

St Matthew's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109552
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	356572
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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	644
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John McGrath
Headteacher	Jane Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 22 lessons taught by 22 teachers, and held meetings with the governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and analysed 168 questionnaires from parents and carers, 82 from pupils and 78 from staff. The team also looked at documents and policies, including those relating to the care and protection of pupils, information the school had collected about the pupils' progress and the school's records of its monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

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

- What the current attainment and progress are, particularly in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- In lessons, how effectively teachers challenge pupils of all abilities and use assessment to secure learning.
- How effective the school's monitoring and evaluation are, especially those of middle leaders, in accelerating improvement.

Information about the school

St Matthew's is a much larger than average school. The proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, are well above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational needs, is also well above average. The school has many awards, including Healthy Schools status and Activemark for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. The school manages a breakfast club and an after-school club. There is childcare provision on the school site. This is managed by a private provider and is subject to a separate inspection. Since the previous inspection there have been considerable changes in staffing and in the leadership structure.

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 provides a satisfactory and strongly improving standard of education. Highly focused and strong leadership has raised staff awareness and ambition for their pupils, and this is already demonstrating significant impact. Many aspects of pupils' personal development are now good and academic achievement is improving strongly. The vast majority of pupils, staff, parents and carers are very positive about all aspects of the school. Pupils describe their school as 'amazing because everyone is so friendly' and 'extremely educational as it is fun to learn'.

Attainment had declined since the last inspection but it is now improving rapidly and is close to the national average, especially in reading and writing. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, but the majority of pupils in all years have accelerated their learning and progress recently. Previous underachievement in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 is being rapidly addressed. This is because underachievement is being identified early and good individual and class support put in place to address this. The work in mathematics in Year 6 is an example of where this is having a particularly good impact. Much of the learning and progress in lessons seen during the inspection was good. Care, guidance and support are good and have contributed well to these better outcomes. Behaviour has improved and is good, making a strong contribution to learning in many lessons. Pupils feel very safe, have a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and have good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Teachers are now using data about pupils' progress to plan lessons more effectively and challenge them, and the work is generally well matched to the ability of all the pupils. Teaching is satisfactory overall, however not enough teaching is consistently good or better. There is much good practice in school, but this is not being shared as much as it could be. In some lessons, pupils are not given clear enough guidance to ensure they can always tell if they are being successful in learning the tasks they are working on. As a result, their attainment is not always as high or progress as fast as it might be.

The new senior leadership team has achieved much in a short period of time and is central to the improved success of the school. The questionnaires completed by staff during the inspection are highly positive and show clearly how well the new headteacher has created and developed a shared ambition. Self-evaluation is very accurate and the key areas for development are understood very well. The school knows clearly what needs to be done and has set in place very appropriate strategies to achieve this. Many initiatives have been put in place, and most are showing signs of good impact. For example, an initiative to raise the awareness of teachers to have a better understanding of the use of data. This has resulted in rapid improvement in pupils' learning and progress and consequently a considerable rise in attainment in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2. However, some initiatives, such as involvement of new middle leaders in lesson observations, are in their

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early stages of development and have not had time fully to embed. The fact that so much has been achieved in such a short period of time indicates that the capacity for further development is good.

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?

- Further raise attainment and accelerate progress through ensuring that all teaching is good or better by:
 - sharing more widely the good practice in teaching that already exists in school
 - giving clear guidance to pupils in lessons so they can always tell if they are being successful in learning the tasks they are working on
 - ensuring that marking is consistently good in all classes and in all subjects.
- Involve new middle leaders in lesson observations, in order to maximise their effect.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils are eager to learn and they co-operate well with each other. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson, pupils were seen enthusiastically working together making shadow puppets to enhance their understanding of shadows. Improved achievement in mathematics was exemplified in a Year 2 lesson where pupils made excellent progress, thoroughly enjoying applying their numeracy skills to the selling of real cakes. The learning and progress of pupils from all ethnic backgrounds are satisfactory. This includes those who speak English as an additional language, as the work is matched to their individual needs and they have appropriately targeted support. Pupils who have special educational needs are also enabled to make satisfactory progress. They receive effective support in class as well as one to one tuition on particular areas of underachievement. Some good examples were seen during the inspection of the work of some of these pupils: they had produced written material to help 'teach' others how to subtract. Previous underachievement in mathematics and writing in Key Stage 2 is being addressed well and the standards that pupils attain are rising rapidly. This was confirmed by looking at pupils' exercise books in all year groups. Attainment overall at the end of Year 6 is now just below that found nationally. This represents satisfactory progress from pupils' starting points, which are typically well below those expected when they enter Reception.

Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their learning. This is helped by the mature way that they co-operate with each other. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. They enjoy taking on responsibilities when given the opportunity to do so. For example, they take very seriously their helping roles in the classroom. The school council is in its early stages of development, but already pupils have come up with some good ideas, such as asking for more books in the library. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to take part in sporting activities and clubs and this contributes to their good understanding of being healthy, recognised in national awards. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. When asked what they felt had improved about the school, they said they liked the fact that there were more teachers and that everyone was very friendly.

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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	3
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	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?

The school rightly says that one of its strengths is the good care, guidance and support it provides for its pupils, particularly those whose circumstance make them more vulnerable. Right from the start of the day at breakfast club until the after-school club pupils are nurtured well. There are some significant successes in the way in which the school helps pupils overcome difficulties to enable them to achieve satisfactorily or better. This was seen to good effect during the inspection in some of the small group work with pupils, particularly with those who speak English as an additional language. Strategies to boost attendance are having a positive effect and pupils believe, as do their parents and carers, the school prepares them effectively for the next stage in their learning. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is enhanced by visits to places of interest, events at school and a wide range of clubs. The physical education team has played a large part in engaging pupils in many different types of exercise and sports. St Matthew's is proud of being represented at all the local sporting events. The school rightly recognises that some aspects of the curriculum are in the early stages of development, such as the regular use of information and communication technology in lessons and the embedding of literacy and numeracy into other curriculum areas, although these are improving strongly.

The majority of lessons have appropriately challenging and varied activities that ensure most pupils are engaged well in learning. Year 6 pupils were seen enthusiastically

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responding to a call from outer space enquiring about life in 2011 on Earth. This afforded pupils the opportunity to group ideas into paragraphs and it enhanced their writing skills. Some teachers were seen sharing well with pupils what they should be learning and involving the pupils themselves in assessing how well they are doing. However, this good practice in teaching is not widespread or shared well enough at present. Teaching assistants provide appropriate support that enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language to have access to the curriculum. Increasingly, teachers are checking pupils' understanding regularly throughout lessons. Whilst much of the teachers' marking is helpful in making clear the next steps pupils need to take in their learning, for example in writing, this is not consistent across different subjects or across the school.

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?

Good leadership and management of the school have played a large part in its improving success. A clear focus on raising teachers' expectations of pupils and a greater use of assessment to inform planning has achieved this. The headteacher and senior leadership team work very well together and are being supported increasingly well by middle leaders, many of whom are very new in post. There is a determination and self-reflection that is shared by all the staff. The leadership and management of teaching and learning are good and consequently, the quality of teaching is improving rapidly. The school's self-evaluation is searching and accurate. Analysis of pupils' progress is rigorous and underachievement is being tackled well. Partnerships with other schools are helping teachers to improve by enabling them to see good and outstanding practice there. However, there is much good practice currently within school which is not shared widely enough. There is a very strong drive for improvement to ensure better achievement and personal development outcomes for all pupils.

Currently, all groups of pupils make equally satisfactory and strongly improving progress, reflecting good equality of opportunity for all pupils and effective tackling of discrimination. Racism is not tolerated at all and racist incidents are extremely rare. Safeguarding procedures are good, with good risk assessments seen in action during the current building work. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has many good links with other schools, reflecting different socio-economic make ups, and pupils are benefitting from exchange visits. At present, the school has some good links with the local community and is in the very early stages of developing some international links. Parents and carers are strongly positive about the school and the role of the family worker is much appreciated, as are the weekly updates and a translating service. Governance is

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satisfactory and improving. Members of the governing body know the key strengths and areas for development. They provide the school with effective support and are strengthening their ability to hold it to account.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in Reception with skills that are variable, but mainly well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They settle in quickly and play well together. They make satisfactory progress and many enter Year 1 with levels just below those expected for their age in most areas of learning. Levels of attainment in communication, language and literacy remain below what is expected. However, a close focus on phonics (learning about letters and sounds), enhanced by adults working with small groups of children, is helping to accelerate progress there. Children are enthusiastic about their learning. This was exemplified by their lively responses to the challenge of using 'tricky' words in appropriate sentences. Number work is linked well with literacy. Children were seen enjoying a fishing game to help them successfully compose sentences about subtracting numbers.

Adults provide well for children's welfare. There are well-established routines to promote their personal and social development, such as tidying up and hand washing. There is a good balance between activities chosen by children and those led by adults. Adults generally support children well and their explanations are clear. While the indoor learning environment clearly addresses all areas of the curriculum, this is not the case for the outdoors. Here, activities are not always as focused and this limits children's learning and progress. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory and improving. The team works successfully together to give the children a happy and productive time. Systems to check on what children know, understand and can

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do are becoming more robust and assessment information is increasingly being used effectively to inform future planning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. For example, the vast majority feel that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps their children safe. This enjoyment was very evident to the inspectors, who judged that the extent to which pupils feel safe is good. A few parents and carers do not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Pupils told the inspectors that they felt that the school deals well with anyone who does not behave properly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Matthew's 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 168 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 644 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	101	60	63	38	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	88	52	74	44	0	0	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	93	55	71	42	2	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	42	85	51	8	5	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	89	53	71	42	6	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	85	51	71	42	7	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	71	42	86	51	4	2	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)	57	34	92	55	6	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	70	42	80	48	7	4	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	35	83	49	13	8	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	35	93	55	4	2	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	69	41	81	48	2	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	87	52	76	45	2	1	2	1

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	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.



10 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthew's Primary School, Luton, LU2 0NJ

Thank you for giving the inspectors a warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you, both in your lessons and around the school. Your comments were very helpful to us.

We judged that your school is satisfactory and getting better. You are able to learn in a very friendly atmosphere. You have a good understanding of what it means to be healthy. You behave and work and play together sensibly. Your questionnaires told us that you enjoy all the things that you do at school and that you feel very safe there. They also told us that you feel adults look after you well and are interested in your views.

There are some things that your school could improve to help you do even better:

- your teachers should share more among themselves the things that they do well
- it should always be made clear to you in lessons how you can tell if you are doing well
- your work should be marked equally well in all subjects to help you improve better
- all the new good ideas, such as having all new leaders observing lessons, should continue.

All of you can help by telling your teacher if you are not clear whether you are doing well with each of your activities in class.

We would like to wish you all the best for the future and we hope that you enjoy learning in your new building when it is finished.

Yours sincerely

Alison Thomson

Lead Inspector

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