

St Margaret's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105493
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	324230
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Onyon

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 controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	366
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	Rev R Boulter
Headteacher	Mrs E Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Withington Road Whalley Range Manchester Lancashire M16 8FQ
Telephone number	0161 2262271
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average sized school draws pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds and serves an area of deprivation. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The majority of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average and the proportion of pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language is high. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in the Nursery and Reception classes. The proportion of pupils joining the school other than in Early Years Foundation Stage is very high. There have been considerable changes in staffing across the school over the past two years. The school has gained the Investors in People, Eco Schools Bronze and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that has improved its provision since the last inspection. Although standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 are below average they are gradually moving upwards following a period of decline. Because of the clear vision and determination of the headteacher and Deputy Headteacher the decline has been halted. Parents and carers agree: they say, for instance, that, 'The children seem to be motivated to do better.' and, 'There has been an improvement over the last two years.'

After making a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make satisfactory progress during Years 1 to 6 and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils learning to speak English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar satisfactory progress because of the appropriate support they receive in class. A clear well focused plan to improve pupils' standards in reading is beginning to take effect, but more remains to be done to raise overall standards even further, particularly for higher attaining pupils.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school, especially when they take part in the interesting visits and extra activities the school provides. The satisfactory curriculum is beginning to be a better match to the needs of individual pupils. Pupils' behaviour is good and they show respect for their teachers and each other. Positive relationships and the approachability of staff make a good contribution to pupils' social development and to their sense of security. Pupils say that they appreciate taking on positions of responsibility, for example, as school councillors, and they are increasingly involved in helping the school to improve. Pupils are welcoming and keen to show off their school; they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. For the most part, lesson planning provides enough challenge for the pupils and their different levels of ability. However, work is not sufficiently challenging in some lessons, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Staff work skilfully to support, guide and care for all pupils from the very wide range of cultures and backgrounds. Many pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language but they are quickly able to communicate. This is because of carefully planned support and effective partnerships between class teachers and support staff. Occasionally, however, opportunities are lost to make best use of the support staff's skills. This occurs when they are not utilised to best effect for short periods in some lessons and they have little to do. They are not always actively involved in encouraging pupils to do their best.

The headteacher and the leadership team are united in their vision to raise standards. The school has introduced new systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and this is beginning to make a positive difference. Older pupils are aware of how they are doing in their work but others are not sure precisely what to do in order to improve. Monitoring and checking of pupils' work by class teachers is beginning to improve standards but as yet it is not consistently effective.

The work of the supportive governing body is appreciated by the school. The chair of governors represents a group of committed and increasingly well informed governors who provide satisfactory governance. The headteacher provides good, strong, motivational leadership. Working closely with the Deputy Headteacher she has correctly identified where the school needs to improve and put procedures in place that are taking the school forward. Under the

focused leadership of the headteacher, subject leaders are increasingly engaged in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and are providing effective leadership for school improvement. The school has good capacity to improve further. This is demonstrated by an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and the halt in the decline and gradual improvement in standards and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. The school recognises that the full impact of improvements is yet to be felt.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because of good leadership and good teaching. Children achieve well from very low starting points when they enter the Nursery. Although they make good progress they are still working below expected levels in most areas of their learning by the time they leave the Reception class. Home visits support good relationships with parents and children settle quickly into good routines which promote their independence. Staff across the Early Years Foundation Stage work well together ensuring children are well cared for and have high expectations for their learning and social development. Thorough planning ensures that activities are well matched to children's needs. They generally experience a good range of stimulating activities both indoors and outdoors, although the restricted access to the outdoor space for Reception children limits their opportunities. There is a good balance between adult interactions and child led learning. Teaching assistants provide sensitive, focused support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. Staff know the children well and are able to assess their development to match work to individual needs, including those children who can attain at higher levels.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards for all pupils and especially higher attaining pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Improve the quality of teaching and the involvement of support staff so that work is matched more closely to the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure that all pupils receive the guidance they need to understand how to improve their work.
- Consistently involve classroom teachers in checking pupils' performance in order to raise standards.

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

A decline in standards and achievement has now been halted. Standards are improving, but in the 2008 assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6, in English, mathematics and science, they remain below average. Pupils' achievement, given their very low starting points is satisfactory. The need to raise standards further has been accurately identified by the school. The recent progress of many pupils in reading is good because of the impact of daily sessions practising the sounds of letters. Progress for higher attaining pupils is identified as a priority for whole school improvement. A large number of pupils join the school at times other than the Nursery or Reception class. These pupils are quickly assessed in order to identify their needs and carefully

supported so that they make satisfactory progress. The school has put appropriate support in place for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. This ensures that these groups also make expected progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good overall. Their diverse cultural backgrounds are reflected and celebrated in all aspects of the school's work and pupils' spiritual, social and moral development is good. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They are encouraged to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community through the school council, as eco-warriors and by fund-raising for charities. Pupils understand their responsibilities to others and have influenced decisions to provide a bike rack and to design gates for a community garden. Behaviour is good and the school invests in a range of partnerships which support behaviour, individual learning needs and the emotional well-being of vulnerable pupils. Children are keen to access this support. They feel safe in school and are confident that they can seek help for occasional incidents of bullying. Racial incidents in this culturally diverse school are very rare and pupils respect each other. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school. Attendance rates are rising as the result of the significant steps the school has taken to improve them and they are broadly average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

As the school has experienced changes of staff, the leadership team has focused rigorously on improving the quality of teaching throughout the school. This is beginning to show improvements, although not yet consistently, in all areas. Pupils' enthusiasm contributes well to a creative learning atmosphere and good attitudes to learning are reinforced by the modelling of the broad cultural background of the staff in the school. Warm pupil staff relationships and mutual respect are evident throughout the school and support a learning environment where there is a good mix of adult led teaching and independent enquiry. Lesson planning is generally good but does not always consistently aim to raise attainment in lessons for all groups, especially higher attaining pupils. Support for children who need additional help, individually or in small groups, is good. The use of the outcomes of assessment to help pupils know what they have to do to improve their own learning is still in its early stages.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. By using the information available about pupils' progress many staff are beginning to develop a much closer match of work to meet individual needs. A clear focus on raising standards in mathematics and English by planning opportunities to use the skills in other subjects is beginning to be effective. It is helping to improve the curriculum for all groups of pupils. The quality of the curriculum is enhanced by an appropriate range of additional activities. Pupils appreciate the many visitors who come into school and enjoy activities such as art, sport and music. Older pupils gain a great deal from their outdoor pursuits visit to Debdale. Improvements in information and communication technology (ICT) since the

previous inspection offer appropriate opportunities for pupils to build their skills. Whilst plans are in place to install interactive whiteboards to enrich the delivery of a number of subjects, current access to ICT is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Overall care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Care and support are good and at the heart of the school. The school meets current requirements for safeguarding pupils. Policies and procedures for health and safety and risk assessments are comprehensive and reviewed regularly. Transition arrangements into high schools are good. The school provides high quality support for pupils' emotional well-being. For example, through the effective work of the learning mentor and, 'The Place to Talk', giving pupils the opportunity to discuss any problems they may have.

The school works effectively with a range of outside agencies to support children when specific difficulties are identified. Pupils for whom English is not their first language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage. Appropriate intervention and support is put in place and this helps them to make the same progress as other pupils. Some pupils, particularly those in Year 6, are aware of their learning targets and what they need to do to reach them. However, this is not always the case, and many pupils do not know how well they are doing or what they need to do to make better progress. This level of academic guidance prevents this aspect of the school from being good overall.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Because of the purposeful leadership of the headteacher and Deputy Headteacher, leaders and managers have made a secure analysis of how to improve the school's performance. New procedures, stable staffing and strong leadership are beginning to make a difference. The school has accurately identified the need to raise standards, especially in reading, mathematics and writing and these are a focus for the whole school. Standards are gradually improving. The daily teaching of letters and sounds, a programme to support pupils finding reading difficult and the co-ordinated engagement of a number of outside agencies provide extra support to boost pupils' standards. New assessment systems are raising teachers' expectations. They ensure that pupil progress is tracked closely, underachievement quickly identified and interventions put in place. This has improved the quality of teaching and raised pupils' performance. However, not all class teachers are sufficiently involved in monitoring pupils' progress towards learning targets. The school's diverse community is served well and there are good opportunities for most pupils. The limited opportunities for higher attaining pupils mean that overall equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily by ensuring that pupils from all ethnic backgrounds are fully involved in school life and building links with neighbouring schools. The school is making effective use of its funding in an effort to raise standards and provides satisfactory value for money.

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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	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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?	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**

Thank you, on behalf of the inspection team, for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school. You were very friendly and told us all about the things you do in school. We consider your school to be satisfactory overall. The best things about it are how much it is improving and the fact that your work is getting better.

Your headteacher and all the staff are determined to improve the school even more and everybody is helping to do that. You are a big part of this and we are convinced that you will be very involved and play an active part in school improvement. The standards you reach are now beginning to improve and we want them to continue to get better. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make a good start to their school life. They play and learn happily together.

We would like you to try hard to improve your work in all your subjects. This is very important for those of you who find your work easy. We have asked your teachers and the support staff to make sure that you each learn in ways that suit you best and have work that is just hard enough. We have also asked the school to involve all your teachers more in checking how well you are doing so that they can help you do even better. We want you to know exactly how you can improve your work. We are sure you will because you are keen to do well in your subjects.

With very best wishes for your future.