

St Margaret Mary RC Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103453
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355384
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Desmond Teague
Headteacher	Michael Aldred
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed nine teachers. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to the school's self-evaluation, the attainment and assessment of pupils' progress, minutes of the governing body, the provision for safeguarding and external evaluations of the school. They looked at samples of pupils' work and the school improvement plan. They analysed 40 questionnaires from parents and carers and other responses from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which pupils currently attain and make progress through the school, with a focus on Key Stage 1 and more able pupils.
- The effectiveness of strategies for improving the creativeness and enrichment of the curriculum in line with pupils' needs and interests.
- The effectiveness of the governing body in improving its contribution to monitoring, evaluating and managing the school.
- How well the school is meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils in the early stages of learning English, and gifted and talented pupils.

Information about the school

St Margaret Mary is a slightly smaller than average sized school. The majority of pupils are of White British background. There are a small number of minority ethnic groups, the largest being of Black African heritage. There is a small number of pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, the largest group having auditory difficulties. The school provides a breakfast club for pupils. The school has a number of awards including the Every Child Matters quality mark, and Investors in People.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Margaret Mary is a good school. In the last three years it has developed a number of strengths and has made many improvements. Important aspects of the school, such as the progress of pupils, teaching, assessment, leadership and governance, previously regarded as satisfactory, are now good. Additionally, the school provides outstanding care and support for all of its pupils and enjoys an excellent partnership with parents and carers. The ambitious headteacher and his deputy have led the equally determined staff imaginatively in developing a thriving and welcoming school. They have built a strong track record of improvement which clearly shows a good capacity to continue. Pupils and their parents share in their pride of the school and all strive to make it even better. This is summed up by the pupil who commented, 'There is no single word I can think of to describe how good this school is.' Pupils have very good attitudes to learning, are friendly and polite, and behave well. They enjoy school and their opportunities to have a say in its development. This is reflected in the rising attendance figures, and by the many pupils who participate in the wide variety of clubs and extra-curricular activities at the school. An example of this is the forty or more pupils who with parents, staff and governors regularly walk together to school every Friday. All pupils are fully included in school life, feel safe and have great confidence in the adults around them.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly into school life and make good progress in their learning and personal development. As a result of recent school action, they continue to make good progress through all years in the main school to reach average and sometimes above average levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Rigorous monitoring by senior leaders has led to improved teaching. Teaching is now consistently good because teachers are very well organised and have a much better understanding of how to use good assessment systems in their planning. They have also started to develop a new and exciting curriculum. Leaders realise that this is needed to help raise the standard of basic skills in literacy and numeracy, although the accurate use of information and communication technology (ICT) is good. The school also accepts that more can be done to increase the range of challenges for gifted and talented pupils. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those in the early stages of learning English is good. There is a very strong community spirit in the school, enhanced by close links with the church, which makes a strong contribution to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

The headteacher has excellent organisational skills and, with other school leaders, has developed accurate school self-evaluation and realistic targets for improvement. This is strengthened by an increasingly effective governing body which shares the ambitions of school leaders and is providing good support and challenge to the school.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the improving and developing creative curriculum meets the needs of all pupils by:
 - extending further the accurate use of English and mathematics across the curriculum, in order to help raise attainment
 - widening the opportunities and challenge offered to gifted and talented pupils
 - ensuring that lengthy lessons do not lose rigour and excitement for pupils in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Most children enter school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those expected for their age. Over the last few years, pupils' attainment has been broadly average, and recently sometimes above, in English and mathematics by the time they leave school. In the last two years, as a result of school evaluation and consequent action, there has been considerable improvement in pupils' attainment in science. There is also evidence in all years of accelerated progress by pupils, nearly all of whom are achieving well. The school is working hard and with some success to guide more pupils to reach above-average attainment. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in the early stages of learning English is good. Other pupils whose first language is English act as 'buddies' and play a significant role in helping these pupils learn and understand English.

Pupils respond positively to their good learning opportunities. They regularly join enthusiastically in explaining their thoughts to their talking partner and sometimes to the whole class. They enjoy learning and mention numerous examples of what they like, such as studying World War II, 'I love history', rainforests, trips to Sutton and Solihull, speaking Spanish, using net books and looking at government through 'In the News'. Pupils are thoughtful in their self-assessment which was observed in Year 5 when they explored a visual text about Medusa. Many gave articulate responses beginning with, 'Today I have learned...' Pupils behave well, act responsibly and respect each other and adults. They feel safe and secure in school and understand the need to be healthy. Almost a third of them have at least three hours physical exercise at school each week. Attendance is improving steadily because most pupils enjoy school so much.

Pupils are extensively involved in the local community, especially through activities with the church and the link with Urban Devotion, a local faith-based charity. Pupils enjoy contributing to the community through activities such as the duckling watch, when they look after ducklings and cygnets in a local park. Pupils have a good knowledge of different cultures and beliefs, and respect the feelings and values of others. Improved basic skills in numeracy and literacy, combined with the development of social enterprise and team skills, and the use of 'pupil voice' to encourage initiative, gives pupils a good preparation for their future lives.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good because lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives for the needs of all pupils. There are good relationships between adults and pupils, and teachers are skilled in their questioning and encouragement to pupils to explain their learning. This was seen in many classes during the inspection. In Year 2, for example, pupils were continually involved in devising verbal and written instructions for making jam sandwiches, devising posters or using 'bossy' imperative words in sentences. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and most are suitably challenged. The only exceptions are sometimes the more able and talented pupils who are not moved on quickly enough to more challenging work. Assessment opportunities are used well by teachers and the use of progress data in planning is much improved. The marking of pupils' work is accurate and helpful. A feature of most teaching is the frequent reminder to pupils to self-assess their own learning. Teachers also work very effectively with teaching assistants who are often involved in intervention activities with pupils in greatest need of help.

The school has recently revised its curriculum and is providing a much wider range of creative and practical activities than in the past. Pupils were given the opportunity to help devise the new curriculum, their most notable contribution being to suggest extended activity sessions to help the completion of work and give greater depth to learning. Further enhancement has come from an increase in extra-curricular clubs, more outside

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visits and regular research opportunities through net books and the very well resourced ICT suite. Displays of pupils' work are of good quality and support learning well. Pupils enjoy especially the chance to learn Spanish and play the trumpet. School leaders know what needs to be done to further refine and develop the curriculum, and have a clear agenda to address the goals they have set.

There is an extremely strong ethos of care and consideration for all pupils, which is helped by the meticulous and well-planned interventions of adults. There has been a noteworthy improvement in the provision for, and recognition of, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Skilled and focused provision has also helped pupils in the early stages of learning English to make good and sometimes outstanding progress. These pupils and those from the most vulnerable circumstances receive high-quality support. Links with a range of outside services and agencies are very effective. The school has successfully improved procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality. The school provides a well-managed and popular breakfast club every school day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership and management of the school, particularly through the complementary skills of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have been successful in promoting many significant improvements in the school in the last three years. This has included developing an ambitious and challenging environment for learning, which has the full support of a continually evolving team of leaders, staff and the governing body. Morale in the school is high and great attention is paid to orderliness, communication and shared priorities. This has already led to improvements in pupils' progress and attainment, the introduction and effective use of rigorous assessment strategies, and a much increased level of devolved management responsibilities to the staff. Accurate self-evaluation and monitoring, including detailed evaluation of teaching and learning, are also enabling leaders to identify very clearly where the school needs to improve further. Leaders have ensured that pupils are nurtured in an inclusive learning environment where they have equal opportunities to participate fully in school activities, free from discrimination. Members of the governing body have greatly improved their contribution to the school. A number are new but all show a good knowledge of the school, and a strong determination to challenge leaders to take the school further. They ensure that there is good provision for safeguarding through regular monitoring of the school's procedures and appreciate the importance of taking full ownership of this responsibility.

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The school's engagement with parents and carers is highly effective. They are constantly encouraged to join in activities with their children. This includes walking to school with them on Fridays, helping in extra-curricular clubs, and attending 'Inspire' workshops in school. Partnerships to promote learning and the well-being of pupils are good. They include strong links with the adjacent church, a local school providing for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and membership of the RAIK (Raising Achievement in Kingstanding) consortium of schools. The school has good involvement with the local community and is developing wider community cohesion effectively through links with Rwanda and Sierra Leone. School leaders have recently developed the school buildings and environment very effectively, which has had a positive effect on pupil learning and achievement. The school gives good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below and sometimes well below those expected for their age, especially in relation to language and number skills. A few have little knowledge of English. Children settle quickly in school and make good progress in all areas of learning. They develop curiosity and an eagerness to learn and discover. This was observed when a child confidently approached an inspector to enquire, 'Are you a police officer?' Children quickly learn to cooperate with each other and understand the routines of the classroom. Their behaviour is good. They are encouraged to be independent and choose freely from a wide range of interesting and exciting activities, including role play and using computers in their own mini-suite. Resources, including a movement room, are plentiful and of good quality inside and outside, where the school has developed a very stimulating environment.

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Teaching is consistently good. Adults are caring, ensure that children are kept safe, and their accurate collection and use of assessment data ensures that the needs of all children are known and provided for. Children's learning and personal development are supported and guided skilfully, although very occasionally children spend too long on the carpet listening to adults speaking. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and have helped to make significant improvement in many aspects since the last inspection. There are good partnerships with outside learning providers, and the school is determined to increase this further. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are fully in place. Relationships with parents and carers are excellent, with a recent survey indicating 100% satisfaction with children's induction into the school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Responses from parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive, both in this questionnaire and in the one circulated by the school very recently. There were no negative written comments and many positive ones. In particular, parents and carers feel that their children enjoy school and are safe, that the school deals well with unacceptable behaviour, and that the school is well led and managed. Typically, a parent wrote: 'We have only praise for the way the teachers have nurtured our child. The school ticks all the boxes'. Only three respondents expressed disagreement with any statement, and none showed strong disagreement. Inspectors looked into these concerns but found no evidence to support them.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Margaret Mary RC Junior and Infant 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 218 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	58	17	43	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	63	15	38	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	40	22	55	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	35	23	58	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	45	20	50	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	30	25	63	3	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	33	26	65	1	3	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)	12	30	23	58	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	38	24	60	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	40	22	55	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	25	22	55	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	55	17	43	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	53	17	43	1	3	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 all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



8 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret Mary RC Junior and Infant School, West Midlands, B23 7AB

Your school gives you a good education. We really enjoyed seeing how much you enjoy school, how well you behave and hearing about the exciting things you do in school. We were really impressed with your new buildings and playground, your vegetable plots and your prayer garden. I was also very pleased to hear so many of you telling me the school's mission statement.

You are very well cared for by the adults in your school, and you and your parents and carers say how safe you are in school. Your parents are very pleased with what the school does for you in your education. You make good progress in your learning in all classes and are helped to improve in all that you do. You have good teachers and classroom assistants, a good headteacher and deputy headteacher, and other leaders who are helping the school to improve in many ways. They provide you with many exciting and enjoyable learning activities, like the visit you had from the local firemen and their engine during the inspection. We are pleased that you are so keen to be healthy and I particularly enjoyed walking to school with members of the 'WOW' (Walk Once a Week) club.

We have suggested to your school leaders ways in which your school can improve even more. You can help by trying to use your writing and number skills well in all your different activities. We would also like some of you who are more able or have special gifts or talents to have more opportunities to work at activities which particularly interest you. You can also help by making sure that in the longer lessons you asked for, you stay on task and really concentrate for the whole time.

Finally, well done Year 6 in your fundraising for children in Rwanda. We hope you will all continue to do your best for yourselves and for others who are not as fortunate.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite

Lead inspector

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