

St Matthew Academy

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

Inspection dates

19–20 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Some teaching is not yet good enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good or better progress across the year groups and subjects.
- Teachers do not consistently give pupils work that is challenging enough to help them reach the standards of which they are capable. Sometimes pupils mark time doing work that is too easy for them.
- Outcomes are not consistently good across the subjects and year groups. Although there have been improvements in some subjects, where progress is now good or better, there is still too much variability.
- Although overall attendance is broadly average, rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are high in relation to national figures for all pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, many of whom are new in post, are driving forward improvements at a good pace. Leaders have removed the previously identified inadequate teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Equally, all aspects identified as requiring improvement in the last inspection report are now good and getting even better.
- The executive headteacher has ensured that the many new leaders and teachers receive high-quality training and support. Some of the more recently appointed leaders are at the early stages of developing their leadership skills.
- In a number of subjects and year groups, teaching has improved rapidly, leading to pupils making strong progress.
- Pupils behave well. They enjoy coming to school and feel safe.
- Provision in the early years has improved. Leadership and teaching are good, resulting in children's good progress. Children are well prepared to start Year 1.
- The interim management board (IMB) has a clear understanding of the school's performance. As a result, it provides effective challenge and support to leaders to make sure that the school delivers an increasingly high standard of education.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make consistently good or better progress by:
 - teachers raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that pupils who find work easy get on with more challenging work without unnecessary delay
 - teachers learning from the best practice found in the school and partner schools.
- Continue to work with parents to reduce absence, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Consolidate the training of new leaders so that they have an even greater impact on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes to reduce variations between subjects and groups.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Following the previous inspection, the school faced much turbulence, including many changes in leadership, teaching and other members of staff. The executive headteacher, the new head of school and the primary headteacher carried out a root-and-branch reorganisation of all aspects of the school's work. Through high levels of support from partner schools and external consultants, leaders have been successful in improving all aspects of the school. This is still a work in progress. Leaders and governors are ambitious and strive for excellence. Their initial accomplishments show that they have a very strong capacity for further improvement to reach the goals to which they aspire.
- Leaders provide much support and training to help teachers improve their practice. Leaders, ably supported by a teaching and learning consultant, frequently observe teaching and arrange bespoke training to help teachers improve their practice. Additionally, teachers learn from best practice in the school's three partner schools. With new systems to check on pupils' progress, leaders use the information for setting ambitious targets for pupils and for their teachers. Leaders make sure that they hold teachers to account for their pupils' progress. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving at a good rate, with some that is very strong.
- Senior leaders have replaced former heads of year in the secondary phase with directors of learning. This means that the new leaders keep a close eye on both pupils' pastoral care and their academic achievement.
- New middle leaders are enthusiastic and keen to drive forward improvements. Some lack prior experience of leadership. They have not yet developed their skills to drive forward improvements in teaching and ensuring that pupils make consistently good or better progress in the areas of their responsibility. They have just begun to attend leadership training to improve their effectiveness.
- Leaders have reviewed and improved the curriculum. In the primary phase, in addition to learning English and mathematics, pupils learn a range of subjects and develop skills through a topic-based approach. In addition, primary pupils learn from secondary subject teachers and use the secondary school's specialist facilities. These include, for instance, lessons in music, art, French and physical education. Primary phase leaders have robust systems for checking progress in English, mathematics and science. They are planning to check pupils' progress in the foundation subjects from next academic year.
- In the secondary phase, leaders have introduced new curricular pathways. These options better match the needs of pupils. There is an appropriate balance of academic and vocational courses on offer. Current leaders recognised that too few pupils studied subjects that result in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). With the new arrangements, a higher proportion of pupils now in Year 9 will study for the EBacc as a greater number have been encouraged to study both a qualifying modern language and a humanities course.
- There is also a range of extra-curricular activities on offer for pupils, which enhance pupils' experience of school and their personal development. In primary, these include

choir, chess club, song writing and drama, and in the secondary phase, sport, media and the debating team.

- Leaders use the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively. Rates of progress of eligible pupils at the end of key stages 2 and 4 in 2016 were generally above those of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders use the primary school sports funding productively to provide pupils with a range of extra-curricular and after-school sporting activities delivered by a sports specialist. They also use the funds for purchasing sporting equipment. These help pupils to enjoy a range of activities, such as dancing, rounders and athletics, and to develop their sporting ability and physical fitness.
- Leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding (additional government funding for pupils who did not reach the expected levels in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6) well. The extra support helps eligible pupils with bespoke programmes to acquire the knowledge and skills that they had not yet attained by the end of Year 6.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is led and managed well in the primary phase. These pupils make similar progress to their peers because leaders make sure that they use additional funding to meet the needs of individual pupils. In the secondary phase, however, leaders have not had a coherent overview of the provision and its impact on different pupils. This means that those secondary pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not been supported as well as their primary peers.
- The new systems put in place this year for monitoring and following up absence are leading to overall improvements. Work with families is beginning to make a positive difference for individuals. However, persistent absence, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remains too high.
- Leaders work well with off-site providers to support a very small number of identified pupils who require some alternative provision to best meet their needs. Leaders check pupils' attendance and that the provision provides a safe learning environment for the pupils who attend. These arrangements help pupils to become successful learners.

Governance of the school

- Members of the IMB, who have responsibility for governance, have a range of experience and expertise, such as in education, finance and human resources, which they bring to the board.
- Governors have made a strong contribution to the school's ongoing improvements. They have made some important strategic decisions, such as sorting out the school's finances, appointing the head of school and making appraisal systems more robust.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need further improvement. They make good use of external consultants to check the school's work and to verify the information that they receive from school leaders.
- Governors provide leaders with both support and challenge in their continuing aspiration to improve the school further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders take safeguarding seriously. They have commissioned audits of all aspects of safeguarding to ensure that all documentation, processes and procedures are in place.
- Leaders make sure that members of staff receive proper and updated training and are well placed to apply their training to their work, with clear systems for referrals and follow-up of concerns. Leaders make sure that the many new members of staff who have joined the school mid year receive training as part of their initial induction.
- Leaders keep detailed records. These show that leaders work effectively with external agencies and parents to make sure that pupils are safe.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through presentations by the police on personal safety and, for those of an appropriate age, presentations on the dangers of sexting, for example.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is improving because of decisive action taken by school leaders. It is no longer inadequate. There remains, however, some weaker teaching, and a few of the teachers who joined mid year have not yet had time to benefit fully from the training and support. In addition, teaching is not yet good overall because inconsistencies exist across subjects and key stages.
- Inspection evidence, including work seen in pupils' books and outcomes over time, shows that sometimes the work set is not challenging enough because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. This is particularly, but not exclusively, true for the most able pupils. There are occasions when pupils mark time as they do repetitively easy tasks. In some cases, pupils become distracted from their tasks because the tasks are not sufficiently motivating. This slows their progress.
- Sometimes teachers fail to pick up on and address pupils' misconceptions. The quality of feedback and its impact on helping pupils to improve their work is variable.
- Where teaching is effective, there are high levels of challenge and the work set entuses the pupils. There are well-established routines and positive relationships between pupils and adults. Teachers ask probing questions and challenge pupils to think deeply. They give pupils useful feedback that helps them improve their work. Where teaching is typically of this quality, such as in English, geography, media studies and business studies, pupils of all abilities make good or better progress.
- Teaching makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Year 6 pupils told inspectors about a recent discussion that they had on extremism and how it manifests in society. In a secondary English lesson, for instance, pupils debated whether the police should carry guns. Pupils displayed much maturity and respect for each other's points of view when they discussed Islam during a religious education lesson.
- Teachers and additional adults, particularly in the primary phase, provide effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps

them make good progress. Although leaders train teachers in the secondary phase in how to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, there is limited in-class additional adult support.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- As pupils progress through the school, they grow in self-confidence and ambition. Primary pupils, for instance, told inspectors that they value their education and want to succeed so that they can meet their goals and dreams.
- Pupils are aware of the various forms of bullying. They are confident that on the odd occasion that it does happen, members of staff will address it. Most pupils say that if they had any concerns, they would approach an adult in the school, who they are confident will help them.
- Leaders provide a designated nurture group class for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up academically and socially. This helps them in their transition into the secondary school.
- Pupils welcome the daily sessions of 'gospel reflection equals action time'. Secondary pupils told inspectors how much they appreciated the school's sensitive approach in helping them understand and respond to recent current events such as the terrorist attacks and the tower block inferno. Pupils are proud of their charitable work, especially in raising funds for the children's ward in the local hospital. Primary pupils say that they would like more opportunities to take on responsibilities.
- Secondary pupils benefit from an employability day run by a large city firm, as well as the role-modelling days led by alumni of the school who inspire them with 'top tips to the top'. With many other opportunities for impartial advice and guidance, leaders help pupils in making suitable choices for the next stages of their lives.
- Leaders promote pupils' mental well-being through topics, such as relationships, which form part of the personal development curriculum. In addition, the school employs a part-time mentor to work with vulnerable pupils. She also runs a social skills group to help pupils deal with their difficulties.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils say that with the introduction of the new behaviour policy, behaviour has considerably improved. They are well aware of the escalating raft of sanctions should they misbehave. Secondary pupils do feel that there needs to be a better counterbalance in rewards. School leaders agree and are reviewing this.
- In most lessons, pupils are attentive, cooperative and keen to learn. On the odd occasion, when teaching is less inspiring, there is some low-level disruption.
- Pupils wear their uniform with pride. Behaviour in the corridors and dining room is calm. Pupils say that the new arrangements for outdoor provision mean that there are no longer incidents that flare up because of overcrowding. There are well-organised

routines for year groups to take it in turns to use different sections of the playing fields. Pupils are supervised closely and behave responsibly as they cross the road to reach these areas.

- There has been a three-year upward trend in attendance. In 2016, overall attendance reached the national average for secondary schools. Leaders have continued to work with parents and agencies to increase attendance. Persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remains above average.
- The alternative provision helps the very few pupils who attend to change and improve their behaviour. This enables them to learn well and return to the school after a period.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils in Years 6 and 11 receive extensive extra booster sessions before and after school as well as during school holidays. This helps them make up lost ground because of weaker teaching over time and succeed in their national tests. Even so, inconsistencies remain.
- In 2016, although key stage 4 overall progress was high, including in English, mathematics and languages, there was variation across subjects. Attainment was strong in business studies, geography and media but below average in art, hospitality and catering, history, religious education, French and the two core science qualifications. The proportions of pupils entered for and achieving the EBacc qualification were well below average.
- The school's information shows that there have been a number of improvements this year. However, in some subjects where leadership and teaching have not yet improved enough, pupils continue to underperform. This is also the case in key stage 3, where latest tracking data for Year 8, for instance, shows some wide variation between subjects.
- In the 2016 Year 6 tests, pupils' progress in reading and mathematics was above the national average. In writing, it was average overall. The proportion reaching the expected standard in all three subjects was below average. Current school data shows that pupils are on track to reach higher standards this year. Owing to the significant changes to teaching staff mid year, there are some inconsistencies in how well pupils are achieving across the subjects and year groups in the primary phase.
- The most able pupils do not consistently make the good progress and reach the standards of which they are capable. In the 2016 tests, high-ability girls particularly made well-below-average progress overall. At key stages 1 and 2, the proportions of pupils reaching greater depth across the subjects and starting points were generally below national averages. This is because there has been a strong focus on increasing the proportions reaching the expected standards and not enough challenge to stretch the most able.
- Pupils achieve well in reading as phonics is taught effectively from the early years and through into key stage one. As a result, there has been a three-year upward trend in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In 2016, the school's results were similar to the national average for the first time.

- In the 2016 key stage 1 teacher assessments, the proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected for their age was above average. This represents overall good progress from Reception.
- Disadvantaged pupils across the key stages and subjects in almost all cases make faster progress than other pupils nationally. It is more variable against their peers. This means that some attainment gaps remain.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are achieving stronger outcomes this year, especially in the primary phase. It is not as strong in the secondary phase.
- Leaders check outcomes for the very few pupils who attend alternative provision. They make good progress.
- All pupils who left Year 11 in 2016 went on to further education or training.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader, ably supported by a consultant, has improved all aspects of the early years provision. Because of good teaching, children make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Children join the early years with skills, especially in language and communication, which are lower than expected for their age. The proportion of children who leave Reception with a good level of development and ready for Year 1 has risen and is now in line with the national average.
- Members of staff regularly assess children's learning and progress and use the information to adapt their plans to meet the needs of the children. The early years team also work with parents to make sure that they are part of their child's learning.
- Leaders have good systems for evaluating the effectiveness of the early years. They identified, for instance, that some clutter in the outdoors was inhibiting children's ability to use the space effectively for learning and exploring. They have begun to reorganise the outdoors and have plans to develop it further.
- Teachers and other adults plan a raft of exciting activities. Children, therefore, engage enthusiastically and enjoy school. Adults place great emphasis on developing children's skills across all areas of learning, especially in literacy. The current topic in the Reception classes is based on the book 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Inspectors saw children working in pairs, creatively constructing homes for Grandma from cereal cartons and other materials. Before building, adults encouraged them to draw and write their plans. Others were in the mud kitchen preparing soup and roast chicken for Grandma's dinner. Adults challenged some more-able children to write and create their own book, which they gladly did.
- Pupils behave well. They work together in pairs or small teams, share resources, take turns and listen attentively.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective and the setting is secure. Children's welfare has a high profile, and members of staff are very good at spotting individual needs and catering for them. As a result, children are safe, happy and confident.

- Leaders have correctly identified that they need to narrow the gender gaps, as girls are far outperforming boys.

School details

Unique reference number	135264
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10033632

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	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,223
Appropriate authority	Interim management board
Chair	Patricia Barber
Executive headteacher in charge	Serge Cefai
Head of school	Miranda Baldwin
Head of primary	Lorna Beckley
Telephone number	0208 853 6250
Website	www.stmatthewacademy.co.uk
Email address	info@stmatthewacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 June 2016

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website as the website is currently under reconstruction. Leaders expect to launch the new website shortly.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish as the website is currently under reconstruction. Leaders expect to launch the new website shortly.
- St Matthew Academy, an all-through school, is much larger than the average-sized secondary school. The Catholic Diocese of Southwark sponsors the academy.
- A very high proportion of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.

- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receiving support is above the national average. The proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual times is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards at key stages 2 and 4. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Following the examination and national test results in 2015, the diocese brought in three headteachers from outstanding Catholic schools to strengthen the leadership team of the school. The team includes the executive headteacher from Sacred Heart Catholic School, a consultant headteacher from St Thomas the Apostle College and a primary consultant executive headteacher from St Mary's Catholic Primary Schools Trust, Croydon. The executive headteacher and consultant headteacher took up their appointments in October 2015. The primary consultant executive headteacher began working in the primary phase in January 2016.
- There have been many changes since the previous inspection. The new head of school took up her post in September 2016 and the new primary headteacher took up her post in January 2017. There has been a very high turnover of teaching and other members of staff. In January 2017, for instance, 20 new teachers and teaching assistants started in the primary school. A sizeable number of senior and middle leaders are new to the school or new in post. A few more changes in staffing and leadership are planned for September 2017.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision, either full or part time, at Capol Manor College, which offers vocational courses, or New Woodlands School, which supports pupils having trouble in managing their behaviour.
- A section 48 inspection of religious education did not take place at the same time as this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was converted from a section 8 monitoring inspection of a school with serious weaknesses to a full section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors observed a range of learning activities, including 50 parts of lessons. Most of these were joint observations with senior leaders. The inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, primary headteacher, consultant headteachers, other senior and middle leaders, the chair of the interim management board and the education consultant from the Archdiocese of Southwark.
- The inspection team also took account of the 50 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire as well as the school's own surveys of parents' views.
- The inspectors met with five groups of pupils and spoke to pupils across the year groups and phases during the inspection. Inspectors also listened to groups of pupils reading in the primary phase.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation and action plan, records of senior and middle leaders' evaluation of examination results, assessment information on pupils' progress, logs and records of behaviour and attendance, and records of meetings held by the interim management board. External reviews of the school's work were also scrutinised.
- Information on the very few pupils who attend alternative provision was evaluated.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Amanda Carter-Fraser	Her Majesty's Inspector
Beverley Johnston	Ofsted Inspector
Jeffery Quaye	Ofsted Inspector
James Whiting	Ofsted Inspector
Gerard Strong	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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