

# St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Bowers Gifford

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115150
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311857
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	284
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Canon Eileen French
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Dean Moran
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	London Road Bowers Gifford Basildon SS13 2DU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01268 552176
<b>Fax number</b>	01268 556299

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is larger than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than usually found, but is increasing each year. An average percentage of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who use English as an additional language is average but numbers are increasing. More pupils than is usual have moderate learning difficulties and the percentage with a statement of special educational need is above average. The percentage of pupils entering or leaving the school is much higher than normal. The school has attained the Healthy School Award.

## 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's is an improving school that gives its pupils a satisfactory standard of education. The large majority of parents are happy with the school and say that their children enjoy attending. One wrote, 'My child can't wait to go to school in the mornings.' The new headteacher has made a good start and is providing strong leadership. He is well supported by the deputy headteacher. They have both got to grips with what must be improved and standards are starting to rise. Pupils have begun to make better progress towards challenging targets, although the school still has some way to go in its drive to raise standards. Current pupils attain broadly average standards and most make satisfactory progress. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision for the school's future and work well together as a team. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory, as is its capacity to improve further. However, they recognise that other layers of management are weak. The headteacher is working diligently to ensure that middle managers become more effective and take full responsibility for their areas. Because of this, leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There is also much to be done to strengthen governance. Governance is currently inadequate because governors do not hold the school to account effectively by challenging managers and acting as critical friends. They too readily accept what they are told - without question.

There have been improvements to teaching. This is because the headteacher has worked hard to support teachers and challenge inadequate teaching. Inspection evidence shows that teaching is satisfactory. Indeed, there are some good features in teaching, but practice is inconsistent and the large proportion remains satisfactory. The proportion of good teaching is not yet high enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. Senior leaders have plans in place to improve teaching further and to promote better progress through an improved curriculum. Presently the curriculum is satisfactory. They rightly recognise that improvements are required to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all learners more effectively. Recently introduced plans show a change of approach to enable more links to be made across subjects to make learning more purposeful.

Satisfactory care, guidance and support ensure that pupils' personal development and well-being are also satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, although restlessness and inattention adversely affects some lessons. Pupils are well cared for, enjoy school and feel rewarded for their efforts. One said, 'I like my school because we have team points to build up your confidence.' Pupils make a good contribution to their school and local community. Links with Basildon District Council enable pupils to participate actively in the recycling scheme and the school council raises money for school-based projects by organising events such as 'Strictly Come Skating'. Pupils relish the responsibilities offered to them, conduct themselves safely, and actively take up healthy lifestyles. Sound basic skills and positive attitudes prepare them satisfactorily for the future.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children make good progress in Reception. Good links are made with families through a good induction process that helps children to settle quickly. Upon entry, the range of skills is wide but usually at expected levels. By the end of Reception, children reach at least expected levels and a proportion exceed them. Relationships and behaviour are good. Teaching is good. Indoor facilities, the new outside area and good quality resources are used effectively to make learning

interesting. Staff and teaching assistants work together well with this age group. They assess children's day-to-day progress in all areas of learning and provide clear evidence of attainment by the time children reach the end of Reception. Well-planned activities are interesting and engage the children. There is a good balance of adult-led sessions and opportunities for the children to choose what they would like to do. Leadership and management are good because the Foundation Stage leader has high expectations of what children can achieve.

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

- Increase rates of progress across Years 1 to 6 to match those reached in the Foundation Stage and, thereby, improve standards and achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good in order to make up for previous underachievement.
- Make middle managers more effective in improving standards and monitoring teaching, and ensure that governors hold the school to account robustly for its performance.

A small proportion of the 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**

Standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well because provision is good. However, pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is uneven because, in too many year groups, there has been a record of underachievement in the past and evidence of pupils marking time. Standards are average at the end of Key Stage 1. Year 6 results in core subjects have fallen in recent years, representing a declining level of achievement. The school has made a determined effort to reverse this trend and early indications are that standards have rallied this year and are now average. Nevertheless, given the start children make in the Foundation Stage, standards are not yet high enough. Because the quality of pupils' learning is improving, pupils are making progress that is satisfactory in more lessons and are on track to raise standards further. However, more able pupils underachieve when teachers expect too little of them. Pupils who find learning difficult attain as well as and, sometimes, better than their classmates. This is also the case for pupils whose first language is not English.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' enjoyment of school is shown in improving levels of attendance, which are now satisfactory. They accept responsibilities with pride and genuinely want to help others, for example as mediators and play leaders. The school council is an active and valued force and pupils know their views count. They have raised money for the school to purchase playground equipment. Behaviour is satisfactory, but in some lessons pupils are restless and their inattention can hinder progress. Unacceptable behaviour does occur but is dealt with quickly and fairly. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to follow a healthy lifestyle and act safely and sensibly. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They understand that what they do affects others, and respect faiths and cultures different from their own. A Christian ethos permeates the school and assemblies provide meaningful and reflective

interludes. Pupils are developing sound economic skills and are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The recent focus on improving teaching and learning is showing some success, but teaching is not yet good enough to overcome the legacy of underachievement. Examples of good practice demonstrate the ability of teachers to capture the interest of pupils at the start of lessons so that they listen attentively. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboards, which involve pupils and support their learning. Most pupils persevere with their work, but a small minority finds it difficult to concentrate all the time and, in a few lessons, low levels of disruption are not handled effectively. Pupils work well together in most lessons and teachers encourage pupils to share their ideas with each other. In some lessons, insufficient time is allowed for pupils to complete set work because teachers spend too much time talking. Not all lessons cater for the full range of abilities, leading to a lack of consistency in the challenge provided particularly for more able pupils. There are examples of good marking, but practice here is also inconsistent. Comments in some pupils' exercise books do not ensure that pupils know what to do to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Recent improvements to the curriculum, such as linking subjects together in termly and half-termly units, are beginning to make learning more meaningful for pupils. Provision now offers a much wider range of activities and has resulted in a more flexible and creative approach. However, these changes have had insufficient time to make a full impact on pupils' learning and achievement. Pupils who find learning difficult enjoy full access to the curriculum. The school has rightly identified the need to further develop the curriculum to raise standards in Years 1 to 6. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and includes a number of clubs for sport, drama and music. A residential visit to Devon helps to improve pupils' physical and social skills. Visits in the locality and visitors to the school are used effectively to support work in areas such as personal safety and how to lead healthy lifestyles.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements. Good levels of pastoral care enable pupils to feel safe and secure. Pupils' welfare is valued and the school has established effective links with outside agencies to provide positive support for particular pupils and their families. Individual support for pupils who need special help with their learning and for those with medical problems enables them to make at least satisfactory progress. Academic guidance is satisfactory. New assessment procedures are in place but have not yet had a full impact on progress because pupils are unclear about how their personal targets help them to improve their work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The school judges the quality of leadership and management as satisfactory and inspection evidence agrees. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are providing strong leadership. The headteacher has worked hard to introduce and develop a manageable range of initiatives to improve standards in the short space of time in which he has been in charge. The large majority of parents support the school and many of them comment positively about recent academic improvements. In the words of one, 'Mr Moran seems to have a great attitude to pushing the school forward.' Some of these initiatives are already showing an impact and the school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory. Systems to check on the quality of teaching and to hold teachers to account for their pupils' progress are now well established. However, middle leadership is inadequate because subject leaders are not involved sufficiently in the monitoring of their own areas of responsibility. They do not yet give clear and consistent direction to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The governing body is supportive of the school, but governors are not as involved as they should be in monitoring school development. They do not hold the school rigorously to account for the standards it achieves. Their understanding of the information available on the school's performance is limited, and they do not understand their role as critical friend. These important weaknesses reduce the overall effectiveness of leadership and management.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### 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>	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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

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

<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>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
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

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**Annex B**

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

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Bowers Gifford, SS13 2DU.

Many thanks to you all for giving us a warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. It made us cheerful to see so many smiling faces. You told us lots of interesting things about your school. You enjoy the sports, tournaments and clubs you are able to take part in. Those of you in the school council like the responsibility you are given. You raise money for charity through organising events such as 'Strictly Come Skating'. This is very commendable, well done! Some of you are peer mediators and help other pupils in your school. You understand how to live a healthy lifestyle and know about which foods are good for you. Most of you behave well, but there are some of you who could behave a little better in lessons. It is very important that you listen carefully in class and always do your best work.

Your headteacher and his deputy headteacher are doing a good job. We think your school is a satisfactory school. That means it does some things well but there are still some things which need to be improved. Your teachers work hard and teaching in your school is satisfactory. I have asked your headteacher to ensure that teaching is good so that you make better progress in your work. I have also asked that the teachers who are in charge of subjects make sure that regularly check teaching so that they know how good it is. Finally, the governors of your school have been asked to ensure that they ask your headteacher questions so that they fully understand what improvements need to be made. They also need to understand how well you do in tests and whether you are doing as well as other schools.

I wish you all well at St Margaret's and hope you continue to enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead inspector