

St Matthew's RC High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105577
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	355801
Inspection dates	15–16 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Lee Northern HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Alan Denny
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Hogan
Date of previous school inspection	20 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons, taught by 35 different teachers, and held meetings with groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school and examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding. In addition, 72 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by a representative sample of students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of the school's actions to reduce attainment gaps, particularly in mathematics and English, between girls and boys and in the rate of progress for more-able students.
- How well teachers and other staff use assessment information when planning lessons to meet the needs of all students and ensure that they make good progress in line with their capabilities.
- The progress made by leaders and managers, including the governing body and other partners, in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection and in securing further improvements to the school.
- The extent to which the curriculum is innovative, imaginative and highly effective in meeting the needs of all groups of learners, including support for raising standards in numeracy and literacy and in promoting workplace skills.

Information about the school

St Matthew's is a larger-than-average school; students are drawn largely from the Roman Catholic communities to the north-east of Manchester. Over 25% of students are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is significantly above the national average. A very large majority of students are from White British backgrounds, although there are a small number of students from several different minority ethnic groups. The numbers of students from these groups is gradually increasing. A very small minority of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs are both below average. The school has specialist status in technology. The school currently holds the Intermediate level International School Award, the Healthy Schools Award and the Artsmark.

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****2**

Main findings

St Matthew's is a satisfactory and improving school. Underpinned by the strong Catholic ethos, which pervades all of the school's work, is a clear commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all groups of students. This approach is exemplified by the views of many parents and carers as summed up in the words of one that 'St Matthew's is a great school where the ethos of respect is clearly evident'. This can be seen in the success of the school in reducing the differences in attainment between boys and girls in English and mathematics and in accelerating the progress of more-able students in these subjects so that it is now in line with their peers.

The rising trend in the proportion of students securing five or more good passes at GCSE has continued from the time of the previous inspection and exceeds the rate of improvement seen nationally. In 2010, nine tenths of students in Year 11 reached this standard. Together with the broad range of vocational and work-related learning opportunities provided through the curriculum, this shows that students are well prepared for their future choices when they leave school. The proportion of students securing five or more good grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics, has risen more slowly and was slightly below the national average in 2010. This is because students' attainment in mathematics and in English is not as high as that in subjects such as science, modern foreign languages or in vocational courses. The proportion of more-able students on track to secure the highest grades at GCSE in English and mathematics is also increasing. They now make better progress in lessons because more teaching challenges them to reach higher standards and the curriculum in these subjects is more closely matched to their needs.

Leaders and managers share an ambitious vision for the school. Since the previous inspection, appointments to the senior team and to key middle leader positions have strengthened the school's capacity to bring about further improvement. There are systematic procedures in place to review the quality of teaching but these are not rigorous enough to provide a sufficiently accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the curriculum. As a result, the proportion of teaching that is bringing about good or better progress in lessons is not high enough to further raise levels of attainment. Where teaching is less effective, teachers speak for too long or students are not sufficiently challenged to extend their thinking through open-ended questioning. In addition, where teachers do not use assessment information to plan for a greater variety of activities, the learning needs of all students are sometimes not met.

The school has good plans in place to address those aspects of its work that it has correctly identified as requiring further improvement. Attendance levels are rising because the school is assiduous in promoting the benefits of good attendance and it works well with a range of external partners when absence from school becomes an issue. The

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specialist status is providing good support through the curriculum for vocational courses and for the development of information and communication technology to support learning. The school has been successful in tackling underachievement in mathematics, in reducing levels of overall absence and in increasing the number of students leaving with a range of good GCSE grades. Set against the backdrop of managing the move in 2009 from temporary accommodation to a new building, this demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment through building on recent improvements, particularly in English and mathematics and for more-able students, by:
 - ensuring every lesson provides a consistently high level of challenge for all students
 - further reducing the variation in the quality of teaching.
- Improve further the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment information to better plan lessons that meet the needs of all students, whatever their capabilities
 - increasing the extent to which students take greater responsibility for their own learning
 - improving the quality of questioning so that more students are actively involved in lessons and are challenged to reason and justify their answers.
- Strengthen the rigour of the monitoring of teaching and learning by:
 - further developing the skills of leaders at all levels to more accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is very similar to that seen nationally and students reach broadly average levels of attainment by the end of Year 11. However, within this picture of broadly satisfactory progress overall, there is some variation between subjects and between different groups of students. Students make good progress in science, modern foreign languages and in vocational courses because a higher proportion of teaching better meets their needs in these subjects. Attainment in 2010 in English and mathematics was below average and the proportion of more-able students achieving grades A and A* in these subjects was less than half that seen nationally. In addition, the progress made by girls was slower than that made by boys in both English and mathematics. Current examination results, assessment information held by the school and lesson observations confirm that previously inadequate progress in mathematics has been eliminated. Students are now making satisfactory progress overall and reaching standards in line with those seen nationally. However, current attainment in mathematics is not rising more rapidly owing to the legacy of weaker teaching and low expectations. The picture of satisfactory progress in English has been strengthened and more students are

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now reaching the higher grade benchmarks than in previous years. This is because leaders and managers have taken decisive action to strengthen leadership and management in these subjects and to eradicate instances of inadequate teaching, particularly in mathematics. The steps taken to promote girls' achievement in both subjects have also been successful and current information held by the school shows that their attainment is now more closely in line with that of boys. The progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also satisfactory. Nevertheless, progress is faster when students are supported through additional targeted provision than in lessons, where activities are not always sufficiently well adjusted to meet their needs. Students who are known to be eligible to receive free school meals progress at rates similar to those of their peers.

Parents and carers say that the school provides a safe and very caring environment. Students agree and say they feel very safe and that bullying is rare and, when it does occur, they are very confident that adults in school will deal promptly and effectively with it. Students' behaviour contributes well to learning in lessons. Their movement around public spaces is calm and orderly, despite the very occasional instances of boisterousness when moving between lessons or at social times. There is good participation in sporting events and other health-related activities and the majority of students enjoy the range of healthy options available from the school canteen. Students make a strong contribution to the school and wider community, particularly in giving their time to fund-raise and support the wide range of charitable causes with which they are involved. The school council, which was less active last year, now has ambitious plans for re-energising its work with the school community. The school is highly effective in providing a spiritual and moral dimension for students. The curriculum provides many opportunities for students to learn about other cultures, faiths and societies and plans are in place to extend the opportunities for students to experience these aspects more frequently at first hand.

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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	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, although there is some variation in the quality and consistency of teaching across the school. In the better lessons, a variety of activities is used to interest and motivate students and to meet the needs of all groups within the class. Where teaching is effective in promoting good or better progress, teachers display good subject knowledge, have positive relationships with students and, in planning lessons, take careful account of what students already know and can do. Progress is faster when teachers use assessment information well to clarify to students how they can improve their work. In less effective teaching, students are too reliant on adults for support and, as a result, this slows the pace of learning. In some lessons, questioning is not used effectively to promote participation or extend students' thinking. Assessment information is not always used consistently to ensure that lessons meet the needs of all groups of learners.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to improving outcomes for students, particularly in Key Stage 4. It provides a broad and balanced range of courses with particular strengths in the range of vocational choices on offer for students which match well their needs and aspirations. As a result of this, the proportion of students who achieve a range of good grades at GCSE is high and increasing. There is also a wide range of enrichment opportunities which are well supported by students and much enjoyed. The care, guidance and support for students – particularly for those whose circumstances

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might make them vulnerable – make a significant contribution to their well-being and participation in education. Arrangements are good to support the transition of students from primary schools and in the guidance for older students on their future options beyond school. The impact of this care and guidance and of the curriculum can be seen in the improvements in overall attendance and in the above average proportion of leavers who move on to education, employment or training.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers at all levels are effective in articulating and sharing high aspirations for the school and for its students. Challenging targets are helping to raise expectations and to accelerate progress. Actions to improve provision have been successful in many areas, as in the drive to tailor the curriculum increasingly to the needs of individuals and in the work to eliminate inadequate teaching in mathematics. A comprehensive programme of professional development, linked to quality assurance procedures, is providing good support for teaching. However, the approach by which managers at all levels evaluate the effectiveness of teaching is not rigorous enough to ensure that students make consistently good progress in all their lessons. Senior leaders have plans in place to extend existing partnerships with a neighbouring school to bring about improvements in evaluating the quality and impact of teaching. The governing body brings an appropriate range of expertise in support of the school. Governors are well informed about its work and are effective in holding leaders and managers to account for performance.

The school benefits from a wide range of external partnerships, both locally and internationally. These links have provided good support for transition, for work-related learning and in improving students' behaviour and attendance. Partnerships with local authority agencies play an important role in the good safeguarding arrangements for staff and students. The school has a good understanding of its context and operates very effectively as a cohesive community. Plans to extend outreach work to different communities in the local area will further enhance opportunities for students to gain first-hand experience of other faiths, cultures and societies. The school is effective in evaluating the outcomes of its work across all groups of students. As a result, actions to reduce variations in attainment and participation are concerted and effective.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who contributed their views to the inspection was lower than that normally for secondary schools. A very large majority of the replies indicated positive views of the school, particularly in relation to the extent to which students enjoy and feel safe at school. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns in written comments with the way in which behaviour is managed by the school. Inspection evidence, including a scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions with students and staff, indicates that the school manages students' behaviour well and that students' conduct is good in classrooms and around the school site.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Matthew's RC High School 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 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,125 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	46	37	51	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	46	36	50	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	49	29	40	6	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	36	37	51	6	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	36	40	56	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	33	34	47	10	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	33	41	57	4	6	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)	23	32	37	51	8	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	36	36	50	5	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	29	44	61	3	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	31	37	51	6	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	46	30	42	4	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	39	36	50	3	4	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



17 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Matthew's RC High School, Manchester, M40 0EW

You will remember that a team of inspectors and I recently inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and took note of the views that you expressed.

We judged the school to be satisfactory overall and good in some areas of its work. In particular, you said that you felt safe at school, that bullying was rare and that the school prepared you well for the next stage in your lives. The inspection team agreed with your views in these areas. We also found that the school goes to considerable lengths to ensure that each of you gets the right support when you need it. You also show a good knowledge of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and you greatly value the opportunities provided by the school to eat sensibly and to participate in sporting and health-related activities.

The headteacher, staff and governing body have a good overview of the work of the school. Examination results for students at the end of Year 11 are broadly in line with those seen nationally. The good curriculum and the satisfactory teaching you receive help you to make the progress expected of you in your lessons, although some of you make better progress in science, modern foreign languages and in vocational subjects. The school has rightly identified the need to ensure teaching improves so that more of you make good progress in all of your subjects. As a result, we have asked the headteacher, governing body and staff to:

- raise attainment, particularly in English and mathematics, and to increase the proportion of those of you that gain GCSE passes at the highest grades
- improve the number of lessons that are good or better
- ensure that leaders and managers identify more accurately the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching in order to bring about further improvements.

You can play your part in improving St Matthew's by continuing to attend regularly, behaving well and working hard. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern

Her Majesty's Inspector

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