

Inspection of a good school: The Matthew Arnold School

Kingston Road, Staines-upon-Thames, Surrey TW18 1PF

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 February 2024

Outcome

The Matthew Arnold School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Assal Ruse. This school is part of Bourne Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Alex Russell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Field.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils and staff are aspirational. Pupils know that the caring and attentive staff want the very best for them. They appreciate the improvements that the new headteacher and leadership team have introduced. This includes raised expectations for their learning and behaviour. Through the broad and balanced curriculum, pupils are now learning more. They know what is expected of them, and the rules of being 'Ready, Respectful and Safe' permeate all aspects of school life. Pupils learn in calm and focused classrooms.

Pupils have warm and friendly relationships with staff. They feel safe and well-supported. The diversity of the school population is celebrated by pupils who are respectful of difference. Bullying and discrimination are never tolerated in this inclusive school. Pupils feel confident to raise any concerns they may have, including by reporting these through the school's website.

Pupils' views and requests for improvements to the school are listened to. The student council represents their peers well. Pupils enjoy the choice of extra-curricular activities on offer, including the new dance and 'cheer' clubs. The school is committed to increasing the range of cultural experiences that pupils have in school. Trips, both locally and internationally, are appreciated. At the time of the inspection, pupils were eagerly looking forward to the school's upcoming ski trip.

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

The school has designed an ambitious and interesting curriculum. Recent changes, including a move to a longer key stage 3, have ensured that pupils study a broad range of

subjects in more detail. The school clearly identifies in plans the important knowledge and skills that pupils must learn. In many areas the curriculum has been organised well so that pupils build their understanding over time. However, where there have been recent revisions, in some subjects, what pupils will learn and when is still being developed. Additionally, the school is taking steps to increase the uptake in modern foreign languages so that more pupils can achieve the English Baccalaureate.

Careful thought is given to the texts that pupils read and study in English and during tutor time. This provides pupils with experience of a diverse range of genres and authors. The school prioritises developing pupils' literacy across the curriculum. As part of this, teachers introduce new vocabulary well. This helps pupils to talk and write with confidence in different subjects. The school have implemented a clear strategy in key stage 3 for helping pupils who find reading more difficult. Those who need additional support get the help they need to read with improved confidence and fluency. Plans are in place to develop this further to benefit all pupils who need this support higher up the school.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this to introduce new learning and help pupils to recall what they have previously covered. In mathematics, teachers confidently model the calculation strategies that pupils use. Teachers regularly check what has been learned and address areas where pupils need additional help to fully understand key topics and concepts. However, some teachers do not always break down new information into manageable chunks or choose the most appropriate activities. This makes it harder for pupils to build understanding.

Pupils with SEND, including those attending the West Molesey Centre, are supported well. Teachers know pupils' individual needs and the strategies that help them to learn. Teachers make great use of technology to model new learning, and ensure pupils have close support to develop their writing.

The school has high expectations for attendance and behaviour. As a result, pupils' attendance is improving. The school is working diligently to further raise this for those pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should. Staff know how to manage the behaviour of pupils well. Pupils are treated with consistency and fairness. Low-level disruption is very rare because pupils behave responsibly.

Pupils benefit from a thorough personal development programme. They learn how to keep themselves safe and develop a firm understanding of human rights. Pupils receive comprehensive careers guidance. They appreciate the opportunities to meet with employers and training providers, including from the uniformed services.

Governors and trustees are committed to their roles. They robustly challenge leaders for progress towards key priorities. Staff are highly positive about the new leadership of the school. They value the rapid improvements already made and the vision for the future.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- With the transition to a broader key stage 3 curriculum, the school is continuing to develop and refine some of its planning. This means that in some areas leaders have not yet precisely identified and fully sequenced the detailed knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Leaders should continue their development of the curriculum to ensure all pupils acquire what they need in readiness for the next stage of their education.
- The lesson activities selected by teachers do not always align precisely to the intended curriculum. This means that pupils do not always learn as much as they could. Leaders should continue to provide training to staff that will give them the expertise needed to implement the curriculum effectively across all subject areas.

Background

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

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2018.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138765
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10296379
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	981
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Field
CEO of the trust	Alex Russell
Headteacher	Assal Ruse
Website	www.matthew-arnold.surrey.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes in staff. The headteacher joined the school in 2023. There have been many other changes in senior leadership.
- The school has a specially resourced provision, called the West Molesey Centre. All 37 pupils who attend have an education, health and care plan for autism spectrum disorder.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school currently uses eight registered alternative providers to support the education of a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the leader responsible for pupils with SEND, other teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors, a trustee, the CEO and other representatives of the trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and design, and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and staff to hear their views.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential Ofsted surveys for staff, pupils and Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Martin Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicky Archer

Ofsted Inspector

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