

St Matthew Academy

St Joseph's Vale, Blackheath, London, SE3 0XX

Inspection dates 6–7 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching which is now good, with some that is outstanding.
- Achievement has improved year on year, and progress is good for all groups of pupils across the school.
- Pupils benefit from many inspirational experiences which help to promote good achievement. As a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly, and the caring and supportive approach to managing behaviour is leading to a reduction in incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
- Pupils' safety and well-being are strongly promoted. Attendance is above average.
- Every opportunity is taken to make the most of the all-through nature of the school, and this ensures that the school community is cohesive.
- The new principal provides inspired leadership. He is effectively supported by the three vice principals. Together with the governors, and in partnership with the diocese and local authority, they are securing continuous improvement in all areas of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment at the end of Year 2, although improving, remains stubbornly well-below national averages. As pupils join the school at different points with skills well below those typical for their age, this still represents good progress.
- Rates of progress in mathematics are not as fast as those found in English. This is due to inconsistencies in teaching, marking and other feedback to pupils within the subject.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 44 lessons or part-lessons. Most of these were shared observations with senior leaders. Short visits were made to look at teaching in English and across the lower school. These were also joint observations with school leaders.
- Work in pupils' books was analysed with senior leaders.
- The inspection team observed the academy's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, evaluations of the school by outside consultants, minutes of meetings of the governing body and its different committees, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, met with different groups of pupils, attended assemblies, and interviewed a sample of staff. They also spoke to members of the governing body, a representative from the Diocese, which is the academy's sponsor, and from the local authority.
- The views of parents were sought at the start and end of the day, and through the school's surveys. Inspectors considered the 73 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered written comments from 115 staff.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Hawkes	Additional Inspector
Alan Jarvis	Additional Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Additional Inspector
Ann Short	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Matthew Academy is much larger than the average-sized school. It was opened in September 2007 as an all-through school, sponsored by the Catholic Diocese of Southwark.
- Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are from Black African and Black Caribbean heritages.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- Nearly half the pupils are known to be eligible for additional government funding (the pupil premium). This includes pupils in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families. This is much higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at other than the usual times is high.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards at Key Stages 2 and 4. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, a new principal has been appointed, along with two vice principals. This was in September 2012, when the senior leadership team was also restructured, to reflect the three mini-schools within the academy (lower school includes the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 4; the middle school includes Years 5 to 8; and the upper school includes Years 9 to 11). A new sports hall was opened in January 2013.
- A small number of upper school pupils study vocational courses at Lewisham College, ensuring that they leave school with recognised qualifications. Three students attend New Woodlands school to receive support for their behaviour.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By June 2013, raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics so that pupils reach at least average levels in Key Stage 1, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing in different subjects, particularly in Year 1
 - increasing the consistency in the teaching of letters and sounds.
- Accelerate progress in mathematics across the school so that pupils make progress at rates similar to those they make in English, by:
 - improving the quality of teaching so that more is consistently good or better across the school
 - making sure that activities are designed to excite and engage the pupils, through more investigations and problem solving
 - making better use of information about how well the pupils are doing to ensure that work is more closely matched to their abilities in mathematics
 - providing sharper guidance for the pupils so that they have a better understanding of what they have done well and what they can do to improve this further.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Nursery with skills well below those expected for their age. Skills are also very low for the children who start in the Reception classes. Children make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage but are still below age-related expectations by the time they leave.
- Attainment by the end of Year 11 has risen since the last inspection. The upward trend in all key measures has been sustained over several years. Pupils entered for early English language and mathematics GCSE make good gains in their grades. This is helping pupils to improve their performance, and enabling higher-attaining pupils to do additional examinations such as statistics.
- Although reading was well-below the national average at the end of Year 2 in 2012, this represents good progress from the pupils' low starting points. Reading was above average by Year 6, and in line with expectations by Year 11.
- The school's efforts to raise levels in reading are beginning to have an effect. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) in the lower school is helping also with writing skills. The regular Friday morning 'DEAR' sessions, where the whole school 'drops everything and reads' is promoting a positive culture of reading for enjoyment. The library is used extensively and pupils have many opportunities to read. Special events such as those marking World Book Day bring in authors, and the whole school engages in activities which support reading.
- Overall standards have improved sharply at the end of Key Stage 2, in both English and mathematics. Progress is good across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Information on how well pupils are doing is being better used to plan activities which match different learning needs. This is less effective in mathematics where progress, although good, is not as rapid as in English because work is not always pitched at the right level.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress, because teaching is good and also because of the extra help they get.
- Pupils who arrive at times other than the usual one make good progress. Their needs are carefully assessed on arrival so that they are placed in the group most suited to their ability, and so that work is planned to meet these needs.
- Pupils funded through the pupil premium make good progress. By the time they leave school, the gap between them and their peers has narrowed, as measured by their average point scores. This measures the overall GCSE attainment between all the different groups of pupils. Their attainment in English, where the gap between them and other pupils in school is six months, is much better than in mathematics, where the gap is closer to 16 months. Funds are used to make sure that they get good support in small groups. A good example is the ACE groups (accelerated curriculum experience) in Year 7 and 8. Many of these pupils have fallen behind in their learning but are now making rapid progress in literacy and numeracy as the result of effective specialist teaching.
- Pupils from different ethnic groups, including Black African and Black Caribbean, also make good progress. This is also the case for pupils who speak English as an additional language, who receive effective additional support.

- The school plans to develop further the various ways it is supporting pupils eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium. It is too early to assess whether these initiatives have had an impact on their progress.
- Pupils who attend the local colleges are making good progress in their vocational courses. Close contact is maintained by the school to make sure they are well cared for.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good. There is some that is outstanding. The best teaching is characterised by planning which takes into account the varying needs of the pupils. Effective questioning and examples provided by teachers help to make sure that a quick pace is maintained in lessons. For example, Year 7 made good progress in understanding different types of fairy tales in an English lesson. The effective questioning by the teacher allowed pupils to develop their understanding further by exploring their own questions.
- However, in some lessons, work is not always matched to needs, and this slows the learning. This is the case for example in some mathematics classes.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to challenge pupils' thinking and work at a fast pace. In older classes, effective links are made to examination requirements to further motivate the pupils. For example, Year 11 pupils made good progress in understanding the expectations of a science test through lively questioning.
- Teaching requires improvement in some mathematics lessons as opportunities are missed to engage the interests of the pupils, for example by getting them to solve real problems linked to real life situations.
- Reading is taught well across the school, though there are inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics in the lower school. Sometimes opportunities are missed to link the sounds to writing. Opportunities to practise writing are too few to consolidate these skills.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. Learning support assistants make good use of information about pupils' starting points to plan activities which match their needs and interests.
- Pupils benefit from learning in small groups for some examination subjects. For example, Year 9 pupils in art made good progress in making three-dimensional models of surrealist pictures which they had created, inspired by the work of Salvador Dali.
- Specialist teaching also helps to enrich the learning. For example, lower-school pupils have opportunities to learn to cook and apply advice about healthy eating. Years 3 and 4 pupils enjoyed an inspiring narration of a traditional African tale by a story teller. This was run in the school's immersion room, which combines special lighting and sound effects to generate a calm atmosphere.
- Marking and feedback are strong in English across the middle and upper school. Pupils are provided with clear guidance on what to do next to improve their skills, and are given opportunities to consolidate these skills. Marking is less detailed in some mathematics books, and does not provide sufficient help for pupils on the next steps in learning. Marking in the lower school has improved and is leading to faster progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Children in the youngest classes say they feel safe. Older pupils talk about the close links with a community police officer who has helped them appreciate how to keep themselves safe. Year 11 pupils' involvement in a community crime project helps them support the younger children to feel safe.
- Pupils report that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively by the school when it does occur. Pupils in the lower school are taught in assembly to tackle bullying by talking about it - 'tell, tell, tell.' Older pupils provide support and mentor younger ones, and show mature attitudes towards different sorts of bullying.
- Pupils say that the values they are taught ensures that all are treated equally regardless of ethnic or cultural background. A small minority of parents expressed concerns about how bullying was dealt with. Staff also raised concerns about inconsistency in dealing with inappropriate behaviour. Inspection evidence confirmed that incidents are rare, and that the school does all it can to deal with these concerns.
- Pupils say that they are safe, and are taught how to take sensible precautions to risk taking. The involvement of some older pupils with community action against violent crime helps them to mentor younger pupils who may be at risk.
- The school places emphasis on meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of the pupils. Pupils speak warmly about the care shown when they experience difficulties. 'Teachers let my light shine.' was one comment made by a pupil. One teacher said, 'When you are at your worst we love you the most.' Pupils who are given support off-site for short periods show good improvements in their behaviour as a result of this specialist guidance. The respect pupils show each other contributes to an orderly and calm atmosphere around the school, and to making it a cohesive community.
- Pupils are very active around the school, taking part in assemblies, leading lessons, and ensuring that others are well behaved. A wide range of clubs and activities helps to engage their interest, for example the different gospel choirs who rehearse at lunchtimes. At the heart of the school is the chaplaincy, which provides effective spiritual support for those in need. Special events add to the strong contribution the school is making to the pupils' moral, social and cultural development.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has made continuous improvements since opening. Improvements have been more rapid since the appointment of the new principal and the vice principals. The achievement of all groups of pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, is rising. This reflects the school's determination to make sure that all forms of discrimination are eliminated and all pupils have equal chances of success.
- Since September 2012, the school has been using better systems for evaluating the performance of staff. Regular checks on learning, coupled with targeted support, are helping to hold teachers to account for the progress of the pupils. School leaders make accurate judgements of the quality of teaching, and effective coaching is leading to improvements.
- The organisation of the school into three phases from September 2012, together with the dynamic leadership provided in each area, ensures that the school has a strong capacity to maintain the improvements seen since the last inspection.

- The school makes the most of being all-through to establish a strong community with effective points of transition. Mixed-aged tutor groups help to promote good relationships, and strong links with the adjacent sixth form centre and with other colleges enable pupils to be given the best guidance on their career paths. As one pupil said, 'I enjoy the connections the school has as it inspires me to strive and work hard because I can achieve more.'
- The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the pupils, including those who attend off-site vocational courses. There are valuable opportunities for extended learning, for example, events such as book week, and the many enterprise activities which all pupils, including the youngest, participate in.
- Since opening, the school has been ably supported by their sponsor. As well as involvement in the appointments of senior leaders, the Diocese provides an adviser to support the principal. It offers training opportunities for governors and staff which complements that offered by the local authority. This makes a strong contribution to the academy's success.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors make effective use of their wide-ranging experience and expertise to support and challenge the school in equal measure. They know the school well, understand from data how it is improving in comparison to national results, and provide effective support and challenge. They know how the funds spent on supporting pupils, such as the pupil premium, are having a positive effect on their achievement. They have been instrumental in the recent appointments to the leadership team. They support the rewarding of teachers' performance based on the newly agreed policy. They work well in partnership with Catholic Diocese and the local authority. This gives them good access to regular training which they attend to broaden their expertise. Governors know their own strengths and weaknesses and have plans to strengthen their role. They make sure that each governor has a specific responsibility and this helps to ensure that all statutory requirements, including those related to safeguarding, are in place.

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	135264
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	402681

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Mallen
Principal	Michael Barry
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2010
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