

St Margaret of Scotland Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 109634 |
| Local Authority | Luton |
| Inspection number | 310048 |
| Inspection dates | 14–15 May 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Keith Sadler |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 468 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Michael Fielding |
| Headteacher | Mrs Christine Boyd |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4 July 2005 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Rotheram Avenue Luton Bedfordshire LU1 5PP |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
| Age group | 4–11 |
| Inspection dates | 14–15 May 2009 |
| Inspection number | 310048 |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Margaret of Scotland is much bigger than most primary schools and is over-subscribed. It opened in September 2008 following a merger of the former infant and junior schools. It serves three Catholic parishes and hence many pupils travel some distance from all parts of Luton. About half the pupils are from White British backgrounds and the others are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being Polish. A small proportion of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. Most of these pupils either find learning hard or have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

The school is due to be extended to a capacity of over 600 pupils with the addition of a third class of pupils in each year group. An extensive building project to accommodate these pupils is due to begin at the end of the summer term.

The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a 30 place Nursery, which children attend on a full-time basis in the term following their fourth birthday. In addition, there are three Reception classes. There is a pre-school, St Paul's, on the site that is not managed by the governors. The school has gained the Healthy Schools and Investors in Families awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Margaret of Scotland provides a satisfactory standard of education. The school has a number of good features and is improving. The headteacher provides clear and decisive leadership and she is supported well by her new leadership team. She successfully promotes her vision for a successful school. This is reflected in the good personal development of the pupils and their improving achievement. Parents are almost unanimous in having confidence in the school. Their views are summarised by the parent who wrote, 'I feel content every morning when I leave my daughter. The school leaves me with a sense of well-being knowing that my daughter is being taught and taken care of in such a caring environment.'

Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory though it is accelerating. There was some underachievement in the autumn term, particularly in writing and mathematics, owing to some unsatisfactory teaching. Senior staff quickly and correctly identified the need to improve teaching by ensuring that teachers' assessments were accurate. A rigorous improvement project was put into place to remedy this in order to ensure that future work set is challenging for all groups of pupils. This has been successful overall and, in consequence, progress in lessons has quickened as the quality of teaching has improved to its current good levels. Nonetheless a few lessons remain satisfactory because the level of challenge is not yet high enough. However, as a result of improvements, pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6, are firmly on course to attain standards that are in line with the national average in English and science. In mathematics, a legacy of some under-achievement is being tackled well though standards, overall, are lower, because pupils do not always apply their mathematical skills and knowledge well enough in practical and problem solving situations.

The school's care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is very good. Staff are skilled in managing pupils and ensuring that relationships are consistently positive. Vulnerable pupils are supported well by the team of support staff helping them to feel included in all the school has to offer. Information about pupils' progress is diligently collected and used very effectively to ensure that any pupils in danger of slipping behind are quickly identified and good support systems are put into place. These arrangements, when linked to the increasingly accurate assessments of pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics, have been an important key in the school's developing effectiveness.

The curriculum is satisfactory. A good start has been made on drawing together curricular planning from the former infant and junior schools. An appropriate emphasis has been placed on ensuring that the curriculum is adapted and amended to meet the particular needs of St Margaret of Scotland pupils. In addition, senior leaders correctly identified the need to ensure that the curriculum becomes progressively more challenging for pupils as they move through the school.

Pupils are very aware of the importance of diet, exercise and hygiene to promote a healthy lifestyle. The school deservedly holds the Healthy Schools award that recognises this. Pupils behave well and act safely, considerately and politely in and out of lessons. They enjoy school and learning. They willingly contribute in many ways to their school and local community. Their sound basic skills prepare them satisfactorily for their future education.

Leadership and management are now good. The leadership team, working with the governors, quickly identified clear priorities starting with the process of welding two groups of staff together. This has met with success. All the staff share a common commitment to improvement.

They work closely as a team and thoroughly enjoy the new opportunities to learn about developing strategies for teaching and learning in age groups in which they have previously lacked experience. Staff morale is high because there are clear and good routes for all teachers to make a contribution to the continuing improvement of the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children achieve satisfactorily in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It provides a secure and happy environment so that all children are included and settle quickly and happily into school. There are good links with the school's family workers and teacher with responsibility for pupils for whom English is an additional language. This ensures that children and families new to the area, or needing support, get the help they need. Staff look after children with care and attention so that children feel safe. Teaching is satisfactory overall with strong features in the good relationships between staff and adults so that, in the main, behaviour is managed effectively and children's personal and social skills develop well. Teachers' expertise in teaching phonics is varied so that progress across the three Reception classes is inconsistent but, overall, children make sound progress in developing their knowledge of letter sounds and how they can use these to read and spell.

The stimulating outdoor learning environment is used appropriately. Children enjoy playing together and are provided with satisfactory opportunities to explore and discover for themselves. However, when children take part in 'free flow' activities, where they choose an activity either inside or outdoors, learning is often not as good as it could be. This is because, while teachers' planning is generally satisfactory, it does not identify what it is children are expected to learn from taking part in 'free flow' activities or the support adults can provide. Similarly, teachers make good assessments of what the children know and understand but not all of them are using these assessments to plan precisely for individuals to ensure the best possible progress.

Children's skills are similar to those typically found when they enter the Nursery. They make satisfactory progress so that by the end of Reception, most children reach standards appropriate for their age in all areas of learning except personal, social and emotional development, where it is above. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a strong team spirit amongst staff and they work very well together to take on new initiatives. Good links are established with parents. They are welcomed warmly into school and encouraged to contribute to their children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress by embedding the good arrangements for teachers' assessments to ensure that there is a consistently high challenge in future activities set.
- Raise standards in mathematics by focusing on applying mathematical knowledge in practical and problem solving situations.
- Improve the quality of planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that there are clear learning objectives for 'free flow' activities to promote development across all areas of learning.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The senior leadership's determination to improve progress has led to a strengthening of progress from previous weak achievement, particularly in mathematics. It is now at least satisfactory in all year groups and improving. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and, like in Years 3 - 6, it is accelerating due to improvements in teaching and learning. Year 2 pupils are on course to attain standards that are in line with expectations. Slower progress in Years 3 - 6 in the autumn term has been arrested and Year 6 pupils are on course to attain standards that are in line with the national expectation, though the proportion of pupils expected to gain the higher level in mathematics is below that normally found. Pupils' ability to put their mathematical skills to effective use in problem solving and practical activities is not yet secure. As a result of appropriate support for vulnerable pupils, and the many that are at an early stage of learning English, their progress matches that of their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils feel physically and emotionally secure and know that adults will always help them. They care for one another and older pupils take some responsibility for younger ones, for example as play leaders. Pupils have good attitudes to learning because adults respect and encourage them. Behaviour is good, pupils are keen to explain their learning and they work well in groups. Pupils care about those less fortunate than themselves, and they raise money for many charities. They develop enterprise skills and their role in the community, for example by managing budgets for their clubs. The school has good links with several local schools, particularly with art and technology. Pupils understand the need to treat everyone fairly. They have a role in making decisions in school, for example in planning school meals. Attendance is satisfactory because some pupils from specific groups have below average attendance. However, the school is addressing this well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are now good in all year groups and this has enabled pupils' progress to accelerate as a result of successful training. Teachers know their pupils well, and ensure that classrooms are calm and purposeful places where pupils enjoy their learning. In the best lessons, work is very well matched to pupils' learning needs and teachers provide interesting activities in a lively manner that captures pupils' interest and encourages them to concentrate well. Previous weaknesses in teachers' assessments meant that in too many lessons, work was not sufficiently well-matched to pupils' learning needs. This has been overcome in most lessons, though the arrangements are not yet fully bedded down to ensure that the level of challenge is consistently high. Pupils' positive attitudes lead them to work well together, to concentrate, persevere at their tasks and be proud to demonstrate their achievements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum promotes personal, social and health education effectively and, as a result, pupils are polite, respectful and interact well with each other. Provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory and is improving at a good rate. The school is making good progress in developing a 'thematic' approach to planning by linking subjects such as history, ICT and English. Where this has been introduced it is having a good impact on pupils' enthusiasm for learning, and for use of ICT and boys' writing. There is a good range of after school clubs, visitors and visits helping promote pupils' learning, levels of fitness and good personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults encourage and support children well, and there is good and improving provision for those children with learning difficulties or for whom English is a second language. Pupils and families are provided for exceptionally well by the two effective family workers who contribute well to the school's high level of care. This is recognised in the school already gaining the 'Investors in Families' award. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils and promoting good health are robust. Pupils know how to improve because teachers share targets with them and write helpful comments in their books. Support staff contribute well in lessons and there is good team work. The school takes action to reduce the rate of absence, and works closely with parents and other agencies to support learning. In consequence, attendance rates, although satisfactory, are improving.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Under the good and determined leadership of the headteacher, the senior staff, working closely together, have united the two schools exceptionally well. There is a common purpose amongst the staff that has successfully created a good team spirit. Links with the local community are good and those with the three Catholic parishes are excellent. The school has established links with another Luton school providing pupils with a close understanding of other heritage groups. In addition, a link has been established with a school in Majorca which has enabled pupils to develop email links. A new innovation is to form links with Polish schools following the headteacher's visit, soon to be reciprocated to a school in Poland. Such initiatives demonstrate a good sense of community cohesion.

Senior leaders' comprehensive self-evaluation processes have accurately determined the key priorities for raising standards and improving provision with the implementation of a good quality improvement plan. Most of all, they have quickly brought rigour to the processes for checking pupils' progress and this has been an important factor in the strengthening of achievement.

The new governing body has quickly gelled together. Governors have worked exceptionally hard and effectively to ensure that the very short timescales set for the merger of the two schools has been met. At the same time, working in close partnership with the headteacher, they have ensured that plans for the substantial expansion of the accommodation are securely

in place. The school's good improvement in its provision, and the strengthening of achievement, demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement.

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 3 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 3 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 3 |

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/or disabilities make progress | 3 |

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

| | |
|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 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 | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School, Luton, LU1 5PP

Thank you for helping us when we visited your classrooms and assemblies to see you at work. You were very polite and helpful and we enjoyed talking with those of you we met. We were really pleased to see how much you like to take part in activities during and after school and how well you behave.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. It is hard to imagine that only last July, you were part of two separate schools. All the adults look after you very well and help you to feel safe and happy. Your school is warm and welcoming to you, your parents and also to visitors like us. Your teachers do a good job and they are working hard to make sure that the lessons that they plan for you are interesting and enjoyable. Your headteacher and senior staff lead and manage the school well. We know that some of you are excited at the thought of all the new buildings you are going to have, and your headteacher and governors are working hard to make sure this, too, runs smoothly.

Your headteacher and staff are determined that your school is going to get better, and we have asked them to make sure the following things are done to help this.

- Ensure teachers further improve the progress you make by using the assessments of your work to plan work that is always challenging.
- Raise standards in mathematics by improving how well you use your number skills in practical and problem solving activities.
- For staff who teach those of you in the Nursery and Reception to make sure that their plans have clear learning objectives particularly for 'free-flow' activities.

We know that you are proud of your achievements when you reach your targets, and you can help by making sure that you concentrate and reach them quickly.

We hope that you enjoy your future learning.

Yours faithfully

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector