



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST MARGARET'S SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Margaret's School

Full Name of School	St Margaret's School		
DfE Number	202/6014		
Registered Charity Number	312720		
Address	St Margaret's School 18 Kidderpore Gardens London NW3 7SR		
Telephone Number	020 7435 2439		
Fax Number	020 7431 1308		
Email Address	enquiry@st-margarets.co.uk		
Principal	Mr M Webster		
Chair of Governors	Mrs Caroline Bradford		
Age Range	4 to 16		
Total Number of Pupils	150		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	4-5 (EYFS):	21	5-11: 60
			11-16: 69
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	150	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 0
Number of Boarders	Total:	0	
	Full:	0	Weekly: 0
EYFS Gender	Girls		
Inspection dates	29 Mar 2011 to 30 Mar 2011		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in March 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills	2
The quality of the pupils' personal development	2
The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	3
3 ACTION POINTS	5
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	5
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	5
4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE	6
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	6
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	6
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	6
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	6
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	8

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Margaret's School is a day school for girls aged from four to sixteen, founded in 1884 in Hampstead. As the school grew, it moved twice, being evacuated to Burgess Hill, Sussex, at the beginning of the Second World War. In 1940 it moved back to Hampstead, and finally into its current premises in 1943. The school is an educational charity, with a governing body of nine members.
- 1.2 St Margaret's aims to provide a secure, caring and challenging learning environment in which girls are encouraged to strive for excellence in all they do. The school seeks to place respect for others at the heart of the school community, within which the potential and talent of each individual can be recognised, nurtured and realised. St Margaret's aims to ensure that education is seen as a partnership between pupils, parents and teachers.
- 1.3 The school has 150 girls on roll, of whom 21 are aged four to five, 60 are aged five to eleven and 69 are aged eleven to sixteen. Its Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of one Reception class, housed in a classroom with its own outdoor space. Entry to the school is based on informal selection procedures for the younger children, and more formal written tests for older pupils. Transfer to Year 7 for pupils already in Year 6 is normally routine. The ability profile of pupils in the senior school is above the national average, with a fairly wide spread of ability. The school does not carry out standardised testing to establish junior school ability in relation to national data.
- 1.4 Many girls come from business, professional and diplomatic families, and the majority live within five miles of the school, with a few travelling a significant distance. About a third come from ethnic minorities. Most girls stay on at St Margaret's until they have completed their GCSE studies at the end of Year 11, after which the large majority go on to their first choice of sixth-form provision.
- 1.5 The school has no pupils with statements of special educational needs, but has identified fifteen pupils having some form of learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD), mostly mild dyslexia. Three of these pupils receive special support from the school. Twelve pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), of whom one receives special support.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The overall achievement of the pupils is excellent due to the school's success in fulfilling its aims of providing a secure, caring and challenging learning environment. Pupils throughout the school display good knowledge and understanding across the curriculum and apply their knowledge effectively. The majority go on to sixth form study at the school or college of their choice. They are articulate, attentive, write fluently and work both independently and co-operatively. Years 2 to 9 performed in Barnado's Inaugural Concert at Wembley Arena recently and the majority of eligible pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Recent achievements in mathematics include an A* at A level in Year 11 and a Gold award in the Maths Olympiad. Junior school sports teams have been very successful and many girls achieve high grades in speech and drama and in music examinations. Throughout the school pupils achieve well in literacy, numeracy, scientific work, and in artistic, technological, physical and creative areas, as well as in the humanities, although little evidence of information and computer technology (ICT) was seen in lessons or books across the curriculum.
- 2.2 Pupils' results for national tests at age eleven have been above the national average for maintained primary schools, with some differences from year to year.
- 2.3 Pupils show excellent attitudes to learning. They are attentive in lessons, participate well and persevere. The strong relationships evident between pupils and teachers contribute significantly to pupils being polite, co-operative and enthusiastic learners. They are happy to engage in discussion with both adults and each other. Pupils' learning is focused by written objectives in almost all lessons. Staff provide well-planned support for EAL pupils and those with LDD, who thus make significant progress.
- 2.4 The curriculum is appropriate and balanced and contributes effectively to pupils' academic progress. The range of extra-curricular activities is varied and the introduction of a timetabled lesson for Years 7 to 9 on '125 Things to Do' aims to broaden pupils' interests, stimulate their curiosity and enrich their learning.
- 2.5 Pupils make rapid progress and achieve high standards because of some excellent teaching in both junior and senior schools. The best teaching in the senior school goes beyond the GCSE curriculum, but other lessons are limited by strict adherence to examination requirements. Teachers know their pupils well and are supported by the helpful pupil profiles from the EYFS onwards. Marking is conscientious and is very good in some subjects, where it indicates ways to improve, sets targets and challenges pupils.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.6 Overall, the quality of pupils' personal development is good, with some outstanding features. Pupils are confident and articulate individuals who show consideration for, and awareness of, the needs of others. During interviews and in their responses to the questionnaire pupils confirmed that they are happy and feel valued at school.
- 2.7 Pupils' spiritual development is good. Pupils appreciate and are inspired by subjects such as art, music and literature, which enhance their spirituality, helping them to

think beyond their own world. An awareness of other faiths is fostered well in personal, health and social education (PHSE) and religious education lessons and also in school assemblies.

- 2.8 Pupils' moral awareness is good. Lessons and assemblies contribute to their moral development, enabling them to demonstrate a clear understanding of right and wrong in many aspects of school life. The school council gives pupils a limited but appropriate insight into public services and roles. Well-planned programmes in PHSE and citizenship enhance their understanding of public institutions.
- 2.9 Pupils' social development is excellent. They cooperate well with one another and respect and listen to one another's opinions. Pupils work hard in many fund-raising ventures both locally and further afield. In their different houses pupils are responsible for initiating their own charitable events and they allocate the money raised. Pupils' cultural development is good, showing a good awareness of the wider world and its cultural diversity. Visits to the theatre, museums and art galleries widen their appreciation. Older pupils take part in residential trips such as the recent and much enjoyed visit to Iceland. Culture Day and international food events further raise pupils' cultural awareness.
- 2.10 The school has effective safeguarding policies and procedures to protect pupils and to promote their health, safety and welfare. The school's child protection officer receives appropriate training as do all other members of staff. Appropriate procedures guard against fire, including regular fire drills and training, and deal with health and safety risks in school and on outside visits. Adequate provision is made for pupils who are ill and records are well maintained. First aid training meets requirements and the school has an appropriate Special Educational Needs Disability Access policy.
- 2.11 Effective systems ensure academic guidance and pastoral care so that any concerns about pupils are noted and acted upon. Rewards and sanctions are clearly understood and serve to promote considerate behaviour, with an emphasis firmly on the positive. The school does not provide a mid-day meal but arrangements for pupils to eat a packed lunch are satisfactory. Healthy eating is promoted through the PHSE and science curricula. A good sporting programme provides pupils with regular exercise.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.12 The school's governance is good, reflecting full knowledge of the school's aims and needs. The governing body has nine members, chosen for their expertise in various appropriate disciplines, and ensures that all are aware of all the school's activities, as there are no sub-committees. Governors meet twice a term, and also have close contact with the school through regular meetings of the chairman and principal. The deputy chairman has a monthly meeting with the principal and the child protection governor has an annual meeting with the deputy principal, when the effectiveness of the safeguarding and child protection policies is reviewed. Through all these contacts, as well as an annual lunch and informal conversations with staff and attendance at school functions, the governors keep very well informed, and ensure that educational standards are maintained. Governors are active and enthusiastic and generally conscientious in fulfilling their responsibilities to keep policies and procedures under review in order to promote pupils' achievement and welfare; however, in the past the dates of staff checks recorded in the central register of appointments have not always been completed correctly.

- 2.13 Leadership and management are good, with some outstanding features. Parents have commented enthusiastically on the accessibility and dedication of the school's leaders, and of their ability to deal with parental requests and concerns. Pupils' education and personal development are a direct outcome of this strong management. However, the principal and deputy principal are the only senior managers within the sphere of education. There is no middle management structure, and thus the very successful leadership depends entirely on two people, with no support or back-up should it be required.
- 2.14 Recruitment of staff is now conducted rigorously and recorded accurately as required to ensure that pupils' welfare is protected. Premises and accommodation, although somewhat crowded, are well maintained. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and welfare, health and safety, and staff appraisal and monitoring of teaching are supportive.
- 2.15 The school has effective links with parents, keeping them well informed about school life. The fortnightly newsletter and the website are appreciated by parents, and reports are helpful and informative, conveying information about progress, targets for future improvement, and pastoral comments from form tutors. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show a high level of satisfaction. Parents expressed particular satisfaction concerning the curriculum, the extra-curricular activities, and prompt responses to their queries. They were least happy about the opportunity for them to be involved in school life, although the existence of a flourishing parent association and the evident help given by parents with various activities do not support this view. Some parents were not happy about the school's handling of their concerns; inspectors found that these were dealt with appropriately.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

3.1 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore must:

- ensure that all entries in the single register of appointments show correctly the dates on which the relevant checks were made [Part 4, paragraph 22(4) and 7(b), under Single Register of Appointments].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement.

3.2 In addition to the above regulatory action point, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that the senior school curriculum provides sufficient opportunity for all pupils to broaden their work beyond the limits of their examination courses.
2. Develop strategies to devolve some of the school's management tasks more widely.
3. In the EYFS provide more opportunities for children to engage in open-ended, self-initiated activities that promote independent learning and allow children to follow their own lines of enquiry.
4. Ensure that EYFS policies are monitored effectively and reflect the particular requirements of the EYFS Framework.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.1 The effectiveness of the setting is good overall, with some outstanding features, so fulfilling the school's aim of encouraging girls to strive for excellence within a secure, caring and challenging learning environment. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and children are well cared for, making good, often outstanding, progress in their learning. Close partnerships with parents, other practitioners and outside agencies ensure that children's needs are met effectively. Staff and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and are well placed to take effective steps to improve it.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 Leadership and management are good. Appropriate checks ensure the suitability of staff but in the past records of these checks have not always been maintained effectively. Policies and risk assessments safeguard children well, although monitoring systems to ensure that policies reflect the particular requirements of the Foundation Stage are not robust. All children are treated equally and their learning and welfare needs are fully met. Parents, with whom staff develop strong partnerships, express a very positive view of all aspects of the provision. Resources are used very effectively by well-qualified, knowledgeable staff to provide children with fruitful experiences, indoors and outside. Staff attend regular training to further develop their professional knowledge and practice. Monitoring of the provision is good, and identifies areas for improvement effectively.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 The quality of provision is good overall, with some outstanding features. Bright, airy classrooms and a freely accessible outdoor area provide a stimulating, well-resourced environment, which reflects the children's backgrounds and the wider community. Well-planned, purposeful activities provide an interesting and challenging curriculum but opportunities are limited for girls to engage in self-initiated activities. Effective use is made of observations to identify the next steps in children's learning and assess progress, about which parents are kept well informed. Children with EAL and LDD are supported extremely effectively through close liaison between early years' staff, the learning support co-ordinator and parents. A caring key person approach helps children to feel secure, while appropriate daily checks of equipment and facilities and the effective deployment of staff ensure their safety and well-being.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.4 Outcomes for children in the EYFS are outstanding. All girls achieve very well with the majority making outstanding progress in relation to their individual starting points and capabilities, working consistently beyond the Early Learning Goals by the age of five. They are independent, inquisitive learners who join in enthusiastically, listen attentively and respond positively to the expectations of the adults who work with

them. Girls develop excellent literacy and numeracy skills, writing familiar words and phrases on Mothers' Day cards and using a range of resources to add numbers to twenty. They access computers independently, developing confidence in the use of ICT. Girls demonstrate good understanding of health, hygiene and exercise. They are polite, form firm friendships, working and playing together exceptionally well. Girls leave Reception very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the deputy chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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