

St Matthias Church of England Primary Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137185
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	385579
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2012
Lead inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Snelson
Headteacher	Claire Davies
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2010
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite

Additional Inspector

Tracey Kneale

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 17 lessons or part lessons taught by 10 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, teachers and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and examined safeguarding arrangements as well as other information including school development plans, policies, external evaluations and a range of pupils' work. Thirty-one questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised, together with those received from staff and a representative sample of pupils.

Information about the school

St Matthias is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British, the remainder representing a range of other ethnicities. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to that seen nationally. The school exceeded the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for academic performance, last year. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than usual is above that seen nationally.

The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery and a Reception class. The school became an academy in August 2011, and is a member of the Malvern Academies Partnership, made up of four local primary schools and the local high school. The school provides care for pupils both before and after school.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- St Matthias Academy is a good school. It has continued its improvement reported two years ago and has built a strong foundation for extending this improvement in the future. The school is not outstanding though, because the attainment of pupils is not yet consistent and is capable of further improvement.
- Almost all pupils make good progress so that, over time, most are now reaching the standards expected of them in reading and mathematics. However, the school recognises that the improvement has not been as strong in writing, which is now a priority in the school's development planning. The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has been particularly good in the last two years.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Pupils are positive and enthusiastic and understand well how to keep safe especially in the confined space of the main playground. Their enjoyment of school is shown by their greatly improved attendance and punctuality. The school makes effective provision for the care of pupils.
- School leaders, especially the headteacher, strive continually to provide the best possible education for their pupils. The leadership of teaching and management of school performance are decisive and rigorous and have greatly improved. Since becoming an academy, the school has developed close links with the Malvern Academies Partnership of schools, which are proving increasingly beneficial to pupils' education. The number of parents and carers engaged with the school is low, and leaders accept that there is a need for further initiatives to increase their involvement.
- Consistently good teaching has led to the improved achievement of the great majority of pupils in all year groups. Parents and carers are positive about the school's provision for their children.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate improvements in writing, especially that of boys, so that the progress made by pupils matches that in reading and mathematics, by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length across the curriculum, and encouraging them to take greater care in their presentation
 - helping pupils have a better understanding of their writing targets, and broadening their use of better reading skills to expand their writing vocabularies .

- Develop further initiatives to encourage more parents and carers to engage with the school by:
 - school leaders, members of the governing body and friends of the school actively promoting the school's good provision for pupils in the community
 - helping and encouraging more parents and carers to understand how they can work in partnership with the school for the benefit of their children's education.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Nursery with skills below those expected for their age, and a minority have low personal and social skills and language development. They make generally good progress in all areas of development in the Nursery and Reception classes so that, by the time they enter Year 1, their skills are only slightly below those expected for their age. Progress is best in the development of their number skills and in their personal development.

Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 for the large majority of pupils so that, by the end of Year 2, most are reaching expected standards in mathematics and reading, although not as many in writing. There has, though, been good and accelerating progress in the last two years, and the school has begun to address this imbalance. In Key Stage 2, there has also been some inconsistent attainment, in part caused by differences between the varying abilities of small cohorts. Standards by the end of Year 6 have moved between above and below average, but progress has improved consistently in all year groups from some previously very low levels in basic skills. Learning is much improved among several groups of pupils, especially for the disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Inspection evidence shows that the school is successfully narrowing the gap in attainment for these pupils. The introduction of a one-to-one programme, 'Number Count', has had an especially beneficial effect on the progress of some younger pupils in mathematics. Although the school has recognised past weaknesses in writing, especially that of boys, the improvement sought has not been

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so marked. Pupils do not at present have enough opportunities to develop their extended writing or use their improved reading skills to support their writing ideas. They also do not have sufficient understanding of their writing targets and how they could improve.

Attainment in reading is greatly improved, and nearly all pupils are reaching at least average standards by the end of Year 6, with some pupils reaching above average attainment in other year groups. Pupils make good progress because resources have improved, and most of them enjoy reading to adults and independently. They join enthusiastically in learning their letter sounds, and younger ones are beginning to understand how to use their word-building skills. Almost all parents and carers indicate in their responses that the school is successfully developing their children's basic skills, and enabling them to make good progress in their learning.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching over time has improved to good because of the school's consistent and robust monitoring of its effectiveness, and the steps taken to help teachers improve their practice. Nearly all parents and carers indicate that they believe teaching is good, as one put it, 'I am really impressed with the way staff and pupils interact.' Pupils also confirm that they think teaching is good. Inspection findings confirm good teaching throughout the school. Evidence of good teaching in the Nursery and Early Years Foundation Stage was observed in the rich learning environment, strong relationships between children and adults, and the encouragement of independent play, especially in outdoor activities.

In Years 1 to 6 teachers' planning and the use of assessment have improved and become more consistent. Planning makes lesson objectives clear and makes better use of assessment and associated data to match teaching more closely to pupils' needs. Teachers maintain good pace and provide plenty of challenge in lessons. This was seen in Year 5 when pupils were working on improving past weaknesses in using efficient methods of division. Good learning also occurs when teachers create a variety of interesting practical activities which encourage pupils to think for themselves and work independently. This was observed in Year 1 when pupils worked independently on netbooks and visited the class shop in order to calculate everyday money problems. Teachers are occasionally long-winded in their initial explanations when pupils are eager to begin activities. Although teachers set targets for improvement, especially in writing, they do not always check whether pupils remember or understand their targets. This results in a small number of pupils repeating earlier mistakes and not making the progress expected. There is also inconsistency in teachers' guidance to pupils on the importance of good presentation of their work.

The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good, and their learning is supported effectively by the contributions of teaching assistants. The planned interventions of assistants with small groups and individuals are

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contributing strongly to better learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A large majority of parents and carers feel that pupils' behaviour is good, and that their children are kept safe. A parent summed this up when describing the school as 'a fantastic school, full of kindness, fun and hard work'. Pupils themselves also say that behaviour is good most of the time. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly into school routines, learn what is expected of them and mostly behave well. A small number are sometimes very fussy when they are required to share resources. In the rest of the school, behaviour during the inspection was good and occasionally excellent. Teachers have worked hard to ensure that pupils are fully engaged during lessons, and most pupils show obvious enjoyment of their learning and cooperate well with each other in many activities.

Pupils have a strong awareness of the school's behaviour policies and report that, where sanctions are necessary, they are applied fairly. Pupils express few worries about bullying of any kind, either physical, through technology, or name-calling. Their main concern is that a small number 'swear in the playground', but they do not hesitate to report this to adults. Many pupils, especially younger ones, enjoy working regularly with older pupils, especially the 'Reading Rangers' who hear them read and encourage them. The school has a number of active and effective links with external agencies in order to meet the needs of pupils whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable or potentially disruptive. Good relationships are evident throughout the school, encouraged by the ever-courteous and caring staff. The school's leaders, through a number of rigorous initiatives, have successfully promoted much improved punctuality and attendance, which is now slightly higher than average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher sets high levels of aspiration and ambition for school improvement, based on a shrewd knowledge of the school community and a tireless determination that pupils should be enabled to reach their full potential in their academic and personal development. These ambitions are shared by a continually developing senior and middle management team, and all other members of staff. This has led to many improvements in the last two years, including better progress in learning by the great majority of pupils, better provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and more effective teaching. All staff strongly agreed with the statement that leaders do all they can to improve teaching. Rigorous monitoring by the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, and teachers' own demanding self-evaluations have led to a consistent rise in the quality of teaching. There is now a wider sharing of management responsibilities and associated accountability, and professional development is promoted well.

The curriculum has been made more practical and interesting for pupils, and has also

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been instrumental in helping the good promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This was observed in assemblies during the inspection when members of the school council shared with the school their experiences on a recent trip to a partner school in Portsmouth. Links with other Malvern Academies provide both pupils and teachers with good opportunities to share resources, learning experiences and good teaching practice. In addition, links with schools in Tanzania and France are helping pupils develop a wider knowledge of the world. School leaders evaluate the school's performance accurately and have created an extensive bank of knowledge of the needs of every pupil. The governing body and the school leadership team are assiduous in promoting equal opportunities, the school is fully inclusive, and there is no evidence of discrimination. A strong track record of improvement shows that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

The governing body has developed its knowledge of the school considerably. Regular training has helped governors to feel more confident in their roles, resulting in much greater involvement in the management of the school and more effective challenge to school leaders. The governing body meets its safeguarding duties effectively. In particular, governors recognise that they have a greater role to play in the school's engagement with parents and carers. The school has tried a number of ways to encourage a wide partnership with parents but with limited success so far. A minority of parents are fully involved with school activities and are very positive about the school's provision. The school's challenge is to find other ways of encouraging the greater participation of the 'silent majority' of parents and carers.

Glossary

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.
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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



11 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthias Church of England Primary School, Malvern Link, WR14 1NA

We should like to thank you all for making our inspection of your school such an enjoyable two days. We were very impressed by how the older ones, particularly the 'Reading Rangers' in Years 5 and 6, help the younger ones. We also enjoyed hearing about the visit of the school council to Portsmouth and seeing all of their wonderful photographs, especially the girl holding the 'sail'. It was a pleasure also to see your musicians showing what they have learned, and how generous you were in your applause for them. We were pleased to see you behave so well on our visit, although we do understand how you might have the occasional argument on such a small playground.

You go to a good school, where you are well looked after by the staff, and you know how to keep safe. Most of you are now reaching the standards expected of you in reading and mathematics because you have good teachers and leaders, especially your headteacher, in the school. Your writing, particularly that of some of the boys, has not yet improved quite as much as your other skills so we have asked your school to help you improve more. We have suggested that you have more opportunities to write; that you are encouraged to take more care with how you present your work; that you understand what your targets for improvement are, and that you use your better reading skills to help your written work.

It was good to see that you and some of your parents and carers on your questionnaires wrote that you are pleased with and proud of your school. We have asked your leaders though to encourage more of your parents and carers to come to see what you are doing in school and how and what you learn. You can certainly help in this by persuading them to come more often. We hope you all continue to enjoy school, and that you will like your newly designed playground.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite
Lead inspector

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