

Inspection of St Margaret's Church of England Academy

Aigburth Road, Liverpool, Merseyside L17 6AB

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They described their school as a safe and friendly place to learn, where everybody is welcome. Pupils are appreciative of the care and guidance that they receive from staff. Pupils are confident that there are adults in school who they could approach should they have any worries.

In lessons, and around the school, pupils behave well. Most pupils are extremely polite and courteous. They are respectful of other people in the school. Pupils said that bullying is rare. They are very confident that staff would resolve any bullying quickly, should it ever happen. Sixth-form students act responsibly and lead by example.

Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their 'learning for life' lessons. They said that these lessons provide them with a greater understanding of issues such as the role of women in society and discrimination. They enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities available to them. Sixth-form students benefit from a similarly high-quality enrichment programme.

Leaders have raised their expectations of what pupils can and should achieve at St Margaret's. Despite recent improvements to the curriculum, inspectors found that pupils experience an uneven quality of education between different subjects, including in the sixth form. Consequently, not all pupils achieve as well as they should.

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

Senior leaders, including governors, are taking the right steps to improve the curriculum. They have begun to think more deeply about what an ambitious curriculum should look like, including in the sixth form. Leaders are determined to raise the achievement of all pupils at the school, including those pupils who are disadvantaged. They are working well towards this goal. Leaders are also increasing the number of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

To improve the quality of curriculum planning, senior leaders are working effectively alongside subject leaders. This is to ensure that subject leaders identify with accuracy the most important overarching topics and concepts that they want pupils to know and remember from the curriculum. In addition, senior leaders are ensuring that subject leaders and teachers put these topics and concepts in a clear and logical order. Leaders are fully aware that subject plans are at different stages across the school. For example, some plans continue to lack ambition and are incomplete. Added to this, some teachers do not choose the most appropriate activities to teach new knowledge. As a result of the differences in the quality of curriculum planning, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

In the sixth form, students have access to a full range of academic and vocational courses. However, not all curriculum plans define the exact knowledge that teachers want students to know and remember. Most teachers use their subject expertise to help students to gain a reasonable level of knowledge in the courses that they study. However, students in the sixth form do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should.

Leaders' overarching strategy for assessing how well pupils are learning the curriculum is unclear. That said, many teachers use an appropriate range of assessment approaches during lessons. However, they do not all use these approaches effectively enough to help pupils learn the intended curriculum. At times, some teachers are unaware of whether all pupils have understood, or remembered, previously taught knowledge. Some teachers do not fully address pupils' misconceptions before they move on to new topics.

Leaders encourage pupils to develop a love of reading. However, leaders have not thought carefully enough about how to help those pupils who find reading more difficult. As a result, leaders do not identify these pupils quickly enough. This means that some of these pupils are not receiving the timely support that they need to help them to catch up quickly with their reading.

Leaders with responsibility for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have accurately identified those pupils with SEND. However, they do not always use the information that they possess effectively enough when putting together their plans to support these pupils with their learning. Consequently, teachers do not always adapt the delivery of the curriculum effectively enough for pupils with SEND. Some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils said that the systems to manage behaviour are used by teachers consistently and fairly. As a result, any disruption to pupils' learning is minimal. Pupils attend school regularly. However, there are some occasions when pupils are late to lessons. Leaders are in the process of addressing this issue.

There is a well-planned personal development curriculum in place. This ensures that pupils develop a broad knowledge of issues such as relationships and healthy lifestyles. It also enables pupils to deepen their knowledge of a range of career opportunities. Staff encourage pupils to make an active contribution to society.

Students in the sixth form benefit from strong relationships with their teachers. They are appreciative of the wider support that they receive to address issues such as their mental health and how to apply for higher education, employment or training.

Governors are increasingly providing an appropriate level of support and challenge. Leaders have taken some effective steps to address staff well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils benefit from a personal development curriculum that teaches them about how to keep themselves safe. Well-planned assemblies provide pupils with additional opportunities to deepen their understanding of issues such as peer-on-peer abuse. Pupils are confident that leaders have put appropriate systems in place that enable them to report any safeguarding concerns.

Leaders have strong relationships with external safeguarding partners. When necessary, leaders use external partners' expertise to provide pupils in need with the help and support that they require. Leaders ensure that staff receive timely and up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff are confident that should a safeguarding incident arise, they would know what steps to take.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders' plans remain underdeveloped and/or incomplete. Not all leaders have thought carefully enough about exactly what they want pupils and students to learn. Nor has sufficient emphasis been placed on how to select the most appropriate pedagogical activities. As a result, not all pupils, and not all students in the sixth form, learn as well as they should. Senior leaders should continue to develop the curriculum across all year groups and key stages. This is so that all pupils and students know more and remember more of each subject.
- Leaders have not developed an approach to assessment that allows teachers to check where pupils have missing or insecure knowledge. As a result, teachers do not always address pupils' misunderstandings or deficits in knowledge quickly enough. Leaders should review their assessment systems so that teachers check precisely what pupils know and understand of the taught curriculum. They should also use this information to adapt curriculum plans accordingly.
- Leaders do not give reading a sufficiently high priority across the school. As a result, not all pupils read widely and often. Some pupils have gaps in their reading knowledge and skills. Leaders should put strategies in place to identify those pupils who are struggling with their reading. They should provide these pupils with the appropriate support to help them to catch up quickly with their reading knowledge.
- Currently, leaders do not make the best use of the information that they have about pupils with SEND, when putting together plans to support these pupils with their learning. Consequently, there are times when teachers do not have a complete enough understanding of what they need to do to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. Leaders must ensure that any information that is in their possession is accurately analysed and used effectively to improve

the quality of education for pupils with SEND. They should also improve the quality of information that they supply to teachers.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	138850
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10200830
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1039
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stewart Crowe
Principal	Stephen Brierley
Website	www.stmargaretsacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	28 September 2018

Information about this school

- The school's last section 48 inspection took place in July 2017.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this 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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal; other senior leaders, one of whom is currently acting as the special educational needs coordinator; middle leaders; teachers; and members of the support staff.
- An inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also scrutinised the minutes of various governing body meetings.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, geography and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered other curriculum areas, including art and design, food and nutrition, modern foreign languages and physical education.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader to consider the culture of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documents in relation to safeguarding, including leaders' pre-employment checks on staff.
- Inspectors also spoke to staff and pupils about wider aspects of safeguarding. They considered survey responses from staff, parents and carers, and pupils around safeguarding. An inspector also checked the arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to behaviour and attendance, the school development plan, the self-evaluation summary and curriculum plans.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes, in corridors, during registration, in assembly and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of their behaviour. Inspectors discussed pupils' programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Alyson Middlemass, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Emma Jackson	Ofsted Inspector
Dympna Woods	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Veitch	Ofsted Inspector

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