

Matthew Arnold Primary School

Dingle Lane, Liverpool, L8 9UB

Inspection dates 29–30 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Matthew Arnold is a caring school which makes a real difference to the lives of pupils. It willingly accepts and turns around the fortunes of pupils from across Liverpool, many of whom have been unsuccessful in their previous schools.
- Pupils in the speech and language unit and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the expert support they receive and because all staff have been extensively trained in how to teach different types of needs.
- Pupils' attainment is below average at the end of Year 6 but from their well below average starting points in the Nursery class, they make good progress and achieve well.
- Teaching is good, particularly in the Nursery, the Reception class and in Key Stage 2. Teachers build professional relationships with pupils and model good behaviour and manners.
- Pupils are well mannered, polite, and friendly and, for most of the time, behave well.
- Attendance has improved over the last two years and is now close to the national average.
- Governors are highly skilled and challenge the leaders of the school to improve teaching and pupils' achievement. Consequently, results at the end of Reception and pupils' attainment in mathematics have improved.
- Senior leaders and teachers who lead subjects check on the quality of teaching and on pupils' achievement well. This has helped them to make improvements from year-to-year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Pupils' progress is slower in Key Stage 1 than in other parts of the school.
- Pupils do not always have the chance to extend their writing skills in all subjects and sometimes they do not write enough, which hinders their progress.
- The levels attained by boys and pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals lag slightly behind other pupils, particularly in writing and reading.
- The quality of teachers' marking and how they set targets for pupils vary across the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 17 lessons. Two of these observations were with the acting deputy headteacher and most observations were for between 15 and 30 minutes.
- Inspectors heard pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read and they held discussions with the school council and two groups of pupils, as well as talking with pupils informally. Inspectors considered the results of the annual school survey completed by pupils in 2010, 2011 and 155 responses to the 2012 survey.
- Inspectors met a few parents at the start of the school day, considered the seven responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own annual survey of parents which in 2012 has 115 returns.
- Inspectors held meetings with seven members of the governing body, two members of the local authority, staff who lead subjects in the school and with senior leaders. They looked at a range of documents including: the school improvement plan, pupils' work, results of pupils' tests and the school's records from checking on the quality of teaching.

Inspection team

Allan Torr, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Patricia Davies

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Matthew Arnold is an average sized primary school.
- The pupil premium is extra funding given to schools by the government to support children of armed forces families; pupils who are looked after by the local authority and pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Around half of pupils are supported by the premium which is more than double the national average.
- Most pupils are White British but there is a small and increasing proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who receive extra help from school staff because they have been identified as having special educational needs (school action) is around average. The proportion who are supported by external specialists because of their needs (school action plus) is more than double the national average.
- The school in 2012 exceeded all the current national floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress expected by the government.
- The local authority places pupils from across Liverpool into a 20-place specialist speech and language unit. While they are at the school they become Matthew Arnold pupils.
- Three pupils are educated off-site at pupil support centres and at Mab Lane Primary school.
- The school leads Dingle Lane Children's Centre and accommodates a part of Abbots Lea Special School both of which were not inspected during this inspection.
- There is an after-school club that uses the school's rooms but is not managed by the governing body.
- The headteacher is a National Leader in Education and provides support for many schools and their staff. Matthew Arnold is a national support school which means that staff help to support others to improve their teaching. It is also one of the first schools in the country to be appointed as a National Teaching School.
- At the time of the inspection, the subject leader for English was the acting deputy headteacher and a higher level teaching assistant was teaching her class; the deputy headteacher was on maternity leave but came in to school to join meetings with inspectors.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of feedback by:
 - giving time for pupils to consider and respond to the teachers' marking
 - making sure pupils know what they need to do to improve in each subject and what to do to reach the next level.
- Improve the quality of pupils' writing particularly in Key Stage 1, by:
 - giving more time in lessons for pupils to practise and improve their writing
 - extending pupils' opportunities to write and improve their writing in all subjects
 - using information and communication technology (ICT) in most lessons to practise, edit and improve their work
 - using the knowledge they have picked up from their reading about how authors and writers choose and use words, phrases and sentences.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start the nursery with skills, knowledge and development that are well below those expected of three-year-olds. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because the activities are well-matched to the children's abilities; the adults extend children's knowledge and their thinking and because phonics (the letters and the sounds they make) are taught well. In one lesson, for example, children revisited the sounds they already knew; learnt how to say, read and write the new sound 'e'; and moved quickly onto building words using the new sound.
- Pupils make slower progress in Key Stage 1. In the phonics test at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' reading ability was well below the national average, particularly for boys and for pupils who are supported by the pupil premium. This is because they do not extend either their reading or writing skills quickly or read or write as much as they could in class.
- Over their time at school and particularly in Key Stage 2, pupils' progress speeds up. The gap between boys and the national average for boys closes down in reading, writing and mathematics. The gap between pupils who are supported by the pupil premium and similar pupils nationally also closes. Much of the reason for this is good teaching. Another reason is the way in which teachers have started to use very good tracking of pupils' progress and introducing specialist teaching for individuals and groups to help them catch up.
- Pupils with speech and language difficulties make good progress because they are supported and taught by skilled and expert teachers and teaching assistants.
- In an English lesson in the speech and language unit, pupils made good progress in building sentences and extending their knowledge and use of words. This was because they had individual sheets showing what aspects of writing and speech they needed to improve. They learnt new words and how to put them correctly into sentences to make their speaking and their writing better. The teaching assistant modelled how to make sounds correctly and asked pupils focused questions so they could build on their skills and knowledge.
- The school is well thought of in the community and across Liverpool for being able to take pupils with complex special educational needs, behavioural and emotional needs, and those who have been excluded, and helping them to make good progress. Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs make good progress because staff are highly trained in how to teach them, and because they are taught by their teachers in classes with other pupils rather than being taken out of important lessons.
- One of the reasons why attainment dipped significantly in 2011 was because the school willingly accepted six pupils into Year 6 from a local school that was closing, all of whom had complex needs and very low attainment. Their inclusion in the school results had a significant impact in making pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 appear much lower. In their final year at Matthew Arnold they achieved well.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well and they often outperform the White British pupils. The pupils who have been transferred into Matthew Arnold from other schools make good progress but some make outstanding progress because the school does everything it can with specialist agencies to help them learn. Those who are taught off-site make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers use effective teaching strategies to involve all pupils and to make sure they do not sit listening inactively for too long. As a result, pupils make good progress. Teachers ask pupils, for example, to move around the class collecting answers and evidence, ask pupils to discuss their thoughts and answers in pairs and small groups and they ask them to use individual whiteboards

to record their answers. In a very effective mathematics lesson, recognising that prime numbers have only two factors, pupils understood and enjoyed the task and they worked together discussing complex examples involving two operations.

- Parents and pupils said in the school surveys and in discussions that pupils learn a lot, they enjoy school, they are given help when they need it and that teaching is good. The local authority reviewed the quality of teaching recently and also judged teaching to be good overall.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use questions well to gauge pupils' understanding. In one lesson for example, the teacher skilfully modelled how to use coordinates to locate something on a grid. She carefully checked pupils' understanding and their thinking before moving onto the next stage of learning. A teaching assistant gauged whether to provide extra support and questions to a pupil with Down's Syndrome to make sure she fully understood the concept.
- There are good examples of marking and feedback to pupils. Teachers refer to pupils' individual targets and give them tips on what to do next to improve their work. In a few examples, however, marking needs to be improved because the tips on what to do next are not or cannot be followed up by pupils in the next lesson. Marking also varies between subjects and teachers. In English there are sometimes clear tips about how to improve but in other subjects, particularly 'topic work', written feedback congratulates pupils but does not show them how to improve their work.
- Teaching is better in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Key Stage 2. The teaching of writing is not as good as it could be because pupils do not spend as much time as they could writing, editing, practising their skills and improving their work. For example, in topic work pupils sometimes spent time filling in worksheets rather than using and applying their writing skills. The teaching of reading is improving. However, there is a missed opportunity to link what pupils have read, how authors use sentences and words to improve their own writing.
- Although there are timetabled slots for pupils to use and develop their ICT skills, there are missed opportunities for pupils to use ICT to write in most lessons. Pupils' achievement is around the national average in ICT because they are involved in research and in creating multi-media presentations.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents and pupils agreed that behaviour is good for most of the time and incidents are dealt with well by adults. Pupils who have specific behaviour needs are dealt with well by staff and this help often helps to correct their behaviour and enables pupils to succeed.
- In lessons, there is a good, purposeful working atmosphere and adults in the class are good role models for behaviour. As a result, pupils feel respected and cared for; they show good levels of manners, politeness, and responsiveness to teachers' instructions and are friendly to visitors. It was striking, for example, how Year 6 pupils offered their hands to be shaken by the inspector as they came to share their reading books.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour. They use their voices and their position in the classroom to establish good behaviour and to monitor behaviour in the room. They use rewards and sanctions well to maintain good behaviour and to make sure pupils know the consequences of their actions.
- There are very few recorded incidents of bullying and pupils agreed that bullying is rare. There are very few incidents of racism but homophobic language is more common, for example, using the term 'gay' to mean something is poor or rubbish. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe using the internet and said that, although they knew of a few instances of cyber-bullying, this form of bullying is uncommon.
- Pupils have responded well to the school's teaching about anti-social behaviour and gang culture. The school makes good use of outside agencies, such as safety officers and the police to tackle this kind of behaviour. It uses role models well and links with the university and industry to raise pupils' aspirations and expectations.

- In 2010 and 2011, pupils' attendance was a concern because it was well below average and the proportion of pupils persistently absent was high. Since then attendance has increased and persistent absence reduced to be closer to the national average. The few pupils educated off-site have low levels of attendance. Boys' attendance is lower than girls' and pupils supported by the pupil premium have lower attendance than other pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a good strategic overview and leads the school, the children's centre, and the teaching in school well. He is highly committed to this area of Liverpool and heightening the prospects for pupils and parents. He is highly thought of in the local authority and nationally, supporting many other schools in helping them to improve.
- The deputy headteacher has an excellent understanding about how to track the attainment and progress of pupils. The system gives an excellent overview of the support provided for each pupil and its impact on their progress. The acting deputy headteacher has an accurate view about the quality of teaching and has high expectations about what a good lesson should be and to what all pupils are entitled.
- Teaching is checked frequently by the deputy headteacher, and leaders of the different subjects. This is done by observing lessons, reviewing work in pupils' books and by talking with staff. As a result of this monitoring, leaders take effective action to improve teaching. The leader for mathematics, for example, after focused observations looking at how more-able pupils are challenged in mathematics lessons, led a staff meeting in how to improve teaching of these pupils.
- The management of teachers' performance is taken seriously by leaders and governors. They have taken difficult decisions not to award pay rises or allowance to teachers who have not been teaching as well as they could.
- The curriculum is well thought out and meets pupils' interests and their needs. It gives pupils many opportunities to listen to visitors and to go on trips to further their understanding of the different topics they learn about. The visits are also well planned to develop pupils' social skills and their spiritual and religious awareness. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The quality of safeguarding is good. The systems to check, record and vet teachers is detailed, thorough and is reviewed frequently. The systems to protect pupils and to work with outside agencies to ensure pupils' safety are very good. Teachers discuss the safety and vulnerability of every pupil in case extra help and support is needed. The school has a track record of taking pupils who have disrupted home lives and making a positive difference to their lives.
- **The governance of the school is good.**
 - Governors are highly skilled, well trained and have the expertise, knowledge and understanding to be able to challenge school staff and hold them to account for pupils' achievement. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and about pupils' attainment and progress. They have a good understanding of how to compare the school's performance with others nationally and in the local area. Following the dip in results in 2011, they asked detailed questions to get to the bottom of what happened. The school is in financial surplus and governors take effective action to check on spending and on the allocation of funding. For example, to improve the attainment of pupils with special educational needs they decided to invest in and deploy a teaching assistant in every class. Governors have started looking into the impact of funding, such as the pupil premium, but this could be improved if there was a greater focus on making sure there is an impact on this group of pupils' attendance and achievement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104557
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	395366

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Helen O’Sullivan
Headteacher	Mr Gary Mason
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2006
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