

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Matthew's Church of England Aided Primary School and Nursery Centre

Church Road, Donnington Wood, Telford, Shropshire TF2 7PZ

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 June 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this warm, welcoming environment. The school fosters strong relationships with pupils and their families effectively. The 3 Rs of 'respect, responsibility and resilience' are understood by pupils, who show kindness and care to others. Pupils respond well to the school's expectations and achieve well by the end of Year 6. However, the curriculum is not delivered consistently well in some subjects. This means that in some areas of the curriculum, pupils do not learn well enough.

The school celebrates and gets to know each pupil as an individual. Pupils learn to debate, sing and perform. Pupils willingly engage in leadership roles. They enjoy the roles of 'well-being champions' and 'peer buddies'. The variety of clubs sparks pupils' talents and interests. Through these experiences, pupils are supported to develop new leadership skills and be active responsible citizens.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They welcome visitors and take pride in their school. Many pupils behave very well in classrooms. At social times, pupils get on well together. The school manages pupils' behaviour effectively.

Pupils are proud to represent their school and community. For example, speaking at inter-school debating events on subjects such as reducing emissions and participating in football tournaments.

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

The quality of the curriculum is mixed. Although recent developments are helping to improve this, the school remains on a journey of improvement. For example, the school is sensibly focused on developing a curriculum that can be implemented successfully to mixed-age classes. Nevertheless, there is variability in how well the curriculum is implemented. For example, staff checks on pupils' learning do not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge consistently. This means that pupils can have misunderstandings or gaps in their knowledge that are unidentified and so go unaddressed. As a result, pupils do not build a secure foundation on which to put more complex ideas as they go through the curriculum.

The school's approach to teaching reading is not secure. The delivery of the reading programme does not consistently teach pupils to blend sounds to read effectively. This means that some pupils do not learn to read as fluently as they should. The books pupils read match the sounds that they know precisely. Staff regularly read stories to pupils, bringing characters to life. Reading areas are attractive and engaging.

The school has clear processes for identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, pupils with SEND have mixed experiences in classes. Sometimes, staff do not adapt the curriculum precisely so as to help pupils with SEND learn the curriculum successfully.

In the early years, children are well cared for. Staff help children settle into school routines diligently. However, activities in the classroom and outside areas do not always match the intended curriculum. The school is working to strengthen the curriculum in early years. Staff receive training on how to help children develop their spoken language. Staff help the pupils learn new vocabulary.

The school helps pupils attend school regularly. The school works effectively with parents and carers to identify the barriers which can prevent their children from coming to school regularly, and they remove them. This has helped some pupils who find attending school tricky to improve their attendance over time.

The curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education is effective. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. Pupils talk about topics such as bullying and relationships with growing maturity. Pupils learn to keep themselves safe in school, on the internet and in water. The school offers a range of extra-curricular enrichment clubs, including sports, cookery, arts and Bible studies. Pupils look forward to residential experiences in Years 5 and 6. Pupils with SEND participate fully, for example some take on leadership roles and represent their school at events.

Governors are dedicated to their roles. However, over time those responsible for governance have not challenged leaders sufficiently to improve the quality of education for pupils or when checking leaders' work on school improvement priorities.

Most staff report that their well-being is taken into consideration. Early career teachers benefit by learning from more experienced teachers. Many staff are proud to be part of 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)

- The implementation of the curriculum is inconsistent, and staff do not check pupils' learning consistently. This means pupils have gaps in their knowledge or misconceptions that are unnoticed and so go unaddressed. This impacts on the depth of pupils' learning across subjects. The school must ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently so that staff identify gaps in pupils' knowledge early and address them swiftly and pupils are able to remember and connect new knowledge securely.
- There is variability in the teaching of early reading. As a result, the weakest readers do not learn to read as fluently as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills needed to deliver the early reading curriculum effectively.
- Sometimes, the curriculum is not adapted precisely in order to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should. The school should make sure that the curriculum is adapted consistently to enable pupils with SEND to learn and achieve well.
- Governance of the school is not robust. This means leaders are not held to account or supported to make the rapid improvements that are needed. The school must improve the quality of governance so that governors can provide robust challenge and support to school leaders.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the

last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 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.

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 | 123557 |
| Local authority | Telford & Wrekin |
| Inspection number | 10378235 |
| 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 | 312 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Rebecca Nash |
| Headteacher | Deborah Mills |
| Website | www.stmatthewscofe.com |
| Dates of previous inspection | 4 and 5 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in September 2023.
- The school provides full- and part-time places for children aged three and four.
- A new chair of governors and vice-chair of governors were appointed in June 2025.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school provides wrap-around care in the form of before- and after-school provision.
- The school is an aided school in the Diocese of Lichfield. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2024.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with a range of staff and held regular meetings with leaders. The inspector also met with representatives of the local governing board, the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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 inspector reviewed responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys, including free-text responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey.
- The inspector spoke to staff to gather their views about the school, including workload and well-being. The inspector met with groups of pupils and spoke informally to pupils during lessons and at lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Pamela Matty, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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