

Inspection of St Matthew's Church of England Primary Academy

New Hall Lane, Preston, Lancashire PR1 5XB

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected

The headteacher of this school is Mark Mackley. This school is part of Cidari Education Limited, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Peter Ashworth, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John McClelland.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this welcoming school. The school's kind and inclusive ethos is evident in the way that pupils accept and celebrate the differences between them. Pupils, including children in the Nursery, are considerate and share with their peers. Pupils rightly feel safe and know that staff will listen to them if they have any worries. Staff know pupils and families in the community well and build good relationships.

In lessons and around the school, pupils behave well. They have positive attitudes to their work, enjoy learning and try hard in class. The school has renewed its curriculum to ensure that it is ambitious. It strives for every pupil to reach their potential. However, the previous weaker curriculum means pupils have developed gaps in their learning over time. As a result, many pupils do not have the knowledge they need for the next stage in their education.

Pupils enjoy trips to outdoor and adventure centres, nature reserves and local walks. They develop their talents with sports clubs, board games and 'star writer' club. Pupils are proud to hold positions of responsibility such as eco-champions. The 'language ambassadors' welcome pupils new to the school or country. This helps pupils to settle quickly.

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

The trust and local governing body have supported the school to bring about considerable improvements. They offer helpful and insightful support and challenge. This work has made a real difference to pupils' well-being and enjoyment of school. The school has ensured that the precise knowledge they want pupils to learn is set out clearly. Pupils now build their knowledge more securely than they did previously. This is beginning to impact their achievement positively. However, many pupils have not had enough time to benefit from new, ambitious content.

Staff have had support to teach this new purposeful curriculum well. However, despite the revised curriculum thinking, in lessons, it is not consistently delivered effectively. Activity choices in lessons are not precisely linked to the intended learning. As a result, pupils develop misconceptions. These are not picked up or addressed by staff as quickly as they should be.

The school swiftly identifies the differing needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are determined to remove any barriers to learning. Overall, staff use well-chosen resources to support pupils effectively. The school ensures that learning experiences are appropriate to pupils' needs. For instance, some tasks are broken down into smaller steps, revisited orally or supported with picture cues. This helps pupils with SEND to learn the same curriculum as their peers.

In most lessons, staff check pupils' understanding of what has been taught before and build on this. However, at other times, they do not spot when pupils do not understand or have misconceptions. The staff do not link learning securely enough to what pupils

already know. When this happens, pupils, including those with SEND, are moved on to new learning while there are still gaps in their knowledge. As a result, pupils do not gain the necessary subject knowledge over time.

The school's early years curriculum sets out what children need to know at each stage. However, the school does not always adapt the curriculum sufficiently to support the communication and language needs of the youngest children. While staff care about children and develop positive relationships, they do not consistently model language and talk effectively. This means that children do not develop the vocabulary they need as well as they should.

The school's reading curriculum is well considered and delivered. Children start to learn sounds as soon as they start in Nursery. Staff ensure that pupils have enough time to practise and revisit new sounds. As a result, younger pupils learn to read with fluency and accuracy. Pupils who struggle to read with confidence receive extra help. Most pupils leave key stage 1 able to read. Older pupils who still need support catch up quickly. Pupils learn how to read with expression because their teachers read with emotion and feeling at the end of each day.

Staff have high expectations of behaviour at the school. They are consistent and fair in making sure these expectations are met. This has helped behaviour to improve over time. Learning is not interrupted. Pupils play considerately at breaktimes. They are polite around the corridors and stairways. The school insists pupils attend on time every day. Staff have a personalised approach to each families' needs. They build trusting and helpful relationships. As a result, an increasing number of pupils arrive each day.

The school ensures pupils know about online safety and how to stay healthy. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is strong. This is supported by close links with the local church and faith communities. The school takes a proactive approach to ensure that all pupils are treated equally. Pupils demonstrate mature attitudes and treat each other with respect.

Trustees and governors recognise that there is still much to do. The school knows its strengths and areas for development. It is acting on these. The school has considered how to bring in new changes without overburdening staff. Most staff feel valued and well supported in their roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The delivery of the curriculum is variable across the school in all phases and subjects. At times, activities are not well matched to support learning. This hinders pupils from

building a secure body of knowledge over time. The school should ensure that teachers receive the support and development they need to deliver the curriculum consistently well.

- Children in the early years do not achieve as well as they should. Some children do not learn the vocabulary and general knowledge they need to be well prepared for Year 1. The school should ensure that staff receive the support they need to ensure children develop the communication and language skills they need to be prepared for their next stage of education.
- Across the school, teachers' checks on pupils' understanding are not specific enough. This means misconceptions in pupils' learning are not identified and addressed swiftly enough. The school should ensure teachers' checks on pupils' knowledge are precise and inform their teaching so pupils build knowledge securely over time.

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	148904
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10348383
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	468
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John McClelland
CEO of the trust	Peter Ashworth
Headteacher	Mark Mackley
Website	www.st-matthewscofe.lancs.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Matthew's Church of England Primary Academy converted to become an academy school in January 2022. When its predecessor school, Preston St Matthew's Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted on 28 and 29 November 2017, it was judged to be requires improvement for overall effectiveness.
- The school is part of Cidari Education Limited.
- This is a Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection was June 2022.
- The school runs a before-school club for pupils.
- The school does not currently make any use of alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's educational provision.
- This was the first routine inspection 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history, art and design and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with leaders and pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- An inspector listened to some pupils read to a trusted adult.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the diocese. She also met with the CEO and members of the local governing body.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses from parents and carers, both in person and from Ofsted's Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including records of behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also examined the school's self-evaluation documents.

Inspection team

Trish Merritt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rachael Alarcon	Ofsted Inspector
Annie Douglas	Ofsted Inspector

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