

St Matthias Church of England Primary School

Bacon Street, London, E2 6DY

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher, well supported by a skilled and committed team of senior and middle leaders and a strong governing body, has brought about improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from their low starting points when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage to reach broadly average standards at the end of Year 2 and above average standards at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding. Teachers' good subject knowledge, together with their consistent focus on developing pupils' key skills, ensures that pupils learn successfully.
- Behaviour is good and this contributes strongly to pupils' good achievement. Pupils are keen to do their best, from the moment they join the school, and consistently try their hardest in their school work.
- The school is a harmonious and inclusive community. Pupils feel safe and thrive in an environment that cultivates mutual respect and values, instilled from the headteacher, governors and the diocese. This positive ethos is felt throughout the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong because of the many and varied opportunities available to them in and through the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not yet ensure that pupils make outstanding progress.
- Not all pupils reach the highest levels of which they are capable.
- Teachers and other adults do not always plan for pupils, including the most able, to cover as much work as they could, in lessons or at home.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 parts of lessons taught by nine teachers, of which five lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, staff, including senior and subject leaders, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including teachers' planning, the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and resulting development plans, information on pupils' attainment and progress, records of the monitoring of teaching and governing body meetings, an external review of teaching, safeguarding documentation and pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, spoke with them about their learning and behaviour and reviewed the work in their books. They visited the school's breakfast club and after-school childcare provision.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) for inspectors to consider. The school's most recent survey of parents and carers was considered. Inspectors spoke to parents over the telephone, met them individually and spoke to parents informally as they brought and collected their children from school. The 22 responses to the staff questionnaire were taken into account.

Inspection team

Beverley Perin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Olson Davis

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils come from Bangladeshi backgrounds, with the remainder coming from White British backgrounds and a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding which in this school supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school runs a breakfast club and a daily after-school childcare provision, catering for pupils from this school and three other local primary schools.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of pupils across all key stages to outstanding by:
 - teachers and other adults having consistently high expectations of all pupils, including the most able, so that they cover more work in class and at home and so make outstanding progress
 - teachers planning more challenging activities during lessons and for homework that enable all pupils to attain the highest levels of which they are capable.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those typically expected for their age. Good teaching means that children are helped to make good progress, including in their understanding of letters and sounds, in readiness for Year 1. The proportion leaving the Reception Year in 2013 with a good level of development was similar to that found nationally.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2013 were broadly average for this small cohort. Rates of progress in pupils' learning across Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics are good. All pupils, including those from the range of ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language, learn well and enthusiastically in lessons. They benefit from tailored support, as a result of which they develop resilience in their approaches to learning and are emerging as confident and willing young readers and writers.
- Pupils, including the most able, make good progress in all subjects through Key Stage 2. The school's successful actions to improve 'reading for meaning' have resulted in pupils' increased enjoyment and understanding of the fiction and non-fiction texts that they read. The school encourages home reading and pupils who have specific difficulties or who are unable to read to an adult at home are given additional support and opportunities to read with adults in school.
- Pupils' progress in writing is good. Opportunities for pupils to write are planned for across all subjects and celebrated through the school in classrooms and public spaces. In Nursery and Reception, children are actively encouraged to write frequently and take pride in their early achievements. "Look – I can write 'zip it up'," a Reception child told an inspector. This was his first writing of a phrase. Pupils' books are well presented and older pupils plan and draft their writing in order to improve it, seeking to meet their literacy targets. For example, one pupil improved his writing by adding adverbial phrases to make it more persuasive to the reader.
- Progress in mathematics has not been as strong as it has been in literacy. This has been a recent focus for improvement across the school in order to make the mathematics teaching more challenging for all pupils, for example in respect of their calculation and problem solving skills. Pupils now benefit from using 'hands on' resources in their mathematics lessons, which help them to understand harder concepts and try out different ways of solving problems. Inspectors saw evidence in lessons and in books that teaching and achievement in mathematics are now good across all key stages.
- Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs receive well-targeted support so that they make the same good progress as their peers, and sometimes better. The school's commitment to the best for all its pupils is at the heart of its belief in equal opportunities and all pupils are understood and known as individuals.
- In 2013, the attainment of Year 6 pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium funding was the equivalent of about 10 months below their peers in reading and mathematics, a smaller gap than previously. There was barely any difference in their writing standards, for the second year running. In 2013, standards for pupil premium pupils in all subjects were above those of non-pupil premium pupils, nationally. The school's current checks on pupils' learning and standards in all subjects show that any remaining gaps are closing or have closed across the school because of the additional and targeted teaching support that the pupils are receiving.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good across the school and ensures that pupils make good progress. It is not yet outstanding because, in some instances, teachers and other adults do not have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve in the time given and do not plan for them to cover enough work in lessons. This means that not all pupils are challenged to reach the very highest levels of which they are capable, including the most able.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons that interest and engage the pupils. For

example, pupils in a history lesson worked in groups to research the topic of evacuees during the Second World War, leading to class presentations. The levels of engagement in this activity and in the following question and answer session were very high, with pupils demonstrating deep thinking and empathy. Subsequently, they were keen to continue reading a novel on the holocaust, demonstrating their understanding of inference and appreciation of what it might have felt like to be fighting for survival. The teacher's planning and knowledge of her pupils' abilities and interests enabled outstanding learning to take place and contributed to pupils' strong spiritual and moral development.

- Pupils are eager to learn and their willingness to work with others or alone for extended periods enables them to make good and, sometimes, outstanding progress. They become absorbed in their work as a result of teachers' good planning and the effective use of clear guidance that ensures pupils know how to be successful in the task they are set. For example, in a piece of persuasive writing, pupils used a range of linguistic devices to persuade Sir Ernest Shackleton to hire them for his expedition to the South Pole. Pupils produced writing that was detailed, imaginative and technically accurate.
- Classrooms are well organised and promote good learning habits in the pupils; resources are used effectively to accelerate learning. Disabled pupils or those with special educational needs are helped to make good progress and encouraged by the adults supporting them to express themselves verbally and participate in discussion with their peers.
- Pupils' books are neat and well presented. There is good evidence that work is marked frequently and that pupils respond well to the helpful improvement points and guidance provided by their teachers. This is a consistent strength across the school.
- Teachers constantly check pupils' learning through the lessons and this helps pupils to know they are on track to success. Teachers make good use of the pupil assessment information to target work precisely and to ensure that all pupils, including those in receipt of the pupil premium, make good progress.
- Homework in reading successfully promotes enjoyment and independence in this skill; however, teachers do not consistently use homework to ensure that pupils have opportunities to consolidate and extend their learning across all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous, friendly and respectful to each other. They demonstrate positive attitudes to school and this is seen through their improved attendance and the way in which they wear their school uniforms with pride.
- Pupils behave well in the playground and in the school hall, although they are apt to be a bit noisy and boisterous on occasion. Inspectors were impressed during 'wet play' with the way in which all year groups engaged in a range of different activities during playtime and packed away afterwards, settling back to work with almost no prompting from adults.
- The school has a calm and positive atmosphere. Daily assemblies and the promotion of weekly values serve to develop the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils of St Matthias care about each other and others, taking pride in the work they do to support charities across a range of different religious practices.
- The school has effective strategies for managing behaviour and, for some pupils, this has enabled them to overcome personal challenges and avoid exclusion. As a result, previously high proportions of exclusions have reduced significantly.
- Attendance this year is improving and is now average.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding and zero tolerance of racism and all bullying and name calling. They appreciate the school's work on anti-bullying, which extends to parent workshops, also. Pupils report that the school responds promptly, should they report any concerns to teachers or other adults.

- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are especially aware of the need for safe practice when using the internet. Living and coming to school in a busy and diverse area of East London with many local tourists, pupils understand how important it is to keep themselves safe from strangers.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, fully supported by the staff and governors, has successfully embedded a culture of aspiration throughout the school where everyone is working towards outstanding.
- Leadership is not outstanding, as leaders have not yet secured outstanding teaching and pupil achievement across the school.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, check pupils' progress regularly to support improvement, and booster classes are promptly arranged for any pupil who is underachieving.
- Teachers, including newly qualified teachers, have good support from the school's leaders, and teachers benefit from professional development targeted to their individual needs. This includes coaching and mentoring from expert teachers in the classroom so that best practice is modelled and shared.
- The school has an accurate view of its own performance and all leaders are held to account for leading important aspects of the school's work through its robust school development plan. Actions taken to improve pupil outcomes in reading and mathematics, for example, have been successful and standards in the school are now thoroughly good and improving in all respects.
- The curriculum is broad and designed to ensure that pupils enjoy a range of subjects, enrichment opportunities and visits that make a positive contribution to their academic and personal development. Pupils particularly value their residential visit to Gorsefield and the art, chess and football clubs.
- The local authority and the London Diocesan Board for Schools are confident that the school provides a good standard of education and have contributed to a recent external review of the school's performance. Support has been effective in improving standards in reading.
- The school is making effective use of the government's additional primary sports funding, including to develop teachers' skills. Pupils participate in competitive sports with others schools; they are taught to swim and there is an ever-increasing range of sports activities that attract pupils across the school to prioritise a healthy lifestyle.
- Strong links with external partners result in well-targeted support for vulnerable pupils. Families are known individually and support is available to keep children safe and able to access their education.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is a strength of the school. Governors are passionate about, and committed to, providing the best education possible for their pupils and to ensure that they have opportunities to enjoy a rounded and culturally rich education in a secure environment that embraces its diverse community. They monitor the work of the school closely, coming into the school to meet staff and pupils, listening to pupils read and observing lessons alongside senior leaders. Governors understand how to interpret performance data and use this knowledge to prioritise areas and subjects for improvement with the headteacher. They manage the school's finances effectively, including the deployment of pupil premium and sports funding, constantly evaluating the impact of this funding on pupils' achievement and personal well-being. They undertake training to help them fulfil their roles effectively and take account of pupil performance information and their knowledge of the quality of teaching when agreeing teacher salary levels with the headteacher. Governors offer challenge and support to the school in the right balance and ensure that statutory requirements regarding finance, policies and safeguarding are diligently met. They know their school well and articulate a clear and informed strategic vision for its journey to outstanding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100956
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	440934

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth McCurry
Headteacher	Clare Sealy
Date of previous school inspection	30 March 2011
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