



Stretton St Matthew's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111382
Local Authority Warrington
Inspection number 288942
Inspection date 11 September 2006
Reporting inspector George Crowther

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Stretton Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Stretton, Warrington
Age range of pupils	4-11		Cheshire WA4 4NT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01925 730371
Number on roll (school)	207	Fax number	01925 730916
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr D Goldie
		Headteacher	Mrs Mary Cummings
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Matthew's serves a relatively advantaged area. Pupils' attainment when they start school is above average. No pupil is eligible for free school meals. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few are from minority ethnic heritages, but none is at the early stages of learning English. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed during the past year.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Matthew's is a good school with some outstanding features. It is largely successful in its aims to develop children into caring, confident and responsible members of the community, and to help them to achieve their academic potential. Good teaching and a very positive environment for learning are key factors in this success. As a result, the children really want to do their best and they thoroughly enjoy being at school. The great majority of parents think the school is doing a good job.

Children join the Reception class with above average attainment and make good progress across the school. By Year 6, standards are high, with results in national tests consistently much better than for most schools. Because standards are high by Year 2, the school has the constant challenge of ensuring children continue to build quickly on their existing attainment. Overall, good teaching ensures that this challenge is met well. A minority of children, however, are not always challenged sufficiently by the work they do, particularly the more able. The school has recognised and is tackling this issue.

Children's personal development is good because the school places a high priority on encouraging them to be enthusiastic learners and good members of the community. As a result, the children have very positive attitudes to all they do in school and they behave well. Relationships between children and with adults are outstanding. The quality of teaching is good. Most lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all children, and well organised to make learning fun and interesting. A rich, varied curriculum meets the diversity of children's needs effectively. Good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children make a confident, productive start at school.

The fairly new leadership team is providing a clear direction for further improvement. Careful checks on the school's effectiveness have led to a largely accurate evaluation, but the information is not always analysed systematically enough to ensure that the best action is taken to tackle weaknesses. Nonetheless, the school has already shown that it has a good capacity to make any necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work in lessons is sufficiently challenging, so that all children, particularly the more able, make good progress across Key Stage 2.
- Analyse the information about the performance of the school more rigorously and ensure that action taken to tackle weaknesses can be measured in terms of improvements in achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well because teaching and the curriculum are good and the school's very positive approach to learning motivates them to do their best. They settle quickly in the Reception class and make good progress. By Year 1, most children exceed the

expected standards. Further good progress leads to results in the Year 2 and Year 6 national tests that are significantly above average. Measures of children's progress from Year 3 to Year 6 show that many do well. As a result, they maintain and build upon the high standards seen in Year 2. Over the last three years, children have made particularly good progress in mathematics. There are still a minority of children, however, whose progress during Year 3 to Year 6 is average rather than good. The school is tackling this relative weakness by aiming to make work in lessons increasingly challenging, particularly for the more able children. The few children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The work they do in lessons is well matched to their needs and they get good support from teachers and teaching assistants. Standards in information and communication technology are above average and have improved since the last inspection.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The children are very happy and confident because, as many parents said, the school nurtures personal skills just as successfully as academic success. The children say, 'There are lots of interesting things to do in lessons and they're fun.' They like being at school and they are very keen to learn. They are friendly, polite and well behaved, reflecting the school's values. Relationships are outstanding, as seen when children of all ages play together at break time. As one child said, 'Everyone gets on well together in our school.' Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because there is a strong emphasis on helping them to understand their own feelings and their place in the wider world.

Children have a clear sense of their own well-being. They know how to make healthy choices in the food they eat and the exercise they take. They explain that they feel safe at school, and they know how to stay safe out of school. Class jobs, and a wide range of significant responsibilities for the older children, such as being a buddy to a Reception child, promote an excellent understanding of contributing to the community. Children are keen to express their opinions and school council members say the staff listen.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Even at a very early stage in the school year, teachers have developed very good relationships with their classes, which support learning effectively. All teachers have high expectations of the progress children can make. Lessons are planned very carefully. Whole-class sessions are usually lively and interesting, which makes the children eager to learn. Teachers manage and organise children's learning effectively. Occasionally, the work is not challenging enough, particularly for the more able children. This is either because it is not at the right level

or because the type of task does not allow the children enough freedom to show what they can do. Children's learning is well supported by teachers and teaching assistants.

The school has good systems for assessing children's attainment and tracking their progress. Teachers have used this information well to improve children's writing skills, but it is not always used well enough to raise standards in other subjects. Careful assessment of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities leads to the setting of precise learning targets, which help them to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has a good range of activities and experiences. It is carefully planned and organised, which helps all the children, whatever their needs, to build on their skills and knowledge. A strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy is complemented by exciting work in other subjects, such as art and drama. The school is successfully focusing on developing skills, such as information retrieval and note taking, for example, through work in history. Activities outside lessons are outstanding in range and quality, particularly the many clubs organised by the staff. The children's strong personal development owes much to a good programme of personal, social and health education, which supports all aspects of children's learning. The curriculum meets the needs of the few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities effectively. Clear plans for these children's learning and skilled support from staff contribute to the good progress they make.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Levels of care are excellent, which matches the school's evaluation. Academic guidance, however, is good rather than outstanding because a minority of children, particularly the more able, do not make as much progress as possible.

The staff know the children very well and their highest priority is to ensure that each child is safe, happy and ready to learn. This was clear at break time when many staff mingled with the children, chatting with them about their day in school. The children are very confident about the level of care in school: 'The teachers are really friendly and they help you if you are unhappy or need help with your work.' This confidence in the care staff provide makes a strong contribution to children's personal development. Procedures for more formal aspects of care, such as child protection and first aid, are excellent. Children get good support for their learning in lessons. Targets set for future achievement help children to know what is expected of them. Even at this early stage in the school year, teachers have a good awareness of most children's individual needs and what they should be learning next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management, with a strong emphasis on teamwork, set the tone for a school that aims for high standards and is constantly striving to improve aspects of its work. A clear set of values and aspirations gives the school a strong impetus to improve. The headteacher leads by example. She teaches, initiates school improvement and has a strong focus on ensuring that each child is doing as well as possible. Much information is gathered about the school's performance, which gives a largely accurate picture of its effectiveness. At present, however, the information is not always analysed systematically enough to tease out the best action to take to improve the children's achievement. For example, relatively weaker progress by more able children during Year 3 to Year 6 has been identified, but the action taken so far has not been specific enough to tackle the issue effectively. Nonetheless, the school has been successful in raising standards in a number of aspects of its work. For example, it identified weaker aspects of writing skills and targeted action has led to significant improvement. Such successes show that the school is well placed to raise standards further. Governors provide considerable support and have a perceptive grasp of the school's strengths and what needs to improve further. They are not afraid to ask challenging questions about the school's performance.

The views of parents are sought on a range of matters and the great majority feel their opinions are valued. Some parents' written submissions to the inspection raise concerns, for example, about children's behaviour, but there was no evidence to support these.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I visited your school last week to find out how well you are doing with your work. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for being so helpful when I asked you questions. I enjoyed finding out about the things you like doing.

I think there are lots of good things about your school, but I also discovered two ways in which I think your learning could be even better. The things I judged to be good or better are:

- your school is a very happy place where everyone gets on exceptionally well together
- the Year 6 children do a really good job as 'buddies' looking after the youngest ones
- you enjoy being at school and you are really keen to do your best with your work
- you are making good progress in most of the work you do
- the lessons I saw had interesting things to do, which helped you to learn
- you really enjoy all the activities outside lessons, particularly the residential visits
- you are well behaved and very friendly towards visitors
- you understand about being healthy and staying safe
- the school council has a lot of good ideas and your teachers listen to them
- you like the way the staff take great care to make sure you are safe and happy.

I would like you to work with your teachers to improve the way you learn.

- In some lessons, the work your teachers give you is not as challenging as it could be. I've asked them to make sure the work really makes you think. You must try hard, even when the work is difficult.
- The teachers look at what you do in lessons and give you tests. This is to find out how well you are doing. I've asked them to look really carefully at all this information to find out if there are particular things you need to improve.

Thank you for helping me with the inspection of your school. Please share this letter with the other children. I hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Matthew's a good place to be.