

Inspection of St Matthew's Catholic Primary School

Queens Drive, Walton, Liverpool, Merseyside L4 8UA

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school fosters a sense of aspiration and entrepreneurship. For example, it encourages older pupils to help operate a tuck shop. It has also partnered with a local high school to encourage future careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

The school has raised its expectations for what pupils should learn. For example, it has made positive changes to its mathematics curriculum. These changes are helping pupils to improve their mathematical understanding. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), generally achieve well during their time at the school.

Pupils value the positive relationships that they have with staff. Pupils are safe, feel well cared for and are happy. Most pupils engage well in their lessons. They behave sensibly when they move around school.

Pupils appreciate being consulted on their ideas for extra-curricular clubs. The school councillors regularly collect the thoughts of their classmates before meeting with school leaders to put forward new suggestions. In recent times, the school has arranged numerous sports clubs as well as more novel clubs such as a trading card club and a slime club.

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

The school has designed a broad, ambitious curriculum. It has outlined what pupils are expected to learn by the end of each year group. In most parts of its curriculum, the school has broken down its expectations into small, logical steps of learning. This helps teachers to deliver curriculum content to pupils in a coherent way.

The school is currently refining some parts of its early years curriculum. In some areas of learning, the school has not made strong connections between the early years curriculum and national curriculum subjects. In turn, pupils do not routinely build on their prior knowledge when they move into key stage 1.

The school ensures that most curriculum content is delivered effectively. Pupils develop a secure body of knowledge across many subjects. However, a small number of subjects are not delivered consistently well across the school. In part, this is due to a number of recent staffing changes. However, it is also because the school's oversight of how some subjects are delivered is not incisive enough. Consequently, the school does not swiftly address some deficiencies in how well these subjects are taught. At times, this impacts on how effectively pupils learn.

The school uses a range of assessment strategies effectively to check on pupils' learning. In some subjects, the school uses assessment information particularly well to precisely identify and address pupils' knowledge gaps and misconceptions.

The school identifies pupils with SEND early. Staff support these pupils well. Staff adapt the delivery of the curriculum appropriately to help pupils with SEND to access their learning. Pupils with SEND usually achieve well.

The school is developing its approaches to promoting a love of reading. It has recently created a new library in the school hall. It also encourages pupils to participate in reading initiatives, such as the local summer reading challenge.

Able staff deliver the phonics programme effectively. Pupils generally read books that are sufficiently matched to their knowledge of sounds. The school provides highly focused, effective support to help pupils to catch up in their phonics learning. Most pupils leave Year 1 with the skills that they need to read with fluency and confidence.

The school provides well for pupils' personal development. For example, pupils hone their debating skills by discussing topical issues. Pupils engage in charitable activities and community initiatives. They develop a secure knowledge about how to keep themselves safe, and how to look after their bodies and minds. Pupils value the extra-curricular trips and experiences offered to them, such as the residential visits in Year 2, 4 and 6.

Pupils have a positive attitude to their education. Most behave well and are attentive in their lessons. This includes children in the early years. The school places a high priority on attendance. It has effective strategies in place to remove any barriers that prevent some pupils from coming to school. Most pupils attend school regularly.

Governors are effective in their roles. They know the school well and provide clear strategic direction. The school, including governors, is taking positive steps to respond to the views of some staff, parents and carers. For example, the school recently commissioned external partners to help them to consult staff on ways to improve staff's workload and well-being. Most staff feel well supported by the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of subjects are not delivered consistently well across the school. This means that some pupils do not develop a deep body of knowledge in these subjects. The school should ensure that staff are well equipped to deliver curriculum content effectively. It should also ensure that subject leaders have a secure oversight of their subject so that they can address any issues with curriculum implementation.

- The school has not established strong links between the curriculum in the early years and some national curriculum subjects. This means that some pupils do not routinely capitalise on their prior learning when they move into key stage 1. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking in the early years, in order to build connections with the key stage 1 curriculum so that pupils can make the best start to Year 1.

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	132793
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10256015
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ron Burke
Headteacher	Claire Sime
Website	https://matthews.school
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 April 2010, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2020. New deputy headteachers have also been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- There is a before-school club at the school, which the governing body oversees. An external provider operates the after-school club at the school.
- The school is a voluntary aided Catholic primary school. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in November 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection is due to take place by the end of 2029.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: art and design, early reading, history, mathematics and science. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector observed pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors. Inspectors also talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- Inspectors met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their wider experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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