

St Matthew's Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108047
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309582
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Don Mason

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mandy Young
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Eastwood
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Wood Lane Leeds West Yorkshire LS7 3QF
Telephone number	0113 2681489
Fax number	0

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils in this larger than average primary school come from a wide variety of social and ethnic backgrounds. The majority are from White British backgrounds. A very small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average but varies considerably from year to year. The school has received Healthy School status, an Intermediate International Schools award and a Stephen Lawrence award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that enables pupils to achieve well and provides outstanding pastoral care for them. Pupils are proud of their school and speak highly of their teachers and the interesting activities they provide. Their good personal development is reflected in the way pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds work and play happily together. The strong and positive atmosphere of racial harmony in the school is enhanced by initiatives such as the work of the Primary African Caribbean Excellence Project and acknowledged by the school's receipt of the Stephen Lawrence Award.

Standards and achievement dipped in the last two years. However, staff have taken effective action to halt the decline and restore the above average standards that were previously a positive feature of the school. Children's attainment on entry to school is broadly in line with national expectations. As a result of improvements in assessment and teaching, the good start children make in the Foundation Stage is successfully built on in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Pupils are currently making good progress and standards are rising once again. Because of the good support provided by well trained teaching assistants, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similarly good progress to other groups of pupils.

The quality of teaching is good overall. There is an occasional variation in quality. For example, when lesson introductions are too long and focused at middle ability pupils, the more able do not always have enough time to work on activities that challenge them to achieve their best. The curriculum is of good quality. Curricular enrichment is outstanding with a wide variety of events, visits and activities that successfully promote pupils' enjoyment and learning. During the very popular curriculum enrichment afternoons, pupils in small groups take part in numerous activities ranging from circuit training to Makaton sign language.

The work of the learning mentor, the support for pupils who display challenging behaviour and the strategies used to support the well-being of all learners exemplify the outstanding pastoral care provided for pupils. While there are occasional problems in the playground, they are quickly dealt with and good relationships between staff and pupils ensure that all individuals feel safe, adopt safe practices and know that someone will help them if there is a problem. The academic guidance provided for pupils is satisfactory overall and strongest in writing, where most pupils are given good advice about their achievements and what they have to do to improve. The high quality care provided for pupils with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is exemplary and much appreciated by parents who make such comments as, 'My child, who has special needs, really enjoys going to school and has always been included in all activities and is viewed as a valuable member of the class'. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through the school council, fundraising activities and by participating in events that support the church and the local community.

Inspired by the strong leadership of the headteacher and his deputy, the adults in school are enthusiastic and determined to improve pupils' achievement even further. Thorough assessment and monitoring procedures are in place which enable senior staff to set challenging targets and to check on pupils' progress towards meeting them. Staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are clear about what they have to do to bring about further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle well into Reception as a result of strong induction procedures and close partnerships with parents. Parents are most appreciative of the positive start their children make to their education, many sharing the view of one that, 'The Foundation Stage is first class!' Children enjoy their learning in an inclusive environment, supported by skilled adults who ensure that all children's individual needs are quickly identified and met. The indoor classrooms are interesting and excite the children. The school is aware, however, that the outdoor area could be developed further to ensure that it enriches learning as much as the activities inside. Adults have high expectations and support the children in developing good routines to ensure that they are ready for learning. There is a good balance between teacher-led activities and those the children choose for themselves, which supports them in becoming more independent. Children move into Year 1 with standards that are at least in line with expectations and with the good personal skills needed to become confident, happy learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils, especially the more able, are always challenged appropriately.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Following a period of consistently above average standards in the Year 2 and Year 6 assessments, standards fell in the last two years to average overall. This issue has been successfully resolved. It is clear from analysing the school's most recent data about pupils' progress and from the work seen in pupils' books that standards are now above average. Pupils are regularly tested and the information gained is used by class teachers and senior staff to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Year 6 'booster' classes and a variety of support groups are carefully planned to provide suitable support at an early stage. This is particularly effective in ensuring that those pupils who find learning more difficult than most achieve well. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make the same good rate of progress as other groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' behaviour is good and most pupils show good self-control. The small number of emotionally vulnerable pupils make good progress in managing their behaviour, because they are very well supported by skilled staff. The pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good and their spiritual development is outstanding. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to reflect on their place in the world and appreciate the wonder and beauty of their planet. The school council makes good use of suggestions from pupils to influence the life of the school from helping select healthy school meals to promoting safety on the local roads. However, the fact that the council does not have officers who set the agenda limits council members' opportunities to develop useful life skills. The use of 'class health pledges' is an effective and innovative method of helping pupils to learn about, and take some responsibility for, leading a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make good progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). These skills, in addition to the very good progress they make in developing self-confidence and high self-esteem, provide a good foundation for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are generally well planned. They are presented in a lively fashion and good use is made of interactive whiteboards to help maintain pupils' interest. A great deal of work has been undertaken to improve teaching and learning in writing and mathematics. As a result of the interesting topics, careful preparation through speaking and listening activities, clear advice and regular practice, pupils are becoming enthusiastic writers. They are very proud of their achievements displayed in the 'Big Writing Books'. The careful analysis of test results in mathematics enabled teachers to focus on areas of weakness and the subsequent support has helped pupils to make better progress.

However, in the occasional less successful lesson the lesson introduction, when the teacher talks to the whole class, is sometimes too long, with the result that the less able pupils cannot keep up and the more able pupils mark time. On these occasions, the time that pupils have to work on activities matched to their ability is too short. Less able pupils are usually well supported by well trained, enthusiastic teaching assistants which enables them to make good progress overall. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk with well focused questions which challenge pupils of all abilities to think more deeply about their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is successfully focused on improving pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy. At present, there are better opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills in other lessons than their numeracy and ICT skills. Although pupils' personal development is promoted well overall, some activities are teacher led and pupils have few opportunities to take the initiative or to plan and work together on activities of their choosing. Class discussion time and assemblies give pupils excellent opportunities to explore their spiritual and emotional well-being. Many subjects contribute to their good understanding of, and active participation in, a healthy lifestyle.

The Curriculum Enrichment project, combined with the many after school clubs and other initiatives, provides outstanding learning opportunities for pupils. They include modern foreign languages, cooking, emergency first aid and art and craft projects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is outstanding. The adults in school work very well as a team to ensure that pupils feel safe and valued. The learning mentor provides sensitive support to the most vulnerable pupils and their parents, to ensure that pupils benefit well from all the school provides. Pupils value the opportunity to seek advice through the 'Confidential Chat Box' and say that their requests are always followed up. The school offers a 'second chance' to pupils who have experienced difficulties in other schools and goes to great lengths to help them gain control of their emotions. It has close links with parents and outside agencies to promote pupils' well-being. Procedures to safeguard pupils are in place and attendance and behaviour are monitored closely.

Systems to check on pupils' progress are now well established. The information is used to set challenging targets and to support pupils in meeting them. The advice offered to pupils about their achievements and what they need to do to improve further is best in writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is largely responsible for the sense of purpose in the school. They are well supported by an effective leadership team who value the resources and training they have received to enable them to carry out their role effectively. There is a strong feeling of optimism and self-belief among the staff of this inclusive school and they are determined to seek further improvements. Senior and middle managers are effectively using the new, comprehensive assessment procedures to check on pupils' progress and do whatever they can to ensure that as many pupils as possible reach their challenging targets. The latest 'subject leaders' report is a much improved and effective document. It provides a powerful means for self-evaluation, assisting the school to move forward.

Governors provide strong support for the school. They receive a wealth of information about the school's performance that they use with increasing insight to ask challenging questions. Parents in general are very supportive of the staff. However, the inspection revealed that a significant number of parents have concerns, especially about behaviour and bullying, which the school recognises it must seek to allay. Although inspection activities included talking to several groups of pupils and observations of pupils at play during break time and lunchtime, no evidence was found to suggest that the parents' worries were justified.

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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?	2
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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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 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	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Matthew's Church of England Aided Primary School, Leeds, LS7 3QF

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We particularly enjoyed visiting your classrooms, seeing the work you were doing and talking to you about your school. We find that your school provides you with a good education.

Good things about your school

- The adults in school take extremely good care of you and give you a lot of support, especially if you are having any difficulties.
- You make good progress in your work.
- You generally behave well in school and the adults help you to develop good self-confidence and self-esteem.
- You are proud of your school and the opportunities you are offered. You particularly enjoy the Curriculum Enrichment afternoons.
- Your writing and mathematics are improving well because teachers are providing you with more interesting activities and helping you to understand how you can do better.
- The teachers are now checking your work to make sure that as many of you as possible reach your targets.

What we have asked your school to do now

- To make sure that all your lessons are as good as the best ones and especially to see that those of you who are quick learners always have the sort of work that really makes you think.

You can help your teachers by working hard, behaving well and taking advantage of all the opportunities offered by school.