

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

Church Lane, Toppesfield, Halstead, Essex CO9 4DS

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

St Margaret's is a calm and happy place. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and say that the staff know them very well. Pupils are proud to be part of this small school. They like that they know everyone and that everyone is kind and caring. Pupils say that bullying happens rarely and that staff deal with this quickly.

Staff are ambitious for all pupils. Pupils enjoy a varied curriculum, including learning music, computing and physical education (PE) with teachers from across the school. Pupils achieve well and learn about other cultures and diversity, preparing them for the wider world.

Pupils behave well and have a focused attitude to learning. Pupils respond well to staff's high expectations of behaviour. There are clear routines in place and pupils move calmly around the school. Pupils can be energetic, but they know when they need to be sensible and when they can be playful. There is a culture of positivity, reminders and rewards that encourages good behaviour.

Pupils are inquisitive and are confident to be themselves. Staff foster pupils' personalities and celebrate that everyone is unique. Pupils benefit from the strong pastoral support that the school offers.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have constructed a carefully sequenced curriculum from early years that meets pupils' needs. The curriculum is ambitious. Leaders have high expectations for what all pupils should learn. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and know how to teach different subjects effectively. They usually plan activities that match and deepen pupils' understanding. Teachers and subject leaders check what pupils have learned and usually adapt the curriculum as needed. In a few subjects, these checks are not as regular, so teachers do not spot some misconceptions quickly.

Leaders have made reading a priority, beginning in the early years, to ensure that pupils can access the full curriculum. Pupils enjoy reading. There is a focus on teaching phonics consistently and ensuring that pupils become fluent readers. Younger pupils who are developing their phonics knowledge learn this quickly. Where needed, the pace of phonics teaching is adjusted to meet pupils' needs. Pupils talk confidently about the books and authors they like and dislike and the reasons why.

Leaders have a robust system for identifying pupils' needs early. They ensure that pupils get the help and support they need to do well in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well to access the full curriculum. Pupils with SEND make strong gains in their knowledge.

Children in the early years enjoy coming to school. The curriculum is well sequenced and prioritises children learning a range of vocabulary. Staff are knowledgeable and

target children's learning through well-planned activities. Adults teach children how to talk, work and play with others. Children know routines and behave well when playing with their peers and on learning tasks. They learn important subject knowledge that prepares them well for key stage 1.

Pupils are confident and enjoy their learning. They behave well in lessons and when moving around the school. Leaders have clear routines in place to develop pupils for secondary school. There are clear processes in place to support pupils who need help with managing how they feel, and all pupils make use of these. Pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep safe online and in real life. Pupils say that they feel safe in school.

Pupils value the range of learning experiences from their personal, social and health education curriculum and say that it helps them to be ready for real world. Pupils enjoy learning about other cultures and religions. Pupils thrive on having responsibility and say that currently this is limited. Pupils attend sports clubs but there are few opportunities for them to learn or try new things in other areas.

Governors know their role and hold leaders to account. Governors work closely with the school to identify priorities for development and focus on the sustainability of the school. Governors have a clear strategic vision and meet statutory obligations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that keeping pupils safe is a priority. Leaders have clear processes in place to manage and identify concerns. Staff have a high level of confidence to spot and report concerns. Regular training ensures that all staff keep up to date with local issues. Leaders challenge agencies when needed to ensure that pupils and families have the correct support.

Pupils know about online dangers and learn how to keep their personal information, including photos, confidential. Pupils feel safe and they report any concerns to adults. They are confident that their concerns will be dealt with properly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teachers do not identify and address pupils' misconceptions quickly. This means that some pupils are less secure in learning some important subject knowledge. Leaders must ensure that staff use their checks on pupils' learning to identify and address pupils' misconceptions in all subjects in a timely fashion.
- Leaders provide a limited amount of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are not currently engaging with experiences that develop their talents and interests.

Leaders must ensure that they provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their interests.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	115071
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10240985
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Helen Kent-Jackson
Headteacher	Stephanie Newland
Website	www.st-margaretscofe.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Several members of the governing board have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- This is a Church of England primary school. The school's most recent section 48 Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools took place in October 2015.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, history and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors considered the design of the curriculum, spoke with

subject leaders, visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' books or listened to children reading, and spoke with teachers and pupils.

- Inspectors spoke with the local authority improvement partner and the diocesan representative.
- To inspect safeguarding, meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead, teachers and pupils. Inspectors also reviewed records, policies and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with governors and the leaders responsible for SEND and early years provision.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors observed and spoke with pupils, including at breaktimes, and took account of the responses to Ofsted's survey of pupils' views. There were fewer than five pupil responses.
- Inspectors reviewed the 16 responses and the 16 free-text comments submitted to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers.
- The inspectors took account of the 13 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Nerrissa Bear, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Glenn Russell

Ofsted Inspector

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