

St Matthew Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135264
Local Authority	NA
Inspection number	345502
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Christopher Russell HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	957
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Rourke
Headteacher	Mrs Monica Cross (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The majority of the inspection time was spent looking at learning; 34 lessons were visited and 34 teachers observed. Meetings were also held with students, staff and governors. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, 204 questionnaires completed by parents, and questionnaires completed by staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether lessons enable all groups of students to make satisfactory and improving progress
- the impact of the work being done to strengthen middle leadership
- whether procedures for observing lessons and improving the quality of teaching are now more extensive and effective
- whether the way in which leaders use data about students' achievement has improved.

Information about the school

St Matthew Academy is an all-through academy for students of primary and secondary age. The academy opened in September 2007 following the closure of a primary school and a boys' secondary school. Its specialisms are in business and enterprise. Students come from a wide area of south-east London. Years 10 and 11 contain only boys; these year groups are small. Other year groups contain both boys and girls. Many students join at the start of Year 7. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Matthew Academy has made major strides forward in the two and a half years since it opened; many things have improved in the twelve months since inspectors last visited.

In particular:

- leaders now focus much more sharply on observing lessons and working with teachers to improve the quality of their teaching
- the way in which the academy uses data to track and measure students' progress has improved
- the role of middle leaders (such as heads of faculty) has been strengthened.

The academy is in a strong position to continue its improvement. Senior and middle leaders are providing clear direction, drive and ambition for the academy's further development. They have a thorough, accurate and realistic understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for future development. Many aspects of provision have improved in the past year, leading to better outcomes for students. The academy's work as a specialist college is a particular strength: it underpins many improvements and is doing much to raise students' aspirations.

Although still variable overall, the quality of teaching is improving. Leaders have dealt determinedly with any inadequate teaching and almost all teaching is now at least satisfactory; the academy has some excellent teachers. The curriculum has also improved, particularly at Key Stage 4. These improvements are helping students to achieve much more. The progress of many students is, however, limited by their low levels of literacy. A number of initiatives have had a dramatic effect on students' reading skills, although opportunities to develop students' literacy skills across all subjects of the curriculum are being missed.

Attendance has improved dramatically over the past few years and is now above average, particularly in the secondary phase. Behaviour has also improved: much behaviour is now good, although there are still incidents of misbehaviour, particularly where teaching is less effective. A common system for responding to misbehaviour in the classroom has been introduced across the academy - the 'behaviour for learning' policy - but is not yet used consistently by all staff, reducing its effectiveness.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to good by ensuring that:
 - lessons move at a sufficient pace
 - teachers make effective use of 100-minute lessons

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- students understand what they are expected to learn and be able to do during lessons
 - lesson activities interest and challenge students of all abilities
 - marking consistently provides clear and helpful guidance to students about how to improve
 - lessons in all subjects provide sufficient support for the development of students' literacy skills.
- Ensure that all staff apply the academy's new 'behaviour for learning' policy consistently.
 - About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students' achievement is satisfactory: attainment is low, but improving securely and quickly; students currently make expected progress and rates of progress are improving rapidly.

Key Stage 2 national test results were low in science and mathematics in 2009, but results in English increased significantly, particularly for reading. GCSE examination results were significantly below average in 2009, although these students had particularly low attainment when they entered the academy. There are clear signs that the current Year 11 are on track to achieve more; some students, for example, have already attained five or more higher grades including English and mathematics.

Patterns of achievement across different groups of students are generally quite consistent. Although their overall progress is also satisfactory, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities typically make slightly more progress than other students because they are very well supported. However, students in receipt of free school meals and some middle-ability students make slightly less progress than other students.

Most students have good attitudes to school and enjoy learning. They concentrate and listen well in lessons, and work well with other students. Most are able to speak confidently and answer questions enthusiastically, although the limited literacy skills of many students hold them back, particularly in the older year groups. Where teaching is less interesting, students are rather passive and sometimes misbehave.

The improved, healthier food in the canteen is popular with students. However, outdoor facilities are currently very limited and this restricts opportunities for physical activity.

The many students spoken to by inspectors said that they feel safe and well cared for.

The academy's specialist status makes a strong contribution to students' outcomes.

Many of the extensive opportunities for students to make a contribution to the local and wider community, for example, arise from the specialism. Achievement in the specialist subjects is rising.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The academy offers a good range of care, guidance and support for students. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly well supported. Arrangements for supporting students with English as an additional language were less secure, but have been strengthened in recent months.

The quality of teaching has improved. Although satisfactory overall, an increasing proportion of lessons are good. Almost all lessons are characterised by good relationships between students and staff. However, in weaker lessons:

- the lesson moves too slowly, particularly in 100-minute-long lessons
 - the lesson is heavily dominated by the teacher, with students spending a lot of time listening
 - students are not clear enough what they need to learn or be able to do by the end of the lesson
 - activities are not matched closely enough to the ability levels of different students.
- Marking is improving: some is now very helpful and helps students to understand what they need to do to improve, although this is not yet consistently the case.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The curriculum has developed and now meets students' needs well. Particular strengths are:

- a very flexible curriculum for older students, with the opportunity to study a wide range of vocational courses
- extensive opportunities for enrichment, many linked to the academy's specialist status.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders at all levels are providing considerable drive for the academy's further development. They have a detailed understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and their plans for the future are now much more sharply focussed. Governors also have a thorough understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and hold leaders accountable.

The programme of lesson monitoring involves senior and middle leaders and is now rigorous and extensive. Almost all of inspectors' observations were undertaken jointly with school leaders. In each case, the leader was able to analyse and judge the quality of the lesson with considerable accuracy.

Systems to set targets for students and track their progress have developed significantly in the last year. This is helping leaders at all levels to identify underachieving students and hold teachers more accountable for students' progress. However, the systems are still developing and the data are not yet sufficiently accessible for all leaders.

The academy makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Much is done to strengthen links with the local and wider community. The focus, through the academy's specialist status, on stimulating social enterprise, is a particular strength.

The academy's procedures for safeguarding are secure. Checks on new staff are carried out correctly and recorded well.

The extent to which the academy promotes equal opportunity is satisfactory and improving. Improved data about assessment are increasingly being used to track the progress of different groups to ensure that everyone does well.

The academy works in close partnership with a wide range of agencies and external partners. Specialist links with businesses are particularly strong.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children enter the academy with low skill levels. They are well taught and make good progress. Children enjoy a wide range of practical activities, both inside and out. They develop language skills well because questioning and role play areas are utilised to good effect. Their creative development is well promoted because resources are used imaginatively. Children are very well cared for and supported and, as a result, their behaviour and personal development are good. Occasionally, planning and guidance do not link key objectives for learning to activities. Assessment is used well and children's progress is tracked effectively from term to term, although the starting point of each year group in Nursery and Reception is not analysed in sufficient detail.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were generally positive about the academy. Most of the negative comments related to

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concerns about the variable quality of teaching and its impact on students' progress. This matched the findings of the inspection team (and indeed the judgements of the academy's senior leaders).

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Matthew Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 204 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 957 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	78	38	107	52	9	4	9	4
The school keeps my child safe	66	32	110	54	13	6	7	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	64	31	117	57	16	8	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	20	126	62	29	14	6	3
The teaching is good at this school	37	18	133	65	24	12	5	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	24	113	55	30	15	7	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	18	129	63	24	12	5	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	33	16	104	51	28	14	5	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	15	114	56	28	14	9	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	23	105	51	31	15	11	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	11	107	52	34	17	9	4
The school is led and managed effectively	31	15	112	55	28	14	16	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	23	117	57	21	10	11	5

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 February 2010

Dear students

Inspection of St Matthew Academy, London, SE3 0XX

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings.

We found that the academy has developed well since our last visit a year ago. Many things have improved and the academy now has many strengths.

Leaders focus much more on improving the quality of teaching. This is resulting in better lessons.

The curriculum at Key Stage 4 has been developed so that you have more choice of subjects.

You are very well cared for and supported by the school.

Your attendance has improved dramatically.

The way in which the academy sets targets for you and monitors your progress is developing well.

You make a good contribution to the school and wider community.

Lessons are improving and many are good, but the overall quality is uneven. In particular, some lessons move too slowly, especially when they are 100 minutes long.

Marking is improving, although some does not help you to improve your work.

Behaviour has improved, although you told us that there is still misbehaviour in some lessons. The academy has a new 'behaviour for learning' policy, but not all teachers are following it yet. We have asked the academy to work on these areas.

Staff are very ambitious for the academy and are working hard to improve it. They have a good understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development, and know what to do next to continue the academy's improvement.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Russell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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