

St Margaret's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 120200 |
| Local Authority | Leicestershire |
| Inspection number | 313549 |
| Inspection dates | 6–7 November 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Doris Bell |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 215 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Anne Fullagar |
| Headteacher | Julie Wright |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 January 0001 |
| School address | High Street Stoke Golding Nuneaton CV13 6HE |
| Telephone number | 01455 212393 |
| Fax number | 01455 212393 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school had a new headteacher in September 2007. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar that found in most schools. The school has a Healthy Schools award and has twice gained the Investors in People award.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
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| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils and there are clear signs that it is starting to improve. Governors and the headteacher make an effective team. They are fully committed to improving achievement across the school and this year they have led a successful project to raise standards in reading. Their evaluation of the school's current effectiveness is accurate and they have the support of the staff in their drive to improve standards further. Other leaders and managers have a clear understanding of what needs to be improved in their subject areas, although their action plans do not always focus sharply enough on the quality of pupils' learning. However, the actions to improve writing are already having a positive effect on pupils' achievement in English. The headteacher and the governors recognise that the school has not always set sufficiently challenging targets for pupils' achievement but this is about to change as they set the targets for 2009. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Pupils progress at different rates in different classes, depending on how well they are taught. The quality of teaching, which is satisfactory overall, ranges from outstanding to unsatisfactory. Some teachers' planning is excellent. It meets the learning needs of all pupils really well and ensures their best possible progress. Where this is not the case, planning is not always specific enough about how the needs of different pupils are to be met, and pupils are not always actively enough involved in their learning. Through teachers' marking, most pupils receive good guidance on how to improve literacy, especially writing. This is successfully accelerating their progress. The quality of marking in other subjects is not of the same standard and this means pupils are not always sure about how to improve their work. This particularly affects the more able pupils who then do not have the opportunity to take their learning forward by themselves.

The good pastoral care, guidance and support given to pupils contribute greatly to their good personal development and well-being. As a result, behaviour is good and pupils care for and respect others. They see the school as a 'happy place' where 'there is no meanness' and teachers care well for them. Parents also acknowledge this, commenting, for example, that 'children really enjoy attending'. The curriculum, though satisfactory, does not yet fully underpin the teaching of basic skills in all subjects. However, some sound links are beginning to emerge between different subjects. Sound provision and the good use of teaching assistants mean that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in all lessons.

The school has improved since the previous inspection and it knows what it needs to do to become even better. The initiatives introduced for reading and writing are already accelerating pupils' achievement in those aspects of English. Provision and progress have improved in the Foundation Stage and are now good. All of this, together with occasionally excellent teaching in some classes, a rapidly improving self-evaluation process and the drive and enthusiasm of the headteacher and governors, gives the school good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The strong focus on language, numeracy and personal development contributes really well to the good progress the current Reception children are making. This is in contrast to the merely satisfactory progress seen in the records from previous years. Children settle well, take turns, trust the adults and usually listen carefully to them and to each other. Good leadership and management since April have greatly enhanced provision in this age group. Staff have created

an effective curriculum and an exciting learning environment for the children and the outdoor area is used well to enhance all areas of learning. For example, children successfully consolidated their early reading, writing and mathematical skills as they 'wrote' on the playground with water from their squeeze bottles.

There is a good balance between staff-led and child-initiated activities. Sensitive, well-focused staff intervention in imaginatively planned fun learning activities successfully challenges and deepens the children's thinking. Staff record children's learning and progress at regular intervals and they use the information well in their planning. However, there is insufficient recording of learning on a day-to-day basis to make sure that nothing is missed, and that children's learning is moved on at every possible opportunity.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve teaching and learning by achieving greater consistency in the quality of teachers' planning and marking, and by extending the range of teaching methods used to support pupils' different learning needs
- make targets for academic performance more challenging for the whole school and, where appropriate, for individual pupils, especially the more able
- sharpen the skills of subject leaders and managers so that they focus their actions more closely on improving pupils' learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

While achievement is satisfactory overall, pupils' progress is variable. Sometimes it is good and even outstanding, but occasionally it is inadequate. The school's extensive monitoring of pupils' progress shows this clearly and the headteacher has already started to change the situation. The standards seen in pupils' work are average in Year 2 and Year 6. Last year's test results for Year 6 were above the national average except in English, where they were similar to those found in other schools. Standards have improved in the past two years. Despite this, given their relatively high starting points, more able pupils, especially girls, still did not do well enough in the tests. Overall, pupils that are more able do not receive sufficiently challenging work to do. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

The initiatives introduced in September are successfully tackling previous weaknesses in reading in Key Stage 1 and in writing throughout the school. As a result, pupils' progress is improving. However, the techniques used in the 'Big Writing' project are taken too far in some classes. For example, the occasional over-use of 'wow' words means that pupils' writing does not always flow well enough to sustain the reader's interest. It also sometimes lacks the precision in the use of language and the good presentation required to reach the higher levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils respond well to the carefully planned opportunities presented to them to take responsibility for important aspects of school life. They carry out their tasks with real

commitment, and they contribute well to the school and wider community as school councillors and play leaders. Pupils clearly enjoy school, as their good attendance shows.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. The school's Christian affiliation ensures that pupils successfully learn to respect other faiths and cultures, and each other's feelings and ideas. These matters are approached with sensitivity, imagination and understanding. As a result, pupils readily share their thoughts with others, for example through the books on display in the corridor. They behave well in lessons and in the playground. However, they sometimes forget little things like holding doors open for each other or for adults, and there is some unnecessary jostling on the way in from play. Nevertheless, pupils' good personal progress and their satisfactory academic progress ensure that they are adequately prepared for life beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy very good relationships with staff and with each other and most classrooms are happy, productive places. In some classes, exciting, enjoyable activities, closely matched to pupils' different learning needs, lead to rapid progress for all. This was observed, for example, in a Year 1 history lesson involving role-play that greatly enhanced pupils' speaking and listening skills alongside their historical knowledge and understanding. Elsewhere, however, pupils have too few opportunities to take their learning forward by themselves. In some classes, the lack of challenging targets and the narrow range of teaching methods also hinder pupils' progress, affecting particularly the more able pupils.

At times, pupils' work is marked well, for example in literacy, showing pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Here, assessment information is used effectively to plan lessons and set challenging targets for all pupils. However, this good practice does not occur in all classes or subjects. Tackling this inconsistency is rightly a priority in the school development plan.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Improvements to the curriculum since the previous inspection have contributed to the pupils' overall satisfactory progress. However, the curriculum does not yet provide sufficient academic challenge for all pupils, especially the more able. The recent focus on writing has begun to address this and some useful links are starting to be made between different subjects. However, attention to promoting reading, writing or mathematical skills in all subjects is not yet a consistent feature of the curriculum. The school is rightly working on this to help pupils gain a better understanding of the principles that underpin everything they do.

Pupils' personal development is well served by a strong programme of activities which go beyond the conventional curriculum. These include, for example, learning French, visiting theatres and museums and taking part in a wide range of sports and arts activities. The large numbers of pupils involved in sports, and the emphasis placed on eating well, contribute greatly to the pupils' good understanding of healthy living. This has resulted in the school gaining a Healthy Schools award.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers know the pupils well and have their welfare at heart at all times. Parents recognise this as one of the strongest features of the school. Several commented on the commitment of the staff and described the school as a 'very happy and enjoyable place' for their children. Pupils trust their teachers and know they can turn to them should they need help. The good attention paid to all safeguarding procedures, closely monitored by governors, ensures pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves and others safe. The school's sound links with external agencies contribute to all of this. Pupils know their literacy targets, the levels they are working at and, in most classes, they receive good guidance on how to reach their targets. They are, however, less secure about their numeracy targets. Here, the support and guidance they receive is not always as helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

In a very short time, the headteacher has gained an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Her evaluations of teaching and learning are accurate and robust. She has led staff and governors well in constructing a comprehensive, well-focused development plan. The plan has the right priorities but not all of its success criteria are sufficiently focused pupils' achievement. However, through involving staff and governors in the planning, closely monitoring the quality of teaching and giving teachers clear advice on how to improve, the headteacher is successfully raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do.

Governors take very seriously their role in checking the impact of their policies on pupils' learning and personal development. They play a key role in self-evaluation, follow up weaknesses and take an active part in school improvement. For example, following this year's Key Stage 1 reading outcomes, they consulted with the headteacher and staff on how to improve reading and set up a group to help do this. The impact of this work is already evident in the pupils' improved phonic skills in Reception and Key Stage 1. Steps have already been taken to develop the quality of subject leadership. As a result, a timetable is now in place to train staff to lead and manage their subjects more effectively and to set challenging targets for improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret's CE Primary School, Nuneaton CV13 6HE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school, and for talking to us about your work. You and your parents told us that St Margaret's is a happy school that you enjoy attending. We agree. We found your school to be satisfactory overall. That means it does some things well but it needs to do some other things better to help you to learn faster. Here is a summary of some of the good things we found.

- The staff care for each and every one of you and they make sure you understand the importance of keeping yourself and others safe. As a result, you behave well most of the time and you care for each other.
- You have a good understanding of what it means to follow a healthy lifestyle and you clearly enjoy the many opportunities given to you to develop good personal skills.
- While teaching is satisfactory overall, some of it is excellent. Where this is the case, you make quicker progress in your learning.
- The headteacher and governors know what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve your learning. They are beginning to take the steps needed to bring about that improvement.

To help you learn faster, we have asked the school to do everything possible to:

- make sure all of your teachers plan and mark your work equally well and give you more opportunities to learn in different ways
- set targets that provide you with much more challenge to spur you on to learn as well as you possibly can at all times
- help those who lead and manage different subjects to do this even better.

You can help your teachers to do all of these things by working hard and doing your best at all times. We hope you will always enjoy learning as much as you do now and that you will rise to the challenge of doing even better.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell Lead inspector