

# St Matthias Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100956
<b>Local Authority</b>	Tower Hamlets
<b>Inspection number</b>	354918
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Merchant

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	199
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ruth McCurry
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clare Sealy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 September 2007
<b>School address</b>	Bacon Street Tower Hamlets E2 6DY
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<b>Email address</b>	head@st-matthias.towerhamlets.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of the inspection time was spent looking at learning. Sixteen lessons were observed, taught by ten different teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, staff and the headteacher. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including 94 questionnaires from parents and carers, the school's records of pupils' attainment and progress, school policies including safeguarding documentation, the school development plan, 82 questionnaires from pupils and 16 from staff.

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

- The effectiveness of strategies to improve attainment, particularly in writing.
- The accuracy of teacher assessments and the use of assessment information to plan further steps in learning.
- How well the school supports those pupils with particularly low levels of prior attainment and those new to learning English.
- The impact of actions taken by the school's leaders and managers to raise the quality of teaching and learning.

## Information about the school

This school is smaller than most other primary schools. While most pupils are local, a significant minority travel some distance to school from the surrounding area. The very large majority of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic heritages, the largest group being pupils of Asian or Asian British ♦ Bangladeshi background. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than that typically found. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is close to that typically found. These relate mainly to speech, language and communication needs. The school has a breakfast club on the site.

**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 Matthias Church of England Primary provides a good education for its pupils, which fully reflects its Christian ethos. The key strength of this successful school is the exemplary pastoral care that it offers. One pupil reflected the views of many when saying, 'I love this school ... everyone is friends with everyone.' Almost all parents and carers are supportive, and even those who have concerns recognise that their children love coming to school. ♦

By the time pupils leave in Year 6, they are confident, well-rounded young people, ready to play their full part in the world beyond school. Pupils develop well as articulate, courteous and considerate young people, extremely aware of how to lead safe and healthy lives. Adults work together extremely well to ensure that all pupils, whatever their difficulties or disabilities, are able to take full advantage of all that the school has to offer. Pupils' very strong enjoyment of school is reflected in the improving attendance rate, which is now average. However, against the strong advice of the school, some parents and carers still take their children away from school for extended periods during term time.

Children make a good start in the Nursery. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average, is rising strongly year-on-year and pupils achieve well. Improvements in pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics and reading have been particularly good. The school has worked hard to improve pupils' written work which, for older pupils, is now close to their reading skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those new to learning English receive very good support both in class and in small group or individual tuition sessions, which enables them to make good progress in their learning. Teachers skilfully use questioning in lessons to promote learning and to analyse and improve pupils' performance. Teachers mark books carefully and regularly. As a result, the advice teachers give to pupils on how to improve their work is effective and most pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning. In a minority of lessons, learning is held back because teachers do not always ensure that pupils are given sufficient time to work independently, to learn in an active way or to talk about their findings. Staff recognise that they have not yet sufficiently fine-tuned the use of assessment information so that the tasks they set in lessons provide maximum challenge for the potentially high-flying pupils.

Even though the school already has many good features, staff and the governing body know that there is still more that can be done to lift pupils' achievement even further. The senior leaders' evaluation of teaching is highly perceptive, and a wide range of strategies are used to give the school a good understanding of how it needs to improve. This has led to significant improvements to teaching, pupils' attainment and the curriculum since the last inspection and the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that a higher proportion of teaching is consistently good or better so that all pupils can make exceptional progress by:
  - ensuring that teachers specifically use assessment data to plan for and extend the learning of the more able pupils at a consistently challenging pace throughout lessons
  - giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class.
- Work more closely with the few parents and carers whose children do not attend regularly enough to ensure that pupils' overall rate of attendance is 96% or better.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Children join the Reception class with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age, and their language, communication and social skills are well below. The work seen by inspectors confirms that pupils, including those new to speaking English and those with particularly low levels of prior attainment, are, overall, working at broadly the levels expected of them at this stage. Effective strategies to encourage pupils to solve higher-level number problems expressed in words and interventions such as 'Numbers Count' have led to most pupils making outstanding progress in mathematics and attainment is above average by Year 6. Attainment in English is held back because some pupils have difficulty in explaining their ideas when they have read a text, which in turn inhibits their ability to write well at the higher levels.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well because they are keen to do their best, work purposefully in lessons and greatly enjoy what they are doing. This enjoyment stems from the good rapport they have with each other and their teachers. In a very fast paced Year 6 literacy lesson, all groups of pupils made exceptional progress in developing their writing skills by working in groups to devise ways of improving a written text and really enjoyed the challenge of the task.

There is very little difference in the progress made by the various groups of pupils, because the school is very conscious of their individual needs. For example, the school works very effectively to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those with particularly low levels of prior attainment and the very high number who are new to learning English. Detailed plans to support these groups, coupled with thoughtful deployment of learning assistants and timely interventions, ensure that they make similar progress to that of their classmates.

Pupils enthusiastically and knowledgeably explain the value of adopting healthy lifestyles and the need for exercise and have an excellent understanding for their age of how to be safe in the community. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good, although some can be boisterous at play time and at the end of the day. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well and in many different ways. Consequently, they have a highly developed understanding of right and wrong and a deep appreciation and enjoyment of the wonders of life around them. They eagerly take advantage of the opportunities to participate in the life of the community and are very well informed about other people's needs. Pupils develop impressive social and

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interpersonal skills and relish working collaboratively. This, together with secure and improving standards in the key skills in English and mathematics, mean that they are well prepared for the next stages of their lives. The school has successfully ensured that those pupils who have been with them for a long time attend regularly. However, it recognises that it has more to do to ensure that those who arrive mid-way through the year quickly acquire the habits of good attendance.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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 care, guidance and support that the school provides for all its pupils are exemplary. One pupil reflected the views of many when saying, 'The school has helped everyone develop a better future.' The headteacher, staff and the governing body work extremely hard to recognise and overcome barriers to learning that a pupil might have, and these efforts are highly praised by parents and carers. The school works extremely well in partnership with external agencies to secure extra support for those pupils who need it. Induction programmes are highly effective for those who arrive throughout the year and those starting in the Nursery class.

The school has recently revised its curriculum to make it more exciting and creative. The thematic approach provides many opportunities for pupils to practice their basic skills. However, the school has not yet fully evaluated the impact of this on the pupils' learning and has not ensured, for example, that pupils have opportunities to develop longer pieces

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of writing across all themes. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is fully integrated into all topics and the use of the internet means that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to further extend their learning. Well-supported, creative and educational activities outside the normal school day, including the well-attended breakfast club, make a valuable contribution to pupils' high levels of enjoyment.

The quality of teaching, and the engagement of staff with all pupils and their learning, is good. Typically, lessons are fast-paced and productive. Teaching is lively, tasks and concepts are clearly explained, and activities provide effective challenge so that most pupils learn at a swift pace. Adults ask perceptive questions and these help pupils to think and use more varied vocabulary in their answers. Effective use of 'talking partners', drama, role play and letter and sounds (phonics) activities helps pupils make good progress in their speaking and reading. Pupils have a good understanding of the quality of their work and what they need to do next in order to move forward. Learning is sometimes held back because all pupils work at the same pace, as directed by the teacher, and this leads to insufficient challenge for the more able pupils. Teachers sometimes talk for too long when explaining activities and key concepts, which limits the time pupils are actively and independently learning, resulting in slower progress and less time for pupils to articulate and build upon what they have learnt by the end of the lesson.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are eager to learn and make good progress because teaching is lively and exciting. As a result, they move into Year 1 working securely towards their early learning goals. There is a good balance of activities led by the teacher and those that children choose for themselves and there are many opportunities for children to pursue their early literacy and numeracy skills. The excellent space for the youngest children is generally used to good effect. It is effectively organised and well resourced, bright, airy, safe and secure. Inside spaces are fresh and clean, with clearly marked labels on drawers and containers so that children can find and put away equipment independently. The outside



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area offers much opportunity for learning and is used well by adults to help develop children's climbing and clambering skills. Very good records are kept of children's achievements, in photographs, notes and samples of their work. However, this information is not always used rigorously enough to ensure that the next steps in learning are sharply focused on children's differing needs.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

The school and the headteacher clearly enjoy the confidence and support of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire. A number of individual comments praised the extremely high quality care, support and guidance given to pupils, particularly to those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those new to learning English, and also the big improvements seen in the school over recent years. The few criticisms were followed up as inspection trails during the visit. For instance, a small minority raised concerns regarding the extent to which the school takes account of their views. Inspectors found, through discussion with a range of parents and carers and the governing body, and an examination of school policies and other documents, that views of parents and carers are actively sought and acted upon. Views of parents and carers interviewed informally at the beginning and end of the school day confirm the positive responses in the questionnaires.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Matthias Church of England 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 199 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	66	28	30	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	58	62	34	36	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	50	39	41	6	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	49	41	44	7	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	51	40	43	5	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	45	45	48	6	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	40	49	52	6	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)	26	28	55	59	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	38	45	48	6	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	37	50	53	6	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	29	51	54	6	6	4	4
The school is led and managed effectively	31	33	51	54	4	4	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	48	46	49	2	2	1	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



1 April 2011

Dear Pupils

St Matthias Church of England Primary School, London E2 6DY

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. What a lovely two days we had! We enjoyed meeting and talking to you. Yours is a good school which is improving quickly. It has many good features and you are right to be proud of it.

Here are some of the good things we found out about St Matthias Church of England Primary School.

- Your personal development is excellent. You behave well around the school and in your classes and you look after each other so well. You relish working in groups and helping each other to learn and you readily help your classmates when they find things difficult.
- You make good progress as you move through the school and your achievement is getting better all the time. By the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you reach standards that are now similar to those in most other schools. This is because of your exciting curriculum and the good teaching which you receive.
- Your teachers and other adults take very good care of you. You told us they make sure that everyone feels completely safe and secure.
- Your headteacher, the governing body and all the other staff know in detail how to make sure that your school continues to improve.

To help them to do this, we have asked your school to do the following:

- make sure that more of you attend school regularly and take fewer days off school
- ensure that more of you make excellent progress by the time you reach Year 6 by making sure work that is planned for you is not too easy or too hard, but always just at the right level of challenge and that you are able to learn more things on your own.

I am sure that you will help by always working hard and aiming really high.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant

Lead inspector

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