

Inspection of a good school: St Matthew's CofE Primary School

Windmill Lane, Smethwick, West Midlands B66 3LX

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 November 2021

Outcome

St Matthew's CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are enthusiastic about coming to school. They love the subjects they study, especially mathematics and art. They feel safe in school. There is always an adult or friend they can talk to if they are worried.

Leaders set high expectations for all to succeed. This includes those pupils who find learning difficult. As a result, pupils make rapid progress from when they first start school.

Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They play well together on the playground, making good use of the equipment provided. Pupils enjoy the 'reading pods' recently installed in the playground for older pupils. Leaders respond rigorously to the rare instances of poor behaviour or bullying.

Pupils are taught well to appreciate each other's differences. They have strong relationships with each other in this highly diverse school community. Pupils know the school's three key rules are 'be safe, be ready, be respectful.' They live up to the school's expectation that pupils make choices about their lives within an ethos of love and respect for all.

Parents and carers are highly appreciative of leaders' ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Opportunities for pupils to study French and computing have been limited during this time.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils to do well in school, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. They have constructed a balanced curriculum based on practical experiences for pupils. It also reflects the cultural diversity of the school community. Before the pandemic, all pupils were guaranteed at least three trips linked to their learning. Because of lost learning during the pandemic, leaders have focused successfully on pupils catching up in core literacy and numeracy skills.

Pupils get off to a prompt start in reading when they first join the school in early years. Leaders promote a love of reading throughout the school. The well-structured phonics programme enables pupils to progress rapidly in their reading. They can access books linked to the sounds and letters they know. They use their reading skills well across the curriculum to sound out subject-specific vocabulary. In the early years, leaders plan activities that promote literacy well. These occur in both the indoor and outdoor environments. Those who find reading difficult receive expert help and support. This also helps new arrivals to school settle quickly.

In mathematics, teachers make sure pupils are secure in understanding numbers. Pupils apply their knowledge confidently in wider investigations, such as measurement. The curriculum is well sequenced so that pupils can move to the next stage in learning when they are ready. Teachers are skilled at quickly identifying any misconceptions or gaps in learning. They intervene effectively to address these. In early years, children develop their numeracy skills well.

Teachers adapt work so that those who find learning difficult can access the learning. This is achieved, for example, through using vocabulary lists or scaffolded questions. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also receive modifications where required. This means that they can access the same work as their peers.

Teachers are adept at making links with prior learning or with other subjects. For example, in Year 3 they make links between the bronze age and science work on metals.

Pupils do not benefit from enough rich extra-curricular learning experiences. Extra-curricular activities have been slow to restart this term, including in sport. Despite the limitations of the pandemic, Year 1 pupils in history were able to undertake a trip to the Black Country museum. This brought to life their learning on homes in the past. Leaders have given careful consideration to ensure the relationships and health education programme is appropriate.

The focus on the core learning has meant less opportunity for pupils to study French and computing. French lessons have recently started again but computing is still underdeveloped. As a result, pupils are not achieving as well as expected in these subjects.

Leaders, and pupils themselves, set high expectations for standards of behaviour. This is also seen in the consistently high quality of presentation in pupils' books. Pupils are ready to learn and respectful of each other in lessons and in the playground. Pupils attend regularly and those who do not are followed up assiduously by leaders.

Leaders constantly strive to improve the school further. They receive effective support and challenge from their knowledgeable governors and external support partner.

Leaders are mindful of reducing staff workload. They have limited requirements for assessment and marking. Staff are highly appreciative of this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well trained to be vigilant. Any issue, however small it appears to be, is reported, recorded, and followed up. Where early help is necessary, leaders ensure that they secure it promptly. Leaders liaise well with outside agencies when required. Leaders and governors have put in place well-thought-out processes to respond to any allegations against staff, should they arise. They manage appointments of new staff well. Pupils are taught about online dangers through e-safety lessons. They know from an early age the importance of reporting anything that concerns them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although French lessons have recently restarted, this is not the case in computing. As a result, pupils have fallen behind in their learning in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that computing lessons resume as quickly as possible throughout the school and monitor closely the progress pupils are making.
- The school is offering very little in the way of extra-curricular activities at present. As a result, pupils' opportunities to experience a wider, enriched curriculum are limited. Leaders should ensure that pupils have access to more enrichment activities where possible, taking into account the ongoing pandemic restrictions.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour, or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	104000
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10200153
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	352
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ian Williams
Headteacher	Fiona Deakin
Website	www.stmatthews-primary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school opened a new building for older pupils in 2020 and so now has two sites.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school was judged good in its most recent section 48 inspection in October 2016. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of staff.
- The inspector spoke to pupils. He met two members of the governing body including the chair. He also met the school's improvement partner from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 19 responses to the Ofsted Parent View free-text service and 19 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. There were 24 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire and 135 to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- The inspector considered information on behaviour, attendance, personal development, safeguarding and child protection.
- The inspector focused deeply on early reading, mathematics, and history. He also looked at work in art and design, computing, modern foreign languages, and physical education. He visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, and spoke to subject leaders, teachers, and pupils.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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