

St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Toppesfield

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115071
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357690
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Katherine Beck

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Pymen
Headteacher	Naomi Snowdon
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector who observed seven lessons taught by three different teachers. The inspector held meetings with parents, groups of pupils, staff and representatives of the governing body. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the procedures for safeguarding pupils, the school's self-evaluation form and the school development plan. In addition the inspector looked at the report from the school improvement partner, pupils' work, records of pupils' progress, notes of the monitoring of teaching, attendance records and the results of 28 parents' questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following:

- How improvements to most aspects of the school over the last two years have impacted the outcomes for pupils.
- The effectiveness of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities.
- The effectiveness of provision and planning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is a very small primary school. All pupils come from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. Most live close to the school, but there are some who live further away and travel to school by bus. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities is similar to that found in most schools. The school is organised into three classes. Pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are in one class. The second class is for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and the third for pupils in Years 5 and 6.

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's is a good school that plays an important role within its local community. It strongly promotes an ethos that, 'you can do it', building pupils' confidence. Changes since the last inspection have had a significant impact on all aspects of its work, but especially on the outcomes for pupils. Strong teamwork, high expectations and a clear sense of purpose that is shared, not only by adults but also pupils, has resulted in a rising trend in attainment, high levels of punctuality and attendance, excellent adoption of healthy lifestyles and exemplary behaviour. Pupils are very proud of their school and community, take on responsibilities and have a strong voice in the decisions related to changes they believe will improve the school. Older pupils in particular, are highly aspirational and have excellent skills in working collaboratively, solving problems and raising and managing money. The many opportunities to sing, as well as to play the ukulele add much to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Good partnerships with other local primary schools means pupils often attend events that help them to develop friendships with children beyond their immediate locality. This gives them a broader understanding of life outside the village, as well as easing their transfer to secondary school. These partnerships are also successful in enabling staff to work together to share their expertise, to enhance provision and raise attainment and progress. Consequently, planning and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and children make good progress. That said, planning is not including sufficient opportunities for children of this age to learn how to solve problems and use their imagination in their play indoors and outdoors.

Determined action taken since the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory has been successful. As a result, in the past two years, pupils have reached above average and in some individual cases high standards, before leaving the school. A recent review, in consultation with parents, has brought about effective changes to the provision for pupils with special educational needs. This means the work for these pupils is matched closely to their needs and they too make good, and in some instances, rapid progress.

The track record of improvements and robust self-evaluation procedures underpin the school's good capacity to improve. These procedures involve seeking the views of staff, parents, pupils and the governing body. Together they have identified key areas for development with regard to the curriculum and assessment. Recently, a new curriculum has been introduced to develop pupils' creativity, knowledge and skills in a systematic way as they move through the school. It is too early to see if it is having the desired impact. The outstanding assessment strategies that enhance the rate of pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6 have been extended into other classes. However, not all pupils in other year groups know sufficiently what they do well and what they need to do to improve. Parents

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appreciate fully all that the school offers and the high quality care, guidance and support given to their children. One wrote, 'My daughter's enthusiasm for learning has come on leaps and bounds.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend assessment strategies so they are used consistently throughout the school to ensure that all pupils have a very good idea about what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve
- Monitor the impact of the new curriculum to ensure that:
 - children in Reception have more opportunities to think of ways to solve problems and be creative in their play indoors and outdoors
 - pupils build on the knowledge and skills they learn in different subjects each year and are given the chance to express their ideas creatively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils in Years 1 to 4 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and achieve well. In Years 5 and 6 pupils, including those with special educational needs review their work and targets each week, individually, with their teacher and this accelerates their rate of progress significantly. Pupils' strong contribution to the school community ensures that the school has a really positive atmosphere in which to learn. The newly introduced opportunity to write kind comments or a thank you to make another child happy has proved very successful in helping children to be thoughtful to one another. Pupils of all ages acquire important skills they will need for the future by working collaboratively in pairs or small groups in lessons. All have a keen awareness of healthy lifestyles. As a result, pupils only eat healthy snacks, the take up for the nutritious lunches prepared on the premises is high and pupils participate in a wide range of sports in and out of school. Pupils apply for and undergo interviews to carry out different duties around the school and earn points that they collect to swap for an item they would like to own. Pupils contribute confidently their ideas to school improvement targets by saying how they can be the best learners, make lunchtimes and playtimes happy and make the school a safe place to be. Their contribution to the wider community, raising large sums of money during the recent 'Sing Up', running stalls at the local fete and taking part in national events adds a great deal to their personal development.

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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	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
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?

Overall teaching is good and in some cases outstanding. Teachers use imaginative ways to make learning purposeful and relevant in order to capture pupils' interest and enable them to learn and apply new skills effectively. For example, to help pupils write instructions clearly, they were asked to work in pairs, one of them blindfolded, and guide their partner through a short obstacle course. To do this successfully pupils had to be very specific in their instructions. This resulted in high quality work and pupils learned to trust each other and work in a safe manner.

Information provided at the beginning of lessons gives pupils a clear idea about what they are to learn and achieve. Staff make good use of time, new technology and effective questioning to deepen knowledge and understanding. Pupils receive clear feedback and tasks are amended if they are too difficult or too easy. Their exemplary behaviour enables staff to give individual support and guidance without interruption and add to pupils' learning.

A new topic-based curriculum introduced recently to overcome previous inconsistencies in the development of skills year on year, enables pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills well to a range of subjects. It is enriched by activities arranged in cooperation with other schools and events in the locality that promote pupils' personal development very successfully. Visitors to the school and a range of extra-curricular activities that include sport and music, also add to pupils' enjoyment of learning.

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Strong links with the local playgroup, and arrangements for the youngest children to start in Reception at different times of the year, help children to settle in quickly. When it is time to transfer to secondary school pupils are prepared well. Advice sought from partnerships with other agencies, especially behaviour support and a home school support worker, ensures provision is sharply targeted to help pupils overcome barriers to their learning.

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 headteacher, assistant headteacher, staff and governing body all share the determination and ambition for each individual pupil, to do their very best. Since the last inspection they have worked closely as a team. Through the strong leadership of the headteacher, resources have been directed well to bring about much improved rates of pupils' progress. There is strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching, from satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, through teamwork and visits to lessons. This has resulted in consistently good teaching in mixed-age classes. Sharply focused targets set for improving teaching are reviewed regularly. As a result of this rigorous monitoring all lessons are at least good.

The school is very committed to the promotion of equal opportunities. Gaps between the progress of pupils in different classes are closing. The school has identified the strategies, such as in-depth assessments and a skill-based curriculum. Procedures to check the school's effectiveness are robust and key strengths and areas for development are identified to work on in the shorter and longer term. Expertise, to raise the skills of all staff, is sought from the local authority, other agencies and local schools. In particular this has raised the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The governing body uses its broad and good range of expertise in education, personnel, finance and buildings to support and challenge the school very effectively, as well as check the quality of provision. To assist in this the views of parents are sought each term. The budget is monitored carefully and resources directed to benefit the pupils to good effect. Provision for safeguarding pupils is also evaluated regularly by the governing body to check its effectiveness to ensure pupils are safe. The governing body and staff are well trained and training for staff with regard to first aid, especially for paediatric first aid, child protection and safer recruitment is up to date.

The governing body has a good plan to promote community cohesion. The plan shows that the school knows its own community well and has strong links with the local church and community settings. As part of this, the governing body is seeking to enable pupils to

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make a link with a school in Africa and extend their knowledge of other cultures. Pupils have held events to learn more about the cultures of people who live in Spain, France and Germany and raise funds to assist children living in poorer parts of the world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	2
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

Good leadership and management mean that skills in teaching children of this age group have improved since the last inspection. Children make good progress from their different starting points. In 2010 almost all children reached the national average across all the areas of learning and some exceeded it. Analysis of data shows that children make the best progress in their personal, social and emotional development, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Children do not do as well in problem solving and calculation of numbers. Staff know the children well and track their progress through frequent, thorough observations of what they can do. They do not always identify the next step that children need to learn, and ensure that tasks meet those needs.

Curriculum planning covers all the areas of learning. The current theme, 'The aliens are coming', has captured the children's interest well. During the inspection, very young children, most of whom attend for the morning only, were observed making models of aliens that they took on a tour of space, visiting 'planets' set out in the play area and taking pictures of them. The adult working with the children effectively developed their ability to speak and count confidently. While much of this activity took place outside, there are not sufficient opportunities for children to develop imaginative play that takes their learning from indoors to outdoors. Children, old enough to stay all day are successfully taught individually and alongside the older children in Years 1 and 2.

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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

Almost all parents who completed the questionnaire give the school their full support. Parents are particularly pleased with the way the school is led and managed and their child's enjoyment and experiences at the school. Parents spoken to during the inspection reflected these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all of the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Toppesfield 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 inspector received 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection.

In total, there are 46 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	75	7	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	57	12	43	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	50	12	43	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	54	11	39	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	61	11	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	54	13	46	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	68	8	29	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)	15	54	11	39	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	64	9	32	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	61	10	36	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	54	11	39	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	75	7	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	71	8	29	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 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's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Toppesfield, Halstead, CO9 4DS

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. You are right to be proud of it. I know that you enjoy the new topics that you work on for half a term, and that you really appreciate the thanks you receive from other children when you help them. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing some of you playing the ukulele. I am not surprised that you enjoy coming, and hardly ever miss a day.

You go to a good school. Most of you make good progress because you are taught well. Your excellent behaviour and consideration for one another means you can concentrate on your work. The excellent opportunities you have to apply to become monitors, to work together in groups and to take on responsibilities at the local fete are helping you to gain the skills you will need as you grow up. Adults take excellent care of you and keep you safe.

Everyone in school wants you all to do as well as you can in every class. I know you will help by doing your best. I have asked the teachers to:

- make sure that all of you have a very clear idea about what you are doing well and what you need to do to improve
- check that the new topics you are working on:
- give children in Reception opportunities to think of ways to solve problems and be creative in their play indoors and outdoors
- help you to build on the knowledge and skills you learn in different subjects each year and giving you the chance to express your ideas creatively.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Beck

Lead inspector

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