

St Margaret's Church of England (Aided) Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113453
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338175
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Carolyn Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Crossman
Headteacher	Mary Davis
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed the school's work, saw 13 lessons taught by eight teachers, scrutinised the school's policies and documents, and held meetings with staff, parents, governors and groups of pupils. They received and analysed 75 responses to parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the current levels of pupils' attainment and progress to determine the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation
- the consistency and quality of teaching to see whether it is effective enough to ensure a rise in progress
- how well the curriculum provides for the needs of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

This is an average size junior school with a lower than average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, though this is rising. The proportions of pupils who speak English as an additional language and from minority ethnic groups are below average, but the school has a higher than average percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. St Margaret's has achieved Healthy Schools status, the Artsmark Bronze and Silver Travel awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. After a drop in progress two years ago, pupils now make satisfactory progress. From broadly average starting points, pupils leave with attainment that is in line with the national average. Currently, pupils achieve better in English than in mathematics and science. New initiatives in teaching mean that progress in mathematics and science is beginning to rise markedly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar levels of progress to their peers.

The school provides a warm and welcoming environment that is appreciated by parents, carers and pupils and classrooms are lively and attractive places for learning.

Pupils' personal development is good and parents are very happy and supportive of the school's efforts to provide their children with a safe and cohesive environment for learning. Pupils' attitudes to their work are positive and behaviour is good. Many say they love coming to their school. The ethos of caring for others, engendered by the headteacher and her staff, is very clearly felt throughout the school. Pupils enjoy celebrating their achievements together. They develop a good understanding of how to live safely and healthily, enjoying sport and exercise, singing enthusiastically in assemblies and readily giving their time to their school and local community. They have less chance to contribute more widely to communities further afield in this country and abroad, although links are developing with another school in Rochdale.

The school's leaders work as a team, sharing responsibilities and their skills. There is a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement because, while senior leaders have some understanding of what needs to be done to raise attainment further, their evaluations of current effectiveness are not accurate enough. The school does not fully grasp the changes needed in teaching in order to maximise the progress of more-able pupils. The quality of lesson planning is inconsistent and the monitoring of teaching is not always sharply focused on what and how well pupils are learning. Teaching does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to tackle different problems, based on ability, and sometimes those who could go further are held back.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by:
 - ensuring every lesson provides maximum opportunity for pupils to make good progress through better strategic planning that is more focused on raising ambitions and on meeting the learning needs of all groups of pupils

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- developing effective monitoring of teaching that more closely scrutinises the quality of pupils' learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils learn satisfactorily in lessons; most say they enjoy their work and the challenges they receive. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress and in some cases those with more complex needs make better progress than their peers. Progress in English has risen steadily because of the emphasis on opportunities for extended writing, based on the careful honing and shaping of pupils' own ideas. There have been notable strides made in lessons where pupils can explore texts such as 'Macbeth', and are given the confidence to tackle difficult and stretching tasks. Pupils enjoy their learning when they are encouraged to take risks, but when they are all asked to finish the same exercise, starting at the same point, progress slows. Progress in the current Year 6 suggests pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory during their time at St Margaret's.

Progress in mathematics is not so fast as in English because the school has not fully got to grips with what needs to be done in these lessons. The organisation of group work sometimes prevents faster progress. This is because, although many pupils receive excellent support from teachers and assistants, those who are more-able too often find their ambitions hampered through having to work at the pace of others. Interesting challenges in information and communication technology (ICT) often mean pupils make good progress in developing their understanding of the world of work. They engage enthusiastically in enterprise activities set in real-life contexts, develop good team working skills and understand how to get down to work quickly and without fuss. ICT is used very well to bring strands of the curriculum together to make learning more coherent and fun.

Pupils say they feel safe at school and very little bullying or bad behaviour are reported. All pupils understand how to be safe on the internet and in their daily lives. Attendance is above average reflecting a focus of the school's efforts. Pupils enjoy a good reputation in the local community because they give of their time to the church, to other schools and associations and the school makes good efforts to stay in close contact with parents and carers. Some families have become involved more closely with their children's learning through workshops in reading, mathematics and ICT.

The general ethos of St Margaret's is clearly one of community and respect for others. Celebration assemblies and acts of worship often celebrate this. Successes in the sporting and arts arenas form the basis of much joy and pride both for pupils and parents. Other cultures are explored and understanding developed through ambitious arts programmes. The school displays pupils' talents extensively over walls and spaces in every room and corridor.

There have been extensive opportunities for pupils to engage with other schools in the area and they are also developing a link with another school in a very different part of the country. Within school, pupils volunteer to help and contribute in many ways, such

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as by joining the school council, acting as a buddy or helping to arrange the assembly. Pupils had developed links with a school in Islamabad, Pakistan, but recent unrest and upheaval in its locale have prevented this excellent initiative from going forward. The school is now planning further work to ensure its pupils develop clear understanding of the lives of those in the wider world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory with some lessons providing better opportunities and faster learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and resources are effectively used, for the most part, to support learning. Teaching assistants support their charges well, helping those with more complex special educational needs and/or disabilities to sometimes move ahead relatively faster than their peers. The best lessons provide plenty of pace and challenges, with questions directed effectively to encourage pupils to think more deeply, or to take risks when applying their knowledge. Good lessons build on ideas from preceding topics, for example where ICT is used to follow up on ideas developed in science. The clearest examples of this are in English, such as where work

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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on a Shakespeare play was linked to the way writing came from thinking about other historical characters, highwaymen in particular. Good use of drama techniques made this work even more exciting as pupils readily volunteered to be Macbeth or the witches, to help everyone explore these characters' motives for their actions.

Where lessons are less well planned, learning is slow, limited by the pace of the majority and too often skewed to the development of personal skills, such as group cooperation and paired tasks. While these are highly important skills, ones that pupils develop strongly, a focus on independent work is lacking. Weaker lessons lack tasks for different abilities and objectives are insufficiently related to individual needs. Assessment informs planning for learning over the longer term and pupils generally know what will be expected of them by the end of a topic or unit of work. This is less well developed within lessons, because learning objectives are not explained clearly enough.

The curriculum is well organised, providing opportunities for pupils to integrate with one another. It is inclusive and pupils feel involved in the work of their class. Topics help link ideas together through a thematic approach. Pupils are encouraged to explore topics across subjects; however, this is not seen in all lessons. Pupils' needs are well diagnosed through assessment and those pupils who need extra support are given it through an alternative curriculum that provides academic and emotional support. Residential trips, explorations into the local environment, an outdoor classroom and many links with partner schools ensure the curriculum is enriched effectively. There is plenty of sport, music is well catered for and French is taught from Year 3.

Pupils are well cared for and parents and carers say how much they appreciate good communications with school. The challenges facing pupils and their families are very well understood by teachers and needs are identified early through good links with feeder schools. Pupils appreciate their 'brilliant' teaching assistants, as one pupil said. Progress is effectively monitored and pupils are happy with the help they receive. Parents and carers too say they appreciate support that helps them aid their own children. Behaviour and attitudes are all positively encouraged and pupils' self-esteem has been considerably raised by the actions of the headteacher and her staff.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is a very good role model for her pupils and teachers, who share her ambitions. She has brought the school from a point where negative attitudes and poor

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behaviour slowed down learning. Now, pupils come to school ready to learn. She ensures all teaching is at least satisfactory but this does not always mean the more-able pupils are fully stretched. The monitoring of teaching is satisfactory but is not sufficiently sharp and focused on actual learning. Monitoring is thorough as regards what teachers are doing and providing but has not always picked up inconsistencies in the quality of lesson planning.

The governing body supports and knows the school. Governors are highly visible in school, helping to support families and pupils. They do not always challenge the school or hold it to account over how well pupils are progressing. They have not developed a full appreciation of the level of progress of all pupils and how much attainment has been static over years. The school's evaluation of its activities has been overgenerous and this has not been challenged by the governing body. Governors have ensured all statutory processes and safeguarding procedures are in place and robustly monitored. Policies related to this area are regularly monitored, developed and changed in line with pupils' needs and regulations.

Good relationships with parents and carers form because the school communicates clearly with them and reaches out to those who are less willing to be involved closely with their children's education. Workshops have been appreciated and now many parents and carers feel confident in helping their children with work outside school. There are strong links with educational partners that provide for the professional development of teachers, with extra activities in sport and provision for gifted and talented pupils. The school drives its links with other agencies to ensure those who are in need of outside care receive it.

The school's leaders ensure there is a satisfactory level of equal opportunities for its pupils. Those pupils with major difficulties in their personal lives that might hinder their education are well supported and given the chance to belong to a cohesive learning community. However, pupils' ambitions are not always fully developed and the more-able do not always have the chance to fully realise their potential. The clear sense of community felt in school is enhanced by developing links across the United Kingdom and further afield. These are relatively new or temporarily suspended, however, and the school has plans to develop them further.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The responses to the 75 completed parental questionnaires show that parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. A very small minority do not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that pupils behave well and that the school has done a lot to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Margaret's Church of England (Aided) Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 75 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 217 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	63	25	33	3	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	52	69	23	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	61	27	36	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	56	28	37	3	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	48	64	23	31	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	53	30	40	2	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	57	29	39	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	39	52	33	44	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	52	33	44	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	49	31	41	5	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	51	31	41	3	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	53	71	19	25	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	73	16	21	2	3	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret's Church of England (Aided) Junior School, Bideford, EX39 1EL

Thank you for making the inspectors feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you and observing you in lessons. We think your school provides you with a satisfactory education. You develop particularly good relationships with one another, behave well and make a good contribution to your school and local community. You are quick to get on with tasks and use good skills in team working to help prepare you for your next steps in education.

There are some things we have asked your school to do to ensure you perform even better in the future. We have asked it to raise your attainment by:

- ensuring every lesson provides maximum learning opportunity, through better planning that is more focused on raising your ambitions and meeting all your learning needs
- developing the ways it checks on the quality of teaching, to ensure teachers always put learning first.

You can help by continuing to behave well, keep on coming to school every day and developing your own ambitions to achieve the best you can.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Carnaghan

Lead Inspector

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