

St Matthias CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116899
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	326478
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2009
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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)	201
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	Jenifer Morecroft
Headteacher	Jennifer Ahern
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cromwell Road Malvern Link WR14 1NA
Telephone number	01684 574984
Fax number	01684 574984

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2009
Inspection number	326478

© 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 two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school was called Malvern Link Primary at the previous inspection, but changed its name to better reflect its links with the local church. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has fallen steadily since the school was last inspected and is now well below average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Although the school's overall effectiveness is inadequate, children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff constantly check on how well individual children are doing so they can plan activities that help children learn effectively and ensure they make good progress. Children start Year 1 with standards that are as expected for their age.

From Year 1 onwards, teachers are not as well informed about pupils' standards, and the progress that pupils make is too slow. Teaching is inadequate because lessons do not build sufficiently on what pupils already know, understand and can do. The pace of lessons is slow so pupils are not doing enough work to ensure they make adequate progress. As a result, standards at the end of Year 2 are now exceptionally low, especially in reading and mathematics, and achievement is inadequate. Such inadequate achievement continues as pupils move further up the school, so current standards in Year 6 are exceptionally low in English and mathematics, despite this cohort of pupils achieving average standards at the end of Year 2.

The curriculum is satisfactory. When pupils are identified as underachieving, some receive extra support, mainly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This support is effective and these pupils make satisfactory progress. The curriculum also promotes pupils' satisfactory personal development. Pupils generally enjoy coming to school for the good range of extra clubs and activities and because they get on well with staff. Attendance is satisfactory, but is falling each year and is now much lower than at the time of the previous inspection. Despite written and telephone contact with parents about absence, they are not sent sufficiently strong reminders about attendance on a frequent enough basis. Pupils behave well at playtimes, but in lessons their concentration wanders and they start to fidget when they find the work too easy or they have to listen to the teacher for too long. Their lack of active involvement for large parts of lessons is another important reason for pupils' slow progress.

The main cause of the school's decline is inadequate leadership and management. The school's monitoring of its own performance, especially checks on teaching, lacks rigour. Assessments of the standards reached by pupils are correct, but the tracking and analysis of their progress is not detailed enough. This means that the headteacher has been unable to identify the causes of underachievement or to set appropriately challenging targets for the school, teachers or individual pupils. Consequently the targets set are too low. Despite the sound pastoral care that pupils receive, the overall quality of care, guidance and support is inadequate because academic guidance is not good enough. Rapidly falling standards and the increasing concerns of parents demonstrate that the school's leaders and managers do not have the capacity to reverse the school's decline. Nevertheless, after some delay, governors are now taking strong actions to address the situation. Governance is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

On entry to the nursery, children's skills are typically below those usually seen but this can vary from year to year. Most children demonstrate limited communication, mathematical and personal

skills. They are warmly welcomed, make a rapid start in the nursery and make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. When they enter Year 1, most pupils reach the levels expected for their age. Personal development is promoted well as the basis for further learning and children soon learn to share and take turns. The good balance of adult and child-led activities enhances children's confidence as the children independently choose and select materials for a sailing boat or set out from the explorer's camp searching for dinosaurs. Children feel safe, secure and are eager to learn due to good quality arrangements for their care and welfare. Teaching is good overall, especially in the nursery. Children enjoy investigating the exciting variety of practical activities on offer in all learning areas, for example fishing for different shapes in the water tray or hunting for letters hidden outside the nursery. However, the small outdoor learning areas are not resourced enough to provide a truly stimulating learning environment. Good leadership ensures staff carefully track children's progress and use the information to plan the next steps in learning. Activities are usually well planned to meet the needs of all abilities, although they can sometimes be a little too difficult.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress more rigorously; and draw up and implement plans to improve the areas of weakness.
- Set more challenging targets for pupils' progress and ensure these are used by all teachers to: - plan work that is suitably demanding for individual pupils -provide appropriate guidance to pupils on how their work can be improved.
- Ensure pupils make more progress in lessons by ensuring that pupils spend less time listening and more time actively engaged.
- Improve communication with parents in order to reverse the decline in attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and improve their skills so that standards on entry to Year 1 are as expected for their age. From then on, progress is very slow, with only around half of the pupils in most classes making satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. Results in 2008 showed standards were exceptionally low in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2, and below average in writing. This was a big fall from the previous year, when standards were broadly average. A similar fall occurred at the end of Year 6, with below average results in mathematics and science, and exceptionally low results in English in 2008. Current work and the school's own assessments show that standards remain exceptionally low in English, and have fallen further in mathematics, where standards are now very low, despite this being a more able class of pupils than the previous year. Standards in science are higher and progress in this subject is satisfactory overall. Progress is good in information and communication technology (ICT), because pupils receive lots of opportunities to use the good quality resources and take part in courses where parents and their children learn together.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are happy at school and feel safe. They know who to turn to if they need help and most are confident that their problems will be dealt with. Pupils generally get on well with one

another and understand right from wrong. They are polite to visitors and confident when talking to them.

Pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles, but do not always put their knowledge into practice when making choices. Older pupils play a good role in the local community through their fund-raising and work with the church, but this is not as good for younger pupils as they have fewer opportunities. Pupils' understanding of other communities in Britain is satisfactory, but strong links are being forged with a school in Tanzania to help pupils understand life in other countries.

Behaviour is good in the corridors and outside. In lessons, behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils maintain their concentration for as long as possible, but when their interest wanes they start to fidget around on their seats and play with whatever comes to hand. Attendance has been falling steadily since the last inspection when it was judged good. It is now satisfactory, but last term saw the decline continue. Year 6 pupils run a healthy tuck shop, which improves their economic understanding well. However, the poor progress they make in their basic skills means they are inadequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The key difference between the good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the inadequate teaching in other years is the way in which the data from assessments are used to plan work for the children. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, assessments of children's progress are frequently made. The staff then plan together to provide activities that will move children on to the next stage in their learning. This is not however the case in other years where assessment is used ineffectively. In these year groups there is confusion about the progress that pupils are expected to make. The lack of challenging targets means that work is pitched at a level that is too low and too much time is devoted to individual tasks. The pace of lessons is also too slow. The start of the lesson is often an overly long introduction to the work given by the teacher to the whole class. The pupils are keen to listen at first, but as time goes on they become bored. As a result, pupils do not work enough in lessons and, over time, fall further and further behind.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, with a good range of extra clubs and activities that enhance pupils' enjoyment. Older pupils have good opportunities to play a part in the community, but there are fewer opportunities for younger ones. Teachers ensure that pupils can use the ICT resources whenever possible, which helps them to make good progress in their computing skills. Pupils say that they like the way that teachers make links between subjects, such as science and history when they were learning about the Second World War. The main strength of the curriculum is the extra support given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The better progress made as a result of such support goes a long way to offset the slower progress made in lessons, so pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make greater progress than others. More time is now being devoted to teaching the basic skills, such as reading, but it is too early for any benefits to be measured.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Staff care for their pupils well, and pupils feel they can trust them. At the time of the inspection, child protection procedures meet requirements, as do those for ensuring that pupils are healthy and safe. However, actions to improve attendance have not proved successful. The school encourages pupils by praising and rewarding them for good attendance. The chair of governors has written to parents regarding unauthorised absence. However, the school is not sending frequent and strong messages to parents about the importance of regular attendance. Academic guidance is inadequate. Although assessments are now accurate, this has not always been the case, so teachers have not always been aware of their pupils' capabilities. Pupils' progress is not tracked or analysed in sufficient detail, so underachievement has not been tackled quickly enough. Targets for pupils are too low, so teachers are not able to tell them what they need to do to improve at a satisfactory rate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school is in rapid decline and too little is being done to improve the quality of education offered. Relationships between the headteacher and staff became highly strained in 2007. They are now improving, but some staff are still concerned about the overall quality of leadership and management. Parents too are becoming concerned. Half of those with children in Years 3 to 6 responding to the questionnaire were not happy with all that the school offers, compared to 100% satisfaction from parents of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has not checked or analysed the progress of pupils, so managers are unable to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the pupils. As a consequence of this, they do not know whether they are adequately promoting equality of opportunity and meeting the needs of all groups in the school community.

Checks on lessons have failed to identify inadequacies in teaching. Targets for pupils' performance were not met in 2008 and targets for 2009 are too low. The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has recently been promoted to literacy coordinator. She has made a good start by identifying areas of teaching in need of improvement. Governors were slow to deal with the decline in the school's performance but are now taking the strongest possible actions to rectify the current situation.

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

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?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	4
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?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

21 January 2009

Dear children

Inspection of St Matthias's CE Primary School, Malvern WR14 1NA

Thank you for helping us when we came to visit your school. You were all very polite and told us what you think about your school, especially how much you enjoy the extra clubs you can choose from. You are good at using computers and get on well with your teachers and each other.

We found that the school is not as good as it should be. The people who run the school are not working out how well you are doing, so they have not been able to tell the teachers how difficult the work needs to be for you to learn quickly. Because of this, the work you are given is often a bit too easy and you sometimes have to spend too long listening to your teacher rather than doing something for yourselves. When this happens, you lose interest and don't work hard enough. At other times you concentrate and behave well. We have asked the grown ups who run the school to make sure they know how well you are doing. Then they can give you better targets and teachers will know how to plan work that will make you really think. We have asked the teachers to give you more time to do things in lessons, rather than just listening. Those of you who find learning more difficult get extra help, and this helps you to catch up. In fact, you make better progress than others.

All the grown ups make sure you are safe at school. Most of you said that there was someone to talk to if you had a problem, and that they would help you. Fewer of you are coming to school as often as you should. So we have asked the headteacher to remind your mums, dads and carers about just how important it is that you come to school. You can help by reminding them as well and coming to school whenever you are able.

Because of the school's difficulties, inspectors will regularly visit the school to see how much it is improving.

Yours faithfully

David Driscoll

Lead inspector