

St Matthias Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100267
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	323253
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	304
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	Mrs Karlene Fontilio
Headteacher	Mrs Janice Owen-Amadasun (Head) Mrs Michelle Thomas (Executive)
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wordsworth Road London N16 8DD
Telephone number	020 7254 1148

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2009
Inspection number	323253

Fax number

020 7275 9215

Age group	3-11
Inspection dates	23-24 June 2009
Inspection number	323253

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Matthias is a large primary school where almost all the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with two thirds being of Black British, Black Caribbean or African, background. There are a few pupils from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. Almost a third of the pupils on roll are at an early stage of learning English and the most common first languages spoken by these pupils are Yoruba and Twi. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the customary times of the year is higher than is usually found. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery providing full-time education for 27 children and two Reception classes. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have speech language and communication difficulties or find learning hard. The school has gained the Sports Activemark.

The school has had a turbulent recent past. The long-serving headteacher resigned with effect from the beginning of the current term. The local authority (The Learning Trust), working in collaboration with the London Diocesan Board of Schools (LDBS), determined that the governing body was failing to meet its responsibilities. The local authority invoked its powers of intervention and removed the delegated powers of the governing body with effect from 23 June 2009. This means that although there is a governing body in place, governors have no decision-making powers or responsibilities in the operation of the school. The Learning Trust and LDBS are awaiting the decision of the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families for their proposal for an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to be confirmed. The role of the IEB, if ratified, will be to fulfil the roles and responsibilities of the governing body.

An executive principal has been providing support for the school since February 2009 and has taken full responsibility for the past month. It is intended that she will remain in post for the next school year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Despite the recent turbulence in the school's leadership and management, St Matthias continues to be a good school. The more senior and middle managers have ensured that pupils have continued to make good progress in their academic and personal development. Even though leadership and management of the school have been inconsistent in the past, the new executive principal, ably assisted by a senior member of staff seconded by the local authority, has been highly successful in stabilising the school. She is already much admired by pupils and staff and many parents have made positive comments about the actions that she has taken. She has quickly assessed the strengths and weaknesses of all areas of the school's work. New initiatives and systems are already having a positive impact on the morale of staff, which is good, and teamwork is strong. She has also ensured that the school continues to provide a calm and caring community in which the learners enjoy their education. However, governance is inadequate because there is no functioning governing body in place. The local authority and the LDBS are keenly aware of the need to work urgently to remedy this.

Although almost all parents said that their children enjoy school and they are safe, a number voiced concerns. In particular, they said that they felt that behaviour is not good, that communication is poor and that the school is not well led and managed. These matters were investigated during the inspection. The school is being led and managed well. Apart from the fluid situation regarding the governing body, leadership and management at all levels are effective. Pupils' behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school. Although there have been a few instances of bullying in the past, pupils say that they are confident that adults quickly resolve any disagreements. However, parents' concerns regarding poor communication are well founded other than with respect to the Nursery where there are strong links with parents, who are fully involved. Information in the past has been inconsistent and of poor quality. Newsletters have been infrequent, the school does not have a website, and there have been limited efforts to keep parents informed about the pupils' successes. In addition, there have been limited opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's education. Nonetheless, the executive principal has commenced regular weekly newsletters and there are good plans in place to strengthen partnership with parents and build on the excellent communication systems currently in operation in the Nursery. Although the partnership with parents has been inadequate in the past, it is now satisfactory. Overall, the school's partnership with others supports pupils' learning well because the school benefits from the close and productive partnership with the staff of the executive principal's substantive school. In addition, pupils profit from the excellent partnership that the school has with the local authority's support services which aid pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Pupils' personal development is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and school and they enjoy lessons. Classrooms are calm and purposeful places for pupils to learn in a safe and caring environment. However, pupils' enjoyment is not reflected in their attendance, which is below average. There are now clear and robust procedures in place to boost attendance and there are already signs that attendance is improving. Nonetheless, senior staff are keenly aware of the need to reduce levels of absence.

Pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching and the curriculum are good. They enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are much lower than typically found and many children are at an early stage of learning English. They thrive and make rapid progress in the Nursery but, even so, by the time they leave the Reception year only a small minority attain

the expected learning goals. Good progress continues throughout the school, and standards are at the national average by the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement when pupils' starting points are taken into account. Pupils who have learning difficulties and those who are at an early stage of learning English are supported well. There are good procedures for checking pupils' progress and pupils who slip behind are quickly identified and effective programmes are put into place to enable them to achieve well.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. When they enter the Nursery, their skills and understanding are well below average and many are at the early stages of learning English. They get off to a flying start in the warm and welcoming Nursery class and make rapid progress. A range of exciting topics are planned for children to explore the world around them. Staff take every opportunity to develop children's language and communications skills. For example, in a topic on travel, children enjoyed buying tickets, collecting their passports and driving the train to their destination! Skilful support from all staff constantly challenges pupils to develop their language skills. There is good transition to the Reception classes where staff maintain a good balance between activities directed by adults and those that children choose for themselves. Good use is made of the outdoor areas to support learning although provision in the Reception areas is inhibited by limited space. Children's very good progress overall ensures that by the time they move into Year 1, standards are broadly average in all areas of their learning. Inspirational leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage sets high expectations for all and a culture of continual improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- The LDBS and Learning Trust must rectify the current situation regarding school governance as quickly as possible.
- Develop and strengthen the school's partnership with its parents.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Many of the large number of pupils that are new to learning English attend the Nursery. They make rapid progress because the provision is so effective and they soon develop their confidence and their communication and language skills improve quickly. Other early English learners make good progress as do those that find learning hard, because provision for them is of good quality. Progress is good in Years 1 and 2 so that by the end of Year 2, standards overall are average although standards in reading have dragged behind those for writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 6, standards are generally average although they were above average in 2007. Attainment in writing at Year 6 has not been as strong as in reading. Nevertheless, because a good focus has been placed on strengthening progress in writing, the gap has closed. Current Year 6 pupils are on course to attain equally high standards in reading and writing. The school has been consistently successful in ensuring that Black pupils of British, African or Caribbean backgrounds attain standards much above the national average. This is because work is tailored well to meet their needs, such as in a good Year 6 literacy lesson where pupils were quickly learning to understand poetry in a Jamaican dialect.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils get on well together and respect one another's differences. Those who present challenging behaviour from time to time are given good support and are managed well. They feel safe in school because, 'Teachers look after us', as one put it. They are also proud of their role in sorting out problems and helping younger children as 'playground friends'. Indeed, pupils take their various responsibilities very seriously. School councillors are clear that they have a role in, 'Making the school a better place' and are confident that their voice is heard. They are pleased, for example, that there is now a greater range of clubs on offer in response to their suggestion. Pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. This was illustrated very effectively when Year 4 pupils sang with great enjoyment and authority about the components of a healthy diet. Pupils have positive attitudes for learning which, together with the average basic skills, means that they are appropriately prepared for their move to secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are taught well and they know that their teachers will help them if they have any difficulties. As one pupil said, 'Our teachers help us to achieve something bigger and better in our school'. They enjoy lessons because teachers make sure that work is interesting and is planned to meet the different abilities present in each classroom. Teachers are also skilled at managing the pupils' behaviour. Pupils are clear about what they have to do in lessons and what is required for them to meet objectives. This is because success criteria are regularly identified by teachers and these are referred to throughout the lesson. Pupils who find learning hard are supported well both individually and in small groups. Nevertheless, general classroom assistants, particularly in the junior classes, do not become sufficiently involved in pupils' learning and their support is not always effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils' enthusiastic and melodic singing in assemblies is a delight and indicative of the priority given to music and the creative arts. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments and the school is extremely proud of its choir, which is highly regarded and has performed at the Barbican. Sports also has a prominent role in the curriculum and pupils enjoy the range of physical activities on offer and this is recognised by the school's Sports Activemark award. Clubs in other areas are rather more limited currently. There are some good links between different subjects which helps pupils to see how different aspects of their learning fit together. This takes account of the local context of the school well through, for example, events such as Black History Week and Refugee Week. These special occasions also contribute to the good provision for pupils' personal development. The development of pupils' basic skills is catered for well and this is reflected in their good progress. The school is particularly effective at meeting the needs of pupils who have a range of learning difficulties. The school also recognises its more able pupils although provision for them is not always as challenging as it could be.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Provision for the pupils' pastoral support is good. The school makes good use of a range of support partners including other schools and the local authority to promote pupils' well-being. Procedures to ensure the health, safety and well-being of pupils are in place. The academic support and guidance provided for pupils have improved since the previous inspection. Improved systems to track pupils' individual progress are of good quality and enable staff to intervene promptly if pupils fall behind. A good start has been made in encouraging pupils to evaluate their own and their classmates' work and this is supported by consistently good marking of work. There is also good support for the many pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties and this enables them to become confident learners. However, relationships with parents are not sufficiently strong. Parents do not have regular access to information about the school or daily contact with staff and this limits their opportunity to discuss any issues.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The executive principal, although only in post for a short period of time, has brought vision and drive to develop a new direction for the school. Staff appreciate the management structures that she has introduced and they know that their views are appreciated and that all staff have an opportunity to contribute to the school's development. Middle managers and subject leaders have provided an important stabilising role over the past few months and they are committed to the school and its improvement and are effective in their work. Due to backing from the local authority, there are very good systems to enable them to support the good procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating the school's provision. Community cohesion is satisfactory. Although there were difficulties in relationships between the school and church in the past, these have been overcome and the stronger links are already bringing benefit to the pupils. Pupils are involved in a good network of local links and the school's partnership with another Church of England primary school is benefiting both staff and pupils. Financial management is secure and has ensured improvement to the premises. The recent improvements in the teamwork of staff, together with the strengths in provision and continuing good progress, demonstrate a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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	3
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	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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 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?	3

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	4
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

07 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthias Church of England Primary School, London, N16 8DD

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we came to visit your school. We were very impressed with your good behaviour and friendliness. We particularly enjoyed hearing you sing! You told us that you think that yours is a good school and we agree.

You enjoy learning because your lessons are interesting and you are taught well. You showed us that you understand how to stay safe and that you have an excellent understanding of how to be healthy. You like to help to make your school improve and you take your responsibilities very seriously. Your executive principal is doing an excellent job to make sure that all the teachers and staff pull together and continue to make sure that your school provides you with a good education.

There are three things that would make your school even better. First, we have asked your local and Church authorities to make sure that arrangements are put into place to replace your governing body. Second, the school needs to make sure that your parents have much more information about the school and can become more involved. Thirdly, your attendance needs to improve.

We know you will continue to work hard and you can help in particular by making sure that you attend school regularly and encourage your classmates to do the same.

Yours faithfully

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector