

St Margaret's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131349
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	315786
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2008
Reporting inspector	David Law

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	513
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	Mrs G Warburton
Headteacher	Mr C Metcalfe
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Road Orford Warrington Cheshire WA2 9AD

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Margaret's is a larger than average sized primary school. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision that includes a Nursery with 60 part-time places. The school serves a community where social and economic circumstances are less favourable than on average. Although the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average, this varies and in some years it is above average. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school has gained the Activemark, Basic Skills Award and has achieved the Healthy Schools Award. The headteacher took up his post in September 2008 and four new teachers have joined the school this term.

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 provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and it is improving in a number of areas. The recently appointed headteacher is working closely with the deputy, with a clear focus on raising achievement.

The vast majority of children join the Nursery with skills lower than expected in most areas of learning and they make good progress in the EYFS. Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. By the end of Year 2 many pupils still find reading and writing difficult and standards in these subjects are below average. Pupils' achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall, although standards remain below average in English but are broadly in line in mathematics and science. Pupils are making more rapid progress in the current Year 6 where they are engaged in their learning by consistently good teaching. Throughout the school, improving pupils' reading and writing has been a key priority. This is beginning to help pupils make better progress, although standards in these subjects remain below average.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The majority behave satisfactorily in lessons and around school and pupils feel safe and happy. They develop positive relationships with adults and with their peers. The school, together with other agencies, has worked hard to improve attendance to a satisfactory level. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. Where pupils are encouraged to be active in their learning they enjoy it more and make better progress, but there is not enough of this. The school is committed to raising standards by improving the quality of pupils' learning. Teaching assistants make a satisfactory contribution to raising pupils' achievement. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Overall, the care, guidance and support pupils receive are good. The school cares well for pupils and the academic guidance and support they receive are satisfactory. Safeguarding procedures comply with government guidelines. Pastoral systems are well developed and the school has good links with a range of agencies, particularly to support vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents are supportive of the school and are welcoming of the changes recently introduced to improve learning. They comment very positively on the work of the Nursery. One parent said, 'My child comes home from Nursery singing songs he has learned and gets excited when he knows he is going there.'

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The headteacher is ably supported by his deputy. These two senior leaders recognise the need to improve standards and are supporting the professional development of staff as well as managing their performance effectively. However, middle leaders are less secure in their ability to evaluate progress and manage strategies for improving teaching and learning and pupils' achievement. Governors understand that supporting pupils to achieve more highly is a key priority but they are still developing their capacity to hold the school to account for the standards it reaches. Given senior leaders' satisfactory self-evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. In terms of achievement, and the costs of providing for pupils' education, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good. When children arrive in the Nursery most are working at levels below expectations. Through good teaching, they achieve well in their learning. By the start of Year 1, most are working at broadly average levels in most areas of learning. Thorough induction arrangements help children to settle quickly into the Nursery. During this induction, parents are encouraged to take an active role in their children's introduction to education and this results in good links being formed with parents. Children make good friends, treat each other and adults with respect and become happy learners. Teachers and support staff work enthusiastically and continually strive to improve the provision. Thorough observation and assessment of children by their key workers is undertaken and children's 'next step in learning' is accurately identified. On some occasions, when children are not fully engaged in focused activities, they have insufficient time to gather their thoughts and opportunities to develop their language for thinking and communication are missed. There is good teamwork in the whole EYFS team and effective procedures are in place to ensure that care and welfare have a high priority. Consequently, children's personal development and well-being are good. Children are aware of healthy eating habits. Teachers' planning and assessment take account of individual needs and all the areas of EYFS are covered. The indoor areas are interesting and provide a relevant and appropriate focus on personal development and basic skills, as well as the wider curriculum. Provision in the outside area for children in Reception is more limited; as a result, children in Reception do not always have the freedom to learn in their chosen environment. The EYFS is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading and writing so more pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Improve the quality of teaching so it is more effective in helping pupils to make progress as they move through the school.
- Develop the quality and contribution of middle leaders' monitoring and evaluation in the raising of whole-school achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age but by the time they reach Year 1 they are approaching levels expected for their age, although communication, language and literacy remains the weakest aspect of their development. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 1. Provisional results of the 2008 Key Stage 1 national assessments show that by the end of Year 2 standards are average in mathematics although few pupils reach the higher level.

However, while more pupils are reaching the higher level in reading and writing than in previous years, standards in these areas remain below average and not enough pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2007 were below average in English and mathematics and too many pupils did not make the progress of which they were capable. The school took action to improve this. Provisional results for 2008 show improvement in mathematics. Standards in this subject and in science are broadly average with more pupils reaching the higher levels.

Standards in English remain below average. Overall, achievement at Key Stage 2 is now satisfactory. Inspection evidence of work in pupils' books shows satisfactory progress and some good features in Year 6, where the rate of learning is brisk. School assessment and tracking data show most Year 6 pupils are on course to reach their appropriately challenging targets for 2009. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because lessons meet their needs appropriately and teaching assistants give suitable support in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy their time at St Margaret's. They work hard and cooperate well with each other. They say that teachers make learning fun. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils understand how to keep healthy and the school has recently achieved the Healthy Schools Award. They understand the contribution exercise makes to a healthy lifestyle, and all extra-curricular sporting activities are well supported. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they need help. Any incidents of bullying, should they occur, are quickly dealt with. Most pupils behave appropriately and their attendance is satisfactory, although the attendance of a small minority of pupils remains below average. The school council is at the early stages of redevelopment. Pupils say that they hope this will strengthen their voice in the school. Pupils' aspirations are heightened when they take part in an undergraduate experience at Chester University, culminating in a graduation ceremony to which their parents are invited. Links with the church are robust, which results in a positive commitment to the local community. Money is raised in support of local charities; recently, a sponsored walk raised funds to support a project at Alderhey Children's Hospital. Pupils develop satisfactorily the skills they need for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best teaching is in Year 6 where work is well matched to pupils' needs. Here, lessons have a brisk pace and time is used well. Elsewhere in the school, the better teaching often uses practical activities and this engages pupils so they enjoy what they do. When Year 3 pupils are marching like Roman soldiers and following instructions in Latin they are able to use their imaginations. In Year 4 where pupils make electrical circuits for a science challenge they rise to the occasion well. In some lessons, however, tasks do not demand enough of pupils and their rate of learning is not quick enough. Consequently, learning time is lost and in particular this slows the progress of the more able pupils. Sometimes when pupils are working in groups they do not always understand what they have to do and so their learning does not have a clear focus. The introduction of a tracking system is enabling all teachers to have a better understanding of the progress pupils are making. Senior leadership is using this information to monitor improvements and hold teachers to account for what pupils achieve. However, it is too early for the full impact of this to be felt and so the quality of teaching remains variable, resulting overall in pupils' satisfactory progress through the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is broad and balanced and there is a satisfactory range of enrichment activities which support pupils' personal development. Sporting activities provide opportunities for healthy activity while visits to the theatre and museums add to pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils are especially enthusiastic about the residential trips they go on. These help them develop their self-esteem and independence. The school is planning to develop links between subjects more consistently across the school to make pupils' learning more meaningful and effective. Plans to match what is taught more closely to pupils' needs are also being put into place, adding extra enjoyment and involving pupils more actively and effectively in their learning. Provision for pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology is satisfactory; it enables pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to make satisfactory progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

While pastoral care for pupils is good, the academic support and guidance they receive is not as strong, which is why this area of the school's provision is satisfactory overall. The care shown to pupils is rooted in the school's strong ethos. Parents agree that their children's welfare is in safe hands. The school follows policies and procedures to justify that confidence and safeguarding procedures comply with government guidelines. The quality of care provided by support staff for those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a positive feature of the school's provision. Pupils are given clear guidance about behaviour and relationships. A system for tracking pupils' progress is in place. However, while this is a useful tool, its full impact is yet to be seen. Pupils are beginning to be aware of targets for academic improvement. However, they do not always know how to improve their work due to inconsistencies in teachers' marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, is providing the school with a clear focus on improvement. Senior leaders have used a range of review strategies and this has given them an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. Work has started on tackling the key areas for improvement, such as raising standards and achievement, but it is too early for the full impact to be felt. Astute appointments to the teaching staff have been made; there are clear early signs that these are proving successful in helping drive up standards. Performance management has been improved to provide a sharper focus on targets and identify professional development needs. Senior leaders are acutely aware of the need to make subject managers more effective in monitoring and using the outcomes to drive up standards and achievement in their subject. Leaders have a satisfactory impact on promoting community cohesion. The school is inclusive; all pupils are valued equally. Its role in the community is strengthened by its links with the parish church. Pupils have satisfactory levels of understanding of other cultures and religions. Governors discharge their responsibilities satisfactorily and are supportive and

increasingly knowledgeable about the effectiveness of the school. As their knowledge is growing so too is their confidence in being able to ask pertinent questions to hold the school to account.

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Annex A

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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which 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	3
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?	3
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?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	3
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**

The other inspectors and I enjoyed our visit to St Margaret's. You all made us feel very welcome. Thank you for contributing to the inspection by being eager to talk to us and tell us about your school.

We found that your school is providing you with a satisfactory education. You tell us that you feel safe in school. The children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress in their learning. We also found that you work hard in your lessons. We thought that the standards you reach are improving, especially in mathematics, but reading and writing need to improve further because by the end of Year 6 they are below average. The teachers and other adults take good care of you and overall the teaching and learning you receive is satisfactory. Sometimes, teachers give you the chance to do things that are active, like when Year 3 were marching like Roman soldiers. This helps you to enjoy your learning and we would like to see more of this active kind of teaching to help you make better progress. Your headteacher, who is quite new to the school, is working hard with the deputy headteacher, other staff and the governors to make your school even better. However, we would like teachers who are subject leaders to improve how they check on the progress you make so they can help you to learn even more.

You told us that you enjoy going on school visits and that you have the Healthy Schools Award and know the importance of exercise to keep healthy. You enjoy the playground equipment but we thought you could keep the playground tidier! Most of you attend school regularly but a few pupils do not attend often enough.

We hope you will play your part in helping these improvements come about. You can do this by coming to school regularly and continuing to work hard at your reading and writing and by trying to reach the targets your teachers set for you.