

# The Matthew Arnold School

Kingston Road, Staines, Surrey TW18 1PF

## Inspection dates

19–20 June 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders are committed to ensuring that all pupils make good progress. They know what is working well and what needs to improve further.
- The head of school has worked closely with the executive headteacher to galvanise a cohesive leadership team whose members get things done.
- Leaders consistently hold staff to account for outcomes. This has ensured that outcomes are now good and subjects that have been weaker in the past are improving rapidly. However, further challenge is needed to ensure that the most able pupils thrive and reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- The curriculum offers a good variety of subjects which enables pupils to pursue their interests. The on-site leisure centre provides many opportunities for pupils to engage in sport, including as extra-curricular activities after school.
- Teaching is mainly good. Teachers have enthusiastically taken up the school mantra of 'Every day students achieve'. They are focused on improving outcomes for all pupils and especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- The trust provides a strong network of experienced school leaders, which adds to the school's capacity to strive for excellence.
- The school makes a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils feel very involved with the development of the school and that leaders respond to suggestions for improvements.
- The improvement of literacy remains a school priority in further developing reading and oracy across all subjects. This work has begun but needs to accelerate.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite, friendly and proud of their school. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and engage well with one another and with adults in the school.
- Leaders were disappointed that poor attendance affected the GCSE results for some disadvantaged pupils last year. Attendance is improving for all groups, but the focus remains on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities regularly attend school.
- Governors have been proactive in ensuring that they have a stronger skill-set and now hold leaders more robustly to account. They regularly find opportunities to visit the school and test out the variety of information provided by school leaders on all aspects of the school's work.

## **Full report**

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

- Increase the pitch of challenge in all subjects so that the most able pupils can perform at the same level as their peers with the same prior attainment.
- Prioritise the development of literacy across the curriculum, particularly to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Continue to improve attendance for all, and specifically reduce persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The head of school has a strong vision and ambition for the school and works well with the executive headteacher provided by the trust. Together they have helped the senior leadership team to hold others to account but equally to provide support.
- The recent appointment of a deputy headteacher means that the head of school has extra capacity to move the school forward more quickly. Middle leaders feel listened to and have ownership of the school's priorities for improvement. Middle leaders form a hard-working team whose members exude a strong sense of purpose and commitment to strive for excellence for all pupils.
- Middle leaders meet regularly with senior leaders and with one another to debate and share good practice around teaching and learning. They are appreciative of the professional development activities on offer.
- Pastoral leaders have been very effective in reducing persistent absence, with better tracking and employing a wider range of strategies. This has included the setting up of an area called the 'Aspire room' to support vulnerable pupils.
- Senior leaders are committed to ensuring that every student makes good progress. They have revamped the assessment system to ensure that key stage 3 is a better preparation for GCSEs. They are aware that some aspects of the school's work need further improvement. For example, they know that standards are not good enough in some foundation subjects at GCSE.
- Leaders are determined to raise outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, and this is at the heart of their plans to improve the school. The performance data for disadvantaged pupils is stronger in key stage 3 as a result of wide-ranging strategies in place. Leaders have taken swift action to improve the leadership of mathematics since the previous inspection. As a result, mathematics is now achieving in line with national averages and the pupils' books show strong progression.
- Leaders use additional funding, including for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, well. For example, the funding to support Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with their literacy and numeracy is used effectively. Timetabled support slots have led to improvements in reading and numeracy in the autumn term. There are now more individualised programmes during tutor time for those pupils who still need further support.
- The performance management system for teachers has been reviewed and now has increased rigour. It is strongly linked to the whole school areas for improvement, with a focus on more rapid progress for different groups of pupils.
- The school is an orderly, harmonious community where pupils feel cared for by their teachers. The recent introduction of a house system has provided more opportunities for mixed-age activities, which pupils enjoy. They learn about democracy and other fundamental British values. Through lessons, trips and visits they have developed a strong sense of what it means to be British in the 21st century.
- Staff have used opportunities to work in subject networks with other schools to

improve subject knowledge and ensure that assessments are moderated. Middle leaders are expected to observe lessons and check pupils' work in books, which has helped to improve consistency.

- The school's policy on feedback is well established and can be tracked in the majority of pupils' books. This has ensured that pupils take more responsibility for their own learning and know what actions they need to take to further improve their learning.
- The school's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. All pupils follow a course in religious studies, although not all take the GCSE examination. This enables them to explore a diversity of religious experiences. Extra-curricular trips and visits provide further rich experiences. A group of pupils was observed in a science lesson where they were studying conservation. This was to be followed up by a visit to the zoo which they were looking forward to.
- Transition into the school in Year 7 is carefully planned, particularly for more vulnerable pupils. A parent commented in the Ofsted survey, Parent View: 'My son has felt he is a valued member of the school since taster sessions in Year 6.' Other parents mentioned how approachable and caring staff were during the transition from primary school.
- The careers provision is well planned, with exemplary practice around involving local businesses to talk to pupils and also provide valuable work experience placements.
- The school is supported effectively by the Bourne Education Trust. The leadership capacity has been strengthened by the executive headteacher and staff have benefited from opportunities to work with other secondary schools locally.

## **Governance of the school**

- The head of school is supported and challenged by the governors who have a growing range of experience to offer. Governors now hold leaders to account more effectively and test out leaders' assertions, as was evident in minutes of meetings and discussions with some staff and governors.
- Governors have timely reports to check progress for all groups of pupils. They also carry out checks of attendance records as this is a key priority for the school. Some leaders have provided reports at governors' meetings to ensure that they are well informed on all aspects of the school's work.
- Governors also visit the school to join in audits, visit departments and interview groups of pupils. This ensures that they can test out assertions and know with certainty what is happening during the school day.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There are efficient procedures in place for dealing with any concerns raised by staff and records are meticulously kept. The safeguarding team works effectively with parents and a wide range of agencies to keep children safe.
- A large majority of parents who replied to the online survey said that their child was happy at school and felt safe. This was confirmed by the groups of pupils who were interviewed by inspectors. Parents, staff and pupils state that there is very little

bullying and it is dealt with effectively. The safeguarding team monitors this carefully and records show that bullying is rare.

- Pupils enjoy their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, where they learn about a wide range of topics, including how to stay safe in a variety of ways, including online. The recent school policy of not allowing mobile phones to be used during the school day has been effective in reducing bullying via social media.
- Staff training takes place annually with regular weekly updates from the safeguarding team. Leaders make sure that recruitment procedures are robust and complete all the required checks on staff joining the school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Leaders have ensured that there is a very strong vision for teaching and learning and teachers embrace the 'Every day students achieve' mantra. This translates into a focus on knowing pupils well and addressing their needs through thorough planning.
- In the best subjects, typically in mathematics, English, history, physical education and some science, the work is well planned to match the abilities of learners. Teachers engage all learners and address any misconceptions by constantly checking pupils' understanding. In lessons where teaching is less effective, pupils are not clear about what they are learning. Sometimes, the amount of support is too structured, resulting in a lack of challenge with tasks that are too easy.
- Teachers generally have sound subject knowledge and are passionate about sharing their enthusiasm in their specialist areas. In the past, the leaders have struggled to find specialist teachers in some subjects. This is no longer the case.
- Less-experienced staff have access to a wide range of subject support to enhance their knowledge. Middle leaders are providing good support and challenge to their teams and they are ably supported by the senior staff.
- Teachers feel well supported and have appreciated a wide range of professional development opportunities. Some have flourished through a coaching approach which has had a positive impact on their classroom practice. Teachers welcome the regular visits by senior staff and middle leaders to lessons.
- The curriculum has been reviewed in order to match the ambitions of the current pupils. The head of school is pragmatic about making the most of subject strengths and trying to plug any gaps creatively. Pupils feel they have a good range of choices when it comes to options. They would like more access to music and this is being addressed next year.
- Pupils are well prepared with an early options process in Year 8 to support them in making their subject choices. The individual advice and guidance, both in key stage 3 and later on, is of a high standard. An independent careers adviser works with the pupils to prepare them for future choices. Furthermore, a varied range of external speakers come into school to talk to pupils about different careers, and links with local businesses provide pupils with a good knowledge of the world of work.
- Reading is encouraged and literacy is a focus in some tutor periods where pupils are encouraged to widen their vocabulary. However, while literacy is a focus in key stage 4

it is largely limited to GCSE requirements. Pupils would benefit from a greater emphasis on building literacy in key stage 3 in order to equip them better for a wider range of writing and also to prepare them to speak with fluency and understanding as they mature.

- Literacy is well developed within the English curriculum but needs to be more widespread across the whole curriculum, especially to support better progress for disadvantaged pupils.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are happy at school and feel well cared for and safe. They have good relationships with one another and integrate well with different age groups. Younger pupils enjoyed having an older pupil as a buddy when they first joined the school.
- Pupils recognise that the recent improvements in the school have brought about positive change. Year 10 pupils, in particular, told inspectors that behaviour was much better and they now have better lessons in the majority of subjects.
- The school council is now well established and pupils felt that leaders had responded positively to their suggestions. A good example was the arrival of table-tennis tables and table football in the outside areas, which pupils use fully at breaktimes.
- Pupils feel confident that teachers will act in their best interests and help them when in difficulty. Bullying is rare, but pupils feel it is well dealt with by staff if it occurs.
- The head of school is committed to support pupils who experience mental health difficulties. The school now has a room set aside where vulnerable pupils can go to find support. The PSHE programme addresses this topic frequently and pupils know where to go to get help if needed. Parents recognise that this is a strength of the school and one parent noted how grateful she was for the strong support and understanding shown by staff when the family was experiencing difficulties.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are confident and welcoming, and the different age groups mingle with ease. At lunchtimes they enjoy a wide range of activities and the atmosphere is calm and well ordered. The pupils have excellent relationships with the adults in the school.
- Most pupils feel that the recent changes to sanctions have had an impact on improving behaviour and ensuring a consistent approach by staff. A few felt that perhaps the sanctions were overly strict and that a more relaxed approach would also work well. They enjoyed the rewards on offer and like the fact that teachers contact their parents to congratulate them.
- The vast majority of teachers deal well with poor behaviour, including any low-level disruption in lessons. Parents generally reported that behaviour was good, although a

few felt that poor behaviour was not always dealt with effectively by all teachers. Some of the older pupils said that lessons were sometimes disrupted by a handful of pupils, but usually the teacher reacted quickly to sort it out.

- Attendance overall has improved and the school's attendance rate mirrors the national average. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced dramatically because leaders aim to keep pupils in school and learning where possible. A small number of pupils are placed in alternative provision off-site where they thrive. Leaders know that they need to continue to work on improving attendance for disadvantaged pupils as the absence for this group is still higher than that of other pupils. Improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is a key focus in the school development plan.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- In the past, pupils have not achieved in line with pupils nationally with similar starting points. However, there have been sustained improvements in mathematics and English where attainment is equal to national averages.
- In 2017, the improvements to teaching had not had sufficient time to have a marked impact on learning, so published results remained below the national average in some subjects, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Poor attendance by a small number of disadvantaged pupils also affected those outcomes.
- Pupils' work in books and the evidence from lesson observations show that the progress and attainment of pupils currently in key stage 4 have improved. The upward trend continues, especially in English, mathematics, science, history, geography and PE. However, progress is not as strong in a few other subjects, such as business studies, French, drama and aspects of technology. Leaders have put extra help in place after an audit of what needs to be done. More time is now allocated to foundation subjects to allow more in-depth coverage of the curriculum and greater revision time to support better progress.
- In key stage 3, pupils are making good progress against end-of-year targets in the majority of subjects. Disadvantaged pupils, in particular, are making better progress and closing the gap on other pupils. Teachers are now familiar with the new assessment system. Teachers have been given time to moderate results across departments, after formal assessments, to ensure consistency. Middle leaders actively participate in subject networks locally with other schools to improve the accuracy of their judgements.
- The support for reading and numeracy, funded by the Year 7 catch-up additional grant, is effective in improving pupils' comprehension and fluency in reading and basic mathematics skills. The majority of the pupils in this group made good or better progress and only a few now are continuing an individualised programme of support during tutor time.
- The most able pupils could do better across all subjects. In lessons, the work is not always challenging enough, although teachers are now more regularly setting stretch tasks. A few parents also mentioned that the most able pupils could be pushed to do more.
- The careers guidance and individual advice and guidance for pupils is a strength of the

school. Pupils feel well prepared when approaching choices for further education or training. A well-planned programme ensures that pupils have numerous opportunities to hear outside speakers and learn more about work. Some pupils also have work experience placements with local businesses.



## School details

Unique reference number	138765
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10046569

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	660
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Burr
Head of School	Mary Gould
Telephone number	01784 457 275
Website	<a href="http://www.matthew-arnold.surrey.sch.uk">www.matthew-arnold.surrey.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@matthew-arnold.surrey.sch.uk">info@matthew-arnold.surrey.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	9–10 March 2016

## Information about this school

- The Matthew Arnold School is a smaller-than-average secondary school and is part of the multi-academy Bourne Education Trust. The trust has supported the school with an executive headteacher who works for two days a week in the school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is around the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- Two pupils attend alternative provision in the North East Surrey Short Stay School.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 46 lessons. The majority of these were joint observations with school leaders. Inspectors visited two assemblies, tutorial time and two PSHE lessons.
- The views of pupils were taken into account, and inspectors formally met with four groups of pupils, as well as speaking with pupils in lessons and around the school. They listened to readers in a lesson and considered 45 responses to the pupil online questionnaire. Inspectors reviewed pupils' work in books during visits to lessons and completed a scrutiny of a selection of Year 10 books.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account 157 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, including 54 free-text responses.
- Inspectors met with the head of school, the executive headteacher, senior leaders, a group of middle leaders and teachers. They met the chief executive officer of the academy trust and representatives of the governing body. They also telephoned the headteacher of the local pupil referral unit.
- Inspectors analysed a wide range of documentation, including the school's strategic planning documents, minutes of governors' meetings, the single record of recruitment checks, safeguarding information and a range of policies. Inspectors reviewed information about pupils' attainment and progress and reports of attendance, exclusions and behaviour.

## Inspection team

Beverley Murtagh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Harry Kutty	Ofsted Inspector
Alistair Brien	Ofsted Inspector
Taj Bhambra	Ofsted Inspector

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