

# St Margaret's Nursery School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101254
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barnet
<b>Inspection number</b>	307629
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Goodchild

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	102
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Miss Beryl Maltby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jennie Scott
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 February 2002
<b>School address</b>	Margaret Road New Barnet Barnet EN4 9NT
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8449 5466
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8449 9216

---

<b>Age group</b>	3-5
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 December 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	307629

---

© Crown copyright 2007

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 an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and the curriculum, leadership and management, gathering evidence from children's records, teachers' planning, observations of teaching and learning, and scrutiny of notes about the school's effectiveness produced by senior managers, governors and the school improvement partner. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessment, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Children enter the school between the ages of 3 years 1 month and 3 years 9 months and, because of local arrangements for admission to primary schools, spend between three and five terms in the school. Half of the children attend on a part-time basis; the remainder attend for an extended day. Children come from a wide range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and a higher proportion than usually found are learning English as an additional language. A small percentage have learning difficulties and disabilities. The school is subject to reorganisation: plans are underway for it to become a children's centre in September 2008. It already provides a weekly parent and toddler group and a toy library for parents, carers, childminders and other pre-school providers.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding nursery school that gives children an exceptionally good start to their education. Many parents wrote to express their satisfaction with the school's work, describing it as 'fantastic' and 'wonderful'. They say that their children love attending because of the nurturing environment, varied activities and outstanding level of care, and they themselves are very appreciative of the extended provision.

From average starting points, children's achievement is outstanding and overall standards are well above national expectations. All children progress at a similar rate, but those who stay for five terms necessarily reach higher standards than those who spend only three terms in the nursery. Children do particularly well in personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, and physical and creative development. Within these areas of learning, they have already acquired some skills that are not expected until the end of the Reception Year. Children make good progress in developing early writing skills, making marks for a purpose, and begin to form letters and in some cases to copy sentences. The school has successfully raised achievement in mathematical development, and children make good progress, especially in recognising and working with numbers. It has also succeeded in deepening children's knowledge and understanding of the world by increasing opportunities for scientific exploration.

Children are cared for exceptionally well and make outstanding progress in their personal development. They move with confidence between activities as well as concentrating and becoming quietly absorbed in them. Staff treat them as individuals and encourage them to express themselves. Children develop a belief in their ability to succeed and are confident to try things out for themselves. Teachers encourage appropriate behaviour by praising the children and guiding them so that they develop a sense of right and wrong. As a result, they behave exceptionally well and learn to work and play together harmoniously. They are beginning to understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle, for instance, realising that sweets and cakes should only be eaten on special occasions, and have daily access to physical exercise. They feel safe and secure and enjoy trusting relationships with the adults who work with them. The children are encouraged to contribute to the community, for instance by visiting an old people's home, and take part in fundraising. The school is very responsive to the children's ideas about how the school could improve. Children enjoy a wide range of activities, saying that they particularly like taking part in creative and imaginative tasks, dressing up, doing things in the outdoor area, listening to stories, going swimming, watching butterflies develop and making friends.

Teaching is outstanding and sessions are nearly always a hive of purposeful activity. As one parent put it, 'Almost every week my daughter has cooked something, grown something or watched something being born; at the same time she has learnt the importance of good manners and appreciating others'. There is a very good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities, alongside direct teaching of important skills. The school has been working to ensure that tasks are always challenging enough for the most able children and it has made good improvement in this area. There are examples of teachers revealing extremely high expectations, for instance, providing minimal support to children constructing electronic circuits and offering choice from a wide range of exciting materials in creative development. The staff are sensitive to children's individual needs and skilled in providing activities matched to the next stage in their development. Interactions between adults and children are frequently of very high quality so that children make rapid gains in their language development and understanding. Those learning English as an additional language or who have learning difficulties and disabilities

benefit from the individual support provided. A wide range of resources ensures that there is much to capture children's interest. Although the accommodation is somewhat cramped, the learning environment is a labyrinth of colour and visual and tactile stimuli. The walls are covered in examples of children's high quality work as well as being rich with text and images, often representing a range of cultures, to promote their learning.

The school is working to provide further enrichment to what is already a good curriculum. Children go on outings, for instance, to the park, the shops, the zoo and museums, and the school welcomes visitors from the local community, including parents who tell stories in their native languages and share festival celebrations. The large outdoor area makes a good contribution to children's learning; the school is, rightly, developing outdoor opportunities further. Activities are varied and stimulating although they do not include many opportunities for children to get involved in large-scale projects, such as extended topics that involve them in developing a range of skills simultaneously across several areas of learning.

The school is very thorough in assessing what children can do. Parents contribute details to the information gathered from home visits and direct observation when children join the school. Planning and record keeping are meticulous and staff regularly observe children's progress in each area of learning. Effective systems are in place for identifying the needs of children with learning difficulties and disabilities, for whom English is an additional language or who have particular gifts and talents. Parents are kept well informed about how their children are doing and they are involved in their learning.

Senior managers provide outstanding educational direction and are strongly committed to continuously improving the school. Staff are very experienced and share the headteacher's vision, and there have been few staff changes in recent years. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and is well placed to improve further because self-evaluation is good. Senior managers regularly monitor teaching, planning and assessment and teachers receive frequent feedback about their work. The school has devised an exemplary system for monitoring children's achievement in order to identify any differences from one area of learning to another and from one group to another. So far, this system has been used solely by managers to check on the progress of the children in two of the classes, enabling them to begin to make very precise judgements about school effectiveness. The system is now to be extended to the other classes and to involve teachers as well, so that they are able to evaluate the impact of their work on children's progress.

Governors provide good support and increasingly challenge the school's work. Senior managers recognised the need for them to become more involved in monitoring learning and so individual governors have recently become attached to specific classes to assist this process. The school works well with other educational establishments, for instance, providing placements for trainee teachers and childcare students from European colleges. Senior managers are working closely with the local authority and other agencies in preparation for further extending the school's service as a children's centre.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

As a nursery school, the Foundation Stage is covered completely by the Overall Effectiveness section.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend the new system for tracking and monitoring children's progress to all classes and ensure teachers are actively involved in this.
- Refine what is already a good curriculum by providing more opportunities for children to take part in large-scale projects that span several areas of learning.

**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).**

## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

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

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

<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.



## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

3 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Margaret's Nursery School, Barnet, EN4 9NT

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited your nursery school. I really enjoyed my visit and seeing all the lovely things you do. I am writing now to tell you what I found out about your nursery.

St Margaret's is an outstanding nursery school. I can understand why so many of your parents wrote to say that they are delighted that you are able to go to such a good school. They know, as I discovered, that the staff look after you extremely well and make sure you have many interesting things to do every day. You are learning new things all the time. You have especially good opportunities to make things, like all the beautiful cards and calendars you have made for Christmas, and to learn to get on with each other and become confident about who you are. You are also doing well in starting to write, listening to stories and finding out about numbers. You behave really well and I could see that you enjoy choosing from all the activities available. Some of you were concentrating really hard, especially those who were making electrical circuits, and you play very well together. The teachers and other adults who work with you are very experienced in knowing what children of your age need and they work very hard to make learning enjoyable for you.

The nursery school is led and managed exceptionally well and the headteacher and other staff want to make it even better. Recently, they have been checking very closely how well those of you in two of the classes are doing. I have asked them to do the same thing now in the other classes, and to give you the chance to learn through some really exciting big projects that would cover several different areas of learning at the same time.

Keep enjoying your time at the nursery, learning new things and having fun.

Best wishes

Margaret Goodchild

Lead Inspector