

Inspection of St Margaret's-at-Cliffe Primary School

Sea Street, St Margaret's-At-Cliffe, Dover, Kent CT15 6SS

Inspection dates:	21 and 22 January 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since July 2015. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and settled in this friendly village school. Warm relationships between pupils and adults are built on care and respect. Pupils talk confidently about feeling supported and safe. Staff are ambitious for every pupil to succeed. Barriers to learning are seen as an opportunity to strengthen the provision for all pupils. Adaptations to the environment work effectively to support all learners, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, most pupils achieve well.

Staff have high expectations for behaviour. Pupils are keen to exceed these expectations, both inside and outside the classroom. The school's values of resilience, resourcefulness, respect and tolerance, responsibility and reflection are reinforced at every opportunity. Pupils understand how these values help them to succeed in their learning and personally. The opportunities for pupils to undertake leadership roles, such as 'red caps' and early years buddies, are highly regarded.

The school is currently in the process of refining parts of the curriculum. This is because in some subjects there needs to be clearer links between what pupils learn and how teachers check they have learned it.

Parents and carers are highly supportive of the changes made since the new leadership team has been in place.

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

The school has prioritised refining and improving the curriculum across many subjects. The revised curriculum is well sequenced and ambitious from the early years through to Year 6. Knowledge has been precisely identified. Pupils are beginning to remember their learning. The school understands there is still work to do. In some subjects, the curriculum is not supporting pupils to make links between current and prior learning. The way that staff check what pupils remember is not yet systematic. This means that some pupils have gaps in their learning that are not always picked up and addressed well enough. A clear plan is in place to develop these aspects.

Teachers have benefited from high-quality focused training. This has resulted in strong subject knowledge for staff. An example of this is the school's approach to the teaching of reading. The school's teaching of phonics ensures that the majority of children get off to a strong start. Pupils are exposed to a language-rich environment that starts in the early years. This has been enhanced through text choices that link areas of learning together. The school gives support to those readers that require extra help. However, the way that the school checks what pupils know and remember is not precise enough. This means that some of the weakest readers are not learning to read as well as they could.

Pupils build strong relationships with each other and staff. This starts right from the early years where staff are skilled at developing children's independence. During child-led learning, children stay focused on tasks for extended periods of time. Staff design learning opportunities carefully matched to children's needs and interests. Pupils across

the school talk about having trusted adults to support them. The school's pastoral support has been instrumental in helping pupils to be successful in the classroom.

Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They are polite and respectful. Classrooms are a place to learn and pupils are keen to live up to the expectations of staff. Learning is rarely disrupted by the behaviour of other pupils. Pupils are treated fairly and consistently by staff. The school consistently promotes good attendance. Pupils, parents and staff understand the importance of attending school every day. As a result, most pupils attend well and are rarely late.

The whole school approach to pupils' personal development has been thoughtfully considered. Trips and visits link into the curriculum. Pupils are passionate about their Year 6 residential to France, where they are able to practise the French they learn in school. Pupils respect and celebrate differences between themselves and others. They are taught about how to keep themselves safe online. They understand the importance of keeping fit and healthy.

The school's values are well embedded and understood by all stakeholders. Workload and well-being of all staff remain a high priority, despite the significant work already undertaken around the curriculum. Staff are positive about the support that they receive, including those who are new to teaching. Those responsible for governance know the school well. They challenge and support the school effectively and are rigorous in carrying out their statutory duties.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in some subjects does not effectively make links between pupils' prior and current learning. Pupils do not, therefore, build on their previous learning and effectively remember some of the knowledge and skills that they need. The school should ensure that the newly implemented curriculum makes clear links between pupils' prior and current learning, so that pupils learn and remember more.
- The assessment of readers at risk of falling behind is not precise enough. As a result, some of these pupils are not given the specific support they need to address gaps in their learning. This hampers their ability to read with fluency and comprehension. The school should strengthen its approach to assessing the weakest readers to enable these pupils to catch up and keep up with their peers.
- The school's approach to checking what pupils know and remember is not yet embedded. As a result, pupils' misconceptions are not always picked up effectively

enough. The school should ensure that there is a systematic approach to checking what pupils know and remember, so that pupils build securely on prior learning.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	118495
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341492
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Helen King
Headteacher	Craig Ward
Website	www.stmargaretsprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 July 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- A new leadership team has been in post since September 2024.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and geography. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors heard pupils read to a member of staff. The inspectors also spoke to pupils and looked at work in some other curriculum subjects.
- The inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils and those with responsibility for governance, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspectors met with representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed break and lunchtimes and the start of the school day.
- The inspectors scrutinised minutes of the governing body meetings and other relevant documents.
- The inspectors met leaders to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND. They visited lessons to look at the support these pupils were receiving.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Emma Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Catherine Hylands

Ofsted Inspector

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