

St Margaret's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120588
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327316
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Timothy Bristow 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 controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	58
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 Catie Cherrie
Headteacher	Mrs Valerie Buckeridge
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Withern Alford Lincolnshire LN13 0NB
Telephone number	01507 450375

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The St. Margaret's Church of England School is much smaller than average in size. The majority of children generally join the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age. At the time of the inspection, no pupils spoke English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school benefits from its federation with three other local schools.

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 with some outstanding features. The inspector agrees with the parents' view that the school has an extremely caring ethos. The strong leadership of the headteacher, supported by her highly committed team, has improved the provision received by pupils since the last inspection so that teaching and learning are good and the care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. Consequently, pupils' achievement is good and their personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school is demonstrating good capacity for improvement.

Standards have risen so that by the end of Key Stage 2 they are average overall. This is because progress made by pupils has accelerated since the last inspection and is now good. In 2008, standards in mathematics were exceptionally high, but differences in the very small year groups means that in Key Stage 2 presently, pupils are making slower progress and consequently standards are average. In mathematics, opportunities to consolidate their newly learnt calculation skills are missed.

It is evident that pupils are extremely happy in school. They feel highly valued through the individual attention paid to them by the very caring adults as well as through the responsibility many of them are given to help with the smooth running of the school. As one pupil reported, 'We've got lovely teachers that always listen to us.' The development of a healthy lifestyle is good. Pupils demonstrate a good attitude to their own safety and that of their friends. For example, a few work as junior road safety officers leading monthly assemblies to inform pupils of the dangers of the road. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. In lessons, they demonstrate excellent cooperation skills when working together, regularly praising each other when they have achieved success. For example, in one lesson, a pupil congratulated her friend when she remembered to join up her writing. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community by taking responsibility for a range of activities, such as organising assemblies, recycling, caring for younger pupils and looking after the school office. Pupils are well prepared for the future because of their good achievement.

Teaching and learning are good. The recently installed interactive whiteboards are adding enrichment and enjoyment to lessons. Pupils in Key Stage 1 experienced weaker teaching last year due to staffing instability that has meant that the current standards in writing in Year 2 are lower than they could be. The good curriculum provides pupils with many exciting opportunities to enjoy their learning. Excellent opportunities are being provided to enrich the curriculum because of the work of the federation of schools. For example, pupils benefited from the 'science days' last year, improving their experimenting skills. A good selection of additional English and mathematics activities, taught by well-trained teaching assistants, ensures that groups of pupils make good progress. The pastoral care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. All pupils blossom in this very inclusive environment. As one parent reports, 'In my opinion the school offers an extremely warm and friendly environment for both pupils and parents.' Academic care, guidance and support are good.

The good self-evaluation of the school has been instrumental in driving the improvements in provision, for example, by identifying the need to raise standards in writing. Consequently, work to improve writing has been successful this year so that progress has accelerated and standards in Key Stage 2 have risen.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress from their low starting points so that they gain the expected skills and knowledge by the time they enter Year 1. This is because their individual needs are catered for very carefully by the class teacher and the highly skilled teaching assistant, who regularly assess their progress. Procedures to ensure the children's welfare and well-being are good. Children behave well, comply with requests and are keen to take part in activities. For example, one child happily took the lead in the daily 'activate' session with older pupils. The outdoor environment for learning is very good, offering many opportunities for exciting activities. The provision is well led and managed. The very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that they are in a class with pupils from Year 1 and 2. The staff work hard to ensure that their needs are met, trying to balance activities with the older pupils with those that are specifically for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Occasionally this limits the opportunities children have to select independently the activities in which they would like to take part.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain the high standards in mathematics at Key Stage 2 by exploiting opportunities for pupils to apply their skills, so that progress is brisk.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in writing at Key Stage 1 in order to overcome a legacy of underachievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Assessment results for pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2008 show that standards were broadly average overall for the majority of pupils who do not have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This represents satisfactory progress maintaining the good start they receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The unvalidated results for pupils in Year 6 in 2008 shows that, in this very small year group, standards in English and science were average and in mathematics they were exceptionally high. This represents good progress from their starting points. Although standards in English were average, standards in writing at the end of Year 6 were below average. This year the work of the pupils in Key Stage 2 demonstrates that standards have risen and are now average. Differences in year groups mean that the progress that pupils make in mathematics in Years 5 and 6 is slower this year. The very good support received by pupils who find English and mathematics lessons difficult means that they make progress that is at least as good as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding personal development is underpinned by their very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in an assembly, pupils freely came forward to share prayers with each other, particularly when they had personal concerns. Pupils reciprocated by offering support and consideration. Attendance rates are above average. Pupils feel very safe in school. They report that incidents of bullying rarely happen and they know how to get help if they need it. They have a very sensible attitude to eating a balanced diet, remarking that although it is important to eat a healthy diet most of the time, occasionally it is all right

to eat party food. Pupils are making an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community. Members of the school council take their role very seriously. For example, they have decided that this term they will encourage pupils to walk in school and are leading by example. Pupils respond to events around the world by organising fund-raising for charity. For example, this year they are raising money for a school in India. Pupils' good basic skills and their outstanding social skills mean they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Effective teamwork ensures that teaching is generally good. Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear to pupils, which helps to ensure that they are engaged in their work. Marking is carried out conscientiously and pupils receive helpful advice on how they can improve their work. The majority of the lessons are good because the teachers know their pupils very well. Teachers use assessment information particularly well in English lessons so that nearly all pupils are individually challenged by their work. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have experienced past weaknesses in the teaching of writing. Although these have now been remedied and progress is accelerating, it is insufficient to narrow the gap between their standards and national expectations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good range of enriching activities, for example the 'Tudor day' in which the whole school took part was thoroughly enjoyed by pupils and adults. Considering the difficulties the school experiences because of the distance that most pupils have to travel to school, they successfully offer a good range of extra-curricular activities that the majority of pupils take part in. Pupils report that they really enjoy these and are proud of their achievements, whether it is growing their own vegetables or success on the football field. The school has for many years provided excellent personal, social and health education that makes a major contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Opportunities for cultural development are good. Events like 'Indian week' ensure that pupils gain a good understanding of what it means to live in a multicultural society.

Satisfactory links are established between some subjects when the pupils work on themes. However, opportunities to apply and practise skills learnt in mathematics and English lessons are not routinely exploited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding relationships and family ethos in the school are at the heart of the success in developing pupils' outstanding social skills. At the time of the inspection, the school meets all requirements for child protection and health and safety. The school has very good links with outside agencies to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for and make good progress. The excellent links forged by the federation of schools have improved the transition to secondary school by giving the small numbers of Year 6 pupils a range of opportunities to make friends with others of their own age who live locally. Pupils

and parents receive good advice on the progress they are making through activities such as 'targets day'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The overwhelming majority of parents recognise that this is a well-run school. As one parent reported, representing the views of many, 'I would have no hesitation in recommending St. Margaret's to any parent.' The school development plan is an effective tool for school improvement, successfully ensuring that the school makes improvements where they are most needed. Targets that are challenging and regularly reviewed have made a strong contribution to the improvement in pupils' achievement since the last inspection. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. It successfully plans to ensure pupils learn and appreciate aspects of British society they are not familiar with, as well as ensuring that all pupils and parents feel fully included in the life of the school. Opportunities for professional development within school are adequate. The school recognises the limitations of its size and exploits the opportunities presented by the federation to offer training to staff. Governance is good. Experienced governors offer a good balance of support and challenge so that the work of the school is effective. Consequently, the school offers good 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?	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?	1
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

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**

6 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of The St Margaret's Church of England School, Withern, Alford, LN13 0NB

I would like to thank you for the way you welcomed me into your school. I am sure you remember that I came to look at the work you were doing and to talk to you and your teachers.

Unfortunately, I did not meet some of you on the second day of the inspection because the school had to close because of all that lovely snow. Luckily, I was able to watch lessons in all of your classes on the first day and talked to groups of you at lunchtime.

I could see that you thoroughly enjoy coming to school. I agree with you when you told me that coming to this school feels like you are all part of a big family. You are extremely well behaved, showing great care and respect for each other. I was impressed by the excellent way that many of you carry out very responsible jobs around the school. You work hard in lessons and many of you are doing well.

Your headteacher and all the other adults who work in school are doing a good job. They are very caring and are always looking for ways to make your lessons more interesting. They work hard to make sure that you can take part in lots of extra activities that I know you and your parents appreciate.

To make things even better, I have asked the school to do the following.

- Help some of the younger children to do better writing.
- Improve the achievements in mathematics of the older children.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow

Her Majesty's Inspector