

St Matthew's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	104000
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	377006
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
Lead inspector	Doris Bell

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Nigel Mason
Headteacher	Fiona Deakin
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2009
School address	Windmill Lane Smethwick B66 3LX
Telephone number	0121 558 1651
Fax number	0121 558 2713
Email address	fiona.deakin@st-matthews.sandwell.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Doris Bell

Additional inspector

Keith Shannon

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed members of staff during 12 lessons, covering approximately nine hours of teaching. As well as observing full or part lessons, inspectors visited a further 15 sessions, where pupils were learning letters and sounds or being taught in small groups or individually. They also heard pupils read, analysed their work, and discussed their learning and school life with them. Meetings were held with senior and middle managers, and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaires (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including information relating to the attainment and achievement of all groups of pupils, the school improvement plan, governing body minutes, and evidence of monitoring and evaluation. They also spoke to parents and carers, and analysed 116 parental questionnaire responses, together with the responses to the questionnaires returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This average-sized school has a high proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is also high, as is the proportion at the early stages of learning to speak English. The school has an above average proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, mostly relating to speech, language and communication difficulties, or moderate learning difficulties. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It has achieved Healthy Schools status and runs a breakfast club for its pupils each school day. The senior management team has changed since the previous inspection. The headteacher took up her post in May 2011, the deputy headteacher in July 2011.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Good improvement since the previous inspection has led to a robust and ongoing upward trend in attainment. The school is not yet outstanding because teaching is not yet fully effective in ensuring that enough pupils reach the higher National Curriculum levels, or that writing is of a consistently high quality.
- Pupils achieve well. They join the Early Years Foundation Stage with limited skills and understanding, make good progress in all year groups, and leave school with average but rising standards in reading, writing and mathematics. All groups make good progress, although the more-able pupils do not always fulfil their potential.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers assess and track pupils' progress well and use the information in planning. The quality of marking in literacy books is excellent, but it does not always extend to writing in different subjects in order to keep pupils focused on improving their writing at all times. The more-able pupils are not always pushed hard enough in lessons, and pupils' ability to learn independently is not always sufficiently fostered.
- Pupils behave well and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. They and their parents and carers report that behaviour is almost always good. The school is a harmonious community where those from different faiths, cultures and backgrounds learn to care for and respect each other, and to mix together well.
- Staff say they are 'on a mission to provide our very best for the children'. Their work is facilitated by good leadership and management, excellent relationships and very strong teamwork. Teaching is led well and rigorously checked for its impact on learning, and performance managed well. Improvements are underpinned by the staff's willingness to learn from and help each other.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the excellent marking seen in literacy to writing that occurs in other

subjects, so that pupils focus on their writing targets at all times.

- Ensure that lesson activities are consistently challenging, especially for the more-able pupils, and provide more opportunities for all pupils to learn to work independently by pursuing some learning themselves.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents, carers and pupils say progress is good. Inspection findings match their views. Children start school with skills six to 12 months behind the levels expected for their age. They catch up well by the time they start Year 1. The successful teaching of how to link letters and sounds contributes to this, and to the rapidly improving standards in Year 2, which are now broadly average overall. Standards are average in Year 6 but they are higher than in previous years, and represent good progress from the pupils' starting points when they were in Year 2. Over time, they have improved strongly as pupils' progress has accelerated. A strong upward trend is also evident in Year 2, and it is being systematically built upon in Years 3, 4 and 5. This bodes well for the future.

Attainment in reading is average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. Pupils talk enthusiastically about reading, and they become increasingly able to interpret the meaning behind the written word. Year 6 pupils were animated as they compiled questionnaires and conducted surveys of reading habits. Outstanding teaching helped them to see how using their data-handling skills effectively would help them to write more precise reports. Pupils often write at length in literacy, with an appropriate sense of purpose and audience. They use their writing skills in different subjects, but they do not always remember their targets when they do so. They respond well to the strong encouragement they get in marking to improve, for example, sentence construction, spelling or grammar, or to use a wider range of vocabulary.

Pupils have satisfactory mathematical and scientific skills, gained through a variety of practical, investigative work. They rise well to time-limited challenges that increase their ability to calculate mentally, and readily use their mathematical skills to solve problems. This was particularly evident in a Year 2 lesson, where they worked out that division was the same as equal subtraction.

Pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs make good progress. Their learning is broken down into small steps and they receive good support from well-briefed staff. By Year 6, the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils is narrower than the national gap. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, including those at the early stages of learning to speak English, also make good progress, thanks to the staff's precise use of language in lessons, and the constant checks made on pupils' understanding.

Quality of teaching

Lessons most often foster enjoyment in learning because, as parents and carers commented, teachers 'really engage and motivate' the pupils, and have a 'direct impact on (their) progress'. Parents, carers and pupils are right in saying that teaching is good. Some outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection. The well-planned curriculum supports teaching effectively, providing good guidance on how to ensure pupils acquire the key skills associated with different subjects progressively. Teaching and the curriculum make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Learning is usually well matched to pupils' different levels of ability, although there are still times when more-able pupils are not challenged enough by their work. Typically, skilled questioning, based on good subject knowledge, extends pupils' language skills, including by asking them to talk with a partner before offering an answer. Different levels of questioning, directed at individual pupils, ensure all pupils are equally involved in the lesson. This good practice was particularly evident in an outstanding Year 3 lesson where pupils were also encouraged to 'throw' questions to one another as they explored the features of a play script. Steps to success are revisited regularly in lessons, keeping pupils on their toes and eager to succeed. Teachers are skilful at adapting lessons in response to the rate of pupils' learning, and they make good use of what they know about each pupil's progress to take their learning further.

As they mark literacy and numeracy work and work in, for example, science and history, teachers focus pupils well on what they need to do to improve. Pupils know their levels and can explain how their targets will take them to the next level. They appreciate what they know to be 'gap tasks' and willingly come to school early to make sure they complete them. They are also given time to respond to marking at the start of lessons, and marking often becomes a dialogue between pupil and teacher that results in misconceptions being addressed and progress accelerated.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all pupils say behaviour is typically good and the school keeps them safe. Their parents and carers agree, and inspection findings endorse these views. The pupils' good behaviour, enthusiasm for school and enjoyment of learning all have a positive impact on their progress, as do their good attendance and their eagerness to do well. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy living, and those who attend the breakfast club are well prepared for the school day. They also know how to keep themselves safe in and out of school, as well as when using the internet or a mobile phone.

Throughout the school, there is a feeling of belonging to a community where everyone is valued and respected, and where pupils learn to respect themselves and others. The school refers to these as the 'core values' to which the whole school community subscribes. These values are fostered well from the time children start school, and pupils in Year 6 who have been with the school since Nursery say that this is what makes the school a 'friendly, happy place to be'. Pupils report that harassment of any sort, including different forms of bullying, is not tolerated. This was found to be true when incident books were inspected and showed there had been a small amount of racist name-calling. The school recorded and reported this in

line with local authority guidelines and dealt with it quickly.

Pupils willingly help out around the school, for example as play leaders. They are justifiably proud of their school and have a strong voice in it, for example through the school council and in their involvement in determining some of what they will learn. School councillors represent the school at the Smethwick Pupils' Council, gaining a deeper understanding of the workings of a democracy. Pupils readily reach out to others, for example by raising money for charities at home and abroad, and for those affected by international disasters. They have a well-developed understanding of their place in a global society, gained from projects such as 'Who am I', which involved them and their parents and carers in learning about different cultural backgrounds.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers, including the governing body, communicate high expectations in all aspects of school life. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, well founded and well justified. The governing body knows the school well. It works closely with leaders at different levels, and uses its expertise effectively to hold the school to account. There is a high level of commitment to securing the best possible outcomes for pupils and their families. Professional development is used well to improve teaching and learning, and school leaders are meticulous in following up the impact it has on pupils' progress. The various programmes set up to help pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs are carefully monitored to ensure they are assisting pupils' progress. All of this has contributed to the good improvement since the previous inspection, and shows the school has good capacity for further sustained improvement.

All safeguarding requirements are met, and all training, including for child protection, is up to date. The school works effectively with pupils, the community, other schools and a wide range of external agencies to remove any barriers to learning. It promotes equality of opportunity well, and has rightly turned its attention to helping more of the more-able pupils to reach higher levels. It breaks down stereotypes, ensures that no-one is discriminated against, and successfully involves parents and carers in all that it does. This includes, for example, encouraging parents and carers to contribute to topic work, and involving them in the 'Inspire' workshops where they work alongside their children and learn how to help with their progress.

The restructured curriculum has made teaching and learning more exciting for staff and pupils. It gives them a say in topic work and ensures that key skills in different subjects are taught progressively. Subject leaders check that this happens, and that basic skills are promoted as much as possible. A good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum and give pupils memorable experiences that they will carry into adult life. The curriculum promotes pupils' learning and personal development, including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development, well.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Smethwick B66 3LX

Thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. It was such a delight to talk to you about what you do there, and to see how much you enjoy learning. The questionnaires some of you completed also helped us in making our judgements.

You go to a good school, where staff really care for you and work very hard to help you achieve well. You help in this with your good behaviour, the way you get on so well with each other and your hard work in lessons. You told us you feel very safe in school and know that any member of staff will help you if you have any concerns, in or out of school. Those responsible for leading and managing different aspects of your school's work do a good job. They are determined to help you all make the best possible progress. We noted that your parents and carers acknowledge all of this too, and are very pleased with the school.

The way your teachers mark most of your work really helps you see how to improve it. You certainly seem to enjoy those 'gap tasks' you told us about, and which we saw in your books, that require you to correct mistakes or challenge you to do even better. Within this positive picture, we noted a couple of things that the school could do even better to help you make faster progress.

- Ensure your teachers mark the writing you do in different subjects as well as they do for literacy, to help you reach your writing targets faster.
- Give all of you, and especially the more-able among you, more opportunities to work independently and pursue learning by yourselves.

You can all help by heeding your writing targets at all times, and by taking more responsibility for finding things out for yourselves. This will stand you in good stead for the rest of your lives, and we hope you will continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now for a long time to come.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell
Lead inspector

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