

St Matthew's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103404
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355376
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paula Edmondson
Headteacher	Paulette Osborne
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed seven different teachers. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the school's self-evaluation, the attainment and assessment of pupils' progress, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the provision for safeguarding, and an external evaluation of the school. They held meetings with pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. They also looked at samples of the pupils' work and the school development plan. They analysed 94 parent and carer questionnaires together with written responses from pupils and staff.

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

- The attainment, progress and improvement of pupils, with a particular focus on boys and more able, gifted and talented pupils.
- The effectiveness of the new management structure of senior and middle leaders, and that of the governing body.
- The skills of children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage, the provision made for them, and the progress they make.
- The way the school manages behaviour, and its involvement and engagement with parents in this.

Information about the school

St Matthew's is slightly smaller than most primary schools. A minority of pupils are of White British heritage and the great majority of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, the largest being those from Somali heritage. Although a much higher than average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, there are only a few pupils who are at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, with a majority having moderate learning difficulties. Since the previous inspection there have been significant staff changes, including the appointment of a new headteacher, and very recently, deputy headteacher. Significantly more pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual times. The school has a community room which provides parents and carers with opportunities to meet socially, arrange courses and observe different aspects of the school. The school is part of the Nechells Action Zone. It has the Healthy Schools Status, and the Heartlands Quality in Extended Services award. The school provides a breakfast club on Fridays.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Matthew's is a good school. It is a welcoming, caring, exciting and happy centre of a multi-ethnic community. A parent summed up the feeling of the community when commenting, 'It is an excellent school, and parents are made to feel part of an extended family.' The school has been through difficult times since the last inspection. There have been a number of staff changes, particularly in senior management, and during this period of turbulence the school was not as effective as in the past. However, the appointment of the present headteacher fifteen months ago has brought stability, improvement and ambition to the school. Under her inspirational leadership, new leaders are being developed and are flourishing; the attainment and progress of pupils, which slipped badly in 2009, is showing rapid improvement throughout the school. Staff morale is high, governors have improved their involvement with the school, and the school's engagement and partnership with parents is excellent. These developments and the recent appointment of a local authority primary literacy consultant reinforce strongly the school's demonstrably good capacity to sustain improvement. Pupils are a strength of the school. They are unfailingly polite and cheerful, love their learning and work and play together happily. Their attendance is good, indicating their enjoyment of school and the many stimulating learning opportunities they have throughout the curriculum. Pupils are well cared for in a thoroughly inclusive environment. They are kept safe and encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. They serve the school and local community enthusiastically, and strong links with the church and other faiths enhance their spiritual, social, moral and cultural education. The school is rapidly building wider links with other schools and communities in this country and abroad.

Children make a good start to their learning and personal development in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their good progress continues throughout all years in the main school and most pupils achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils with English as an additional language. Although attainment in English and mathematics was low at the end of Year 6 in 2009, it improved to just below average this year and this inspection indicates that pupils are now reaching broadly average standards. The school recognises that it needs to close the gap between reading and writing. More able pupils and boys have shown good improvement in their recent progress, although the provision for gifted and talented pupils is not as good as that for other pupils. Improvement has been brought about by teachers having higher expectations and offering more challenge to pupils through good use of detailed assessment data to set individual targets and inform lesson planning. Additionally, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching by senior leaders is now rigorous, and teachers receive regular and effective professional development. The school has evaluated its strengths and areas for development accurately and is powerfully driven to become even better at everything it does.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain and further accelerate the recent improvements in attainment and progress in English and mathematics by:
 - relating the rapidly improving reading skills of pupils more closely to the skills of writing
 - embedding and using consistently the newly introduced assessment strategies to inform teachers' expectations and lesson planning
 - setting and supporting pupils' achievement of challenging targets.
- Build upon the provision for gifted and talented pupils by:
 - developing a wider range of opportunities for these pupils to develop their talents
 - establishing partnership links with other providers and parents in order to further the particular learning needs of these pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter the school with skills below and sometimes well below those expected for their age, and make good progress in the Reception class. In the main school pupils respond positively to their learning opportunities and show enthusiasm and enjoyment in their lessons. A boy commented cheerily, 'School is my favourite place of all.' They behave well, have good attitudes to their learning and want to improve. This was observed to good effect when pupils in Year 4 were learning the points of the compass. Although this involved some vigorous physical activity, all made great efforts to understand the learning points. A further example involved a small group of pupils in the early stages of learning English who were trying very hard to use 'story sacks' and artefacts to develop their understanding of phonics and their speaking skills. Attainment when pupils leave the school has varied widely in the last three years from average to well below average. During this time different groups of pupils, such as boys and more able pupils, have not always made expected progress. However, as a result of a more interesting curriculum and more focused teaching, boys' progress is now equal to that of girls. More able pupils are being more effectively challenged, especially in mathematics and reading, and more Year 6 pupils attained the higher levels this year. This trend is continuing in all year groups, although attainment in writing is variable and remains inconsistent. Pupils enjoy having their work assessed and also their new involvement in self-assessment of their own work.

Central to pupils' personal development is their good involvement in contributing to both the school and local community. Pupils host and perform at church-led community weekends and there are good links with other faith groups. They eagerly volunteer for responsibilities, all hands in Year 6 shooting up when volunteers were asked talk to an inspector about their visit to Bristol University. They feel safe in school, report little bullying and no racism, and try to develop a healthy lifestyle. A large majority take a cooked lunch in school every day. The recent award of Healthy Schools Status shows the school's commitment to encouraging this aspect of pupils' development. Pupils are very respectful of each other, saying, 'We all get on really well.' They are reflective and show respect for the feelings and values of others. This is very evident in their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning; it is also demonstrated in the prayer tables to which

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pupils contribute, for example, notes to friends and relatives 'to get better soon'. Satisfactory basic skills and good approaches to learning, alongside good personal development, help them to be soundly prepared for the next stage of their lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

Teaching and learning is good and much improved. This is because teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve have risen, they have good relationships with pupils and are planning effectively for the needs of all pupils. Almost all lessons observed during the inspection were good and none inadequate. Challenging activities and good questioning skills are helping to sustain pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Resources are of good quality, especially the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), and are used effectively by teachers. This was seen in the Year 5 class when pupils showed independence and confidence when linking their work in calculation to the development of their computer skills. Assessment data is detailed and used well in planning for individual needs. Teaching assistants are used effectively, especially through intervention with groups of pupils needing specific support. However, occasionally teaching assistants are not involved sufficiently by teachers during whole-class sessions. Sometimes teachers spend too long on their initial presentations of learning objectives. Marking of work is consistent throughout the school in guiding pupils on what they need to improve.

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The curriculum is designed to meet the particular needs of every pupil and is under constant review. The school has increased the range of visitors and visits out of school, including to the seaside. In Year 3, for example, the grandmother of a pupil visited to talk to the class about why she went to the local church and what activities it offered to both adults and children. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the extensive range of clubs and sporting activities provided for them, with over 70% of them participating. They also enjoy the chance to learn a variety of musical instruments and develop their singing skills with the active support of professional musicians. Displays of work, especially in art, show the breadth of the school's commitment to pupils' learning and understanding of other cultures. The school recognises that the development of the basic skills curriculum is the most important need for many pupils and, although there is some provision for gifted and talented pupils, this could be improved.

The school is a very welcoming environment with well-kept buildings and extensive grounds. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for pupils in the early stages of learning English, is well managed. These pupils and those from the most vulnerable circumstances receive good quality support, as do the significant number of pupils who enter the school having recently arrived from another country. Links with outside agencies are extensive and effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

The major strength of the school's leadership and management is the burning ambition to improve and reach the highest possible achievement in all aspects of the school's daily life. These high expectations originate with the headteacher and are shared by all leaders, managers and staff. The enthusiasm of staff is evident everywhere and they welcome the continual and demanding monitoring of performance, and encouragement to develop their skills. This has been key in the successful tackling of a number of identified weaknesses, especially in teaching and the attainment and progress of pupils. Pupils are particularly appreciative of the changes they have seen in the school, and are very proud of how they are being helped and consulted by school leaders and staff. They feel included in all activities and every group of pupils, especially the many minority ethnic groups, are showing sustained improvement in their achievement.

The school has transformed its engagement with parents and carers in the last year. They have been provided with their own community room and are regular visitors both formally and informally, such as their conducted tour of the newly equipped ICT suite during the inspection. Leaders make every effort to communicate with them, and to involve them all

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in their children's learning and in supporting the school's high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The governing body has good knowledge of the school and how it can help to guide school improvement. Governors are using their diverse skills effectively in supporting the school, for example those with an educational background guiding the development of middle leaders. The governing body ensures that safeguarding procedures are securely in place and are regularly reviewed. Regular high quality training for all school staff is a notable feature of the school's provision for child protection.

The provision for community cohesion is much improved because the school has a coherent plan and is particularly active in the local community. Contacts have been made by pupils with other schools in this country and abroad, and these activities are having a positive impact upon pupils' cultural development. The school has a number of thriving partnerships with, for example, the Nechells Action Zone and Aston University. The school provides many good resources, especially its staffing, and gives good value for money.

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	2
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	1
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those expected for their age, especially in language and social skills. A few have little knowledge of English. Children settle quickly into daily routines such as washing hands and choosing healthy snacks. As the teaching is good, children are given many opportunities to develop their skills through role play, using laptops and learning to choose their activities. Teachers have high expectations, question children effectively, and plan well for the needs of all, including children identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. This generates lively and exciting learning, for which the children, particularly boys, show great enthusiasm. As a result they all make good progress, and many are close to reaching the skills expected for their age when they transfer to their next class. A feature of their

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learning is the opportunities children have to work with Year 1 pupils, which promotes their confidence, independence and good behaviour. Assessments of children's progress are accurate and rigorous enabling every child to have individualised learning. Although children are encouraged to use the outdoor area, the range of activities offered there is not as stimulating as those provided in the classroom.

Leadership and management are strong and ensure that areas for development are swiftly identified, and that all policies for child protection and health and safety are in place. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been especially successful in encouraging parents and carers to be involved in their children's learning. They are invited to come into class every Friday for 'rocket readers' and phonics sessions and are involved in the target setting to help their children progress.

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

Responses received from almost half the parents and carers are virtually unanimous in their approval of the school. There was no disagreement for ten out of the thirteen questions, and only one each for the other three. In particular, parents feel their children are safe, enjoy school, make good progress and that teaching and leadership are good. Typically a parent commented, 'I have nothing but praise for the school and staff. As a parent I am always encouraged and made welcome in the school.'

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 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 94 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	76	22	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	72	77	21	22	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	67	71	26	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	54	41	44	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	64	68	30	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	61	65	33	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	65	33	35	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)	60	64	30	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	56	39	41	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	61	65	30	32	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	60	36	38	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	59	63	34	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	72	77	21	22	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.



25 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Birmingham, B7 4JR

I am writing to thank you for the marvellous welcome you gave to us recently and to tell you what we thought about your school. Your school provides you with a good education. You help to make it special because you like learning so much, are happy and well behaved and get on with each other very well. We enjoyed meeting all of you and listening to your stories of all the places you have visited, such as the universities at Aston and Bristol and the nearby Millennium Point.

We think that you are very well cared for by the staff and that you are kept safe. Your attendance is good which is a credit both to you and your parents and carers. They think your school is wonderful and are pleased that you do so well. You are making good progress in your learning and your books show that you are all improving in reading and mathematics, although this improvement is not quite as good in writing. You have good teachers and their assistants, and we agree with several of you who told us that your headteacher has really helped the school to get better. The staff provides you with many enjoyable and exciting learning activities, and you are all very rightly proud of your school and the uniform you all wear.

We think the school can continue to improve with your help and we have suggested how this can be done. We would like you and the staff to make sure that all the improvements in your learning continue, particularly in your writing. We would like everyone to make sure that you do as well as you can not just for one year, but in every year, and that you always have targets which really challenge you. We have also asked the school to provide some more exciting opportunities to learn for those of you who are more able or have special gifts or talents.

We are confident that you can all work together to do this. Please keep enjoying your learning and staying friendly with everyone.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite

Lead inspector

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