

St Matthew's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110750
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325209
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Julie Winyard HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	443
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tim Steel
Headteacher	Mr Tony Davies
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 December 2005
School address	19 Norfolk Street Cambridge CB1 2LD
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, curriculum plans and a range of other documents provided by the school. The team received 79 responses to the parent questionnaire.

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

- the rigour and robustness of the school's tracking of standards, achievement and progress for all groups of pupils, including those who arrive mid-year/key stage and the effectiveness of actions taken to improve standards, achievement and progress for underachieving groups
- whether teachers use assessment and tracking data effectively in their planning and lessons in order to improve outcomes for all pupils
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in ensuring school improvement
- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

St Matthew's Primary School is situated in the centre of Cambridge. A wide variety of minority ethnic groups attend the school and there are 25 languages spoken. St Matthew's is a much larger than average primary school with fewer than average pupils eligible for free school meals. There are fewer pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or a statement of special educational needs than in similar schools nationally. Children currently start the Early Years Foundation Stage with standards slightly below those expected for children of this age. This has changed since the last inspection when standards on entry were slightly above average. There are a slightly higher proportion of pupils who start or leave the school over the year than is found in similar schools nationally. There have been considerable staff changes since the last inspection. The new headteacher took up his post in 2006 and there are two new assistant headteachers. The school has achieved the following awards: Healthy Schools, Active Mark and Early Years Foundation Stage Quality Assurance.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In the words of one parent, 'St Matthew's has improved a lot in recent years – it's a happy, dynamic and very well run school.' The inspection team also found this to be the case. St Matthew's has made good improvement since the last inspection because it has addressed the issues for improvement. For example, the school tracks pupils' progress effectively and is quick to intervene if pupils are underachieving. The school is continuing to make further improvements thanks to the good leadership of the headteacher supported by a good senior leadership team, middle leaders and governors who offer a good level of challenge as well as support. Pupils' attainment, especially that of higher attainers, has improved since the last inspection and is above average. Progress has improved over the last year but remains satisfactory because teaching is not yet consistently good.

There is some good and outstanding teaching within the school and this could be used better, as a model for further improvements. Currently, teaching does not always cater for the full range of pupils needs and is sometimes focused more on activities rather than on what the pupils will learn. Pupils do not always understand how they will have learned successfully by the end of the lesson. Because of the good leadership, the school is aware of these issues and is already working to improve them. It is also working on improving the consistency of effective marking through the school. Because the school has a good understanding of how it can improve further and now has a settled and committed team, it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

St Matthew's is a very inclusive and caring school and pupils from the many minority ethnic groups feel welcomed by the whole school community. For example, the school welcomes an annual visit from the children of the Russian State Circus. Pupils look forward to their return each year. Parents talk enthusiastically about how the staff treat every pupil equally and how hard the school has worked to ensure its diverse community works and plays well together. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the responsibilities they are given and how effective schemes like playground helpers have been in ensuring all pupils feel safe and happy at school. Behaviour is good both inside the school and on the playground and pupils say they are listened to and that there are virtually no incidents of bullying.

A small proportion of the 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Fully implement the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.
- Implement its plans to improve the quality of teaching so that it is all good or better by ensuring that:
 - all pupils have work that matches their needs
 - learning objectives are clearly focused on what pupils will learn
 - pupils have a clear agenda as to how they can be successful learners in the lesson.
- Ensure that teachers' marking explains exactly what pupils need to do to improve their work and that the pupils are given time in lessons to put the guidance into practice.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

3

Standards as measured by the schools unvalidated data for the end of Year 6 tests are above average. The pupils' rate of progress since the last inspection has been variable. It rose slightly from 2005 to 2006 but dipped in 2007. The school's unvalidated data for 2008 indicates that the Year 6 pupils who left the school last year made good progress. Because of this variable picture, progress remains at the top end of satisfactory overall. Also the school's data indicates that the current Year 5 and Year 6 are making satisfactory progress.

Analysis of progress for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities shows that they are currently making satisfactory progress

In just over half of the lessons observed across the school during the inspection pupils made good progress. Their enjoyment of learning was noticeable throughout. In the best lessons pupils used time well and talked to each other about what they were learning. They made clear gains in their understanding during these lessons. For example, in a literacy lesson all pupils learnt the difference between a fact and an opinion. In the satisfactory lessons observed not all pupils made gains in their understanding because they were occupied in tasks that did not move their learning forward.

Other key features of pupil outcomes are shown below.

- Pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to live healthily. They are very keen on the trim trail and think staff should join in with this too!
- The outstanding contribution pupils make to the school and wider community. For example they had a huge influence on the local council so that a zebra crossing was placed outside the school; the school choir opens many local events.
- The school has good systems in place for managing the most vulnerable pupils.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

The quality of teaching in all lessons was at least satisfactory and in just over half the lessons observed, was good. In a small number of lessons, teaching was outstanding. For example, in a mathematics lesson the teacher ensured every pupil was constantly challenged, knew exactly what was expected of them and how to be successful. Other teaching strategies that successfully motivated pupils and accelerated their learning were:

- very clear explanations of what pupils were going to learn and how they would achieve this
- interesting and well planned activities that met the needs of all groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the most able pupils
- effective use of talk partners to ensure that all thinking was focused on what learning was expected.

When observing lessons, inspectors focused on how effectively teachers were using assessments to match learning to the needs of all groups in the class. In most classes there was good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these pupils were given appropriate tasks. A good example of well planned and challenging work for a small group of more able pupils was also seen. Teaching was less successful where the focus was on activities rather than on what teachers expected pupils to learn. Marking is not yet consistent across the school. It is often complimentary but does not always explain to pupils exactly what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are not given enough time in lessons to make the improvements suggested.

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

There are very detailed systems in place to track the progress that pupils make. Senior leaders have used these well to identify the progress of most groups of pupils including those with English as an additional language, gifted and talented pupils and those from minority ethnic groups. However, this has not been so effective for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is why they do not make as much progress as they could. All pupils have learning targets and these are used well in literacy and numeracy.

The curriculum is well planned and has recently been reviewed. The appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy means that pupils develop the skills they need for the next stage in their education. There is a good range of enrichment activities including a recent visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum and the organisation of an art week and a Mexican day. Parents speak very highly of the enthusiasm their children have for these special events and talk about how much their children learn from them. There is a wide range of after school clubs, some of which are led by the pupils.

There is a good level of care and support for pupils, which is much appreciated by parents. The Tuesday club supports the needs of vulnerable pupils well. The school works hard to maintain satisfactory attendance and has a good range of strategies in place to achieve this.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	3
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders at all levels monitor and evaluate the work of the school well. A good example of this is the school development plan which is clearly focused on targets derived from the school's accurate self evaluation. The key improvement issues identified by the school match those identified by the inspection team.

The school has good partnerships with a range of external groups including those who support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Other links which are focused on improving outcomes for pupils include:

- those with neighbouring schools with regard to activities offered at the start and end of the school day
- involvement in teacher education – there were two student teachers placed in the Nursery during the inspection
- a singing project with Kings College
- an Africa project with the Harambi Centre
- links with local businesses to support project themes.

Discussions with governors demonstrated that they also monitor the work of the school well. They ask challenging questions and expect a detailed response from the school. They test out the school's view through well-targeted visits. They know the school well and have a good understanding of what will improve the school further.

The school is taking effective action to meet the needs of most groups of pupils. A new special needs co-ordinator has just been appointed. She is working closely with an assistant headteacher to ensure pupils' progress is more closely monitored for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. At the time of the inspection the school had effective and robust systems in place to safeguard all pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that children make good progress especially in linking sounds and letters and mathematical development. For example, in Reception children were using their knowledge of rhyme to create their own nursery rhymes and in the Nursery children were recording the number of objects with the correct number symbol.

The Nursery provides an excellent start to children's education. However not all children go to the school's Nursery. While provision is good overall, the Reception classes are not currently implementing the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school is aware of this and steps are being taken to ensure that this is addressed rapidly. As this statutory requirement is not yet fully in place the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is no better than satisfactory. Overall effectiveness is also satisfactory because the learning environment is not fully meeting the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. For example, there is little evidence of child-initiated learning and where this is starting to happen it is not planned effectively enough to provide a valid or effective learning experience. Because of this, children are not developing their skills as independent learners sufficiently. For example, during choosing time in the Reception class a large number of children all decided to head to the role play area, which meant that the teaching assistant could not make appropriate interventions for all the children because there were too many.

There is some use of the outside area but this does not extend the indoor curriculum sufficiently to make it a consistently good learning experience. There is a lack of continuity between the Nursery and Reception classes which means that children do not have a joined up experience during the first two years of their education.

There is good care and support for the children who are well looked after and safe throughout the day. There are excellent relationships between staff and children throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and parents say how much their children enjoy coming to school.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents who replied to the questionnaire were positive about the school. Those who wrote comments talked about the good changes that had been brought about since the last inspection. However, there was a minority of parents who expressed concerns about the school. These included: pupils' slow progress and a lack of attention from teachers; not being fully informed of what pupils are learning and their progress; little provision for more able pupils; a lack of communication, especially when pupils are falling behind; and the lack of robust leadership. Inspectors found that leadership is robust and that all the issues raised by parents are being addressed. The large group of parents who attended a meeting during the inspection were full of praise for the school and spoke very highly of the improvements that the headteacher has made, supported by all his staff. They were particularly impressed with the 'Meet the Head' meetings which are open to all parents. Between 30 and 40 parents attend these meetings and all felt that they can raise concerns, they are listened to and that the headteacher takes prompt action to address their concerns.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
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.



12 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthew's Primary School, Cambridge CB1 2LD

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You were most polite, well-behaved and keen to show us around your school. It was good to have the opportunity to talk with several groups of you. I would particularly like to thank the school council, and the other pupils who gave up their time to talk to us, in some detail, about their work and the school.

Your school has made good improvements since its last inspection and is continuing to improve. You can help by continuing to work your hardest and make even more progress. Your teachers take good care of you keeping you safe and secure in school. You work and play well together and we were impressed with how you look after each other and make sure everyone is included.

There are further improvements your school can make and we have asked Mr Davies and the teachers to:

- make sure the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is fully in place so that the youngest children can learn really well
- improve the quality of teaching so that it is all good or better by ensuring that:
 - in every lesson you have work that is at the right level of challenge for you
 - you know exactly what you need to learn
 - you are really clear about how to achieve your best work
- mark your work and explain exactly what you need to do to improve and that they give you time in lessons to make these improvements.

With very best wishes for your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

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