



St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124782
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293111
Inspection dates 29–30 November 2006
Reporting inspector Ruth Frith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bolton Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Ipswich
Age range of pupils	4–11		Suffolk IP4 2BT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01473 251613
Number on roll (school)	210	Fax number	01473 252066
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Canon D Cutts
		Headteacher	Mrs S Gallagher
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school situated in the centre of Ipswich. About 60 per cent of the pupils come from the parish of St Margaret's Church, with the remainder coming from the neighbouring parishes. Pupils' socio-economic backgrounds are usually favourable and this is reflected in the much lower than average proportion receiving free school meals. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with about 12 per cent from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than in most schools. A small number of pupils have a statement of special educational need. After 21 years in post, the headteacher retired at the end of the summer term. Until the new headteacher joins the school in January 2007 the deputy headteacher is carrying out this role.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It is well led and managed and has good capacity for further improvement. Staff are particularly successful in creating a friendly and supportive environment in which pupils do well. Care, guidance and support are good and help pupils to feel safe and develop confidence as they progress through the school. Pupils' personal development is also good and is reflected in their good behaviour, attitudes and relationships with staff and each other. Good links with the church help to support pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development. Effective links with the community encourage pupils to develop their cultural awareness and to care for others.

Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. Staff help children to quickly settle in the school by establishing clear procedures and providing interesting activities. Teachers build on this good start so that by the end of Year 2, pupils achieve above average standards in writing and mathematics and high standards in reading. Pupils continue to progress well so that by the time they leave the school their standards in English, mathematics and science are high. These high standards are a result of the good teaching and curriculum, pupils' very good attitudes to learning and effective support from parents. Learning builds systematically over time at a good rate and ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The vast majority of pupils make good progress and achieve well. Through comments from teachers and the marking of their work, pupils generally have a good understanding of how to improve. Staff have a range of information on individual progress, but the current system of recording does not help them to easily identify any changing needs and achievement for groups of pupils.

The curriculum is good and ensures that pupils enjoy learning and often find lessons fun. As a result, attendance is above average. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well but opportunities are lost to fully develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT). Music and physical education have a high profile across the school and standards of singing are above those usually seen. Pupils are very keen to sing both in school and for the wider community.

The caring school ethos, together with good support from families, governors and the church creates a school where pupils feel happy and learn how to adopt safe and happy lives. The accurate and insightful school self-evaluation procedures have helped staff and governors to gain a clear understanding of the school's strengths and identify appropriate priorities for improvement. During this period of interim headship the staff have continued to develop their work under the good leadership of the acting headteacher. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Create a more efficient system for accessing and analysing information about the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Ensure that ICT is used more effectively, particularly the computer suite, to promote pupils' learning and develop their skills of research and investigation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From slightly above average starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well. This positively contributes to the next stage of their education and their future economic well-being. By the time they enter Year 1 they usually have at least reached the goals set nationally and in many cases have achieved beyond this. Over recent years the school has maintained high standards but there was a dip in the 2005 national assessment results and Year 6 standards were only above average. This was related to that cohort of pupils and their individual needs. The 2006 national assessments show recovery from this dip. In Year 6, pupils attained high standards in English, mathematics and science and achieved well. The percentage gaining a higher Level 5 in all subjects was above average and in reading and science was particularly high. The school exceeded its challenging targets in English and mathematics. In Year 2, pupils attained high standards in reading and above average standards in writing and mathematics. Work seen during the inspection generally indicates continued good progress and achievement for all groups. However, very occasionally lower attaining pupils only make satisfactory progress because the work is not sufficiently well matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils get on well with each other and are very sociable. One pupil said, 'Come to this school and you will have lots of friends and your happiness will never end'. The good relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that they like coming to school and enjoy their learning. Pupils are very caring and supportive towards each other. Older pupils are keen to become playground buddies and offer support to younger pupils who need a friend to play with. They behave well in lessons and around the school. The majority are beginning to put their knowledge about the need to eat healthy foods and to take regular exercise into practice. The school council works well to support the development of the school. Pupils are very aware of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. They are keen to raise money for charity and to take part in community activities, especially those organised by the church.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, teachers successfully place good emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Science teaching has improved and this has led to higher standards. Teachers have a good understanding of what pupils know and can do. They use questioning effectively to develop pupils' thinking and assess

what they understand. In most lessons, teachers use this knowledge well to track pupils' progress and match the work to their needs. However very occasionally, the work for lower attaining pupils is not appropriate. Good quality marking in many classes leads to pupils' better understanding of what they have to do to improve and achieve their individual challenging targets. Teachers use ICT effectively in lessons, especially the electronic white boards. The teaching of music is good and pupils achieve high standards in their singing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy what they are doing because they find activities interesting and feel able to improve and succeed. The personal, social and health education programme is effective in encouraging pupils to stay safe and lead healthy lives. The curriculum is enriched by strengths in music and physical education and interesting links, for example between English, mathematics and ICT, were seen in a science lesson. The curriculum for children in the reception class is good, which ensures that they make good progress in all areas of learning. Visits to places of interest add another dimension to the pupils' learning as they receive a more practical 'hands on' experience, for example when taking part in the Year 6 residential trip. There is a good range of popular clubs and activities which enhance pupils' physical and creative education and help to develop new skills. Best use is not yet made of ICT, as insufficient attention has been placed on fully utilising the computer suite and promoting pupils' independent learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils like coming to school because the teachers and support staff know them well and relationships are good. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and know who to ask for help. The support provided for all pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, is good. Staff effectively use the expertise of specialists from outside school to develop their own practice. Teachers' use their knowledge of pupils well in lessons. However, even though procedures are in place to track pupils' progress over longer periods of time, systems are very time consuming when teachers need to extract information about the progress of particular groups of pupils. Good systems are in place to monitor pupils' absence and these are having a positive impact on maintaining above average attendance. Effective procedures are in place for safeguarding pupils' and these fully comply with the latest government requirements. Procedures for child protection are clear and well established; health and safety checks are rigorous.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

During this interim period of leadership, the acting headteacher and governors have provided good leadership and management. There is a clear focus on raising standards

through improving the quality of teaching and learning within the established caring and supportive school ethos. The acting headteacher has been particularly effective in ensuring that staff morale is high and that all share her clear educational direction and sense of purpose. This has been helped by the development of a new school improvement plan which accurately highlights the current needs of the school. There are effective procedures for checking how well the school is doing and what needs to be done next. Actions are well targeted and have a positive impact on the school's development, for example, improving the quality of pupils' writing. The governing body supports the school well and, by effective monitoring, also checks how the school is progressing towards meeting its aims. The views of all members of the school community are taken into account. The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school and what it offers their children.

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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 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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2
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.

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

01 December 2006

Dear Children,

St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School Bolton Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk
IP4 2BT

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out about your work. We were pleased to hear that you enjoy school and find learning fun. We think St Margaret's is a good school and have listed below some of the things we particularly like.

- You work hard and do well in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Your singing is very good and we were pleased to find out that some of you are learning to play a musical instrument.
- You behave well, look after each other and work and play together well.
- All the staff work together very well as a team and they enjoy teaching you. Teaching is good and helps to keep you interested in learning.
- The school council works hard to make sure that any issues that are raised are treated seriously.
- The activities you do are interesting and this makes learning fun.
- Staff look after you well and you feel safe in school. We were pleased to hear that you would go to a member of staff if you had problems.

Mrs Gallagher manages the school well and is helped by all the staff and governors. We have agreed that your learning will get even better if you have more opportunities to use computers. We have also asked them to improve the way they record what you have achieved so that they can quickly and easily see how they can help you even more.

We left the school feeling very confident that it would continue to improve and that you would continue to work hard and attend regularly.

We wish you well in the future.

Ruth Frith

Lead Inspector