

# St Margaret's Church of England (VC) Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118699
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	339279
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike Capper

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	357
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julia Clarke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Gabbett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 December 2006
<b>School address</b>	Orchard Street Rainham Gillingham ME8 9AE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 230998
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<b>Email address</b>	office@stmargarets.org.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at teachers' planning, the school's assessment information and safeguarding policies, and samples of pupils' work. They analysed questionnaires from staff and pupils, as well as 95 from parents.

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

- how well teachers use information about pupils' previous learning to provide the right level of challenge for all, focusing on support for less-able girls, more-able boys and pupils identified as being eligible for free school meals
- how well recent initiatives from leaders have led to a sustained improvement in pupils' writing
- the use of data to check the progress of different groups of pupils and to plan appropriate interventions for underachieving groups
- how well pupils enjoy school and are helped to learn about healthy and safe lifestyles
- the effectiveness of systems for safeguarding pupils.

## Information about the school

Most pupils come to this larger-than-average junior school from the local community. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most, but not all, of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The school runs a breakfast club each morning.

The school has an Activemark award for its work in physical education, won Healthy School accreditation for the second time in 2009 and has a Basic Skills Mark.

**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?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to its systems for safeguarding pupils.

Governors have not done enough to ensure that the school complies with statutory requirements for the way that mandatory pre-recruitment checks on new staff must be carried out and recorded. Although the issues identified at the start of the inspection had been rectified by the time inspectors left school, the school's systems for safeguarding pupils were not strong enough, and consequently the school's overall effectiveness is inadequate.

The school is particularly successful at supporting pupils' personal development, helping them to learn to take good care of each other and to behave well. Spiritual development is outstanding. The Christian ethos of the school is embedded into everyday life, as can be seen in the way that each year some pupils choose to be baptised into the church. There are very close links with the local Anglican church, and assemblies and other activities, such as the 'cluster' meetings where pupils from different year groups gather together, encourage pupils to reflect on their beliefs and to become good citizens.

Satisfactory teaching means that pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From broadly average starting points in Year 3, pupils make satisfactory progress so that pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 remain broadly average overall. There are no significant differences between the progress of different groups, including less-able girls, more-able boys and those eligible for free school meals, although there are some inconsistencies in the progress pupils make from class to class. This is because teachers do not always make enough use of assessment information to ensure that work is pitched at the right level for all pupils. Where teaching is good, there is a fast pace to learning, with pupils encouraged to work quickly. This is not consistent across the school and in some lessons time is wasted and pupils work too slowly.

Good rates of attendance demonstrate the pupils' thorough enjoyment of school. They get on well with their teachers and are polite and friendly to visitors. Pupils talk very positively about the exciting range of clubs and visits that the school provides. They are rightly proud of their sporting achievements, particularly their recent success in the Medway Mini Youth Games. Pupils make a good contribution to the community by taking part in local events and by being prefects or school councillors. They carry out these roles conscientiously and have helped to improve the school, for example by buying new

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resources for playtimes.

Leaders are committed to improving the school, and their ambitions are shared by all staff. Together they are moving the school in the right direction, although they know that the pace of change needs to be faster. Leaders are passionate about providing a secure and happy haven for all pupils whatever their background or need, and the success of these efforts is shown in the pupils' smiling faces as they come to school each morning.

There is a lack of rigour to self-evaluation because the wealth of data on pupils' progress is not well understood by all leaders. Although leaders use this data effectively to identify pupils who are falling behind and to plan appropriate additional support, it is not analysed sharply enough to get a clear picture of how well the school is performing in relation to others. This means that leaders have an over-generous picture of pupils' progress and therefore they do not always expect enough of staff and pupils in the drive for improvement. There have been many helpful initiatives over the last three years and some of these, such as the teaching of pupils in gender groups to improve writing skills, have had a positive effect on learning. However, some of these benefits have been short term, and leaders do not monitor initiatives well enough to check that improvements in learning are being sustained over time. Despite this, the school has demonstrated in the steady improvement since the last inspection, especially in science test results, that there is a satisfactory capacity to improve.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that systems for safeguarding pupils are rigorous enough to fulfil the statutory requirements for the checking of staff.
- Move the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good by:
  - ensuring that teachers make better use of information about how well pupils are doing so work is consistently pitched at the right level for all;
  - increasing the pace of learning in lessons so that less time is lost.
- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels by:
  - ensuring that leaders have higher expectations of progress from year to year for all groups of pupils;
  - sharpening the analysis and use of data to give leaders a clearer picture of patterns, trends and areas of strength and weakness;
  - systematically monitoring initiatives to check that they are having the desired effect and are leading to sustained improvement in provision across the school.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, and they thoroughly enjoy school. In lessons pupils are largely enthusiastic and are generally keen to do their best. Pupils make the best progress when there is a good challenge in lessons. For example, in a literacy lesson in

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Year 3 pupils were fired up and worked extremely hard, because the teacher had planned a task that built well on previous learning. They made good progress and improved their punctuation and story-writing skills because work was closely matched to their differing needs and they were expected to work quickly.

Test results show that attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. Although test data suggests that some pupils do better than others, observations in lessons show that progress is the same for all pupils, with most making satisfactory gains in knowledge over time from their differing starting points. Pupils make the best progress in reading; this is because there are frequent opportunities for pupils to read at home and at school, and skills are promoted well in shared reading sessions in literacy lessons. There has been a recent initiative to improve pupils' spelling by focusing more closely on teaching phonic skills. This is already having a positive effect on writing, although leaders know that more time is needed to get skills to where they should be, especially in Years 3 and 4. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given sound support both in and out of lessons and they make the same progress as others.

The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, which results in pupils developing a good awareness of these skills. Pupils learn through activities in personal, social and health education lessons and assemblies to take good care of each other and they understand why it is important to behave sensibly. The fact that the inspection team found some weaknesses in safeguarding systems is not reflected in how safe pupils feel in school; pupils say that they feel safe and secure and they know who to turn to if they have a worry. Pupils are knowledgeable about the potential dangers when using the internet, and activities such as first aid lessons for pupils in Year 6 mean that they know how to deal with an emergency. Sports clubs are greatly appreciated by pupils and successfully encourage good involvement in physical activity. Pupils talk confidently about the importance of eating healthily, but they do not always do so, often making unhealthy choices from the school tuck shop.

Pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education and for later life. They make steady progress in developing basic skills and develop good levels of self-esteem and confidence as they get older. Older pupils develop good financial acumen through enterprise projects where they learn to manage budgets and sell goods that they have made.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

### How effective is the provision?

There are good features to teaching across the school and this has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and personal development. Teachers are hard-working and they get on well with the pupils, ensuring the learning is fun in many lessons. They manage behaviour very effectively and make good use of resources such as the interactive whiteboards to introduce new skills. Pupils are grouped by ability for English and mathematics, but within these groups there is still a wide range of starting points. Teachers are aware of the need to plan work for the differing ability groups in their classes or sets and in the best lessons they do this well. However, there are occasions across the school when work is too hard or too easy for some pupils and the pace of learning is too slow. This is because teachers have not taken enough account of their own assessments of pupils' learning to plan what to teach next.

The use of marking and targets to help pupils understand how to improve their work has been developed well over the last two years. Where practice is best, for example in English books in Years 5 and 6, pupils are able to talk confidently about the next stage in their learning.

Important weaknesses were found in the systems for safeguarding pupils at the start of the inspection which mean that the effectiveness of care, guidance and support is inadequate. However, in lessons and around school adults are kind and caring. The school makes good use of outside agencies to find additional help when it is needed. There is a delightful atmosphere in the well-managed breakfast club. It gives pupils a good start to the school day.

The curriculum soundly promotes basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and

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communication technology, but planning is not always rigorous enough to take account of differing needs. In Years 5 and 6 close links are made between different subjects and this helps to make learning purposeful. Pupils are pleased that they are able to learn French as 'it helps to prepare us for secondary school'.

There is good enrichment of the curriculum. An exciting range of clubs in sport and the arts are greatly enjoyed by pupils and promote personal development well. As one pupil said, 'there is always something exciting to do!' Particularly noteworthy is the excellent singing by 'Forte', the boys' choir, which has resulted in them performing locally and overseas.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>4</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership of the headteacher has continued to move the school forward since the last inspection. There is a clear vision for development and the headteacher's ambition and drive for improvement is shared by staff and governors. Together leaders have implemented many helpful initiatives over the last three years, but they know that they need to monitor initiatives more closely to ensure that improvements are sustained beyond one year. Efforts to raise attainment have not been pursued with sufficient rigour because some members of staff think pupils are doing better than they actually are. This is because pupil progress data is not well understood by all staff, and too many do not understand what pupils need to achieve to make good progress. Consequently, expectations are not always high enough. Governors are supportive and have rightly identified that they need more information from the school on pupils' progress so that they can provide greater challenge to senior leaders.

The school engages well with many parents and many are actively involved in school life; for example, many classes had parent helpers during the inspection. Leaders actively seek and respond to parents' views. The school is doing the right things to reach out to parents who do not have the skills and confidence to support their children at home. Leaders know that this is a barrier to raising achievement, but recent initiatives such as computing classes and extra support for the small number of families who speak English as an additional language have not been in place long enough to ensure full engagement with all parents.

The school promotes equality by monitoring pupils' progress and participation in activities carefully, and is beginning to do the right things to close the gaps between the



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attainment of different groups. Leaders ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in school events and they take good account of differing needs; for example, a computer club helps pupils who do not have access to a computer at home to develop the necessary skills. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. There are close links with schools in the United Kingdom, and through a European Community project pupils get good opportunities to learn about life in other countries. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of their place in the world. Leaders are aware that they need to carry out an audit of provision to help them plan what they need to develop next in this area of the school's work.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

Almost all parents indicated that they are very pleased with nearly all aspects of the school. They feel that their children are well looked after, are happy and enjoy their learning, with typical comments being 'staff are approachable and listen to your needs' and 'my child's confidence grew tremendously and the opportunities for sport participation are great'. A small number of parents raised concerns about the school tuck shop. Inspectors agree that the school's efforts to promote healthy lifestyles are significantly impaired by a tuck shop that, at the time of the inspection, was selling sweets and crisps.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Margaret's CE (VC) 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 completed 95 questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 357 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	72	25	26	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	69	72	25	36	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	55	59	35	38	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	58	38	40	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	59	64	33	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	48	47	50	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	44	47	49	6	6	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)	50	53	42	45	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	57	39	42	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	52	42	46	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	41	49	55	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	61	34	37	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	67	31	31	0	0	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



30 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret's Junior School, Rainham ME8 9AE

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work and completing the questionnaire. You were very polite and friendly. We found some good things in the school but also some things that need improving. We were concerned that when we arrived the school was not following some of the rules that it needs to have in place to keep you safe. Although these had been put right by the end of the inspection, we have asked that inspectors should revisit the school to check that the rules continue to be followed.

Some of the things we found out about your school:

- Your behaviour is good. We are very pleased that you told us in the questionnaires that you enjoy school so much and we could see that you are keen to learn in lessons.
- Teaching is satisfactory and you make satisfactory progress as you move through the school.
- You told us that the adults in school are kind and caring when you have a worry or problem. They give you suitable help when you find work difficult.
- You have a well-organised school council and this helps you to take responsibility for many things.
- You told us that there are many interesting things to do outside lessons. These also help you develop a good understanding of how to stay safe.
- Your parents and carers are pleased that you come to this school.
- The headteacher and governors know clearly what needs improving and is working hard to ensure that the school becomes even better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Make sure that necessary procedures to keep you safe are all followed.
- Try to ensure that there is more good teaching so that you make faster progress by checking that teachers plan work that is not too hard or too easy for you and that you always work quickly enough.
- Make sure that all leaders check that you are doing well enough and, where you are not, take action to improve things and then check that what they have done is

making a difference.

You can help the school by thinking about what you eat at playtime. You told us that you know about healthy eating, but we noticed that many of you did not follow your own advice when buying food from the tuck shop or taking it from your lunch box. We wish you all well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mike Capper

Lead Inspector

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