

# St Matthew's Church of England Primary and Nursery Academy

1 Peregrine Road, Plymouth, Devon PL6 5FN

## Inspection dates

6–7 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Instability in staffing and leadership capacity has limited leaders' ability to establish consistently good teaching and learning across the school.
- Variability in the quality of teaching means that pupils do not make consistently good progress in reading.
- Teachers do not guide and challenge the most able pupils to make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in writing.
- The teaching of writing is not securely developing pupils' spelling and grammar.
- Not all teachers check that pupils understand what to do before setting them new work. Pupils then struggle and need to wait for help.
- Leaders do not check the support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities well enough to identify where it needs to be strengthened. Not all teaching assistants move learning on well. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not make consistently good progress.
- Leaders, including governors, have not had a precise and accurate overview of pupils' progress or the quality of teaching. They have not fully identified where improvements still need to be made.
- Middle leaders' strategies for improving teaching are not fully implemented or used consistently well.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has securely established the distinctive ethos of this new school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about her leadership.
- Leadership and teaching in the early years are highly effective. Children make good progress.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved and is now strengthening pupils' progress.
- Pupils are thoughtful and behave well. They uphold the school's values with pride.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Standards have been above national levels for two years.
- Leaders, governors and staff are vigilant and effective in securing pupils' safety and well-being.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
  - urgently securing the governors’ proposed plans to strengthen leadership capacity
  - deepening the evaluation of the information the school holds about pupils’ progress so that it can be used strategically to further develop teaching
  - ensuring that middle leaders’ plans to improve the quality of teaching are implemented rapidly and securely.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make consistently good progress, particularly in reading and writing, by teachers:
  - developing pupils’ skills of reading comprehension so that pupils have a deeper understanding of what they read
  - sharply assessing where pupils’ writing needs to improve and providing the support and challenge for the most able pupils to reach the higher standard
  - planning lessons in reading and writing which develop pupils’ skills of spelling and grammar
  - more accurately identifying when pupils have not understood the learning so that time in all lessons is well used.
- Strengthen the progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, by:
  - leaders checking that pupils’ needs are well met in lessons and tasks they are given appropriately promote their progress
  - developing the roles of teaching assistants so that pupils are supported consistently well.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The effectiveness of leadership has been reduced by unavoidable instability in staffing. The headteacher has identified that the school currently has a reduced capacity for leadership. Governors have drawn up plans to strengthen leadership in the near future. These plans are very recent and not yet implemented. The impact of leadership currently requires improvement in order to bring about consistently good teaching and secure pupils' progress.
- Leaders do not have a coherent picture of progress for all groups of pupils. The school has grown from 72 pupils when it opened in 2015 to now over three hundred pupils. Pupils frequently move into the school at times other than the usual time. The challenge of analysing and evaluating the progress groups of pupils make over their time in the school has not been fully overcome. There is a great breadth of assessment information, but it is not evaluated precisely enough to identify all priorities for improvement.
- Senior and middle leaders make purposeful checks on teaching and have recently intensified this aspect of their work. They give teachers guidance on how to improve, but this is not always implemented quickly or consistently enough. Leaders have established effective checks on individual pupils' progress and through discussions with teachers plan additional support for pupils who are falling behind.
- Subject leaders for English have developed new strategies to improve the teaching of reading and writing. Some improvements, such as the new scheme for spelling, are not yet fully in place. Leaders have introduced a programme for teaching reading, but currently some teachers are not using it effectively to raise pupils' reading skills.
- The additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well planned. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have effective additional help beyond the classroom. However, leaders have not had sufficient oversight of the effectiveness of the support pupils have in class. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities therefore do not all make consistently good progress from their starting points.
- The role of the subject leader has been strengthened through high-quality professional development. The leaders for mathematics are working closely with specialist mathematics teachers to extend their own skills and knowledge. This has enabled them to successfully develop good-quality teaching in mathematics.
- Despite the challenges of establishing continuity in the school, the morale of staff is high. Staff share the headteacher's vision and aspirations for the school and its pupils. The school has quickly come together to form a community. Parents and carers wholeheartedly recognise the headteacher's contribution to making the school a welcoming place where their children develop confidence and values. As one parent said, reflecting the views of many, 'We love how parents are welcomed and encouraged to be involved in their children's school career.' During the inspection, parents joined their children's English lessons to find out more about how their children were taught.
- The curriculum for English is under review. The curriculum for mathematics has been deepened and is now contributing to pupils' good progress. Other aspects of the

curriculum are effectively planned to ensure that pupils are stimulated to learn and have wide experiences in many subjects. The curriculum is given added depth through specialist teaching in French, music, art and drama. Pupils value opportunities to learn about other religions as well as developing a deep knowledge of Christianity. The curriculum strongly promotes pupils' understanding of fundamental values of respect and tolerance as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- A recent review of the use of additional funding to promote the progress of disadvantaged pupils has identified pupils' barriers to learning. Leaders' plans for the support of this group of pupils are in place and pupils' progress is promoted well. This stronger aspect of leadership demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. However, until there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching for all pupils and across all classes, the school has not fulfilled this aim.
- The sport premium is used effectively for specialist teaching and supporting purposeful play at lunchtime. The school uses this funding effectively to take a full part in the local schools' sports partnership.
- The school is part of St Christopher's Multi Academy Trust. The trust has recently given the school good support in analysing assessment information about pupils' progress. A recent review commissioned by the trust has given school leaders good guidance on priorities for improvement. Trust leaders have confirmed with governors the need for a plan to strengthen the capacity of leadership.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are skilled and experienced. They have used the information provided by leaders to draw up plans for improvement. The minutes of meetings show that they effectively challenge leaders about pupils' progress. However, the lack of clarity about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching has hampered their ability to be fully effective. They recognise that the greater clarity in the recent analysis of progress provided by the trust will support them in their role.
- Governors work closely with leaders to track that planned improvements are having a positive impact. For example, the governor who oversees mathematics has worked alongside leaders to monitor the development of the quality of teaching in this subject. He has a detailed knowledge of how decisions have been reached. Subject leaders have benefited from his support and challenge.
- Governors fully appreciate the need to bring greater stability to the leadership of the school. The effectiveness of the review of staffing remains to be proven.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Policies and the school's procedures are robust. Leaders ensure that all checks are promptly made on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with pupils. Governors have recently carried out a full and detailed review of the school's safeguarding procedures. Their comprehensive report confirms the effectiveness of the training in

raising staff's awareness of possible risks.

- All staff are vigilant for pupils' safety and conscientiously record any concerns they may have. Leaders take prompt action to liaise with other services to ensure that pupils are safe. Up-to-date risk assessments are in place to support the school's health and safety procedures.
- Pupils feel safe in school because as one pupil said, expressing the feelings of many, 'Every single teacher is trustworthy and the school is my big family.' Parents also overwhelmingly agreed that the school is a safe place for their children to learn. They are confident to approach leaders and teachers with any problems they may have, knowing that they will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good across all year groups and all subjects. As a result, pupils' standards of work currently do not show that they are making the rate of progress needed to achieve their potential or catch up from lower starting points.
- Teachers do not all have consistently high expectations of the most able pupils. They do not guide them sufficiently well on how to achieve the higher standards of which they are capable. For example, they do not develop pupils' grammar, punctuation or vocabulary in ways which would support them in reaching the higher standards.
- There is inconsistency in the way pupils' plans for what they will write help them to make enough progress in basic writing skills. In Year 6, for example, there is good evidence of pupils writing frequently and at length in ways which are helping them to work towards the expected standard for their age. This is not evident in all classes.
- Progress in writing dips in key stage 1 when there is not enough focus on developing the specific skills of writing. Teachers do not model their expectations sufficiently well for pupils to understand them and use them in their work.
- The teaching of comprehension skills in reading is not consistently good. In Year 5, pupils are taught and regularly practise how to express their deeper understanding of what they read. In particular, this is promoting the progress of the most able pupils. In other classes, there is little evidence of this regular practice and good progress.
- Not all teachers use questioning effectively to check that pupils are confident to begin their tasks. As a result, some pupils, although enthusiastically engaged when teachers are working with them, lose confidence and learning time by becoming 'stuck' very early in the task.
- The quality of support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in class varies. Where teaching is effective, tasks help pupils to work towards their targets. Skilled teaching assistants who have a good knowledge of teachers' planning and pupils' needs ensure that progress is made. In other lessons, the work set is not accessible to the pupils and on occasions teaching assistants, although supportive of pupils' welfare, do not move pupils' learning on sufficiently well.
- The quality of support for disadvantaged pupils is stronger and is having a positive effect

on their achievement.

- Pupils are keen learners and when teaching is effective they relish the challenge to do their best. These good attitudes to learning are now most consistently seen in mathematics lessons. The teaching of mathematics has been developed well and teachers all understand and use the school's scheme of work. Pupils are given challenging tasks from the outset of the lesson and the progress of pupils is well promoted. Lessons all include frequent opportunities for pupils to tackle problems and work through investigations.
- Pupils are taught to be reflective learners and they develop a good dialogue with teachers about their success in their tasks. This aspect of teaching has recently been strengthened and the pupils I talked with said that they value the time teachers give to help them improve their work.
- The good teaching of phonics now begins in the Nursery class. It is taught consistently well in Year 1 and pupils make good progress in learning sounds which help them to read. Across the school, pupils are encouraged to read widely.
- Teachers understand the expectations of what pupils need to learn in science and the humanities across the school, and good teaching is leading to strong progress. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to practise skills of scientific enquiry. Teachers plan interesting learning experiences in geography for pupils to explore and deepen their knowledge of their local area. Teaching and learning in the arts are promoted well.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers and leaders have, in a short time, brought together a community of pupils who have developed shared values and good attitudes to learning. The school has successfully integrated a considerable proportion of pupils who have moved from other schools. All have come together securely under what one pupil described as 'our inspiring motto to let our light shine'.
- The school's values feature in all aspects of school life, and pupils are proud to act them out in their learning and relationships with their friends. Equally, pupils relish opportunities to take on responsibility. 'Spirit detectives' are pupils who seek out and tell others of the school's Christian ethos. The school council has a clear agenda for the aspects of school life they are reviewing on behalf of their classmates.
- Relationships between pupils are good. Pupils know that bullying is more than falling out with friends. They believe that bullying rarely happens in the school and would be quickly dealt with if it occurred. Parents agreed that the school is effective in promoting good behaviour and tackling any difficulties between pupils.
- Pupils are taught well about how to keep themselves safe, including on the roads and in water. They are helped to understand the possible threats from strangers, including when using the internet. In school, they recognise that the 'blue dolphin' is on their computer

screens to help them stay safe.

- Mostly, pupils show a pride in their work and their workbooks are well kept. They take care with diagrams and drawings in their art and science books.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders have ensured that all staff have similar expectations of pupils' behaviour in class and when moving around the school. Pupils are courteous and demonstrate good manners such as opening doors and speaking to all staff politely. Pupils behave well because they are happy in school and relationships between staff and pupils are good.
- In lessons, pupils work together fairly with their classmates, sharing equipment and ideas. Pupils agree that lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour. The few pupils who, through their SEN and/or disability, sometimes display more challenging behaviour are well supported by teaching assistants. School leaders are strengthening this aspect of the school's work further to ensure that pupils and staff are fully supported.
- Pupils enjoy their playtimes and said that should another child be unkind they have ready help from staff. Playground buddies promote a spirit of friendliness and sportsmanship. Pupils also behave well in the breakfast club operated by the school.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school well. Leaders closely track the small group of pupils whose attendance raises concerns. The rate of attendance for the period 2016/17 was broadly in line with the national average. Attendance for this current year shows further improvements.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- The progress made by pupils is currently uneven across the school. Some pupils learn well but others make slower progress that restricts their attainment.
- A significant number of pupils in key stage 2 have only joined the school within the past year. Leaders have identified that some pupils arrive with a legacy of underachievement which needs to be overcome. However, current assessment information and standards of pupils' work show that there is variability in pupils' progress, even for those who have been in the school since it opened.
- Pupils currently do not make consistently good progress in writing. This is particularly true of those pupils who need to catch up to the expected standard for their age in key stage 1 and the most able pupils across the school. These pupils develop good standards of composition, but their skills of grammar, punctuation and in particular spelling are too variable for them to show that they are on track for their targeted attainment.
- Pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 do not consistently demonstrate the skills of reading comprehension with texts appropriate for their age. Not all of the most able pupils are being challenged in their development of these skills. The most able pupils in Year 2 are now being given additional help with this aspect of their learning and are now making stronger progress. However, all pupils develop their enjoyment of reading and read widely for pleasure.

- The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not consistently good. The progress of disadvantaged pupils, however, is being accelerated through the now more targeted support in class and in additional activities to help them catch up.
- Pupils enter Year 1 with a good knowledge of the sounds letters make and go on to make good progress. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard by the end of Year 1 has been above the national average for the past two years. Pupils continue to make good progress in acquiring the early skills of reading. Across the school, pupils develop a love of reading and read widely for enjoyment.
- Pupils are now making good progress in mathematics, and this progress is more consistent across the school. Some of the progress is too recent to be reflected in the school's assessment information. Even so, it is clear from pupils' work that their skills of solving problems and reasoning mathematically are accelerating. Pupils are responding well to the challenges that are now a regular part of mathematics lessons. This is supporting the most able pupils to deepen their learning and acquire the skills they need to reach the higher standards at both key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Pupils make good progress in science and the humanities. They reach good standards in religious education. Their skills of scientific enquiry are developed well.
- There were no Year 6 pupils at the end of the first year the school was opened, and in 2017 the attainment of the very small group of pupils in Year 6 was not published. The standards published in 2017 for pupils at the end of key stage 1 were incorrect. There is now new information which shows an improved picture. The overall standards for writing and for those achieving greater depth in reading and writing are lower than average. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading and mathematics was above the national average.
- Currently, because of a legacy of underachievement over time, some pupils entering the next stage of their education from the end of key stage 2 are not well prepared in the standard of their skills and knowledge.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The leader for the early years has a deep knowledge of children's development and learning. She has developed consistently good teaching across the team of teachers and early years practitioners in the Nursery and Reception classes. Children, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in all aspects of their learning. Parents are delighted with the good start their children have to their education.
- Almost all children enter the Reception classes with the knowledge and skills typical for their age. A good proportion of children start school with particular strengths, for example in number and reading. Teachers plan learning experiences which strongly promote progress. As a result, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been above the national average for the two years the school has been open. The proportion of children who exceed the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics has also been high.
- The leader and teachers work together to bring about improvements across the key stage. For example, they are promoting children's progress in speaking and listening effectively



through working with a city-wide project. They check that additional support accelerates children's progress so that they catch up in their learning.

- In the Nursery class, children already know many of the sounds letters make. They are quick to spot if the sound is in their name. Teachers make this learning fun, but also have high expectations that all children take part and listen. Staff promote high expectations for children's behaviour and learning across the key stage. Staff maintain vigilance and care to secure children's safety and welfare.
- Teachers frame learning in ways which engage children's interests. For example, children used their imagination when creating 'superheroes'. They discussed their characters' special powers. Teachers used this enthusiasm to promote children's writing. Sitting in their 'superhero' capes, children wrote lively descriptions of their characters. Their well-formed handwriting and good composition show that some are already exceeding the expected standards in writing for their age.
- The current level of children's knowledge of number also demonstrates a high standard. Children add, subtract and double numbers accurately using the equipment in the classroom to enable them to work independently.
- Children keep themselves safe when moving around the setting and using the outdoor area. The leader is rightly continuing to develop the outside area so that it makes a better contribution to children's learning.

## School details

Unique reference number	140425
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10048313

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

Type of school	Primary and Nursery
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	328
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Peter Hume
Executive Headteacher	Andrea Smith
Telephone number	01752 395969
Website	<a href="http://stmatthewsacademyplymouth.org.uk">stmatthewsacademyplymouth.org.uk</a>
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Matthew's Church of England Primary and Nursery Academy opened in September 2015. It is part of the St Christopher's Multi Academy Trust. The headteacher is the executive headteacher of this school and one other in the trust. The leadership team is currently not operating at full complement as a result of unavoidable absence of some staff.
- Some children join the school in the Nursery, but most join in one of the now three Reception classes. The number of classes in each year group varies and in key stage 2, pupils are in single-aged classes. A high proportion of pupils, particularly in key stage 2, have joined the school other than at the usual times.
- The school is now larger than an average school and the majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils receiving support for SEN is higher than nationally and in some classes significantly so.

- Too few pupils took part in the 2017 key stage 2 tests to make comparisons with the current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school operates a breakfast club. An outside provider operates an after-school club to provide childcare.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes across the school. Some lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' work in English and mathematics, some of this with senior and middle leaders. They also scrutinised pupils' workbooks for science, the humanities, French and art.
- Pupils were listened to reading in class and an inspector observed a session where a small group of pupils were given additional support for reading. Pupils' reading records were scrutinised.
- Inspectors spoke with many pupils informally and met with a group of pupils to gather their views of the school. Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders. They also met with newly qualified teachers to gauge the support they had had from the school at the start of their careers. Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.
- Leaders met with the team regularly throughout the inspection and provided a wide range of documents for review, including records of pupils' achievements. The school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan were taken into account. Inspectors also reviewed the school's policies and procedures in respect of safeguarding and discussed safeguarding with several members of staff.
- The lead inspector met with a representative group of governors and considered minutes of meetings and governor reports. A meeting was held with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust to discuss the support the school was receiving.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 116 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 93 written comments from parents. An email from a parent was considered, as were the views of a parent who requested a meeting with the inspectors.

## Inspection team

Wendy Marriott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Craig Hayes	Ofsted Inspector
Adrian Massey	Ofsted Inspector

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