

Inspection of St Matthew Academy

St Joseph's Vale, Blackheath, London SE3 0XX

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 March 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is James Potter. This school is part of St Benedict Catholic Academy 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), Jonathan Ronan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Noel Campbell.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Matthew Academy receive an exceptional education. This starts in early years, where strong foundations are built, and continues through to the primary and secondary phases. Pupils develop a rich body of knowledge and achieve very highly. As a result, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school takes a nurturing and caring approach, which leads to pupils feeling and being secure and safe. They appreciate the support they receive from staff if they have a concern. The school's values of 'integrity, courage and service' are evident throughout the school's work. Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils behave very well in all phases of their education. They are committed to their learning and take pride in their work. Where pupils struggle, the school takes prompt and highly effective action to support them.

Many pupils enthusiastically take on roles of responsibility, supporting the school and the wider community. Pupils develop leadership skills when taking on roles, such as prefects, house leaders and pupil council representatives. They benefit from an exceptional enrichment offer. The school provides numerous, varied opportunities to nurture, develop and stretch pupils' talents and interests.

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

Staff have very high expectations for what pupils can achieve. The school's curriculum is ambitious and carefully designed to ensure that pupils acquire essential knowledge, vocabulary and skills. Pupils develop exceptionally detailed knowledge across subjects, which they recall with confidence and ease. The content is carefully sequenced from the early years onwards, enabling pupils to build their learning progressively.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Staff design activities which enable pupils to discuss their learning with each other. Teachers check pupils' understanding continuously and effectively. For example, skilful questioning helps to identify any misconceptions so that these are addressed quickly. Recap of learning at the start of each lesson helps pupils retain important knowledge. As a result, pupils can confidently recall and articulate what they have learned. The standards pupils achieve in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 far exceed those achieved nationally. Similarly, in the secondary phase, pupils achieve very high outcomes at GCSE and in a range of vocational qualifications.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly gain the tailored support they need. The school identifies pupils' needs with precision and shares this information with staff. Teachers make sensitive and appropriate adaptations to resources so that pupils can access the full content of the curriculum.

The teaching of early reading is highly effective. Staff are well trained to deliver the school's phonics programme with accuracy. Regular checking of what pupils understand identifies any gaps in pupils' learning. The school uses this information to carry out targeted interventions that address these gaps effectively. Children in the early years

practise reading with books that carefully align with their phonics knowledge. The school places a high priority on making sure pupils develop a love for reading. A well-stocked library sits at the heart of the school. There are regular reading-focused tutor sessions in the secondary phase. These enable pupils to develop their vocabulary.

The development of pupils' spoken language is a priority. In the early years, staff carefully demonstrate the use of subject vocabulary effectively as children play. Pupils are encouraged to use discussion in pairs and small groups. This helps them develop their ideas and to think about what they have learned.

Pupils have highly positive attitudes and behave well in lessons. They are supportive and respectful of each other. The approach staff take to encouraging positive behaviour is consistent and fair. Staff develop positive working relationships with pupils. Attendance is high and systems for improving this further are well established.

The school's approach to personal development supports pupils to become safe, healthy and well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, 'retreat days' are held in key stage 3, where pupils learn about empathy, equality and service linked to the school's Catholic ethos. Pupils are taught to show respect for difference and to respect the opinions of others. They learn how to keep themselves safe online and to stay physically and mentally healthy. There is a comprehensive careers programme that starts from Year 7, which provides advice and guidance about different pathways.

Leadership and management is exceptional. The headteacher, governing body and multi-academy trust share a clear strategic vision. They have high ambition for their pupils and want the best for them. Staff benefit from high-quality professional development, which enables them to continually improve their teaching. Early careers teachers receive excellent support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	135264
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10345905
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1072
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Noel Campbell
CEO of the trust	Jonathan Ronan
Headteacher	James Potter
Website	www.stmatthewacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- This Roman Catholic school is part of the Archdiocese of Southwark. Its last section 48 inspection took place in February 2023. The next section 48 inspection will take place within the next five years.
- 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.

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 education 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, science, physical education and modern foreign languages. 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.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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 scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with the acting chair of the local governing body. They also spoke with representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including records related to attendance, behaviour and pupil movement.
- The inspectors considered the views of pupils and staff, including through their responses to Ofsted's online surveys. They also considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted's Parent View, including parents' free-text responses.

Inspection team

Robert Grice, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Neil Harvey	Ofsted Inspector
Shaun Dodds	Ofsted Inspector
Ed Simmons	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Franklin	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Crockatt	Ofsted Inspector

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