keeps a rigorous check on pupils' safety, and vulnerable pupils are especially well cared for. Personal support and guidance is excellent and academic support and advice are increasingly helping to raise standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' experimental and investigative skills in science.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to plan and organise their own work and decide how it should be recorded.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to Year 3 is average. Pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in English and mathematics where standards are above average. Progress in writing has improved significantly over the past year due to the school's good focus on this subject. In the past there has been less focus on improving the provision in science and pupils' progress in this subject is not as rapid as it is in English and mathematics. Pupils' skills in carrying out scientific investigations are less well developed than their scientific knowledge and understanding, although they are now making better progress in this aspect. In all three subjects an increasing number of pupils are reaching the higher levels in national tests. The school is close to reaching the challenging targets it has set for the Year 6 test results. Standards in ICT have improved since the last inspection and are above average due to the good progress pupils make. Pupils make excellent progress in art and music and standards in these subjects are very high. Pupils who have specific learning needs make the same good progress as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have an exceptional ability to reflect on the important features in life and the world around them. Their excellent cultural development is enhanced through high quality activities in art and music and opportunities to learn about other cultures including through links with a school in Islamabad. Pupils' outstanding moral and social development is evident in their excellent behaviour and relationships. They are very polite and helpful, showing a genuine concern for one another, for example when helping to assess a partner's work or looking after younger pupils in the playground. The school is an exceptionally happy and harmonious place to be and the calm working atmosphere of all classrooms is a particularly notable feature. Pupils like their teachers, greatly enjoy school and work hard. Attendance is good. As one parent typically noted, 'My son loves school – what more could a mum ask for!'

Pupils' excellent knowledge of how to achieve a healthy and safe lifestyle is evident in the school gaining the Healthy School and Sports Mark awards. Their contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding. Pupils take on many roles of responsibility including as school council members and playground buddies and are involved in numerous local community activities such as musical productions. They develop a range of good skills that will help them in future life including the ability to work well together.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers provide an excellent ethos for learning so that pupils want to do well and work hard. Their behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Activities are challenging, well matched to the level at which different pupils are working. However, there is still too much reliance on worksheets in some lessons which limit pupils' ability to extend their thoughts and ideas. Teaching assistants make a major contribution to learning, especially for pupils who find learning difficult. In the very best lessons exceptionally challenging and interesting activities and a rigorous pace enthuse and motivate pupils especially well so that learning is very good. A strong feature of lessons are the opportunities pupils have for assessing their own and their partner's work which gives them a very good understanding of how well they are doing. However, this system is relatively new and the full benefits have yet to be seen.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad, rich and interesting curriculum helps teachers plan challenging activities that encourage pupils' good progress. Strong links between subjects help pupils to develop their skills well; for example, Year 6 pupils produced some high quality writing as part of their geography project on 'Coasts'. The school recognises that pupils do not have enough opportunities to plan and organise their own work, although this is improving in science. Effective support programmes help pupils whose progress has slowed to catch up and this is raising standards. An outstanding number and range of visits, visitors and school clubs are contributing especially well to pupils' progress and enjoyment of school. For example, the work of the 'Artist in Residence' has led to high standards being achieved in art. The excellent programme for pupils' personal, social and health education supports their outstanding progress in this aspect.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are confident in the school's very good attention to their children's safety and welfare and pupils say they feel extremely safe and well cared for. The school has rigorous safety checks and robust staff vetting and child protection procedures. During the inspection the attention paid to pupils' safety on a school trip was exceptionally good. Vulnerable pupils and their families are given a high level of care and pupils with learning needs receive good support. Effective links with other agencies further enhance pupils' welfare and learning. Pastoral support is outstanding, and the high level of care that pupils receive is a major reason why their personal development is excellent. Improved systems for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress have already raised standards in English and mathematics. However these are relatively new and have yet to be extended to other subjects so the full effect of this aspect of the school's work has yet to be seen.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

St Margaret's is a continually improving school because of the exceptionally strong leadership of the headteacher and the effective support she receives from staff. This is especially evident in the senior leadership team who play an important part in supporting school monitoring and development. Although subject leadership has been affected by staff absences and changeover which has limited some improvements the school has effectively targeted English and mathematics to raise standards in these subjects. Science is now an area of focus, but there is still some way to go before pupils' progress is as good as it is in English and mathematics. Provision for pupils with learning and behavioural needs is very well managed resulting in their good progress. The work of the governing body is excellent. They provide especially good support to the school including improvement planning and development, and resources are effectively deployed to enhance the school's work. The school's productive partnerships with parents, other schools and agencies are helping to improve the quality of provision and pupils' welfare. Very comprehensive and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have given the school a clear picture of how well it is doing. As a result, areas of weakness such as the underachievement of boys in English are being pinpointed and successfully addressed.

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Annex A

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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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.

Annex A

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	1
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

14 June 2007

Dear Pupils

St Margaret's CofE VA Junior School, Northam, Bideford, EX39 1EL

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their lunchtime to talk to us. You and your parents think your school is good. We agree with you and also think some things are already better than that. We were especially impressed by your excellent behaviour and the way you enjoy school and work hard in lessons. We think that your school is continuing to develop well and I hope you will help staff and governors in making your school even better.

- These are some of the other things we thought were good about the school:
- You have a particularly good headteacher who is leading the school very well.
- Staff support you especially well in your personal development which is excellent, you all get on very well together and are very good at taking on responsibility.
- You are well taught and make good progress, particularly in English, mathematics and ICT.
- You have lots of interesting activities especially in art and music where you make very good progress and reach high standards.
- Staff take very good care of you and give you good advice on how to improve. We are particularly impressed by how well you are checking each other's work.
- The governors are supporting the school especially well and are very good at making sure that you and your parents are happy about school.
- We have asked your school to do a couple of things to become even better:
- Help you to become better in carrying out science investigations so you can do as well in science as you do in English and mathematics.
- Give you more opportunities to plan and organise your own work.

Thank you again for all your help and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

D Wilkinson Lead inspector