

St Margaret's CofE VC Primary School, Toppesfield

Church Lane, Toppesfield, Halstead CO9 4DS

Inspection dates 13–14 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, leaders and governors have successfully driven school improvement forward, particularly in teaching and learning and provision in the early years. They have created a strong ethos for teaching, learning and behaviour across the school. Together, they are making sure the school continues to improve.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their physical well-being effectively.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and sometimes they are outstanding. Teachers make good use of well-chosen resources to plan interesting activities which motivate pupils. They create a positive atmosphere for learning. They maintain excellent relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They enjoy coming to school and have very positive attitudes to learning. Their punctuality and attendance are consistently good. The caring atmosphere promotes all aspects of pupils' welfare well. Safeguarding is effective.
- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points in reading, writing, mathematics, science and across a wide range of subjects. Their attainment in reading writing and mathematics, by the end of Year 6, is above the national average. There are no significant differences in the progress of any groups of pupils.
- Outstanding leadership, teaching, learning and assessment are enabling children in the early years to make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. Their behaviour is outstanding and they stay safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes teachers do not set high enough expectations for pupils' learning. As a result, pupils are not always achieving as well as they should.
- Teachers do not always provide younger pupils with the opportunity to deepen their mathematical thinking, which limits their progress. This limits their achievement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement by making sure that teachers always:
 - set the highest expectations for learning for all pupils
 - provide opportunities for pupils to deepen their mathematical thinking.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is providing outstanding leadership with good support from staff and governors in driving improvements forward by robustly tackling weaknesses in teaching and learning. This has led to consistently good teaching across the school and some which is outstanding. As a result, leaders are successfully raising achievement of all pupils across the school. Links with parents are strong. Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school's work and staff morale is high. This is reflected in parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and in completed staff questionnaires.
- The headteacher has introduced robust systems for managing the performance of staff through regular monitoring and evaluation of the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' learning across the school. The new assistant headteacher is an excellent role model for best practice in teaching and learning. The robust system for managing performance has led to outstanding progress by a significant number of pupils in Year 6 and children in the early years provision. The school has moved from a situation where teaching at the last inspection required improvement to where teaching and learning is at least consistently good.
- Senior leaders, subject leaders and governors are effective in making improvements to all aspects of the school's work. Subject leaders are developing their skills well and meet regularly to review pupils' achievement across all subjects. The early years provision has improved considerably enabling children to make outstanding progress from their starting points. Assessment systems have improved and are used effectively to provide accurate information about the progress pupils are making across a range of subjects. This information is reviewed every half term and used to further develop teaching and learning. The school has an accurate view of itself and uses this information well to set clear priorities for improvement.
- The curriculum is relevant to pupils' interests and consists of a broad and balanced range of subjects. It includes memorable experiences, such as science week and visits to places of interest related to topics, such as to a Victorian house, to stimulate enjoyment of learning. There is a strong emphasis on teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. The school has good links with the community and local schools which enhance pupils' learning and achievement. A wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, such as tag-rugby, football, computer club, and art club enrich pupils' learning and enjoyment.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare effectively. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also promoted well, particularly through the Christian ethos where personal values of honesty, kindness towards others and respect are celebrated. This links into the British values of tolerance, respect for others, democracy and the rule of law, which are promoted well. Planned topics of work in personal, social, health and economic education, religious education, music, art and history enable pupils to appreciate and respect others from different cultures and backgrounds. For example, pupils learn about diversity through planned topics on world religions in religious education, and in art they learn to appreciate the work of other artists. There are good opportunities for reflection and staff provide many opportunities for pupils to work together to develop their social skills. Pupils have a deep understanding of right and wrong because staff promote this well through the school's caring ethos and the consistent implementation of the school's code of conduct.
- Leaders make good use of the additional funding the school receives for disadvantaged pupils. The funding is used to provide effective extra individual support which ensures they catch up. As a result, they are doing as well as their classmates and catching up with other pupils nationally. The additional funding is also used to fund school trips and visits for disadvantaged pupils so they can fully participate with their classmates.
- Primary sports funding is used well to provide extra coaching and more sports clubs since the last inspection. Pupils now enjoy new activities such as tag-rugby and dodge ball and their participation in sports has increased.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity effectively by ensuring that different groups of pupils make good progress in their learning. Staff do not tolerate prejudice or discrimination of any kind.
- Since the beginning of the academic year, and at the school's request, the local authority has made more frequent visits to both support and challenge the school. Leaders have found this additional monitoring and review useful and the local authority is now providing effective support.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors provide good support for staff and are challenging the work of the school through regular focused visits and scrutiny of reports from school leaders. They have a good level of knowledge of the school's tracking information about the progress pupils are making. Governors use this well alongside the outcomes of their joint visits to lessons and discussions with staff and pupils to arrive at a realistic view of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress.

- Governors have effective arrangements in place for managing the performance of the headteacher. Objectives are linked to the priorities in the school improvement plan and pupil outcomes. These rigorous and robust targets are monitored closely to hold the headteacher to account. Governors make sure that good teaching is rewarded and any weaknesses are tackled effectively.
- Governors ensure that the additional spending of pupil premium and primary sports funding provides good value for money.
- Governors robustly promote safeguarding by ensuring all legal requirements are met and training and school policies are up to date.
- Governors effectively hold the school to account for the promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including British values.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a safe culture in the school by implementing robust procedures to check the suitability of staff and visitors to work with children and by engaging with parents and outside agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching across the school is good and in Year 6 and the Reception Year it is outstanding. Lesson visits and pupils’ work shows that teachers make use of well-chosen resources to plan interesting activities which motivate pupils. For example, in a science lesson, the teacher used a torch and a globe to demonstrate how day and night occur as the sun shines directly on the earth’s surface as it rotates. In a mathematics lesson, pupils designed their own fairground and calculated the ongoing running costs for each ride.
- Teachers create a positive atmosphere for learning, showing enthusiasm for the task in hand. For example, in a writing lesson, the teacher read out a letter from a princess asking pupils to help her record the characteristics of a dragon, which they did with enthusiasm.
- Staff maintain excellent relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. As a result, pupils try hard and stay focused on their learning.
- Teachers set regular homework for pupils, appropriate to their ages and abilities. Pupils and parents say that homework tasks are challenging and help to improve their learning.
- Teachers provide good levels of support for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who need to catch up quickly.
- Pupils’ work over time, visits to lessons and additional learning activities demonstrate that teaching in a range of subjects such as computing and music is good.
- Teachers are improving pupils’ reading, writing and mathematics well across different subjects as seen in the good examples of pupils’ writing and mathematics work displayed in classrooms and in pupils’ books.
- Teachers make good use of assessment to plan lessons which build on pupils’ prior learning. They provide good feedback to pupils in line with the school’s marking policy. Pupils’ work shows that they mostly learn from their mistakes.
- Parents rightly say they are well-informed about the progress that their children are making in the detailed reports they receive about their achievements across a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers ensure that different pupils have full access to learning and promote equality of opportunity well in lessons. Sometimes, teachers do not set high enough expectations for learning of different groups of pupils.
- Usually, pupils are eager to deepen their knowledge and understanding. However, occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to deepen younger pupils’ understanding of new mathematical ideas.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good. Personal values of honesty and kindness towards others are strongly developed and seen in all aspects of the work of the school. Parents, pupils and staff agree that the support provided to pupils is good and say that pupils are well prepared for transfer to secondary school.
- The school’s welcoming and caring family ethos is at the centre of its work and effectively promotes all aspects of safeguarding and pupils’ welfare. Strong links with outside agencies ensure that more vulnerable pupils and those who need to catch up re-engage with learning. As a result, these pupils develop positive

attitudes to school, and improve their behaviour and attendance. This contributes to the good progress all pupils are making.

- Staff teach pupils about the impact of prejudiced behaviour and bullying on others. Consequently, bullying is rare and dealt with very effectively should it occur.
- Good procedures are in place to ensure pupils' safety. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure in school and when participating in school trips and visits. Pupils use equipment, including computers and the internet, safely. Parents are very positive about the good safeguarding procedures in the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have very good relationships with one another and with staff and they are polite and courteous to visitors. They take responsibility for their actions and reflect on the impact of their behaviour on others.
- The school has adopted the generic safeguarding policy produced by the local authority. However, prior to the inspection, the policy had not been modified to match the school's specific procedures, leading to a lack of clarity over issues such as mobile phones. For example, pupils usually handed their mobile phones in to the office on arrival at school but sometimes did not because the policy did not require them to do so. This has now been rectified and the policy has been revised.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. There have been no exclusions since the last inspection, no racist incidents or prejudice-based behaviour and very few incidents of any kind.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary. Their conduct during this inspection was outstanding and it is clear from all available evidence that this is the norm at St Margarets.
- Pupils say how much they enjoy coming to school and their parents agree. In all lessons visited, pupils had very positive attitudes to learning. Disruption in lessons is extremely rare as pupils always focus on their learning and have the utmost respect for their teachers. They listen to and respect the views of others.
- Pupils' attendance has risen steadily since the last inspection and is above average. Pupils nearly always arrive punctually and well prepared for lessons. Very few pupils are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils across the school are making good progress in a wide range of subjects and are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills from their different starting points.
- Children in the early years make an excellent start. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been rising for the past two years, with an above average proportion of children reaching a good level of development in 2015. Current children joined the school with skills which were below those typical for their ages in each area of learning and are making rapid progress so that the vast majority are on course to reach a good level of development. As a result, boys and girls are exceptionally well-prepared for entry into Year 1. This is a significant improvement from 2015 when boys did much better than girls.
- In 2015, an above average proportion of pupils in Year 1 achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check (a statutory assessment of pupils' knowledge of the relationships between letters and sounds). There has been a steady rise year-on-year in the performance of pupils, although girls did not do as well as boys in 2015. Nevertheless, the school's accurate data shows that the gap between boys' and girls' progress in phonics has narrowed as both groups are on course to exceed the nationally expected standard in 2016.
- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points in reading, writing, mathematics, science and across a wide range of subjects. There are no significant differences in the progress of any groups of pupils.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 build on the rapid progress made in the early years. By the end of Year 2, in 2015, pupils reached above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Current pupils in Key Stage 1 are making good progress. The school's accurate tracking information shows that boys and girls are on course to reach above the expectations for their ages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2015, results show that attainment was above average at Key Stage 2 in reading and writing and broadly average in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils made good progress overall from their different starting points. They made good progress in reading and writing and expected progress in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. The progress of Year 6 pupils in 2015 improved from 2014. The school's accurate tracking information shows that pupils currently in Year 6 are making outstanding progress, with all making better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

and a significant number well above expected progress. All pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to exceed age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress from their individual starting points because effective support is provided to ensure that they fully access learning and achieve well.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and doing better than their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Although there are too few pupils to compare their attainment with other pupils nationally, they are making better progress in all subjects than other pupils nationally.
- The work of the most-able pupils and the school's tracking information show that they are making good progress in achieving the higher levels expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics from their higher starting points.
- Those who enter the school other than at the usual times of admission are making the same good progress as their classmates because staff provide effective support to help them to catch up quickly.
- Pupils make at least good progress in reading and writing across the school. Pupils use phonics (the sounds letters make) effectively to read unfamiliar words and to write and spell words accurately. Current pupils are making better progress in mathematics than they did at the time of the last inspection. The school's accurate information shows that they are currently making good progress and sometimes outstanding progress in mathematics in Years 5 and 6. Nevertheless, pupils' work and visits to lessons show that sometimes younger pupils are not deepening their mathematical thinking skills which limits the progress they can make.
- Pupils are making good progress in physical education because the school makes good use of primary sports funding. Pupils participate as fully as possible in sporting activities and stay fit and healthy. They are successful in competitive games, such as football, with other schools.
- Pupils' work and the information about the progress of pupils shows that they are making good progress across a wide range of subjects, such as music, art, religious education, geography, history and computing.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Outstanding leadership of the early years provision is ensuring that all children are making exceptional progress because they are making very rapid gains in all areas of learning and there are no differences in the progress of any groups of children. The school's accurate information shows that children entered the nursery with attainment below that expected for their ages. The early years leader has eliminated the gaps between boys' and girls' achievement, especially in literacy and mathematics, seen in 2015. Disadvantaged children, disabled children, those with special educational needs and those who need to catch up quickly are making the same outstanding progress as their classmates. Parents confirmed this and said, 'I can't believe how much progress my child is making. It is brilliant! He is a different child!'
- The early years leader works closely with parents to support their children's learning. Parents are encouraged to contribute to their children's initial assessments and to continue to contribute to the ongoing assessments of their child in each area of learning.
- The school uses an online system to record their assessments of children's progress and parents find this to be user-friendly and accessible. Staff ensure that very detailed and highly accurate information is recorded about the progress children are making. As a result, children's different learning needs are identified quickly and assessments in all areas of learning are completed within two weeks of them joining the Reception class. Staff work closely with outside agencies as required and make excellent use of assessment to track progress and move learning rapidly forward.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff consistently set the highest expectations for all children's learning, and teamwork between all adults working in the Reception class is exceptionally strong. As a result, children make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. Excellent support for children ensures that they settle rapidly into their routines.
- Staff provide a range of varied activities to stimulate children's learning so that they make outstanding progress. During the inspection, children sorted different coloured penguins in patterns of two colours, making rapid progress in sequencing. Other children discussed the characteristics of a polar bear they were painting and knew polar bears had black skin, thick white fur and lived in the North Pole.
- Children are very keen to engage in learning activities and greatly enjoy learning. Children's behaviour is outstanding. They behave exceptionally well in all activities, take turns, listen carefully to others and show great respect for each other's differences. Staff promote the welfare and safety of children effectively.

School details

Unique reference number	115071
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10009145

This inspection 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	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martyn Fall
Headteacher	Kim Hall
Telephone number	01787 237354
Website	www.st-margaretscofe.essex.sch.uk
Email address	admin@st-margaretscofe.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28-29 January 2014

Information about this school

- St Margaret's is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British and none speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-aged classes and children in the early years, who attend full-time, are taught in one Reception class.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who receive support from pupil premium funding is low. The pupil premium is extra funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations set for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- More pupils than average start or leave the school part of the way through their primary school education.
- Since the previous inspection, the school received two monitoring visits by Ofsted to determine how much progress it was making in meeting its areas of improvement.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a significant turnover of staff. A new assistant headteacher and three teachers have joined the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons jointly with the headteacher and visited a small number of activities such as whole-school singing.
- The inspector analysed samples of pupils' work across a range of different subjects, including science, and heard a few pupils read.
- The inspector examined the school's assessment information to determine the progress pupils are making in different subjects across the school, including the early years.
- The inspector held a meeting with pupils to seek their views of the school and discussed the views of different pupils informally during breaktime and lunchtime. Meetings were also held with school staff, a local authority representative and governors.
- The inspector took account of 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector also held informal discussions with a small number of parents who accompanied their children to school, and looked at the questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation including minutes of governing body meetings, records of attendance and behaviour, safeguarding policies and procedures, the school improvement plan and the school's own evaluation of its work.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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