

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **St. Margaret's Church Of England Voluntary Controlled School**

Church Lane  
Toppesfield  
Halstead  
Essex  
CO9 4DS

#### **Diocese: Chelmsford**

Local authority: Essex  
Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2008  
Date of last inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2004  
School's unique reference number: 115071  
Headteacher: Mrs Naomi Snowdon  
Inspector's name and number: Dr Duncan Ramsey

#### **School context**

St Margaret's CE is a much smaller than average primary school. Most pupils are from a White British background and there are currently no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average. However, these pupils are not evenly distributed. In some year groups, over half of the pupils have learning difficulties while other year groups have none.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Margaret's as a Church of England school are good.**

St. Margaret's is a good school because strong leadership with a clear vision for school improvement has created an environment where all children feel valued, safe and secure. Relationships in school are based upon Christian principles and are characterised by mutual respect and concern for one another. A very good partnership between school leadership and governors means the school has excellent capacity to keep on improving. Committed and dedicated staff have helped develop the vision effectively.

#### **Established strengths**

- Strong leadership is provided by the head and governors who work in close partnership
- Accurate self-evaluation helps the school to identify the next steps for improvement
- Children feel happy, safe and valued
- Relationships in school are excellent
- There is a good partnership between the school and local churches
- The school is actively involved in its local community
- The school grounds have been developed well
- Prayer plays an important part in school life

#### **Focus for development**

- To embed the vision of St. Margaret's as an excellent church school more fully in the overall plans for school development
- To develop acts of worship so as to allow increased pupil participation and evaluation
- Provide increased opportunities for continuing professional development of staff as part of the ongoing improvement of the school as a church school

#### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners**

Children at St. Margaret's feel valued and special. They talk enthusiastically about their pride for the school and the way in which their teachers care for them. One child said "our teachers expect us to behave well, but they can be fun too". Relationships between children are very good. Older children look after the younger ones well and are happy to take on

responsibilities around school. Children feel they are listened to, and that the school council has made significant improvements by pressing for new playground equipment, helping to organise games and being involved in school grounds improvements. Conflicts are dealt with fairly and compassionately through the use of an effective school policy. The accommodation and resources for the school have been improved over recent years but there is still room for further development. Classrooms could be organised more effectively to provide increased opportunities for reflection, prayer and worship. Displays in school are excellent. They are bright and stimulating and provide evidence for an interesting and varied curriculum. The majority of pupils from all groups do well with children trying hard to reach their full potential. Children really value the rewards they receive for good behaviour, homework, and school work.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory.**

Acts of worship in school are beginning to occupy a more important place in the life of the school. There is a systematic approach to planning which identifies a common theme for each half term. This is communicated well to all people involved in leading acts of worship. Good links with the church have been developed. The Rector is involved with leading acts of worship on a weekly basis and these are greatly valued by the children. Children behave well during assembly time and have enjoyed the recent introduction of a prayer book, in which children from each class write prayers and say them at the appropriate time. Recent effective self-evaluation has led to greater pupil involvement so that worship is beginning to evoke a consistently positive response from all participants. The school has begun to involve the children more in planning and evaluating acts of collective worship more methodically. Very good use of the churches in Toppesfield and Stambourne is made, so as to broaden the children's experience of worship. Children attend, and help to lead services such as those for harvest and the year 6 leavers. The churches are also used to support curriculum activities. Recently the school has developed a system whereby children can talk about what they have learnt in assembly, back in the classroom. This has helped make worship more relevant as children have discussed how the Christian values promoted in worship can be developed and used in every day school life.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good.**

Leadership and management is good because of the very clear vision for church school improvement that the head and governors have developed over the recent period. This is demonstrated through effective self-evaluation which has accurately identified areas for school improvement. Children speak highly of a head teacher who "cares for us, and is fun". They say that the school has improved recently, because lessons are fun and exciting, the school is much brighter, there is new playground equipment and the school grounds have been developed. The school's leaders have communicated their vision well through a clear vision statement. This statement could be developed further to show children how it can help them live out the Christian principles learned in school on a day-to-day basis. Communication between the school, the Church and parents is very effective. Parents speak positively about regular newsletters and class information sheets. The school has worked hard to develop systems where all members of the community can contribute to self-evaluation. There are very productive links with the local church. One particular strength is the pastoral care provided to staff and children by the Rector who has provided support through a variety of difficult times. This has been greatly appreciated. There are opportunities to further develop the training provided to staff as part of the ongoing improvement of the school as a church school.