

Name of School:	St Margaret's Church of England Academy
Head teacher/Principal:	Head of school: Gemma Smith Executive Head Teacher: Emma Wigmore
Hub:	Tendring
School type:	Academy
MAT (if applicable):	The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust.

Estimate at this QA Review:	OUTSTANDING
Date of this Review:	2 – 4 May 2018
Estimate at last QA Review	Not applicable
Date of last QA Review	Not applicable
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	GOOD (Predecessor School)
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	28 – 29 January 2015

Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising of host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

School Improvement Strategies	OUTSTANDING
Outcomes for Pupils	OUTSTANDING
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	OUTSTANDING
Area of Excellence	Religious Education
Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence	Not applicable
Overall Estimate	OUTSTANDING

Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

1. Information about the school

- St Margaret's Church of England Academy is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average. Just over half are from White British backgrounds. Approximately one-third of pupils are of African heritage. Approximately 10 per cent of pupils are of Gypsy Roma or Irish Traveller heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national average.
- There is an Executive Head Teacher and a Head of School. The Executive Head Teacher is also Executive Head Teacher of Bulphan C of E Academy and Lead Head Teacher at Orsett Primary School.
- The school became an academy in October 2016 and is part of The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust.

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Follow up from previous review

- This is the school's first Challenge Partners review.

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- Senior leaders are a highly committed, skilled and cohesive team who are very well led by the Executive Head Teacher. Senior leaders have successfully promoted a vision for a school that ensures that all pupils are treated with respect and are able to thrive. There is a culture of responsibility that is interlinked with accountability at all levels. This has empowered adults to develop systems and practices that meet their own specific needs whilst still remaining within the over-arching school structure.
- Senior leaders have created an aspirational environment for learning, where pupils and staff constantly aim high. Consequently, the school caters exceptionally well for pupils' academic development and for their social and emotional well-being. Senior leaders have overseen significant improvements

in pupils' achievements in recent years.

- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Leaders' work starts with their rigorous analysis of all available information. They invite scrutiny and welcome feedback. Leaders use regular reviews to inform their thinking and are unwilling to accept anything less than outstanding standards for their pupils. As a result, leaders have a wealth of information that they use to plan the school's next steps. Leaders constantly review the impact of new initiatives on pupils' outcomes. School improvement planning provides the strategic direction and is highly aspirational. Plans are assessed carefully so that the outcomes for pupils are the best possible ones.
- The systems and processes for monitoring and evaluating pupils' standards and progress across the school are very rigorous. The pupil progress tracking systems combine extensive research and a pragmatic approach to the effective use of data. There are clear and coherent systems in place, which ensure that data input leads to actions so that positive outcomes are secured. This approach to assessment ensures leaders at all levels are very aware of key areas of strength and development across all cohorts, subjects and individual pupil groups.
- Improving the quality of teaching and learning is central to the school's drive to be the best. The school's continuing professional development (CPD) programme is very well developed and tailored to individuals' career goals and development needs. Staff take opportunities to share their experiences with their peers. Teachers can develop their skills safe in the knowledge that leaders will nurture potential. The school is very outward looking and hosts many events that support staff professional development from a wide range of schools.
- There is a strong partnership with other local primary schools which has strengthened and deepened leadership across each of the schools.
- Pupils are inspired to learn because the curriculum is planned to ignite their interest, while still being firmly centred on the development of key skills.

2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...

...leaders ensured that the school website is up to date and celebrates the many achievements of the school.

...senior leaders reflected on the school environment outside of the classrooms and whether it reflects the school's values and promotes learning.

3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Follow up from previous review

- This is the school's first Challenge Partners review.

3.2 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - What went well

- Teachers' planning is meticulous and lessons are highly structured. Pupils recognise and value teachers' very strong subject knowledge.
- Clear and established routines enable lessons to run smoothly. The brisk transitions between different classroom activities make the most of learning time. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Teachers refuse to accept mediocrity. Pupils know that teachers expect much of them and get to work quickly. They pay attention to teachers' instructions and seek to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Questioning is used consistently well by teachers who know that to probe pupils' preconceptions and test their prior knowledge is part of what motivates pupils. Pupils accept nothing less than a teacher who challenges them and teachers duly oblige.
- Teachers use the system of assessment and feedback very well across subjects and year groups. Consequently, pupils know how to improve their work and teachers have accurate information from which to plan and inform parents about how their children are doing.
- Teachers successfully harness pupils' natural curiosity and thirst for learning. Supportive and trusting relationships underpin teaching, learning and assessment. These relationships are as a result of the school's core values of Love, Wisdom, Friendship, Perseverance, Respect and Courage, which are a central pillar of the school's work. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic in their lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils see themselves as learners and develop excellent behaviours for learning. They enjoy working collaboratively and with their talk partners. They are eager to discuss and seek the opinions and ideas of their peers. They talk openly about being resilient when things go wrong.
- The teaching of writing is a particular strength. Teachers have a very good understanding of the subject. They routinely plan additional challenges to promote a range of genres.
- Reading is taught very well. Pupils understand the importance of reading both for pleasure and also to find out information. The teaching of phonics is very good and provides an appropriate balance between consolidating pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds, and applying this to their reading. Teachers use a wide range of literature to capture pupils' interest and to encourage a love of reading.
- Teaching assistants are a valuable asset to the school. They are well deployed and work very well with the teachers to support and develop

pupils' learning. Vulnerable pupils are taught well. They make very strong progress from their starting points. Teachers and adults working with them have a clear knowledge of their individual needs, and what they need to learn step by step.

- In the EYFS, adults are particularly skilled at planning activities that encourage children to learn by exploring.

3.3 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Even better if...

...teachers were more agile with their in-class assessment for learning and adjusted activities accordingly to increase the pace of learning, especially for middle attaining pupils.

4. Outcomes for Pupils

- Pupils continue to make very strong progress during their time at St Margaret's.
- Children in the early years (EYFS) Reception enter the school with a range of prior experience and their knowledge and skills are typically below those expected for their age. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above the national average. Most children make good progress during their time in the EYFS. Current school information suggests that this is likely to continue this year. They make good progress because skilled teaching ensures that each child's needs are met. Language skills are well promoted and staff model the correct use of language.
- Pupils continue to make strong progress during Key Stage 1. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics national screening check benchmark was well above the national average.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 was above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth was above the national average in all three areas.
- Pupils do well across Key Stage 2. In 2017, pupils' scaled scores in reading and in mathematics were above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the combined expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average; whilst the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard was broadly average.
- Pupils who have SEND make particularly good progress from their starting points. They develop increasing independence and confidence, and are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- Evidence from school assessment information and pupils' workbooks

suggests that pupils are continuing to make very strong progress during their time at the school. Pupils take great pride in their work. They love telling visitors about what they are doing and the progress they are making. Pupils learn much from the careful ways in which staff speak to them, as well as the varied opportunities provided to practise their growing language skills. Pupils write with skill and enthusiasm across subjects because teaching is well informed, organised and inspiring. Teachers ensure that pupils' basic numeracy skills are developed and practised.

- Disadvantaged pupils make sustained progress over time. Carefully planned interventions and good support helps their progress to accelerate as they move through the school.
- Pupils' outcomes and progress in religious education (RE) are a particular strength. This is because teachers have a very strong command of the subject and know exactly how to challenge pupils to attain to a high level.

5. Area of Excellence

5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength?

- St Margaret's works in a close partnership with Bulphan Academy. RE is an area which is led and developed across both schools in combination. RE is a core subject at both schools and it has a high profile equal to that of English and mathematics. There is a core subject leader for RE who leads the subject across both schools including continuing profession development (CPD), coaching/mentoring and support to all teachers. In September 2017, the Diocese launched a new resource for the teaching of Christianity '*Understanding Christianity*'. As a lead school in the Diocese and The Vine Trust, St Margaret's has been leading the way with extensive CPD and support. St Margaret's is recognised as being an outstanding church school by the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS).

5.2 What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

- All school leaders have attended the year long '*Understanding Christianity*' training programme to ensure that teachers' knowledge is up to date and secure. Diocese leaders were invited into the school to lead a more advanced session of CPD covering 'The Big Story' of the Bible. Each of St Margaret's teachers became a 'professional partner' to a teacher at Bulphan Academy.
- Continuing professional development has been used to ensure that staff enhance their understanding of philosophical/ theological/ sociological thinking

in order to stretch and challenge pupils' understanding of Christianity.

- Along with new resources, St Margaret's has developed a highly effective assessment system to measure the progress and achievement of every child in RE.
- The school has drawn up a year-round worship schedule using the resource '*Understanding Christianity*' to enhance the RE curriculum.
- The school has high quality pupils' books to share with other practitioners to demonstrate what high quality RE looks like.
- Christian Values across the whole-school curriculum have been embedded through the use of a 'Big Question', alongside the use of 'What If' learning. This has ensured a consistency of focus for children's thinking within all subjects.

5.3 What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

- The progress data for RE across the school shows that pupils make sustained and very strong progress both in-year and across a key stage, with a large number of pupils making better-than-expected progress. The progress of vulnerable groups in RE matches that of other pupils with the same starting points. Pupils are able to articulate their RE knowledge and understanding clearly and can hold thoughtful conversations. Pupil and parent perception surveys show that RE is a well-respected subject in the school and pupils enjoy lively and stimulating RE lessons.

6. What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

Following discussion with the headteacher, the school is able to access support as and when required.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.