

St Matthew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Ipswich

Portman Road, Ipswich, IP1 2AX

Inspection dates 17–18 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Effective leadership by the headteacher, other school leaders and governors, has improved the quality of teaching and raised pupils' achievement so they are both now good. Leaders have also been successful in greatly improving pupils' previously low attendance.
- The governing body has taken great strides forward and now plays a full and active part in determining the direction of the school.
- School leaders now check the quality of teaching and learning more often and more rigorously, so leaders are quick to spot weaknesses and make effective changes.
- Pupils are well behaved and take great pride in their school. They have a good work ethic and closely follow their teachers' instructions.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is the glue that bonds this diverse and harmonious community together.
- Staff do all they can to ensure pupils' safety. As a result, pupils feel safe in school.
- Teaching is good because underperformance has been tackled. Each classroom is a hive of activity.
- All staff who work with pupils benefit from training that is carefully matched to their needs.
- Pupils throughout the school make good progress in relation to their very different starting points.
- Early years provision is good; children make good progress in the Reception classes because activities are tailored closely to what they need to learn.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always check that pupils read, understand and respond to their marking and guidance.
- The quality of handwriting is poor. Pupils are not taught to write legibly or join their letters.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills across different subjects.
- The school has not explained clearly enough to parents the importance of learning at home.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 17 lessons, in a range of subjects across all year groups. Most observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or one of the deputy headteachers.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher; the deputy headteachers; members of the governing body; subject leaders; other teachers; parents; and pupils. An inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work and heard a group of pupils read.
- The inspectors considered documents about the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement and arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The inspectors took account of the views expressed by parents in discussions and in the 39 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The inspectors also took account of the 46 responses to the questionnaire returned by staff.

Inspection team

Bob Greatrex, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rachael Judd	Additional Inspector
David Webster	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Reception classes attend full time. There are two classes in each year group.
- Three-fifths of the school's population are from minority ethnic groups, and two-fifths speak English as an additional language. About two-fifths are White British, one-fifth from other White backgrounds, and nearly as many are mixed race.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The mobility rate (the proportion of pupils arriving other than at the usual point of entry) is high. Between July 2014 and the date of the inspection, 30 new pupils were admitted to the school, 26 of whom had had no previous schooling in the United Kingdom.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school is part of an informal group of local schools that remain independent of one another but work cooperatively.
- The school runs a breakfast club two days a week and various before-school activities on two other days.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress by making sure that:
 - teachers check that pupils read, understand and respond to the marking of their work
 - pupils are taught to write legibly in a joined hand
 - pupils have sufficient opportunities to practise and hone their writing skills across all subjects.
- Seek more effective ways to engage parents fully so that they are meaningful partners in all aspects of their children's learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, school leaders at all levels have changed the mind-set of the school to create a culture that promotes effective teaching as well as good behaviour. It thrives because staff and pupils share a common understanding of what is expected of them.
- The good progress of all pupils is testament to the strength and success of the school's commitment to giving all pupils an equal chance to succeed. Pupils from many different backgrounds and cultures form a very harmonious community in which everyone is valued. In the very rare occasion any discrimination occurs, the school has clear policies and procedures to take effective action.
- Leadership at all levels is good and a very significant factor in the school's improvement since the previous inspection. Senior and subject leaders' responsibilities are matched closely to their expertise, whether to drive up standards or improve attendance.
- The headteacher and deputy headteachers form a highly effective team. They use their complementary skills well, particularly to check that the changes made lead to improvements for pupils.
- Subject leadership is highly effective. For example, good training based on accurate evaluations has improved the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).
- Experienced teachers representing every year group work closely together, most notably to try out new ideas and ensure they are effective before introducing them throughout the school.
- Teaching is good because teachers' performance is managed well. Points for improvement are clear and accurate, and linked to good-quality training to ensure teaching improves. They are based on findings from joint observations between school leaders and outside specialists.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and identifies the areas needing improvement. Leaders at all levels take these forward by drawing up and implementing effective plans for action.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a meaningful voice in their school. All pupils learn the rights and responsibilities of citizens in modern British society. During the inspection, they learnt with fascination how these began with the Magna Carta. Pupils know and understand the school's values, and how these are relevant to the way pupils treat one another. For example, they learn the importance of respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Pupils experience a wide range of interesting learning opportunities, regularly extended and enriched by visits. Key skills, taught in discrete lessons, are practised in work in most, but not all, relevant subjects. Writing skills, for example, are regularly practised in history, but rarely in science.
- The school uses pupil premium funding very effectively. Well-trained extra staff give disadvantaged pupils additional support during the more academic subjects. This has been a key factor in the good progress these pupils make.
- Primary school sports funding is used effectively to make a positive contribution to pupils' physical development and well-being. Pupils know that exercise is important to health. Funding ensures they participate in a wider range of energetic activities than previously. Specialist coaching improves pupils' skills and techniques, as well as guiding staff to improve their teaching.
- Parents are positive about the school; about four in every five responding to the online survey say they would recommend the school to others. Parents are very supportive of their children and attend many of the activities in which their children participate. The school has had less success in securing parents' attendance at sessions aimed at showing them how they can help their children to learn at home; the

school has not yet found a way to ensure parents support their children's learning out of school.

- The school benefits from good links with other local schools. Teachers across the local network of schools work together, sharing expertise; for example, to create the new assessment system. Pupils, too, benefit from working with those from other schools.
- The school has received good support and guidance from the local authority, particularly to improve the quality of teaching.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good. Staff understand and adhere closely to all statutory requirements and school procedures. As a result, pupils say they feel safe in school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective; it is much improved since the previous inspection because governors have fully implemented the recommendations that were made in a review of how they carried out their role. They contribute fully to school improvement.
 - A wide variety of training, including how to keep children safe, has equipped governors to fully understand their roles and responsibilities and carry them out effectively.
 - Governors know the school very well. On their regular visits to the school, they check on the progress made by pupils and that the changes the school is making are on time and working as expected.
 - Governors carefully analyse the information they receive about pupils' achievements and ask astute questions; for example by comparing the information with what they have received previously.
 - Governors make sure that teachers' pay rises are dependent on their pupils making good progress. They know how underperformance is tackled because they have a clear understanding about how staff are managed. They have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching at the school.
 - Financial spending is checked carefully and governors know the positive impact on pupils' achievements made by the spending of additional funds, such as pupil premium and sports funding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. St Matthew's is a very harmonious community. Right from the very start of their time in Reception, children are very helpful to one another; for example, if one is stuck in their work another will spot this and help. Almost every parent responding to the online survey agreed that behaviour is good at the school.
- The relatively high number of pupils joining during the school year settle very quickly because of the help, support and encouragement of other pupils and staff. Those pupils who speak little English quickly learn school routines and key words, partly because they sit with a supportive 'buddy' who helps them.
- Pupils are keen to learn. One pupil said, 'We love a challenge'. Several spoke with enthusiasm about the way they can decide between three levels of difficulty in mathematics. They explained that this helps because they can start with the least difficult if they are unsure, build their confidence and then move up.
- Pupils willingly take on responsibility. For example, prefects help around the school. Pupils in Year 5 organise exercises for each other and say they enjoy competing against their previous times, and striving to improve.
- Personal development is good. Pupils enjoy the challenges they are given in lessons and the opportunities to test themselves; for example, in outdoor adventurous activities during residential visits.
- Attendance is broadly average, which represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. A very effective and experienced family support worker checks absence and makes sure that all pupils fit for school attend.

- Punctuality is better because, for example, pupils travelling a distance come early to the good-quality breakfast club or the well-coached before-school sports activities such as archery.
- The small number of exclusions since the previous inspection have been for appropriate reasons. Staff respond quickly and effectively to the very rare racist incidents.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Arrangements to ensure that all adults are checked are applied fully. As a result, pupils say they feel safe and the vast majority of their parents agree.
- Pupils say incidents of bullying are rare. They are confident that staff would quickly resolve any worries they might have. Pupils are able to distinguish between bullying and the ups and downs of normal friendship.
- Pupils have a very clear understanding of the potential dangers of the internet and social media, and know how to keep themselves safe online.
- Pupils know and understand other dangers, too. Older pupils, through role-play scenarios, learn how to handle a wide variety of risks, such as a smoke-filled room.

The quality of teaching is good

- Classrooms are hives of purposeful learning and teachers ensure that pupils feel safe and happy. The school's values are promoted effectively in every room so pupils know how to treat one another.
- Teachers check pupils' learning in lessons; watching and listening to make sure that the tasks they set offer sufficient challenge and that pupils understand what they are learning. In a Year 4 English lesson, a misconception was quickly spotted and dealt with by the teacher, who used another pupil to explain how she had gone about the task successfully.
- Teachers' conversations with pupils develop learning well. For example, in a Year 1 art lesson, the teacher's perceptive comments to a pupil encouraged her to reflect on her work, and so begin to develop skills to assess her own work as it progressed.
- Additional adults make an effective contribution to pupils' learning because they are well trained in the activities they use to help pupils. As a result, they are confident and clear in their explanations, so pupils make good progress.
- Mathematics teaching is good. Pupils are taught basic skills accurately, and given the opportunity to apply their skills in problem-solving activities. Good emphasis is placed on deepening pupils' understanding.
- Speaking and listening skills are taught well. Pupils with limited English are taught key words so they become confident and able to function in school. Staff make sure that they pronounce words and phrases correctly. Staff have high expectations that all pupils will explain the reasoning behind their answers.
- Reading is taught well. Phonics teaching is particularly effective because staff, including additional adults, are well trained to use similar methods, so pupils understand and do well whoever teaches them. Tasks in other subjects are used well to practise key skills, such as skimming and scanning text.
- Most writing skills, such as spelling, are taught effectively. However, pupils are given few opportunities to practise skills in relevant and meaningful activities in other subjects, such as science. Pupils are proud of their workbooks, but there is no high expectation of how they will write because there is no clear plan for handwriting. As a result, letters can be of varying size and shape, and pupils are not taught to join letters.

- Pupils say their teachers' marking gives them a clear understand of what they have achieved and what they need to think about next. However, teachers do not consistently check that pupils have understood and responded as they are expected to.
- Homework is set but not always completed because the school has not successfully explained the importance of homework to parents. Pupils are offered the opportunity to complete tasks in school.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Across the school, the progress of the vast majority of pupils is good, as shown by the school's accurate and regular assessments and the evidence confirmed by inspectors. Most pupils enter Year 1 below expectation for that age and leave Year 6 broadly in line with, or above, expectations for that age.
- The school is particularly effective at enabling pupils who join during the year to settle quickly. Well-trained 'buddies', many of whom know what it feels like from their own experience, quickly help these pupils to understand and make sense of what happens in class and school generally. Staff assess each pupil accurately and regularly so that the extra help they get is exactly what each pupil needs. As a result, they do well.
- Teachers and school leaders look at each pupil's progress regularly and make changes if any pupil is falling behind. This improvement since the previous inspection is key to the good progress that pupils now make.
- The school is always looking to improve pupils' achievement. For example, disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress using a scheme designed to raise their numeracy skills. School information shows these pupils typically make progress at three times the expected rate during the programme.
- The results of the Year 1 national screening check of phonics are improving year by year. In 2014, the results were below the national average. This year, school information and inspection evidence suggests the proportion will be higher, and similar to the 2014 national average. This represents good progress through Year 1, largely because adults teaching these pupils have benefited from effective training.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level at the end of Year 2 was broadly average in reading and writing, but below average in mathematics. This was because this group of pupils were relatively weak in mathematics. The proportion reaching a higher level was low. In 2015, the proportion reaching the expected level is similar, but a much higher proportion has reached a higher level. This is because pupils' progress is checked more rigorously now, and school leaders hold staff to account for making sure that those capable of making accelerated progress do so.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level by the end of Year 6 was above the national average in writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling, but below in reading and mathematics. This year, school information and inspection evidence suggests the proportion reaching the expected level will be broadly in line with last year's national average in all these subjects.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected level by the end of Year 6 was broadly average in reading and writing, but lower in mathematics. This year, school information and inspection evidence suggests the proportion will be higher in all three subjects.
- In 2014, the disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 all reached the expected level in writing, three-quarters in reading and two-thirds in mathematics. In writing, no gap existed between them and other pupils in the school, but in reading and mathematics they were nearly two terms behind. When compared with all pupils nationally, they were a term ahead in writing, two terms behind in reading and three terms behind in mathematics. School information and inspection evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school now make rapid progress. Currently in Year 6, these pupils are generally ahead of other pupils in their classes. This improvement is because extra well-trained staff go over specific gaps in their

learning identified in the pupil progress meetings.

- The most-able pupils make good progress. In 2014, the proportion making better than expected progress was nearly double the national figure in writing, a little above in reading and a little below in mathematics. This year, these pupils have been the subject of a particular focus. Quite often, additional adults will work with them on specific skills to accelerate their learning. In addition, stimulating activities challenge these pupils further. For example, the most-able writers produce a regular school newspaper.
- Pupils currently in the school who speak English as an additional language make good progress. When they first join the school, they are carefully assessed and extra help is tailored to their needs. Once they have a rudimentary knowledge of the language, they generally make rapid progress. Typically, they are enthusiastic learners with a strong work ethic who have a love of learning and want to do well.
- Disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs, generally do well from their varied starting points. They, too, benefit from regular and accurate checks of their progress so that extra help is precisely matched to their individual learning needs.

The early years provision

is good

- Children start in the Reception classes with knowledge, skills and understanding that is well below that typical for their age. They make good progress through the Reception Year and begin to catch up. In many ways, such as how they work and play with others, they are ready for Year 1, but the proportion reaching a good level of development is below that found nationally.
- Currently, about seven in every ten children in the early years speak English as an additional language; many are at early level of language acquisition. Staff take every opportunity to develop children's speaking and listening skills. An adult will often sit and discuss a book or interesting object. In this way, they model talk for children to copy. For example, a group compared toy animals and discussed advanced language such as 'heavier'.
- Children behave well. Each day starts purposefully because children are keen to explore new learning. They settle quickly and willingly do as they are asked. They notice others who struggle and are quick to help. They play together well and have a good awareness of their own safety, and that of other children.
- Teaching is good because it meets children's needs well. For example, key skills such as speaking, are promoted through an emphasis on exploring children's own experiences and interests. Accurate assessments ensure that activities closely match children's interests and build effectively on their prior learning. Children are happy because relationships between them and staff are very positive.
- Leadership and management are good. Good levels of staffing help to ensure that children are safe and well looked after. Staff check equipment at the start of every day, and that the outside area is safe and secure before using it. Good arrangements when children join Reception enable them to settle quickly. Parents receive accurate and helpful information about what their children are learning.

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	124783
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	462042

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Barratt
Headteacher	Sue Todd
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2013
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