

St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113459
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	325822
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	David Edwards HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	108
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	Sylvia Thorne
Headteacher	Matthew Tookey
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Polhearne Way Brixham TQ5 0EE
Telephone number	01803 851647
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- How effective are the current strategies to support pupils' learning to achieve challenging targets?
- To what extent the school's provision is ensuring good or better progress from pupils.
- How well the leadership and management of the school demonstrates good capacity to improve.

Evidence was gathered from an analysis of pupils' test results, current assessment and tracking data, and observation of lessons. Parents' questionnaires, discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included in the report where appropriate.

Description of the school

St Margaret Clitherow is a smaller than average primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and a few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is also above the national average. The school hosts an independently managed pre-school provision. Most children transfer to the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. 'The school has a warm and friendly atmosphere and we always feel welcome when visiting the school.' 'All the teachers are wonderful. They know the children really well and are always the first to praise and recognise the children's achievements.' These comments, written by parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, reflect the views of the overwhelming majority of parents who support the school and are very happy with their children's progress and achievements. The relatively new headteacher has begun to make the necessary changes in the way the school is led and managed in order to further secure pupils' good standards of achievement. Parents appreciate the school's commitment to good communication which is maintained through an efficient and approachable team of school administrators. Through introducing a distributed leadership way of working, the headteacher is empowering his staff and managers to take on more responsibility for school development and improvement. He has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has already put in place the right steps to accelerate pupils' progress, although these have not yet had time to have their full impact. There is now a shared understanding amongst staff of the development necessary to maintain and build on the good standards evident throughout the school. This collegiate approach to leadership is evidence that the school has good capacity to improve even further. Progress in promoting school improvement since the last inspection has been effectively addressed except in providing easier access for the youngest children to the outside environment. Governance currently does not provide the school with the strong strategic guidance and support that it needs. This is because for some time there have been a number of vacancies on the governing body which has inhibited its ability to provide strategic support and direction. The school is very aware of this issue and is currently in the process of restructuring roles and responsibilities as well as recruiting new governors.

From the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress and achieve well so that by the end of Key Stage 1 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are generally above average, with none significantly below average. This is because teachers know their children well and provide lessons that meet their learning needs effectively. In recent years, most pupils have maintained good academic progress through to the end of Key Stage 2. Typically, by the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in English and science and average in mathematics. In 2008, the school's challenging targets were exceeded in all three core subjects except for the more able pupils in mathematics. The current Year 6 pupils are firmly on track to attain standards that are in line with national expectations. This represents good progress relative to their starting points and good achievement overall.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well because of the generally good teaching and effective curriculum that engages pupils' interests. As a result, the majority of pupils enjoy their learning. There is an appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy skills within the curriculum. Recent initiatives to improve pupils' calculation skills have been particularly successful in raising achievements in mathematics. Teachers pay good attention to making the purpose of each lesson clear to pupils, successfully encouraging high standards of behaviour, and using information and communication technology well to enliven learning. Good planning also ensures that activities are varied and stimulate learning which maintains pupils' interests. These strategies effectively support pupils' behaviour, which is good, and their positive attitudes to learning also contribute to the good progress they make. In the best lessons, the pace of learning is brisk with effective questioning keeping pupils of all abilities focused on their work.

The high quality care provided for all pupils is demonstrated through the high level of staff commitment. The pastoral care and support for all pupils is a particular focus of the school and is clearly appreciated by parents, as seen in their comments in the returned questionnaires. Effective steps have been taken since the last inspection to improve academic guidance for pupils. The marking of pupils' work is now carried out regularly and is thorough. The majority of written comments guide pupils appropriately in how to improve their work so that pupils of all ages can now talk positively about their targets and what they need to do next to improve. Teaching assistants are well trained and liaise closely with teachers to provide effective support to focus groups of pupils as well as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, although more able pupils generally do well, they could be doing even better. In lessons where teaching is not as strong, more able pupils in particular have too little opportunity to work independently.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is good because of the well planned programme for personal, social and health education. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they are growing into mature and confident individuals. Most pupils enjoy school and their attendance is in line with the national average. In the past two years, the school council has had a significant impact within the school and wider community. For example, members were involved in the interview process for the headteacher as well as raising money to provide new bike sheds and upgrading pupils' toilet facilities. The school's promotion of community cohesion and cultural awareness is satisfactory because pupils currently lack sufficient opportunities to develop their understanding of Britain as a multicultural society. A recent audit on community cohesion has been completed by the school and plans are in place to develop pupils' appreciation of the diverse cultures within our country.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children begin school with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age and make good progress in their learning. By the time they enter Key Stage 1, they are demonstrating good standards of achievement in all areas of learning. They get off to this flying start because staff work successfully together to promote the children's welfare. However, although some work has been carried out since the last inspection to improve the outdoor learning area, it still does not adequately provide for children's overall learning and development needs. Access to the outdoors remains restricted and therefore does not allow children sufficient independent free-flow between the classroom and outside. Despite this inadequacy, children still settle quickly and happily into school because of the commitment, expertise and knowledge provided by the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and her support staff. Through her outstanding assessment and monitoring procedures, staff quickly get to know the children and then match teaching and learning activities to individual needs. Care and welfare is a high priority which leads to children demonstrating good self-confidence, especially when communicating with adults. Children also have the ability to focus on learning for extended periods of time, such as when two children were observed using toy ducks as pupils to rehearse a song. Despite the physical restrictions, staff have high expectations of what children can achieve, which is why most children make good progress in all areas of their learning by the time they are ready to transfer into Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop pupils' skills as independent learners during lessons, in order to maximise motivation and achievement, especially for more able pupils.
- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage area, especially the outdoor learning environment, so that it better supports children's development needs and provides better independent learning opportunities.
- Ensure governors provide effective challenge, as well as support, to maximise the impact and success of actions to bring about school improvement.

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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?	2
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?	2
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?	3
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2

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?	2
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	3
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?	3
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	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**

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School, Brixham TQ5 0EE

Many thanks for being so friendly when we visited your school recently. A special thank you goes to those of you who met with my colleague to share your views and opinions. We were particularly impressed with the work of the school council and the ways you are making a difference within your school and the community. Well done! You gave us lots of helpful information and so I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Many of you and your parents told us how pleased you are with your school. You are right, yours is a good school. There are many reasons why you are doing well. Firstly, your headteacher and staff lead the school well. From the moment you arrive in school, they keep very good records on your development and progress, which they share effectively with you so you know how to improve your work. Second, your teachers, teaching assistants and all the other adults who work in the school do a good job. They make sure you are safe and well looked after. Lessons are interesting and challenging for most of you and you say you enjoy coming to school. Perhaps most importantly, you behave well, think about others as well as yourselves and try your best in everything you do. I was particularly impressed in a mathematics lesson I observed where you showed good understanding of how to construct and interpret graphs. You also told me how the guidance you get from staff really helps you to improve your work, which is why the standards you achieve by the end of Key Stage 2 are good. We were delighted to see how well you get on together at playtimes. Your play leaders do a good job!

Even though your school is good, your headteacher, staff and governors are determined that it will get even better. To help them to achieve this, I have asked them to develop your independent learning skills more during lessons, especially for those of you who find learning easier, to improve the outdoor learning environment for the children in Reception and ensure governors provide effective challenge, as well as support, to your headteacher and his staff.

You can help too by making sure you always try your best in all you do.

Best wishes

David Edwards

Her Majesty's Inspector