



St Matthew's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122764
Local Authority NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Inspection number 292502
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Rosemary Eaton

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mill Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Normanton-on-Trent, Normanton-on-Trent
Age range of pupils	4–11		Newark, Nottinghamshire NG23 6RW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01636 821217
Number on roll (school)	50	Fax number	01636 821217
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr A Martin
		Headteacher	Ms W Ramshaw
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average primary school, serving a rural community. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Children enter the Foundation Stage on a part-time basis in the term before they are five years old and become full-time during the term in which they are five. When they join the reception year, children's standards vary widely but are largely in line with national expectations. A below average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities and none has a statement of special educational need. A few pupils are from minority ethnic groups but there are none in the early stages of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school, which has some good features and others that are outstanding. One parent described St Matthew's as a, 'friendly and happy place'. Pupils echo this sentiment, not just in words but in their enormous enjoyment of school and their enthusiastic participation in its everyday life and special events. Accordingly, their contribution to the school and its local and wider community is outstanding. This begins almost as soon as children join the Foundation Stage and they become part of a rota to carry out tasks such as watering plants and distributing hymn books. Pupils of all ages are remarkably thoughtful and caring. Staff actively encourage this maturity, for instance, by regularly reinforcing the school's 'Golden Rules' and by acting as excellent role models. Pupils are taught how to take responsibility for their own safety and for that of others. They feel secure in school, because 'anyone will help you' and because behaviour is extremely good, in and out of lessons. A well judged rewards system, excellent relationships with staff, and pupils' concern for each other, are a few of the ingredients that lead them to be such outstanding ambassadors for their school. The curriculum offers many and varied sporting activities, often as a result of St Matthew's exceptional partnerships with the community and other schools. Cricket coaching and tournaments, for instance, help pupils to enjoy physical activity and learn to co-operate with others.

Because the school is so small, each pupil has a big impact on its standards overall, and these do vary year on year. However, they are broadly average with results in mathematics often below those in English and science, especially in Key Stage 2. Pupils generally make the progress to be expected and their achievement is satisfactory. The work set in lessons is not always demanding enough and so pupils do not consistently learn at fast enough rates to enable them to achieve well. Again, throughout the year, the school collects accurate information about each pupil's performance, in standardised tests, for example. The headteacher has identified that this is not always used to the full in order to set challenging targets for individuals, track their progress, and intervene quickly if underachievement is revealed.

The headteacher provides strong, clear and thoughtful leadership. She has established some effective systems to find out about the school's strengths and where improvement is needed. The staff work together closely to decide how to tackle weaknesses and, as a result, standards in writing have improved recently. A number of the judgements made by the school, about its own performance, were too generous. Not enough account was taken of pupils' achievement being only satisfactory, rather than good. Pupils and parents set great store by the school's small size: each pupil is known very well. However, a significant strength of the leadership is the way in which no opportunity is lost to prevent pupils and staff becoming isolated or insular: this is an outward-looking school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in English, science and, particularly, mathematics.
- Ensure that work is always matched closely to what pupils need to learn next.

- Improve the systems for setting pupils' targets and tracking their progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In the reception year, children's learning gets off to a good start because they make great strides in their personal, social and emotional development. They benefit greatly from opportunities to work alongside older children and follow their example. Key Stage 1 pupils' attainment varies year on year, but tends to be a little above average.

In 2005 and 2006, the Key Stage 2 national tests results were broadly average, but were weakest in mathematics. Pupils tend to fare better in reading than writing. Writing is improving, however, following the school's actions, allowing more time for pupils to write at length, for example. The school's 2006 target for the English national tests was met, and pupils did better than expected in science. However, the mathematics target was missed. Because the numbers involved are so small, one pupil can have a dramatic impact on the school's overall results and this goes a long way towards explaining this disappointing performance in mathematics. Overall, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 was below average in all three subjects.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same satisfactory progress as others. The very small numbers involved mean that it is not possible to draw conclusions from the relative performance of boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. There are no indications that any particular groups are disadvantaged.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils are extremely confident, benefiting from the arrangements made for them to work and socialise with pupils from other schools, during residential visits, for instance. Their relationships with members of the village club for senior citizens are exceptional. Pupils entertain them regularly, singing carols or dancing, for example, and enjoy chatting to them about school life in years gone by. Innovative 'Play and Learning' groups (PALs) enable all pupils to bring up issues such as the need to drink plenty of water as part of a healthy lifestyle. Their discussions led, in this case, to the provision of water bottles for all. Pupils also regularly act on their own initiative. When Year 6 pupils spotted that reception year children were struggling to find the correct place in their hymn books, they stepped in to help them. Pupils recycle and compost, help to keep the village tidy, and raise funds for a variety of causes. They develop attitudes and personal qualities that will stand them in good stead in their lives beyond school. Attendance is above average and pupils are hard working and responsible. Because their achievement in key areas such as numeracy is simply satisfactory, this to some extent inhibits their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, lessons are often taught well. The school has identified some lack of confidence in teaching mathematics but, otherwise, teachers are knowledgeable about the curriculum and quite clear about what they intend pupils to learn. Pupils' behaviour is managed very well. When necessary, teachers act firmly and fairly. Occasionally, pupils are expected to spend too long on one activity, typically when they are gathered together to answer questions. In these situations, pupils get restless and the pace of learning slows. Teachers use their assessments of what pupils know, understand and can do in order to set work at broadly the right levels for the wide range of ages and abilities represented in most classes. However, tasks are sometimes too easy for particular pupils, or teachers give them the option to do harder work, but do not insist on it. This is a key reason why progress through the school is satisfactory, rather than good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

All the required subjects are taught, with a clear and relevant emphasis on literacy and numeracy. This year, all pupils have begun to learn French, supporting their cultural development. Sport is a strong and successful feature of the school's work, contributing significantly to pupils' well-being and social development. The breadth and quality of the activities offered stem from the school's extremely strong partnership with the local secondary school, which enables pupils to benefit from specialist coaching and tuition. In the Foundation Stage, opportunities to learn independently and through play are balanced with formal activities led by the teacher. Pupils' experiences are enriched very well through 'themed' days and weeks, Indian week, for example. These are often run in conjunction with others schools. Together with visitors to school and visits in the locality and further afield, they enhance pupils' personal development and provide new contexts for learning. The school does not offer many after school clubs, which limits the opportunities for pupils to pursue their particular interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are looked after very well. Procedures for ensuring their safety are all secure. Pupils are fully aware of what they should do if troubled and are totally confident that their concerns will be viewed seriously and prompt action taken. The curriculum includes many aspects of health and safety, for example, ensuring that all pupils learn to swim and are aware of the dangers posed by the nearby river. There are clear and highly effective systems to promote good behaviour, such as the reward of 'Golden Time' when pupils enjoy activities and treats they have themselves chosen. The school has good arrangements for welcoming new pupils and for preparing those in Year 6 for

moving on. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well as are those pupils who are especially vulnerable. Teachers make sure that pupils know their individual targets, although they are not often involved in assessing their own work and deciding whether or not targets have been met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

As a result of the headteacher's clear-sighted leadership, the school has improved well since the previous inspection. Standards are higher and behaviour is significantly better, for example. A strong staff team has been created, which shares the headteacher's vision for the school and her determination to improve pupils' achievement. Each teacher leads a key subject, producing annual action plans that mirror the school's improvement plan in their clarity and thoroughness. This all contributes to the school's good capacity to improve further. The governing body is very supportive and provides a good deal of practical help. Governors fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously, ensure that the school provides satisfactory value for money, and they are kept well informed by the headteacher. Increasingly, they seek ways of finding out at first hand about the school's performance. Assessment information is not collated in such a way that each pupil's progress can be tracked efficiently as they move up through the school and problems identified before it is too late. Targets for the levels each pupil is expected to reach are not always checked sufficiently, to make sure that all pupils and their teachers are aiming high enough. Partnerships with parents are just as strong as those with the local community and other schools. Parents are very positive about St Matthew's, describing, for example, how quickly any concerns are dealt with.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

07 December 2006

Dear Pupils

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School, Mill Lane, Normanton-on-Trent, Newark, Nottinghamshire. NG23 6RW

Thank you for being so welcoming when I visited your school. I am particularly grateful to the PAL's secretaries, who were very helpful indeed. I very much enjoyed my short time with you and I want to let you know what I found out about St Matthew's.

I was extremely impressed with your behaviour, which is outstanding. Well done! I'm not surprised that you enjoy school so much, because you have so many interesting things to do. St Matthew's links with the village and different schools are exceptionally good and give you lots of opportunities to learn new skills and to mix with other children. The staff make sure you are cared for well and that you learn how to stay safe and healthy. You all look out for each other and help the school to run smoothly by doing a great many jobs and by being very responsible.

You learn quite well, but I think you could do even better. I've asked your teachers to help you to make faster progress. Sometimes your work is not quite hard enough. You can play your part by continuing to try your best and by saying if tasks are too easy. I've also asked your headteacher to make sure that a very close eye is kept on your test results from year to year, so anyone who seems to have slowed down is spotted quickly and helped.

I think you are lucky to go to such a happy and caring school. I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely Mrs Eaton Lead Inspector