

St Matthew's CofE Aided Infant School, Cobham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125178
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315179
Inspection date	13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Juliet Ward

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	76
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Bryan Paradise
Headteacher	Mrs Rhian Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Downside Cobham KT11 3NA
Telephone number	01932 863212
Fax number	01932 866857

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well the school had raised the pupils' standards of handwriting and presentation
- whether the more capable pupils were being fully challenged
- the quality of the provision for pupils' spiritual development and how well they are prepared for life in a culturally diverse society.

The inspectors gathered evidence by jointly observing lessons with senior managers; having discussions with staff, governors and pupils; scrutinising pupils' work; monitoring parental questionnaires and the school's records of checks on the quality of its work; and tracking pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given by its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is situated in the village of Downside, on the outskirts of Cobham. The majority of children are of White British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. The number of pupils receiving free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high in relation to national figures and includes a pupil with a statement of educational needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision comprises one Reception class. The school has gained an impressive number of awards, including Investors in People; Healthy School Award 2006; Sports Active Award 2006 and 2007; International Schools Award and the Excellence in Environmental Awareness Award from Elmbridge Borough Council.

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 the good school that staff and governors judge it to be, although the managers are somewhat modest in their self-evaluation. The quality of the leadership and management is outstanding and has brought about many successful improvements since the last inspection. The curriculum has also improved and has an extremely positive impact on pupils' academic progress and their personal development. Pupils and parents are hugely positive about the school, and work closely with staff to give a strong feeling that this is 'our school'. Its happy atmosphere and sense of purpose is down to strong staff teamwork. As one parent wrote, 'St Matthew's is a friendly and compassionate school, and a great asset to the community. A superb staff make supreme efforts to maintain the highest of ethical and academic standards.'

There is much good and some outstanding teaching that gives pupils a very firm platform for success in the next stage of their education. Children enter the EYFS with good skills, at or above those expected for four-year-olds. This strong foundation is systematically built on, and pupils are attaining standards well above those found nationally by the end of Year 2. The school sets itself challenging targets to improve these further, as seen in the consistent improvements in the levels in which pupils attain, for example in mathematics, particularly in the high proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 3. Pupils' handwriting and the quality of the way they present their work have also improved considerably since the last inspection. One parent echoed the thoughts of many when she wrote, 'I am so very happy that my child has been able to have such a wonderful educational start in life.'

All staff work tirelessly for the success of the pupils, whatever their background. Pupils make good progress because teachers carefully assess their needs and then plan lessons to tackle those needs. This, along with the high level of adult support for individual pupils, means that often the best progress is made both by pupils of low ability, those with learning difficulties or with complex needs, and by the higher-attaining and gifted pupils. Parents commented on the superb support the school provides for their children, both those who are gifted and those with learning difficulties. One parent said that 'The school has been excellent in providing work for my child who has been registered as gifted and talented.' This represents considerable improvement since the last inspection, when the higher-attaining pupils were judged to be insufficiently challenged. However, in some lessons the pace of pupils' learning slows slightly, especially in the introductory sessions. The school has already started to address this through well-focused professional development and training for all teachers.

Pupils arrive at school happy and smiling. They are eager to learn and work hard. One reason for the pupils' enjoyment is their exposure to a wide range of interesting experiences, particular those which help them learn about people who live in circumstances much different from their own. Art, music and drama all make significant contributions, and extensive use is made of the school's location to go on visits, for example, to Wisley Gardens. There are a wealth of extra-curricular clubs, including gardening and football clubs, which are open to all pupils and very well attended. Pupils are proud of the contribution that they make to the school by tending their vegetable garden and raising funds for their link school in Uganda; they are caring and aware of the need to think about and respect others. Pupils help others through the harvest collection which they distribute to the local nursing home residents, their toy boxes for children in Belarus, and the raising of funds for many different charities throughout the year. Religious education and the personal, social and health education programme are used to encourage pupils to respect other's beliefs and backgrounds. The many cultures in school are recognised

and celebrated. For example, the school has achieved the International Schools Award, and the links with the school in Uganda have been strengthened through pupils' letters, fund raising, and ongoing exchanging of information about life in each school. Since the last inspection the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved significantly and is now outstanding; assemblies support the spiritual elements of the pupils' development, as do the international links.

The school has achieved 'Healthy School' status in recognition of its success in helping pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle. There is a very strong focus on healthy eating and all of the pupils have a hot meal at lunchtime. This is a real benefit to pupils, and fully supported by all the parents. Pupils have the opportunity for plenty of vigorous exercise, including lunchtime activities which are organised by sports leaders and are much enjoyed by all.

Pupils feel safe at school and know they have someone to turn to if they feel unhappy. They enjoy acting as 'buddies' in the playground and support their friends when they are sad. The school's deserved reputation for supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being is based on well-established links with other organisations such as the local cluster of schools and multi-professional groups. Regular and informed discussions between the headteacher and staff about each pupil's development result in sharply focused action. All systems and procedures to keep pupils safe are robust. Parents remark on how everyone not only knows the names of the children but also their specific learning and emotional needs. Pupils set and evaluate their own personal targets, aided by constructive marking that helps them to see how well they are doing and what needs improving. Pupils understand the high expectations of their behaviour because all adults show how they should respond to each other. A parent summed this up well by saying, 'I am delighted with the care and concern shown towards all three of my children.' Pupils' behaviour, and their attitudes to each other and their work, is exemplary. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good, but there remain a small number of families who take their children out of school for family holidays.

The collective leadership and management of the school are outstanding. At the time of the inspection the school was led and managed temporarily by an acting headteacher during the maternity breaks of both the substantive and assistant headteachers. Parents commented positively on the seamless transition. 'The acting headteacher has carried on with the great leadership', wrote one parent. The organisation, structures and procedures in place throughout the school are extremely robust, and have proven very effective during the period of change. The substantive headteacher has successfully developed self-evaluation skills among staff and governors so that plans for improvement are sharply focused on raising achievement. The governors provide high-quality support in practical ways, although their role in monitoring the school's performance is underdeveloped. St Matthew's is a happy, successful and vibrant school. It has the capacity to become outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The youngest children get off to a good start to their school life in the Reception Class. 'My son loves coming to St Matthew's; he has made a great start to his schooling years,' a very happy parent wrote. From the minute that they start, the children's personal development is of paramount importance. Sensitive arrangements help them settle in quickly. Strong teamwork, based around experienced leadership, means that all adults combine closely to match activities to the children's current stage of development. Consequently, they are completely absorbed and gain much enjoyment from the rich and interesting environment and the extensive links

between indoors and outdoors. There is a careful balance between activities led by the adults and those initiated by the children. Children make good progress during their time in Reception, particularly in their social and emotional development. Most exceed the goals expected of them by the end of their Reception Year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Lift the pace of some lessons to raise the quality of teaching to that of the very best.
- Sharpen the skills of the governors in monitoring the work of the school.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

26 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Matthew's CofE Aided Infant School, Cobham, Cobham, KT11 3NA

On behalf of your inspectors I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we came to your school. We really enjoyed visiting all of your classes, looking at your work and talking with you. We are sad not to have been able to spend much more time in each class. We are especially pleased that some of you came to talk to us about your work, and showed us lots of it.

Your school is a good school with lots of special features. Your lunches are brilliant and I can understand why you all enjoy eating school lunch together. You have so many opportunities to participate in after-school clubs and go on visits. All of the adults working with you care very much about you and want you to do well. Your headteacher and acting headteacher lead and manage your school very well indeed. You make good progress during your time at St Matthew's. Your teachers make lessons interesting. Your behaviour is excellent and you listen well in lessons and try really hard. Your parents said how much they like the school, and lots of them and lots of you told us how well you get on together and how helpful the teachers are. It was good to see how kind you are and how willingly you help each other.

We have asked the teachers to look at ways of making some lessons even better by planning more tasks for you to complete. We have also asked the governors to make sure they check how well the school is doing.

Please thank your parents for kindly sending in the letters and responses to the questionnaire. These helped us to understand how well the school is doing.

Yours sincerely

Juliet Ward

Lead Inspector