

St Matthew's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109552
Local Authority	LUTON LA
Inspection number	319433
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Nelson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	513
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John McGrath
Headteacher	Mrs Debra Cannings
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wenlock Road Luton LU2 0NJ
Telephone number	01582723970
Fax number	01582451961

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school resulting from the amalgamation of the former infant and junior schools on this site. It opened in September 2006. It serves a culturally diverse population near the centre of Luton. Many children speak English as an additional language and the proportion at the early stages of learning English is well above average. A high proportion of children qualify for a free school meal. The number of children who join or leave the school part way through a school year is well above average, as is the number from refugee or asylum seeker families. An above average proportion of children need extra help with their learning. The school has gained Investors in People status. When children start school in Reception their skills and knowledge are exceptionally low when compared with those expected nationally of children of this age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Much has been accomplished during the transition from two schools to a single primary. The headteacher and governors have dealt with some difficult staffing issues, overseen an extensive refurbishment programme, appointed several new teachers, established a new senior leadership team and updated the policies and procedures from the former schools to match the ethos of the new one. Along with the leadership team they have gained a satisfactory view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and put in place systems to check how well individuals are doing with their learning and how good teaching and learning are. The progress of individual children and year groups is tracked regularly but the school does not analyse test and assessment results by ethnicity to identify potential underachievement by groups from different backgrounds. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall.

The school's overall effectiveness and the value for money it gives are satisfactory. They are not better because all of this hard work has not yet raised standards throughout the school from an exceptionally low level. Senior leaders and governors base their evaluation of the school's performance on the systems and structures they have put in place rather than on their impact on teaching and children's learning. Achievement is satisfactory but there is significant underachievement in writing. There are pockets of better achievement, for example in reading groups that get extra support and in some classes, but there are also classes in which achievement is not good enough. The reason for this is that the quality of teaching ranges from outstanding to inadequate and is satisfactory, but not better, overall. In some lessons teachers have to work very hard to control low-level disruption, such as children talking out of turn and being inattentive, so that others are disturbed and the pace of learning is slow. Too few lessons are good enough to raise standards to acceptable levels and prepare children for the next phase of their education and later life. While the school provides a satisfactory range of activities to help children to learn these sometimes lack sparkle and do not fully engage all children. In the Foundation Stage, the provision is also satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Staff work hard to care for the children's individual needs and to promote an awareness and appreciation of the range of cultures in the neighbourhood. One parent commented quite rightly, 'The school is welcoming and friendly and is doing a good job to support the needs of a very diverse community'. The result is a happy and harmonious school where children's personal development is satisfactory. They enjoy being school councillors and having jobs around the school. Behaviour is satisfactory. Most parents are pleased with the school but a few expressed concerns about a variety of aspects, although the inspectors found no evidence to support their criticisms.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

In the Foundation Stage, children show respect for one another, for instance taking turns and sharing equipment, because of the strong focus on their personal, social and emotional development. Progress in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, but when children enter Year 1 standards are still very low. Staff plan a satisfactory range of activities including regular access to a well equipped outdoor area as well as the opportunity to use information and communication technology (ICT), particularly the interactive white board. Support staff are well trained and provide good support for individuals or small groups. Planning reflects the need for a balance

of child-initiated and adult-focussed activities but it does not sufficiently reflect the needs of individual children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Check rigorously and regularly that management systems and structures are helping all children to learn more effectively and raising standards throughout the school.
- Extend children's knowledge and use of language, vocabulary and sentence structure to raise their achievement in writing.
- Eradicate the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching and where it is satisfactory improve classroom management and the pace of lessons to accelerate children's learning.
- Analyse test and assessment results by ethnicity to identify and address any potential underachievement by groups of children.

A small proportion of 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 throughout the school are exceptionally low, indicating no more than satisfactory progress for most children. The school has identified achievement in writing as inadequate because too many children lack a secure grasp of language, vocabulary and sentence structures. Few children gain the higher levels in the Year 2 or Year 6 national tests; the proportion gaining the expected levels is well below average. The school has identified that boys do not achieve as well as girls and has introduced strategies to motivate them more in lessons, although these are too new to have had a significant impact yet. Children who find learning hard make satisfactory progress because of the extra help they get. The school exceeded its targets for Year 6 in English and met them in mathematics in 2007 but these were set a long way below the national average. The 2008 targets are much more challenging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Children understand the need to stay healthy and appreciate the opportunities they have for sport and physical exercise, both in lessons and after school. Despite this understanding, children say they do not always make healthy choices when choosing snacks. They know that they need to keep themselves safe, and they have confidence that the school staff will deal with any problems should they arise. The school has a well developed system for dealing with the rare incidents of bullying, which is understood by all children. They treat one another with respect and their behaviour in the playground is good, but some children find it difficult to maintain their concentration and good behaviour during lessons. This adversely affects their learning and that of others.

The school council enjoys increasing responsibilities, including choosing the colour schemes for the refurbished toilets. Older children take responsibility in the wider running of the school, for instance acting as buddies to children who are new to the school. Opportunities to contribute to the wider community are limited and staff recognise the need to develop more ways for children to gain personal responsibility.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory, though it varies from outstanding to inadequate. Where teaching is good or outstanding the lessons are interesting and exciting. When this happens children behave well and make good progress. These lessons are characterised by good relationships in class and excellent questioning of children. In the small number of inadequate lessons, some children do not concentrate on their work. This slows the pace of learning and is having an impact on standards and achievement. In the majority of lessons, effective use of well trained teaching assistants means that children are supported satisfactorily. Whilst there is evidence of good marking it is not consistent in all classes and children do not always feel the advice they are given is helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory range of activities to help children to learn. Each year group has an effective plan which identifies the learning activities that take place and the links between different subject areas. However, not all planned activities fully engage all children. This is particularly true of boys. Good use is made of visitors to the school who support children's understanding of the wider community. In addition, children enjoy a range of visits that make learning more interesting. There are many sporting clubs available for children after school but none for those interested in extending their learning in other areas such as the arts or music. Staff promote racial harmony through work in lessons, visitors to school and trips to places such as St Matthew's Church and Luton Central Mosque effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school places a great deal of emphasis on pastoral care, with the appointment of family workers and learning mentors who provide effective support for children and their families. Staff help new children to settle quickly and arrangements for children moving into the school are good. The school has in place all the required procedures to safeguard children.

The school uses test and assessment information to identify children who would benefit from additional support to meet any special learning needs. The school does not analyse test and assessment results to identify potential underachievement of ethnic groups. Most children understand their targets and National Curriculum levels in English, mathematics and science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

While the headteacher and governors have achieved a lot in the short time the school has been open, their initiatives have not yet raised standards and improved achievement. The school has introduced systems for checking how well children are progressing and how good teaching is, but senior leaders are not evaluating the impact of new developments on children's learning and progress. The senior leadership team is relatively new and, while teachers are fully committed

to school improvement, several have not been in post long enough to have had a significant impact on raising standards in their subjects. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve. The governors are very supportive and have worked hard to update all the former schools' policies and procedures and support the headteacher with the building refurbishments. They have a satisfactory understanding of how well the school is doing but recognise the need for newer governors to gain experience and confidence in holding staff to account for the school's performance.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	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

29 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Matthew's Primary School, Luton, LU2 0NJ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. This letter is the one I promised your school council to tell you what we found out about your school.

You told us that most children behave well and we agree with you, even though some of you do not pay enough attention in class so that you disturb your own learning and that of others. We have asked your teachers to make sure you all work hard and pay full attention in lessons. A lot of you struggle with your writing and we have asked your teachers to help you to get better with this. Although you make satisfactory progress in your learning, the standards you reach are not high enough. This is because some lessons do not help you to learn enough, while others help you a lot. We have asked the teachers to make sure you learn well in all of them. Your headteacher and the staff have done a lot of work in overseeing the new building work and recruiting new teachers and we have asked them to check that all the work they do is helping you to learn better. Teachers keep a record of how well each of you is learning and know that girls are doing better than boys. We have asked them to track how well groups of children from different backgrounds are learning too so that they can make sure you all do well enough.

We thought you all got on well with each other and were very pleased to meet you and talk with you about your school. We wish you well for the future.

Ian Nelson

Lead inspector