

St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Little Lever

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105242
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	355736
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr John Wiseman
Headteacher	Mrs Georgina Ryding
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2007
School address	Norris Street Little Lever, Bolton Lancashire BL3 1BQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Thirteen lessons were observed, taught by seven teachers. The inspectors held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the tracking of pupils' progress and the school's monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement. The inspectors also analysed 100 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The degree to which pupils achieve well as they move through the school, especially in developing their writing skills.
- How effective is the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Has the school been successful in ensuring the quality of teaching is consistently good?
- How well the school meets pupils' personal needs.

Information about the school

This is an average-size primary school in which the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has gained many awards, including Healthy Schools status. Two members of staff have left the school since the previous inspection and at the time of the inspection another member of staff was absent.

There are independently run before-and after-school clubs on the school site. These are not managed by the school and, therefore, do not form part of this inspection, but will be the subject of a separate inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. At the heart of its work is a warm and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel very safe, get on well with each other and behave well. Pupils say they enjoy school as evidenced by their outstanding attendance. Parents are pleased with what the school provides. The school has been successful in promoting good partnerships with other institutions and within the local community. Pupils get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, in the rest of the school, pupils' progress varies because teaching is not consistently good.

Pupils' attainment is average. Their achievement is satisfactory overall. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with the skills expected for their age. By the time they enter Year 1 they are working well within the expected levels. Throughout the rest of the school, progress is satisfactory overall and by the time pupils leave attainment is average in English, mathematics and science. However, while attainment at the higher levels in reading and mathematics is above average, attainment in writing at the higher level is below average. This is because pupils are not given sufficiently challenging opportunities to use and develop their writing skills. The school has improved the use of target-setting in order to improve writing skills, and inspection evidence shows that in Years 5 and 6 more-able pupils are making better progress in writing this year.

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum and a wide range of interesting extra-curricular activities for pupils. While pupils have a good understanding of the school and local community, pupils' awareness of communities beyond the school's immediate area is much weaker. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the good lessons, pupils are totally involved in learning and are challenged to use their skills well. In lessons where teaching is not as strong, teachers do not use questioning well and assessment information is not used effectively so that pupils are not given enough guidance on how to improve their own work. This slows the pace of learning.

The headteacher has a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school because self-evaluation is robust and very accurate. The reorganised leadership team has a clear focus on school improvement. Together with the governors, they fully support the headteacher in her efforts to improve pupils' attainment. This, together with the steps taken to address standards in previous years and improved assessment procedures indicates that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to consistently good or better in Key Stage 2 by:

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- using assessment data with increasing rigour to ensure all pupils are challenged appropriately
 - making more effective use of questioning
 - providing information to pupils through marking on how they might improve their work
 - quickening the pace at which pupils work.
- Ensure more-able pupils are given plenty of challenging opportunities to use and develop their writing skills.
 - Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of communities different from their own in the United Kingdom and beyond.
 - About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils are keen to do well in lessons and behave well. For example, pupils in a Year 6 numeracy lesson were keen to demonstrate their understanding of prime numbers. The quality of pupils' learning seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory. Where teaching is better than satisfactory learning is of a good quality. In lessons, where teaching is good, pupils work well with one another. Where teaching is satisfactory pupils show less enthusiasm but still behave well. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. School assessment records and inspection findings show that pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. A dip in pupils' attainment in previous years has been addressed successfully. Teaching assistants support pupils well and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. In lessons where teaching is good, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make better progress. However, more-able pupils are not consistently challenged to use their writing skills well in all classes. There are some good examples of their writing in literacy books, but in topic and science workbooks, writing tasks are at times undemanding.

Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and this underpins their good behaviour. Older pupils really enjoy helping younger ones, acting as play leaders at lunchtime. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility and school council members say they are proud to represent 'their' school. They are keen to help those less fortunate than themselves. While pupils have developed a good understanding of their own culture and have a respect for those who come from a background different from their own, their knowledge of other cultures is at best satisfactory. Pupils say bullying is rare and dealt with quickly if it occurs. Pupils recognise the importance of regular exercise and show commitment to a healthy lifestyle. However, school council members pointed out to inspectors that some fellow pupils do not always demonstrate their commitment by bringing unhealthy snacks to school to eat at break-times. Positive attitudes, outstanding attendance, very good social skills and average attainment mean that pupils' preparation for their life after school is satisfactory.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall; teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and at the end of Key Stage 2. Where teaching is no better than satisfactory, the pace is sometimes slow, opportunities are missed to use searching questions to probe pupils' understanding and teachers' marking gives pupils too little information on how to improve their work. Where teaching is good or better, activities are well planned to engage pupils' interests. For example, pupils in Year 2 were highly enthusiastic and used their speaking skills well in performing poems for the rest of the class. In all classes, there are very good relationships between pupils and teachers. Teaching assistants provide highly-effective personal support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Assessment systems have been improved and the information gathered is increasingly being used to good effect. For example, older pupils are very clear about what they need to do to improve their literacy work because targets have been set that clearly indicate the next stages in their learning. This good practice has yet to be extended across the school and as a result, pupils are not always given the right level of challenge, particularly the more-able pupils in writing. The curriculum is satisfactory with a good emphasis placed on pupils' personal development. However, there is insufficient emphasis on broadening pupils' cultural understanding. There is a good range of enrichment activities, including music and sports clubs. Special theme days and weeks such as 'Peace Week,' are used

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well. When asked to write about what Peace Week meant to them one pupil responded, 'I should remember not to fall out with my brothers.'

The care, support and guidance pupils receive are good strengths of the school. Staff know the pupils very well and are keen to provide any help that is required. There are good induction systems in place to enable pupils to settle into school quickly. There are effective links with external agencies which provide additional help if required. Attendance is monitored exceptionally well resulting in any absence being the exception. The school is rightly proud of pupils' outstanding attendance. Parents are very positive about the support they and their children receive.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has a very accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, through effective systems to measure its overall performance. However, the impact of strategies to improve academic standards further, successful in many instances, has still to take effect throughout the school. This is a key factor in pupils' achievement being satisfactory rather than good. There is a strong shared sense of responsibility and commitment among senior staff, which stems from the leadership by the headteacher. Monitoring and development of teaching and learning is carried out. However, monitoring, at times, is more focused on teaching than on pupils' learning. The governing body is satisfactory. It fulfils its legal responsibilities and is increasingly becoming involved in school self-evaluation.

Leaders and managers at all levels, including governors ensure safeguarding procedures meet requirements well, with clear policies and guidelines for ensuring pupils' welfare that are monitored on a regular basis. There are good partnerships with parents, including a parents' forum. There are also strong partnerships outside school, for example, with the local church and with Bolton Wanderers football club. While it is very clear that any forms of discrimination are not tolerated in the school, equality of opportunity is satisfactory rather than good because the more-able pupils need greater challenge academically in developing their writing skills. The school has satisfactory community cohesion provision. It has a good understanding of its local context but links with different communities away from the local area and more globally are not firmly embedded in provision.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress and achieve well and play extremely happily together. Overall, children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in line with those expected. By the end of Reception, children attain well within the expected age-related levels. Children work and play in a welcoming and stimulating environment and facilities are very good. Regular access to a well-planned outdoor area enhances children's opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world around them and their physical development. For example, children thought up for themselves how to create a 'fire engine' by using bread trays and tyres. The teacher and support staff are highly enthusiastic and supportive which ensures children are quite prepared to take risks safely. Children's progress is checked on regularly and the outcomes are used to plan activities according to individual children's needs. However, while there is a very good balance of child-initiated activities, at times more could be done to link teacher-led activities to the choices of activities children are asked to make. Children are very safe and happy in the nurturing environment. Parents and carers are very much involved. For example, there is an excellent display of letters sent back to the school by parents about what their children have told them about their first week in the 'big 'school. There is good quality, effective arrangements for ensuring that children settle quickly and smoothly into their new surroundings. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. They provide a good vision for future success.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a satisfactory return of questionnaires, with some parents and carers with more than one child attending the school just filling in one questionnaire. Parents and carers hold positive views of the school. Of the 13 aspects included in their questionnaire, 12 showed almost total agreement that the school does well. A very small minority of parents and carers showed concerns about being informed about their children's progress at school. However, inspection findings found the reporting of pupils' progress to be satisfactory and in line with requirements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Little Lever to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 100 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 204 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	65	31	31	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	71	71	25	25	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	38	50	50	9	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	50	42	42	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	62	62	33	33	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	46	48	48	0	0	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	51	45	45	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	55	55	37	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	55	39	39	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	44	49	49	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	48	39	39	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	54	54	42	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	65	65	29	29	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



15 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Little Lever, Bolton, BL3 1BQ

Thank you for your warm welcome during the recent inspection of your school. It was a real pleasure to meet you and see you at work and play. I am so pleased that the headteacher and governors have improved parts of the building. You will be pleased to hear we agree with your headteacher that you receive a satisfactory standard of education. The care, guidance and support your school provides for you are good. This level of care helps you feel very safe and valued. Your behaviour is good and your attendance is outstanding – well done! You all get on together really well and this helps make your school a happy place to be.

Your school is always looking for ways to make things better for you, so to help it do this, there are a few things I am asking your school to do:

- Make sure that all the teaching you receive is of a good quality.
- Make sure that those of you who are good at writing are given plenty of challenging opportunities to use and develop your writing skills.
- Find ways to improve your understanding of life in multicultural England and beyond.

I am confident that you will continue to work hard to play your part in making sure your school becomes even better. It might be that one of my colleagues comes to the school to see how it is doing before your next full inspection is due.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector

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