

St Margaret's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134902
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	328993
Inspection date	4 November 2008
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Liz DriverHMI

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	42
Sixth form	14
Appropriate authority	The proprietor Dr Mary Greenaway
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Cunningham
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2005
School address	Tadworth Court Tadworth KT20 5RU
Telephone number	01737 365810
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector and two Care Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and boarding provision. The Care Inspectors spent time in the boarding provision on the day before the Additional Inspector arrived as well as being there on the day he was present.

Description of the school

St Margaret's is part of the Children's Trust, a registered charity, and is set in the Trust's extensive grounds. It caters for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and complex medical needs, including degenerative conditions and additional sensory impairments. Specialised and individualised equipment is provided for all learners. The school is open for 48 weeks of the year. It also provides 52-week placements for 18 learners. It provides full-time boarding provision for up to 33 learners in three boarding houses on site. The school benefits from a coordinated site service from doctors, nurses, therapists and care staff within a 24-hour curriculum.

All learners have a statement of special educational need and do not have to follow the National Curriculum. Most are of white British origin and a small number are from minority ethnic groups. Learners come from a wide geographical area covering sixteen local authorities. The headteacher is responsible for both care and education in the school.

The school gained the Inclusion Charter Mark in October 2006. The Children's Trust has Investors in People and Investors in Volunteer awards. Currently, 45 volunteers are attached to the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstandingly successful school provides very high quality education and care for learners. It meets fully its core aim of providing a safe, caring, organised and happy environment in which each learner's special educational needs are met. Underpinning this is the highly effective leadership of the headteacher and her senior team, which sets a very clear direction and sense of purpose with a continuing focus on improvement. A further strength is the highly collaborative and holistic approach of the multi-disciplinary staff involved. These include teachers, higher-level teaching assistants (HLTAs), learning support assistants (LSAs), care staff, specialist medical and clinical staff, a broad range of therapists, social workers and volunteers. There is a strong culture of communication, collaboration and cooperation between home and school. Parents, and in many cases grandparents, are fully involved in and kept informed of the progress learners make. The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the work of the school. Expressing the sentiments of many others, one commented, 'The staff are so patient with the children and bring them on in leaps and bounds. They do a great job and care for the children so well.'

Achievement across the school is outstanding because of the total education, therapy and care package it offers. Standards on entry are well below what are expected for learners' ages. Most operate at levels similar to children between the ages of three months and twelve. All operate cognitively between three and twelve months of age. However, the progress they make in relation to their starting points is excellent. Though standards remain very low compared to the national benchmark, all learners make significant progress in developing their communication skills and independence.

Learners' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development is excellent. In lessons, learners respond well to one-to-one support sessions and, when working as groups, are enabled to share activities and take turns when appropriate. In a 'yellow' class lesson, a small group were very effectively led and supported in sharing activities whilst working at a 'resonance board'. Some delightful facial expressions in response to auditory stimuli were indicative of their enjoyment at being involved. As a result of calm and sensitive support from all adults who work in the classrooms, learners persevere very well and make excellent progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs).

Teaching and learning are outstanding because teachers plan their lessons to ensure that the individual needs of all learners are met fully, either individually or in small groups. This results in a highly effective ethos for learning and is underpinned further by very strong working relationships between teachers, other adults and learners. An integrated staff approach to setting IEP targets also ensures that learners' physical and medical needs are addressed in lessons. The curriculum, designed and developed by the school, is outstanding because it focuses primarily on the developmental needs of all learners, and the assessment of these. There is a very impressive range of enrichment activities both within the school and off-site that broadens learners' curriculum experience. Similarly, boarders experience an impressive range of enrichment activities throughout the year. The quality of care, guidance and support for learners is superb. Exemplary procedures support each individual in very specific ways and ensure all are looked after in a safe, healthy and caring environment. The dedication, enthusiasm and commitment of all staff in working with learners underpin this aspect of the school's provision.

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. The school's 'can do' approach underpins this. Rigorous self-evaluation has resulted in very well focused development planning, ensuring that the school has continued to improve and develop since the last inspection. The school has, for example, identified that it needs to analyse and use assessment data more effectively to help plan for future strategies. Robust monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have been used to identify and share good practice, resulting in improved quality. There is excellent liaison and collaboration between all staff, which ensures that every learner really does matter and, therefore, makes excellent progress. The school makes a significant contribution to community cohesion. There are highly effective working relationships between the school, school governors and the Children's Trust. In the light of the improvements and developments since the last inspection, the clear direction set for further improvement and continuing success in enabling learners to make excellent progress, the school has excellent capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The great majority of learners stay on at school at the end of Year 11. Achievement and progress are excellent. Learners continue to improve their communication skills and achieve success in the Accreditation for Life and Living Scheme, which is moderated by a nationally recognised examination board. Their personal development and well-being are also excellent. They improve their life skills, develop further their independence, and take part in a wide range of visits to the local community. In a 'green' class lesson, they helped prepare bread and butter pudding and tasted the results of their endeavours, as well as helping with the washing up! Teaching is highly effective and fully meets learners' needs, enabling them to make excellent progress towards the targets set in their IEPs. The highly personalised curriculum, including an excellent range of enrichment and preparation for life activities, is also outstanding in this respect. Recently, learners have started to follow units of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Highly effective care, guidance and support continue to promote learners' personal development really well. Leadership and management are outstanding with a clear direction and purpose to ensure high quality provision, improve learners' communication skills, and develop their independence.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

All the outcomes for children and young people and the overall judgement on the effectiveness of boarding are outstanding. The provision has met and exceeded all the relevant key National Minimum Standards.

Full details of the inspection on the quality of boarding are given in a separate social care report available from Ofsted.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the analysis and use of data to inform planning for future strategies.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Learning is individualised with all learners having specific targets for their personal development. Because of their special needs, particularly those of a medical nature, progress can be erratic

for some and has to be measured in small steps. Nevertheless, the number of learners who achieve their IEP targets is high. Some attain the lower stages of 'P' levels - levels that are well below National Curriculum levels. Progress in lessons is excellent because all learners are challenged to do well and are fully involved. Communication skills improve and some learners are able to make choices, for example, about which picture to look at.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Whilst some learners may become a little frustrated due to communication difficulties, they respond very well to sensitive interventions from adults. A calm and positive atmosphere in lessons is the norm and behaviour is not an issue. Though learners are unable to 'self engage' in physical activities, the school successfully enables involvement. During a lunchtime bicycle club, learners were able to use pedals on the tricycles with support from adults, as they moved around the cycle track in the grounds. This was also a pleasant social occasion for all involved. There is no unauthorised absence and authorised absence is low, being mainly for medical reasons. Learners have a personal 'communication passport', which indicates how they signal their approval or disapproval. As a result, they make choices because adults know how they express their wishes. This develops learners' independence and enables them to continue their education. They are particularly well prepared for the next stage of their life. At the end of their time at St Margaret's, all continue into full-time care or move on to full-time special further education colleges.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

All staff know their learners very well. Teachers' planning is thus highly focused to ensure the learning needs of all are fully met. All adults in the room adhere to this planning, and closely monitor progress and record this in great detail. Lessons are calm, purposeful and challenging. Learners are fully engaged and, as a result, they make significant progress towards their targets. High quality visual, tactile and auditory resources, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT), motivate learners well. In the 'music man' lesson, the use of music and singing enlivened the quality of learning particularly well for classes 3 and 4. Learners were encouraged to listen and join in and, as their movements and facial expressions indicated, they did so with glee. Staff are extremely patient and their expertise ensures learning is purposeful and challenging, not only in formal lessons but also in all activities throughout the day.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum brings together learning, care and therapy, which enables learners to achieve the targets in their IEPs and contributes significantly to their personal development. There is a strong focus on the use of topics to enliven learning as well as on learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is celebrated throughout the building with excellent quality displays of activities in which they have been involved - the school is particularly good at using photographic displays to demonstrate learners' progress. Those who board experience

a 24-hour curriculum to support their development. Extra life skills activities for day learners are provided for their homes to enhance their progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides an exceptionally strong, collaborative, caring and supportive environment where learners are really safe, develop their personal qualities and make excellent progress. Learners' achievement and well-being are at the forefront of the school's outstanding ethos of care and education. Highly effective working relationships with other Children's Trust professionals contribute extensively. Unauthorised absence is not an issue at the school. Very effective procedures enable the school to track, record and review learners' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and her senior leadership team are highly effective and have been instrumental in developing the excellent ethos for education and care, as well as for learning and achievement in the school. Self-evaluation is continuous and reflective with highly focused monitoring and evaluation of the school's effectiveness. This has, for example, enabled leadership to identify that, though the school has much data on learners' progress, it could sharpen the analysis and use of this. Improvement planning is robust with highly appropriate areas identified for development. Leadership has ensured the school provides a high quality and very well resourced learning environment. The governing body takes an active part in the life of the school and is highly effective in its role as a supportive and critical friend.

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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	16-19
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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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

17 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret's School, Tadworth, KT20 5RU

I was one of three inspectors who visited your school recently. We wanted to see how well you are doing.

Your school is excellent.

You make excellent progress.

Your parents are very happy with the school.

The headteacher and all the staff look after you really well.

You seem very happy at the school because there is a lot to do.

Thank you, we had a good time at the school as well!

Yours sincerely

James Bowden

Lead Inspector