

The Matthew Arnold School

Kingston Road, Staines, Surrey TW18 1PF

Inspection dates

9–10 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have halted the decline in standards that resulted in the school requiring special measures. However, outcomes at the end of 2015 were below national averages.
- The quality of teaching does not consistently support pupils in making good progress. Not all planning meets the needs of different groups of pupils well enough, particularly the most able.
- Systems to underpin recent rapid improvements in the school are not yet embedded.
- Pupils' achievements in mathematics are below expectations. Standards are currently improving because of better teaching, but are not yet good.
- Wide gaps exist between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally, although these are beginning to close.
- Teachers, keen to encourage pupils to participate, do not consistently challenge them or develop their confidence to think for themselves.

The school has the following strengths

- The determined leadership of the executive headteacher and the head of school have transformed the culture here. Positivity and mutual respect pervade the school.
- Effective leadership by senior and middle leaders is driving improvements in all aspects of the school's work.
- Members of the interim academy board provide very effective challenge and support for school leaders.
- Outcomes are improving securely in many subjects because of the success of the work to improve teaching.
- Stronger systems to check how well pupils are progressing are being used effectively to help pupils who are falling behind to catch up.
- Pupils, staff and most parents recognise that behaviour has improved. The vast majority of pupils conduct themselves well around the school and in lessons. Pupils appreciate the better teaching and they enjoy making better progress.
- Pupils are well cared for. Those facing personal challenges are supported well. Systems to ensure pupils' safety operate well. Attendance has improved.
- The sponsor, the Bourne Education Trust, has supported the school effectively by enabling productive links with other schools and by deploying strong senior and middle leaders to the school.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate improvements within the school by reviewing and further strengthening activities which have proved effective in transforming the school.
- Ensure that all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, accelerate their learning so that gaps between them and other pupils nationally close quickly by:
 - raising further expectations of all staff as to what pupils should achieve
 - maintaining the robust and regular checks leaders make on the performance of all groups of pupils
 - maintaining strong training and support for teachers and challenging any weaker performance.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring teachers consistently use assessment and other information effectively to plan for pupils' different needs and starting points, particularly pupils with special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils
 - offering all pupils consistently high levels of challenge and appropriate support to develop their confidence so that they contribute more to lessons and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve outcomes for pupils in mathematics by:
 - strengthening subject leadership so that it drives improvements effectively and ensures consistently strong teaching
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop skills in problem solving and mathematical reasoning so they can apply and explain their ideas, and justify their responses.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- The leadership of the school has halted the decline in standards at the end of Key Stage 4. The school's performance information for current Year 11 pupils indicates that outcomes are improving, but they remain below national levels.
- Leaders were slow to introduce the changes required to significantly improve teaching. As a result, there are gaps in pupils' learning which are limiting accelerated progress. Recently raised expectations, tighter systems and well-targeted support for teachers have brought about rapid improvement, but there is still much to do.
- Leaders know the school thoroughly. They are honest and open about its strengths and weaknesses. Their self-evaluation is accurate and they have identified appropriate priorities for action. Leaders acknowledge that the pace of improvement slipped during the autumn term. However, sharply focused action has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and quickened pupils' progress.
- The executive headteacher led the renewed drive for improvement with skill and determination. Clearer and more rigorous systems have been introduced to check on pupils' attainment and progress. Urgent steps have been taken to support teachers, particularly those with less experience. Interventions to help pupils make faster progress are in place. These changes have had a positive effect in a short time, but it is too soon to evaluate their full impact.
- The head of school's commitment and enthusiasm is infectious. She has sustained staff morale and relationships within the school are very positive. The staff who completed a survey as part of the inspection overwhelmingly support the school's leaders and feel proud to work at the school. The head of school's clear vision for high standards within a caring community is well understood. Around eight out of ten parents who responded to Parent View would now recommend the school to other parents.
- Senior and middle leaders responded very well to the uncompromising steer given by the executive headteacher and head of school following the special measures monitoring inspection in December 2015. Middle leaders are energetic, dedicated to improving the school and keen to develop their leadership skills by seeking advice and feedback. Experienced and successful leaders from other schools within the Bourne Education Trust have strengthened the school's leadership considerably, including a deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and subject leaders of English, science, modern foreign languages and humanities.
- Leaders have strengthened the school's systems for measuring how well pupils are learning. There is a much more robust system for regularly gathering accurate and reliable assessment information. As a result, underachievement is being identified more swiftly. This is helping leaders to target extra help for subjects and groups of pupils more quickly than in the past.
- Additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils has not been used effectively to close the gap by the end of Key Stage 4. Leaders have introduced a range of steps to accelerate these pupils' progress which are beginning to show impact.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe are secure and the school works very well with pupils who require extra support.
- The school's training programme is well targeted to meet the school's priorities for improvement. Support for new teachers has been strengthened by commissioning Teach SouthEast, an organisation which works closely with the Bourne Education Trust. Subject experts from other schools in the trust also provide coaching which has helped to improve the quality of teaching.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and has recently been adjusted to offer a wider range of subjects to all pupils in Key Stage 4. There are additional activities for disadvantaged pupils to promote engagement and aspiration and some early signs of positive impact. Provision for personal, social, health and economic education for all pupils is limited to drop down days and tutor-led activities and there is too little oversight or evaluation of its effectiveness.
- Provision for pupils' social, cultural, moral and spiritual development is varied. Some aspects are well developed. There is a strong emphasis on values throughout all aspects of the school's work. Pupils and adults treat each other with respect and this is a strong feature of the school. Displays around the school are purposeful and promote equality well. The multicultural nature of the school is celebrated. Extra-

curricular activities are limited to sports clubs, which pupils enjoy. British values are promoted through assemblies, but leaders do not ensure that all pupils gain an understanding of democracy and the rule of law, or learn about different faiths and cultures.

- The school provides impartial information, advice and guidance to help pupils choose appropriate courses when they move on to the next stage of their education. Almost all pupils go on to education, training or employment.
- The local authority's representative provides effective support and challenge for the school. She has provided advice for the interim academy board and shadow governing body, which has increased their effectiveness.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is currently exercised by an interim academy board (IAB). Following the special measures monitoring inspection in December, a different IAB member took up the post of Chair. He brought raised ambition and relentless rigour in holding school leaders to account.
 - Members of the IAB are very knowledgeable about the work of the school because they visit frequently and scrutinise regular reports produced by school leaders. They know about the current strengths and development needs of teaching and demonstrate very good insight into its impact on the quality of learning and outcomes for pupils. This means they are able to scrutinise decisions about pay progression reliably.
 - The IAB provides appropriately high levels of challenge and support to the executive headteacher and head of school and exercises good strategic oversight of the school. They have checked the effectiveness of the use of pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils and the catch-up funding for pupils who need additional support in Year 7. This has contributed to improvements that have been made in these areas. They understand there is more to do to ensure that all these pupils make enough progress.
 - IAB members also support the school's efforts to keep pupils safe and are suitably trained to ensure they are.
 - A shadow governing body, which comprises personnel with a helpful blend of expertise, is in place. Responsibility will transfer to this body once governors are trained. The Chair of Governors will be one of the current IAB members.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Systems are in place to ensure that all appropriate checks on anyone who works with pupils are undertaken with rigour. A strong culture of care and support for pupils helps to ensure their safety and well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving but is not yet consistently good within subjects and across the school, particularly in mathematics. Pupils describe a palpable improvement in the quality of their learning experience which is providing them with security and confidence. As yet, however, this improved quality is not reflected consistently across the school.
- Pupils behave consistently well in lessons, showing respect for their teachers. They are increasingly keen to learn. Where teaching is strongest, pupils have opportunities to think for themselves, try new approaches and take risks, which helps them to develop resilience and independence. Learning and progress are slower when teaching encourages compliance rather than enquiry and a thirst for knowledge. Sometimes pupils do not have sufficient time within the lesson to engage with the activities in a way which deepens learning.
- Teachers know pupils well and track their progress carefully using systems which are increasingly robust. This gives teachers rich information to help them plan lessons that meet the needs of different pupils. Where teaching is most effective, activities are closely matched to pupils' starting points and teachers continually check pupils' understanding of key ideas. Teachers then respond by revisiting ideas or by accelerating pupils on to more demanding tasks when they are ready for them. Sometimes teachers do not use assessment information to plan carefully or adjust what pupils do next, but continue with a task which may be too easy or too difficult. In some lessons, across all subjects, the least-able pupils are not given sufficient support, some pupils are moved on before they are ready, and the most able are not extended quickly enough.
- Pupils are challenged and supported particularly well in English, humanities and modern foreign languages, because teachers plan carefully to meet pupils' learning needs and then check pupils' progress

to see how successful they have been. This informs the next steps for learning and helps pupils to make better progress. There are examples of this strong practice in many other subjects. However, in some classes, expectations are not consistently high enough to ensure pupils make rapid progress over time.

- Pupils appreciate and benefit from the support they receive from additional adults in the classroom. Teaching assistants are well directed by teachers to support pupils with special educational needs, and they use questioning skilfully to guide and develop pupils' learning. Other adults in classrooms, including specialist and advisory teachers, contribute effectively to pupils' progress, by providing timely and effective support and challenge to extend pupils' thinking.
- Improvements to the school's assessment and tracking systems have raised teachers' expectations of pupils, but not always enough to support accelerated progress. Teachers' judgements of pupils' current achievements are more secure because assessments are more consistently rigorous and more carefully moderated, both within departments and by utilising subject expertise from other schools in the academy trust.
- Most pupils are aware of how well they are progressing towards their targets. Feedback by teachers in books is regular and follows the school's policy. Pupils often respond well and use the feedback to improve their work. However, sometimes pupils are not clear enough about how to improve because feedback is not precise enough and in other cases pupils do not act on the advice given. Teachers do not consistently use misconceptions or shortcomings identified in work to direct future learning in lessons.
- Teachers and leaders are using the more robust tracking system to identify pupils who are falling behind, and planning well-targeted interventions. This includes disadvantaged pupils and Year 7 pupils needing to catch up in English and mathematics. There is evidence that these interventions are making a positive difference in years 7 and 11, but it is too soon to see impact in other year groups.
- Homework is set more regularly, new systems are used to let parents know, and most recognise this aspect of the school has improved. However, homework is not of a consistently high quality and not always used well to support learning in lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils feel safe in the school. They say that bullying and relationship problems are usually addressed successfully. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media. Pupils say that the information they get from the school is appropriate and helpful.
- Not all pupils experience a comprehensive programme of personal, social health and economic education and some feel there is a lack of sex and relationships education.
- Overall attendance has improved over the last two years and is now around the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is low, but improving. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has diminished as a result of a number of successful strategies to get them back into classrooms and enjoy their time at the school. A few pupils are late to school and lessons.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is impressive. It is based on detailed knowledge of pupils, particularly those facing significant personal challenges. Procedures are rigorous and the school works very effectively with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the care and support they require.
- School staff frequently check on the attendance and progress of pupils who attend alternative courses at other establishments in order to make sure they achieve well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Conduct around the school is generally good. Parents, staff and pupils all agree that behaviour has improved considerably. The classrooms are a calm and orderly learning environment. Pupils usually show high levels of respect towards each other and adults, although pupils say a little derogatory language is still used.
- In lessons, pupils are attentive and follow teachers' instructions appropriately. When teaching is less effective, pupils lose interest and become distracted. Generally, though, pupils manage themselves well. Inspectors saw very little low-level disruption.
- Although many pupils demonstrate a willingness to learn, some show a reluctance to speak in discussion

and challenge thinking. They would rather sit back and be informed than work problems out for themselves. This lack of confidence reflects how things were, rather than the current more productive working relationships evident in the school.

- Leaders now have good management information which they use to keep these issues and challenges in focus. Behaviour at the school is improving.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In the 2015 examinations too many pupils did not make good progress from their starting points in English mathematics and science. The proportion of Year 11 pupils attaining the important standard of five A* to C GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics, was a little above the previous year, but well below national levels.
- Standards are now rising securely in nearly all subjects as a result of much better teaching and a better culture of learning in the school. Current information collected by the school about progress, along with work seen during the inspection, shows that outcomes are improving rapidly. This is because effective systems have been put in place to check progress and improve teaching. Much of this improvement is relatively recent.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieved about half a grade behind their classmates in both English and mathematics in 2015, and over a grade behind other pupils nationally. Currently, disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 are on track to make better progress and close the gap. In other years, some disadvantaged pupils have not caught up with their peers. Although systems have been introduced to provide them with extra support and teachers are clear about the need to identify them when planning lessons, these improvements have not had sufficient time to have enough effect.
- Pupils with disability and special educational needs are benefiting from a thorough review and strengthened leadership of this aspect of the school's work. Enhanced provision for them and a better understanding of their learning needs means that their progress is improving. Some Year 11 pupils have wide gaps in their learning, which will be difficult to make up before the 2016 examinations.
- Pupils who did not achieve at least Level 4 at Key Stage 2 in reading, writing or mathematics benefit from extra support funded by the Year 7 catch-up premium. Nearly all are making faster progress in their first year in the school. These and other intervention programmes, such as using older pupils as 'buddy readers', are providing effective focused support for reading.
- The most-able pupils make less progress on average than others. This is because they are not presented often enough with work which has been designed to suit their specific needs and therefore to be sufficiently demanding. However, some of the most-able pupils have not mastered basic skills, due to insufficient challenge in the past. Occasionally, they are moved on to extension tasks before they are ready.
- Pupils' learning in English is a strength in the school. Outcomes in 2015 were disappointing but leaders have reviewed why this happened and good levels of challenge and support for pupils are promoting good progress. Pupils benefit from engaging activities connected to everyday life and precise feedback from teachers which helps them to steadily develop their skills of expression and communication.
- The progress made in mathematics is improving, but there are still gaps in pupils' knowledge due to previously poor teaching. Pupils are using numbers and calculation with increasing confidence. However, teaching in mathematics does not yet present a clear and logical view of mathematics. Pupils are not yet given enough opportunities for problem solving. Even when this happens, they are not always required to explain their thinking, which limits their capacity to reason mathematically.
- Learning in science is inconsistent. Some lessons are appropriately demanding and interesting, with a range of activities used to help pupils understand complex ideas. In other lessons, misconceptions are not tackled successfully. The curriculum has been overhauled by the subject leader, who is also tackling weaknesses in teaching, and this is beginning to lead to higher standards in science.
- Pupils' progress in other subjects is at least secure, with particular strengths emerging, or being maintained, for example in history and languages. Teachers with strong subject expertise are enthusing pupils and driving improvement.

School details

Unique reference number	138765
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10009299

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	798
Appropriate authority	Interim academy board
Chair	David Burr
Head of School	Mary Gould
Telephone number	01784 457275
Website	http://www.matthew-arnold.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info@matthew-arnold.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 July 2014

Information about this school

- The Matthew Arnold School is a smaller-than-average secondary school, whose sponsor is the Bourne Education Trust.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is near the national average. Pupil premium funding is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children. Some pupils are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is a little lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is near average.
- The proportion of pupils with disability and those who have support for special educational needs is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need or education, health and care plans is near the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A very small number of pupils currently receive education off-site. They follow a programme of learning provided by Brooklands College and Merrist Wood College.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection began as the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures after its last inspection in July 2014. During day two, the inspection was deemed a section 5 inspection under the Education Act 2005.
- Inspectors observed 29 lessons, 28 jointly with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior and middle leaders and newly appointed staff.
- The lead inspector met the Chair of the interim academy board, the IAB member who will become the Chair of the Governing Body and two members of the shadow governing body.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime and talked informally with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account the 62 responses to the online parent questionnaire Parent View.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including those associated with safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, progress information of current pupils, minutes of meetings of the IAB, the school's evaluation of its own performance and improvement plans.

Inspection team

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