



# St Margaret's CofE Voluntary Controlled Junior School, Rainham

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118699  
**Local Authority** Medway  
**Inspection number** 291217  
**Inspection dates** 12–13 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Liz Kounnou

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior	<b>School address</b>	Orchard Street
<b>School category</b>	Community		Rainham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11		Gillingham ME8 9AE
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 230998
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	351	<b>Fax number</b>	01634 230998
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Alan Vousden
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Gabbett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 March 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 7–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 12–13 December 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 291217
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Margaret's is a larger-than-average junior school serving a mixed catchment area that includes pockets of significant economic deprivation. About a quarter of the pupils have learning difficulties, which is higher than average. A very small proportion of pupils, around 3%, are from minority ethnic groups; very few of these are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils joining the school after Year 3 is similar to most junior schools. However, more pupils join the school in Years 5 and 6 than is typical and a high proportion of these have specific learning difficulties.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to this good school. They really appreciate the good teaching and learning, saying that teachers challenge them: 'Teachers give me confidence and courage. When I think I can't do it they say, you can have a try.' Lessons are often fun because staff have redesigned the good curriculum to ensure that pupils have plenty of opportunities to work together in small groups and find things out for themselves. This approach has ensured that pupils make better progress in science now. Pupils achieve well and reach average standards in English, mathematics and science. The most able pupils do exceptionally well in these subjects, and all pupils achieve extremely well in reading. Writing standards are not as high and improving pupils' writing is currently a high priority for the school. School leaders know that pupils who have learning difficulties, especially a small group of boys, are not making as much progress as they could in English and mathematics, because lessons do not take enough account of their individual targets for learning.

More than one parent explained how their children had grown in confidence since transferring to the school. Parents particularly appreciate pupils' good behaviour, with many choosing the school for this reason. The school's very inclusive approach reflects the Christian ethos. Pupils who are struggling to overcome learning difficulties soon settle in because the care, guidance and support for all pupils are good. Pupils of all abilities are set targets to help them improve their work. These are not fully effective because they are not clear enough to show pupils what they need to do to reach the next steps in learning, and the way they are set varies throughout the school.

Leadership and management are good and lead to good school self-evaluation. There are good systems to check how well all the pupils are doing and the school's good capacity for improvement is evident in the changes that have been made to improve pupils' achievements. The school has organised some unusual groups that are beginning to make a significant difference for boys and girls, who much appreciate working together in single-sex groups.

Pupils' well-being has a high priority. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. The school council runs its own affairs and controls a small budget. The council members even play a minor part in the appointment of new teachers. Extremely good links with schools in other European countries allow pupils to widen their horizons really well. Good links with local businesses are helping Year 6 pupils to gain the skills they will need for their future well-being. The school has earned a third Basic Skills Quality Mark, reflecting the importance that is given to developing key skills for life. The Healthy Schools award contributes well to pupils' good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and how to keep themselves safe.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing throughout the school and ensure that pupils' learning targets explain what they need to do to improve their writing skills.

- Ensure that pupils who have learning difficulties, especially boys, make better progress in English and mathematics.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well. When they join the school their attainment is broadly average. Fewer pupils have attained above-average levels when they join the school than is typical, and a much higher proportion than usual have specific learning difficulties. When pupils leave the school, standards remain average, but this disguises some significant variation in achievement. For example, most pupils make excellent progress in reading, and broadly satisfactory progress in writing.

Pupils are set by ability and the most able do extremely well, reaching much higher standards than might normally be expected of them. Pupils in the top sets appreciate this: 'I like lessons because they are challenging and I learn a lot of new things,' said one. Other pupils say that teachers explain work well so that they find it easy and make good progress. Most pupils who find work more difficult make at least satisfactory progress, though some boys who have learning difficulties are not achieving as well as they should because of their poor attendance.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils really appreciate the school's efforts to help them develop as mature young people and feel privileged to take on their school responsibilities. Playtime 'Special Buddies' show great pride in their tasks and contribute well to the safe routines on the playground. The school council used their good knowledge of healthy eating to persuade the Tuck Shop to sell healthier options. All around the school pupils enjoy their lessons, have good attitudes and behave well.

Pupils' contribution to the community is outstanding, with a wealth of activities undertaken, including partnerships with pupils in European schools. They participate enthusiastically in several local competitions and challenges. An eco-engineers' competition really helped them develop a simple understanding of business skills that will stand them in good stead in future. Attendance is satisfactory but a small group of pupils are persistently poor attendees.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very warm relationships with pupils, and provide many stimulating activities to make lessons interesting. In Year 6, pupils

describe lessons as, 'Great – really fun – easy to understand – there is a good balance of talking and doing.' Varied teaching styles in the English and mathematics sets successfully motivate different groups of pupils and this is accelerating pupils' progress. Nonetheless, some pupils who have learning difficulties do not make the same good progress as other groups, because lessons are not always tailored well enough to help them make the next steps in learning. In small groups, teaching assistants support these pupils really well, with a sharp focus on their individual targets.

Good assessment procedures ensure that teachers know how well their pupils are doing. Teachers' high expectations encourage pupils to try their best, and often to make rapid progress, especially in reading. The most able pupils are challenged really well in lessons. The best marking accurately assesses pupils' attainment and clarifies next steps for improvement, but marking is not consistently good across the school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good because it captures pupils' interests and motivates them very well. Links between subjects are often very stimulating. For example, numeracy lessons in Year 3 included elements of English and cookery. Pupils knew that the best reports of the work were likely to be sent to partner schools in the European Comenius project. Setting pupils by ability enables the school to tailor work well to meet most pupils' needs, but there is sometimes a mismatch of activities for pupils who have learning difficulties.

An outstandingly varied range of lunchtime and after-school activities, including animation, chess, modern languages and numerous sports, enriches the curriculum. Pupils visit local and national sites of interest frequently, and are especially excited about the residential visits on offer. Good links with local secondary schools provide opportunities for Year 6 pupils to enjoy specialist laboratory facilities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents very much appreciate the good care, guidance and support provided for their children. 'This is not just a school, it is a community – the staff are so very dedicated to the children.' The Church Youth Worker provides invaluable support to pupils experiencing difficulties. Staff and governors are punctilious in ensuring that pupils are safe at school. There are many ways that successfully encourage pupils to do their best. House points are very popular and there is regular recognition of 'star achievers'.

Pupils are set targets to help them improve their work, but currently the way these are used varies from class to class so that they are not fully effective. A few parents raise concerns about homework, but pupils say that it is fun and really helps them to improve.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and characterised by rigorous procedures for checking how well pupils are doing. The senior management team are very effective because they work well together and with great determination. They tackle weaknesses that have been identified through their reviews with enthusiasm. They have introduced some innovative practice, such as single-sex groupings in English, mathematics and science to overcome the persistent differences in achievement of boys and girls. Recent assessments of pupils' work show that this is beginning to have a positive effect. Previous weaknesses in science standards have been tackled effectively so that pupils now make good progress throughout the school.

Governors work effectively with senior staff to review the school and plan how to bring about improvements. The resulting strategic plan is satisfactory and includes clear objectives that show how improvement will be achieved. However, the plan does not make clear which the most important priorities for the school are so that there is not a concerted effort to tackle these from all staff. This limits the overall effectiveness of the plan.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school. The staff care for you well and provide a lot of interesting activities for you. Most of you are making good progress because you have a lot of fun. St Margaret's is a good school and the staff and governors work really well together to try to make it even better.

Here are the things that we think are best about your school:

- You make excellent progress in learning how to read.
- You really appreciate the good teaching and learning, and the care that staff provide.
- You concentrate very well and work hard in your lessons.
- You behave well all around the school and take on a lot of responsibilities.
- Your involvement in the local community and your links with children in other European schools are extremely good.
- You take part in an outstanding variety of clubs at lunchtimes and after school, and can go on plenty of educational visits.

These are the things that we think could be better:

- Your writing skills are not as good as your reading skills.
- You do not all know your learning targets, especially those for writing, and you are not all involved in helping teachers to know when you have reached them.
- Some pupils who have learning difficulties are not making as much progress as they could.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.