

Inspection of a good school: St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Bowdon Street, Edgeley, Stockport, Cheshire SK3 9EA

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 November 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, safe and well looked after at St Matthew's. They work hard in lessons, behave well at play times and care for each other. Pupils said that bullying is very rare. They are adamant that staff will sort out any issues related to poor behaviour, including bullying, quickly and effectively. Pupils said that there is always someone there to help when they need it.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy and how to make positive choices in life. They are enjoying the return of clubs and school trips, following the easing of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Since the previous inspection, the quality of education has declined. A period of considerable turbulence in leadership had a damaging impact on pupils' learning. Teachers and leaders did not expect enough of pupils' achievement and behaviour. The new headteacher has taken decisive and effective actions to improve behaviour and the quality of education. His work with the senior leadership team is helping to get the school back to where it should be. However, some weaknesses remain. These are preventing pupils from achieving as well as they could.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Since taking up his post in January 2020, the headteacher has worked effectively with other leaders to improve the quality of education at St Matthew's. Subject leaders have improved most subject areas by developing curriculum plans that are well ordered and identify exactly what pupils need to learn. A small number of subjects are not as well

developed. Teachers are less clear about the knowledge that pupils need to acquire in these subjects.

Most pupils have benefited from these recent improvements. They are making better progress through the curriculum than they did in the past. However, this is not the same in all year groups. Some teachers are not implementing the school's updated curriculum plans effectively. Nor are they using assessment strategies well enough to check how well pupils are learning. As a result, they are not ambitious enough in moving pupils' learning forward. Pupils in these year groups are not developing the building blocks of knowledge that future learning depends on.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading. They have introduced a new phonics programme and ensured that all members of staff have received training and support. This is having a positive impact on pupils' early reading development. Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 are progressing well through the phonics curriculum. Teachers make regular checks on how well pupils are learning. Teachers ensure that anybody who is struggling gets extra support so that they can keep up with their peers. There is a wide selection of high-quality books for pupils to enjoy across the school. Children in the early years enjoy listening to stories and reading with their friends. Older pupils read regularly in school and at home. Those who met with the inspector took great pleasure in sharing their thoughts and feelings about reading.

Too often, in the recent past, lessons have been disrupted by poor behaviour, and some pupils have missed school due to temporary exclusions. However, the new leadership team has transformed this aspect of school life. Pupils now thrive in the school's positive and nurturing culture. They are respectful towards each other and the adults who teach them. Children get off to a good start in the early years. They quickly learn to follow school routines and develop good attitudes to learning. A small number of older pupils occasionally have difficulty in managing their own behaviour. However, staff know pupils well and understand what to do to help them to re-engage with their learning. Every member of staff and every parent and carer who responded to the Ofsted surveys said that pupils at the school are well behaved.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported at St Matthew's. A small team of staff work together very well to identify and support pupils who are struggling with their learning. They intervene early so that pupils do not get left behind. They support teachers in adapting the ways in which pupils can access the curriculum so that pupils with SEND can learn alongside their classmates. Leaders have also developed effective links with specialist services. Parents are kept well informed about the help that school staff and other professionals are providing to their children.

Older pupils relish the special responsibilities that they are given, such as school ambassadors and librarians. Members of the 'Ethos Group' regularly play a role in whole-school assemblies where pupils' efforts and achievements are celebrated.

Governors know the school well. They share leaders' high ambitions for the school. They provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.

All members of staff who responded to the survey said they enjoy working at the school. They feel well supported by school leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team meets regularly to review cases and ensure that safeguarding remains at the heart of the school's work. All members of staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff understand what to do if they have any concerns about the safety of a pupil. Leaders are in regular touch with outside agencies and do all they can to provide support for vulnerable pupils and their families.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not have a good enough understanding of how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum. As a result, they often set work that does not link to what pupils already know. Leaders need to ensure that all members of staff make regular checks on how well pupils are learning so that they can plan work that helps pupils to build their knowledge on what they have learned previously.
- In a small number of subjects, curriculum plans lack detail about the key knowledge that pupils need to acquire and the order in which it needs to be learned. This prevents pupils from building on what they already know and can do. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans for all subjects are well planned and well sequenced.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140417
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10204433
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Helen Wetherell
Headteacher	Stephen Murphy
Website	www.cdatstmatthewsprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	29 and 30 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Chester Diocesan Academies Trust.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in February 2017.
- The governing body manages the breakfast club.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- There have been significant changes to the staff team since the school was last inspected. The deputy headteacher took up his post in 2018. The headteacher started at the school in January 2020.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team.
- The inspector met with the leadership group that takes responsibility for SEND.

- The inspector held a meeting with four governors, including the chair of governors, who attended remotely.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. As part of this process, he met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to pupils reading. The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work in other subjects.
- The inspector examined safeguarding records. He also met with the safeguarding team to discuss how pupils are kept safe.
- The inspector spoke to pupils about their experience of the school. He also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during dinner times.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. He also looked at the responses to the survey for staff and the pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Paul Tomkow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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