

# St Margaret's CofE VC Primary School, Toppesfield

Church Lane, Toppesfield, Halstead, CO9 4DS

**Inspection dates** 28–29 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because overall they have not made enough progress year-on-year, especially in reading. Reading books are not always matched closely to pupils' abilities and early reading skills are not yet taught consistently well.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good. The needs and interests of groups of differing ability are not always sufficiently taken into account in teachers' planning. Pupils are not given the opportunity to use their reading and writing skills widely enough.
- Not all teachers make effective use of information about pupils' progress and attainment to ensure that work is set at the right level for all abilities, particularly for more-able pupils.
- Teachers do not always make it clear to pupils when marking their work how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve. Pupils' response to the marking of their work varies between classes.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary. For example, they often complete tasks too quickly and are not always encouraged to go back and make improvements.
- Subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and driving improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The plans that school leaders and governors have to improve the school do not have precise information to measure the success of the improvements, particularly the targets for pupils' attainment. Governors have not consistently checked pupils' progress has been quick enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils have a good relationship with adults. They feel safe and are well cared for. The school is warm and welcoming.
- The knowledgeable headteacher accurately evaluates the school and has acted quickly to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons jointly with the headteacher and made short visits to other activities led by teachers and trained assistants.
- Groups of pupils met with the inspector. Discussions were also held with staff, including subject leaders. Meetings were conducted with the Chair of the Governing Body and with a representative from the local authority. The inspector also considered a letter from a local pre-school provider.
- The inspector took account of 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work and read a range of documents. These included documents about the school's own evaluation of its work, school improvement plans, pupils' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Margaret's is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British. No pupils speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-aged classes and one class for Reception pupils.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and are supported through school action is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or through statements of special educational needs is also above the national average.
- Within the last year, an interim headteacher led the school for a term and a half during the absence of the substantive headteacher.
- More than half of the teaching staff joined the school within the last five months. The headteacher has been appointed to the role since the previous inspection.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
  - when planning lessons, teachers give pupils more opportunities to use their reading and writing skills, and take into account the interests and needs of groups of differing ability
  - teachers make effective use of information about pupils' progress to ensure work is set at the right level for all abilities, particularly for more-able pupils
  - pupils are clear how well they are doing, what they need to do next to improve and encouraged to respond to the marking.
- Raise achievement, particularly in reading and writing, by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to use reading and writing skills in other subjects
  - ensuring that reading books always match the ability of pupils
  - ensuring that early reading skills are taught systematically.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that subject leaders closely monitor and improve the quality of teaching
  - including precise information in the school improvement plan by which to measure the success of the strategies for improvement, particularly for pupils' attainment
  - ensuring that governors keep a close check on the progress pupils make.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with highly variable skill levels due to some very small year groups but typically are in line with those expected for their age. Through the variety of activities both in the classroom and outdoors, they make expected progress. Teachers provide suitable activities to promote all areas of learning; the most successful are those that help children develop their personal and social skills. Children have a lot of fun but there are too few opportunities for them to develop their writing skills.
- Achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 requires improvement because pupils have not achieved overall standards above the national average or progressed more than the expected rate by the end of Key Stage 2, especially in reading and writing. Pupils have not had good quality teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in the past, although this is improving as a result of recent and effective staff training.
- More-able pupils are not always provided with work which gives them the challenge they require to make the progress they are capable of, notably in reading and writing. Reading books are sometimes too easy for pupils, and they are not sufficiently extended when asked to interpret the meaning behind words and phrases.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making the same expected progress as their peers because of the extra help they are given, often in small groups or one-to-one teaching.
- The progress of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is similar to that of others in this group nationally. The extra support that the school is providing with this funding enables these pupils to reach their targets and to make the same expected progress as their peers. Gaps between the performance of different groups, including those receiving this funding, are closing.
- The school's progress data provides evidence of improved progress in both key stages during the current academic year, particularly in reading. This is because pupils now have an increasingly effective and well-taught daily programme of phonics to help them to use their letters and sounds to read. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy reading and their improving skills are clearly helping them to develop their writing skills.
- The new sports funding has been directed effectively towards training school staff and particular events so that high-quality provision and an improvement in a wide range of pupils' sports skills can be sustained in the future.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is too variable across the school. Although good practice was observed, the quality of teaching is not consistently good across the school and requires improvement, particularly in writing and reading.
- In some lessons, pupils' progress is slowed because planning does not take their needs sufficiently into account. Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to use their literacy skills in different subjects and learn from each other, for example in developing their writing skills. Pupils sometimes lose time either waiting for the teacher to help them because the task is too difficult or waiting for others to catch up because it is too easy.

- There is inconsistency and a lack of challenge in the way that teachers mark pupils' work in English and mathematics. They do not always point out clearly what pupils need to do next to improve their work. As a result, pupils' individual targets are not precise enough in English and mathematics to help them move along in small and easy to understand steps. Some pupils' respond to the teachers' comments about their work but this is not a consistent across the school and limits the rate of progress made.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, practical activities are planned to cover all areas of learning. Children benefit from a spacious and stimulating environment. Staff are skilled in developing relationships but there are limited opportunities to encourage children to make the good progress. This is because assessment is not routinely used to plan for a wide range of abilities.
- There is a growing proportion of good teaching. Nevertheless, there has not been enough time for these changes to have a full impact on pupils' attainment and progress, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Some lessons are lively, interesting and interactive. This was seen in a Years 5 and 6 literacy lesson when pupils were divided into different groups of the community, including local residents and the council, developing persuasive arguments for and against wind turbines. This approach was successful in bringing the learning to life because it encouraged them to consider different points of view, and ask and to respond to some searching questions.
- Pupils with special educational needs are given good one-to-one support in lessons as well as extra help with English and mathematics. This enables them to participate fully in activities and make the progress expected from their starting points.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Their attitudes to learning and engagement in some lessons are not good enough. Their progress slows when they have too much time to complete routine activities and rely on adult support. Pupils do as they are asked and show pride in most work.
- Pupils are kind, considerate and courteous to each other and to adults in the school. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and are good ambassadors for the school. They are proud to be members of the school community.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and get on well with adults and each other. Pupils understand types of bullying, such as those connected to race, name calling and internet bullying, but feel that it is not a problem at their school. The rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with effectively. This was confirmed by a scrutiny of the school's behaviour records.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View feel that pupils behave well. The school works closely with parents to ensure that their children attend school. Attendance is broadly average.
- The school environment is a safe place to learn and develop and behaviour policies are securely in place. They are understood by all pupils and applied consistently. Outlined in the school's processes is the expectation that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed.

## The leadership and management requires improvement

- Subject leaders are at the early stages of developing their roles in making improvements in teaching and learning and so the effects of their work are yet to be seen in improved standards and quality of teaching. The leadership and management of the school therefore requires improvement so that leaders and managers at all levels work well together to spread best practice.
- The school's improvement plan is not challenging enough. Measures of success are not sufficiently detailed in order for pupil performance to be sustained so that leaders can assess the impact of improvement strategies. However, the school improvement plan has realistic goals, and targets the improvement of academic standards.
- Performance management and staff appraisal systems have made teachers increasingly accountable for their pupils' progress. Information gathered from lesson observations and the analysis of progress data is used to decide teachers' performance targets, salaries and promotion.
- The headteacher has acted quickly to improve the teaching of phonics by organising training for all staff. She has organised specific lessons developing younger pupils' understanding of letters and sounds and knowledge of spelling patterns for older pupils. The headteacher has swiftly tackled weaknesses in teaching. This is ensuring that pupils' progress is quickening over this academic year.
- Additional funding to improve sports provision has been carefully allocated. It is used to fund and supplement the sports clubs and competitions, and increase skills in coaching for team sports. The application of this funding has been thoughtfully evaluated by the headteacher in relation to the improvement of pupil's skills and teachers' subject knowledge.
- The school provides a broad range of subjects and balances the time spent on different areas of the curriculum well. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through daily activities in lessons as well as additional activities after school. A wide range of physical education and sporting activities promote pupils' health and well-being effectively and are enjoyed by pupils, for example dance.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures fully meet requirements and are reviewed regularly. Record keeping, including risk assessments and staff training, is thorough and up to date.
- The local authority has provided support for the school and there has been a focus on the progress that pupils make. The local authority is working with the governing body to support its work on quickly addressing the school's priorities.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a good understanding of how the school is doing and are clear about what it needs to do to improve further. They are informed and participate in various forms of training, including safeguarding and understanding performance data. However, they have not always kept a close enough check on the progress different groups of pupils make and held the leadership to account. This has rapidly improved as they now receive more comprehensive information from the headteacher relating to the progress pupils make and the quality of teaching practice in the classroom. They confirm the information for themselves through regular visits to the school. Governors understand how the management of performance is used to improve staff practice, tackle under-performance and reward good teaching. They use their knowledge and skills effectively when undertaking the performance management of the

headteacher. Governors are clear about how the pupil premium funding is apportioned and its effect on accelerating pupils' progress. They are also evaluating the impact of the additional sports funding. The governors are knowledgeable about how pupil performance compares with that of other schools.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115071
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	440537

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	80
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Martyn Fall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kim Hall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 November 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 237354
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