

St Matthias Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100956
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	307537
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Malcolm Johnstone

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ruth McCurry
Headteacher	Ms Clare Sealy
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Bacon Street Bethnal Green London E2 6DY
Telephone number	020 7739 8058
Fax number	020 7739 8057

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small primary school is situated in an area with features of significant socio-economic disadvantage. Over a half of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and many have English as an additional language. The largest groups represented are from Bangladeshi families. Few pupils are at the early stages of English language acquisition. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is well above average. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at unusual times is higher than in most schools. There has been a large staff turnover this year with four new teachers starting this term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education with many good features. Almost all of the parents who responded are pleased with all aspects of the school's work. Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are indicative of their good personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is effective provision for care, guidance and support and pupils say that they feel safe in school. 'I know that my child is in safe hands and is getting the right education' was a view echoed by many parents. There is a high degree of racial harmony and pupils show respect for the views and beliefs of others. This aspect of their learning prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are below average. Given the very low starting point of most pupils, this represents satisfactory achievement. Most pupils achieve well in reading and girls achieve well in writing, mathematics and science. Boys do not do as well as the girls in these subjects although their achievement is still satisfactory. There are many good features in teaching and learning but teaching is not consistently good and this is reflected in the differing progress by pupils. In the teaching of mathematics and science, the use of day-to-day assessment to plan subsequent learning is not as effective as it is in English. In some lessons, the work is either too easy or too hard. There is often a lack of challenge for the more able pupils. As a result, they do not achieve as well as they might.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Given the difficulties posed by very low attainment on entry and the high proportion of pupils moving in and out of the school, it has a reasonable record of improvement over the past three years. The headteacher leads the school well and is a good role model in her commitment and dedication to the pupils. She has led the development of a good curriculum. There are many extra-curricular and enrichment activities that give pupils opportunity to make an effective contribution to the community.

Self-evaluation is good. The use of performance data and the results of the monitoring of teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection. It has helped the school identify the right areas for development. Target setting is satisfactory and has improved over the past two years. It has brought a steady improvement, particularly in increased numbers of pupils reaching the level expected nationally. It has not had the same marked impact on the numbers reaching the higher level.

Almost a half of the teaching staff has changed this term. Most of these are teachers who are new to the profession. The recent staff changes have meant that the leadership of key subjects and the senior management are not yet established. Despite this, the school has a good record of inducting new teachers and building good teamwork and has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The curriculum is exciting and creative with a good balance of indoor and outdoor play to support the children's learning. Consequently, the children have a positive start to school life. Most children join the school with standards that are well below that expected for their age. They achieve well and make good progress, although most do not reach all the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. The quality of teaching is good. Good planning, preparation and assessment procedures ensure that activities meet the needs of the children successfully. There

is a good professional dialogue between home and school, including home visits. This helps children settle quickly into school routines. Good leadership and management are effective in bringing about further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, mathematics and science, especially among the boys.
- In mathematics and science, make more effective use of day-to-day assessment to ensure a better match of work to pupils' needs.
- Provide greater challenge in the work provided for the more able pupils, particularly in mathematics and science.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are satisfactory overall and show gradual improvement over the past three years. Standards in the national assessments at the end of Year 2 improved and were broadly average in 2007. This is because pupils' attainment was a little higher at the start of Year 1 and the school's monitoring shows that teaching was good in Year 2. The improvement also reflects the better provision in the Foundation Stage developed over the past two years. There are some variations but overall achievement is satisfactory for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. Pupils do best in reading, which is taught effectively across the school. Girls achieve well in writing, mathematics and science but most boys do not make the same level of progress in these subjects. The more able pupils could achieve more since the work they do is not always challenging enough. The good additional support both for pupils with learning difficulties and for pupils who have English as an additional language, help them make similar progress to that of all other pupils. The pupils who join school other than the normal starting time make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' enthusiasm and interest in the wide-ranging opportunities provided underpins good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have good knowledge and respect for worldwide communities. They hold firm views about justice and fair play and this responsible attitude contributes well towards creating a happy school. Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite, and courteous. They know about keeping safe and say that they feel free from bullying. As one pupil said, 'there is always someone we can go to if we have a problem.' The latest reliable figure for attendance shows that it is broadly average and improving. Pupils enjoy healthy food options, and eagerly participate in a wide range of physical activities. The school council appreciates having a voice and influencing what goes on. For example, the pupils are proud of their contribution to the improvements in the playground, organising games and the raising of money for a wide range of charities. Pupils leave the school as confident and well-rounded individuals with basic skills that prepare them satisfactorily for their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

During the inspection, there was some good teaching across the year groups. In these lessons, pupils made good progress. Teachers make most lessons interesting and enjoyable and this captures pupils' imagination and attention effectively. Pupils say how much they enjoy lessons and this is supported by parental comments. As one parent wrote, 'learning is made fun and as a result my child enjoys lessons.' In all lessons, classroom management is good and lessons are able to proceed in a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Classroom assistants provide good support for pupils. Presentation and marking are good and teachers' comments show pupils how they might improve. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of reading and writing. This has improved standards well in reading and is beginning to have a similar effect on writing. In the teaching of mathematics and science, the use of day-to-day assessment is not developed as well as in English. This results in some work that does not meet the different needs of the pupils effectively enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum ensures good coverage of all subjects. Specialist teaching in physical education and music has proved to be successful and has raised the profile of these subjects with the pupils. There are good links between subjects and this makes learning more meaningful. Good use of information and communication technology supports pupils' learning effectively across the curriculum. In a science lesson, for example, computers and digital cameras enhanced learning and captured pupils' interests. French is to be included in the curriculum this term. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and for pupils with English as an additional language. There are good enrichment opportunities and pupils enthusiastically attend the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities and visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are robust procedures for child protection and health and safety checks around the school site are thorough. Risk assessment for school visits and good attention to detail in promoting safety ensures that all pupils receive good levels of care. Attendance has improved gradually because of the rigorous monitoring and the school's close work with parents, community agencies and the local authority. Other agencies effectively support the school in meeting the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties and those who have English as an additional language. Academic targets for groups and individual pupils guide their academic progress satisfactorily and make them aware of what they have to do next to improve. Pupils arriving other than at the normal time for admission soon settle into school routines and quickly make friends. Their progress is tracked effectively and appropriate targets set for them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

With the support of a committed staff, the headteacher has worked successfully to provide children with a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage. She has ensured good provision for pupils' personal development and for their care, guidance and support. She listens to and consults with staff, pupils, governors and parents and they say that they feel involved in their school. There is a clear focus on raising standards and improving teaching and learning in the good school improvement plan. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly and has brought some improvements. For example, recent monitoring has improved the teaching of writing and speaking and listening.

The initiatives to raise standards and achievement over time have brought about satisfactory improvement but have not been entirely successful. For example, there is still work to be done to improve the standards attained by boys and the more able pupils. Subject leadership and the composition of the senior management team are in the process of re-structuring as a result of staff changes. There have been good opportunities in the past for senior staff to bring about improvements in their subjects. Governors have good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and support the school well. They challenge the school and hold it to account for the education it provides.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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.

Annex A

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

25 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthias Church of England Primary School, London, E2 6DY

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school. I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit and would like to share with you some of the things we found out. Your school is providing a satisfactory education with many good features. We think you behave well, are polite and courteous and try to do your best in lessons. You all get on well together and help each other in lessons and in the playgrounds. You tell us that you enjoy school and feel safe and that all the adults who work in school care for you and look after you. We agree with you. We were pleased to see how much you know about staying safe and eating healthy foods. There are many exciting activities happening in school in lessons and after-school clubs. It was good to see how well you support various charities by raising lots of money. You do particularly well with your reading, although we feel that the boys could be doing better in writing, mathematics and science. We have asked the headteacher and staff to make sure that in all lessons, the work you do helps you to make the best progress that you can in these subjects. We also think that the work given to the top groups in mathematics and science is not always hard enough.

Good luck for the future.

Mr M. Johnstone Lead Inspector