



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 135264

St Matthew Academy

St Joseph's Vale

Blackheath

London

SE3 0XX

Inspection date: 6th – 7th February 2023

Chair of Governors: Pat Barber

Headteacher: Miranda Baldwin

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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Matthew Academy is an all-through school for pupils of primary and secondary age. It is situated in the Greenwich Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. As the Archdiocese sponsors the Academy, the Education and Schools Funding Agency, rather than the Local Authority, funds it. The principal parishes the school serves are Our Lady Help of Christians, Blackheath and St Saviour Lewisham. Currently, the school also draws pupils from 25 other parishes. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 18%. This is a significant reduction since the last inspection in 2015. 52% of pupils are from other Christian denominations, 19% from other faiths and 11% have no religious affiliation. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time devoted to Religious Education is 10% in the primary phase, but there is a shortfall in provision in the secondary phase.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 16 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 1059, with 199 pupils in the primary section. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is 14% and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 33%. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities and where English is an additional language are both above the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is 30% in the primary phase and 45% in the secondary phase. and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 33%.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Matthew Academy is a Good Catholic school because:

- Leaders provide a welcoming and supportive environment where gospel values are celebrated in the physical environment and lived out in the relationships among pupils and staff and between school, parents and parish.
- The school's pride in the diversity of the pupils and their families together with the staff that constitute the school community contributes to the sense of belonging and inclusion enjoyed by all pupils and supports their learning.
- Religious Education subject leadership and specialist staffing has recently been strengthened significantly, enabling developments that will support the learning of pupils throughout the school.
- Prayer and liturgy is planned and integral to the life of the school, and the development of opportunities for pupils to design and lead celebrations has commenced.
- Recent improvements in the Catholic life of the school, introduced by the school's recently strengthened leadership are beginning to see their impact embedded, for example in the achievement of The Oscar Romero Award at participant level in November 2022.
- Leaders and governors prioritise pastoral care and the well-being of every member of the school community which impacts positively on pupils' progress and success.
- The school has a supportive governing body who know the school well and are determined for it to grow and flourish in its mission.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Take the opportunity of the introduction of the new Religious Education Directory
 - [a] to promote higher standards in Catholic Religious Education across the academy;
 - [b] to ensure more robust systems of assessment.
- Ensure that pupils experience the rich tradition of Catholic prayer and liturgy in the daily life of the school community so that pupils can play an increasing part in its planning and leadership.



Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	2
Catholic Life	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	2
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	2
Religious Education	2
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	2
Collective Worship	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.	2
The quality of provision for Collective Worship.	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	2



CATHOLIC LIFE

2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is good.

- Pupils appreciate, value, and actively participate in the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- They respect the Catholic traditions of the school and recognise the responsibilities that follow from them. Hence, they regularly engage with activities promoting the Catholic life and mission both within the school and in the local and wider communities.
- Pupils participate in acts of service and fundraising to support a range of charities.
- The school mission statement is a living reality in the St Matthew Academy community and beyond the school, including among key stakeholders, because the school community contributes to it. It reflects a belief in the distinctiveness of every individual made in the image and likeness of God. Pupils demonstrate an ability to articulate this in many contexts including the respect they show for themselves and others.
- They feel able to express pride in their own religious and cultural identity and beliefs as a result of being members of this school community.
- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary in lessons and around the school, and strong and positive relationships are evident throughout the school.
- Pupils respond well to the school's personal support and development opportunities. As a result, they are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of physical, emotional and spiritual growth.
- Pupils respond positively to the leadership opportunities available to them through the positions of prayer leaders, school council membership, house and sports captains with plans in hand to extend the range of roles.
- Pupils, appropriate to their age and capability, have a good understanding of loving relationships and an appreciation of physical, emotional and spiritual development.

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is good.

- The school mission statement clearly expresses the educational mission of the Church and underpins the life of the school. Reviewed in 2021 it thoughtfully expands upon the school motto "Let Your Light Shine". The mission statement is displayed throughout the school and referenced in the daily life of the community.
- Staff are committed to its implementation across the curriculum and the whole of school life. They participate in school activities which reflect the Catholic life and the mission of the school.



- There is a clear sense of community at all levels, evident in the quality of relationships and the centrality of prayer in the life of the school. Its Catholic identity is at the core of behaviour management. Cultural day is an annual event and manifests the commitment of all to being an inclusive community.
- Forgiveness is taught alongside the school values of growing inclusiveness, nurturing faith transformation through integrity, courage and service which together enable everyone to flourish.
- The school environment reflects its mission and identity through obvious signs of its Catholic character, including a prayer room and adjacent chaplaincy centre. Scripture features prominently in displays.
- Staff promote high standards of behaviour and are good role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils.
- The curriculum reflects a commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, to care for our common home and to the dignity of every human person.
- The school provides many opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff through timetabled and voluntary activities.
- The school has regard for the pastoral needs of pupils and staff. Pastoral staff, supported by a range of professional specialists and support services, seek to address the material as well as the spiritual and emotional needs of pupils. During the inspection a teacher correctly but unobtrusively identified that a pupil had not had breakfast and gave them a snack bar. Staff welfare is also addressed within the school. The Senior Leadership Team operates an 'open-door' policy for any who need to discuss a matter.
- Pastoral programmes, personal, social and health education and relationships, sex and health education, are planned, well taught and reflect Catholic teachings and principles.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is good

- The strength of the Catholic life of the school is a testament to the commitment of school leaders, subject leaders and governors who support the mission of the Church and have a clear and ambitious vision for the school and the drive and commitment to realise it.
- School leaders demonstrate a public commitment to the mission of the Church and are well regarded as models of Catholic leadership by both staff and pupils.
- The provision for the Catholic life of the school is recognised as a leadership responsibility. Governors hold school leaders to account through critical reviews of rigorous monitoring and evaluation reports supplemented by personal on-site assessments.
- Staff identified professional development including that provided by Cafod and at a retreat at Aylesford Priory as positive examples of the commitment to increase staff understanding of and engagement in Catholic education. The events clearly added to staff understanding of Catholic education in its fullness.
- School leaders are aware that some features promoting the Catholic life that were suspended during the pandemic are yet to be resumed.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is

- Pupils are engaged in and enthusiastic about their religious education. They clearly enjoy opportunities provided to discuss and reflect spiritually, ethically, and theologically and to consider the implications of religious commitment in everyday life.
- Pupils from their varied starting points including some from a low baseline generally make expected progress in each key stage.
- Almost all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, are making broadly similar progress.
- Pupils achieve GCSE Religious Studies grades in Year 10 public examinations in line with the national average.
- All pupils in the lessons observed concentrate well and have the desire to improve.
- Behaviour for learning is very good reflecting strong classroom management that acknowledges the dignity of all present in the classroom. The positive attitude to learning by pupils is enhanced and sustained when enabled to address challenging activities and explore complex ideas, particularly by specialist religious education teachers. Pupils are very willing to support and be supported by their peers and even spontaneously congratulate an outstanding contribution.
- Most pupils, relative to their age and capacity, are religiously literate. Pupils in lessons observed in Years 7, 8 and 9 use specialist vocabulary accurately and confidently, the term 'omnibenevolent' being used appropriately by a pupil in Year 7.
- As indicated by teacher assessment, pupil attainment is good and sometimes exceeds their achievement in other curriculum areas.
- The quality of pupils' class work is good. Written work is generally well presented and thorough, and pupils usually respond in writing to the feedback offered to their work on a regular basis.
- Standards of presentation in written work are generally good and broadly on par with their literacy or English books.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.

- The quality of teaching is good, with some examples of outstanding elements. At its best it enthuses pupils and engages them totally because of the subject knowledge of teachers and their skill in deploying effective teaching strategies, allowing pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers clearly understand the value of religious education, which they successfully communicate to pupils.
- In the primary phase the subject is intelligently led by a curriculum leader who effectively plans and selects resources that promote sound learning. These are made available to class teachers who are beginning to adapt these to the needs of their pupils.



- Class teachers in the primary phase efficiently manage their time, and all lessons observed generally showed a good pace however a limited range of teaching strategies was seen. Highly effective use of questioning was in evidence and, when used, was transformative and had an immediate impact.
- In the primary phase pupils are given time and opportunity to respond to teacher feedback which sometimes takes the form of marked work; at other times, it is verbal feedback.
- Assessment for primary phase pupils is starting to have an impact. As it is developed to check pupils' progress and attitudes to learning, teachers will gain greater knowledge and awareness of pupils' prior learning and capabilities, and this will enable them to better meet the specific needs of all those in their group when planning.
- Data from primary phase assessments is gathered with other forms of monitoring, including lesson observations, learning walks and book scrutiny. This now needs to be coordinated to impact learning and provide greater challenge, particularly for more able pupils.
- In the secondary phase specialist religious teachers collaborate effectively to devise and teach schemes of learning in ways that engage and often enthuse pupils.
- High standards of pupil behaviour and secure learning environments in the secondary phase enable teachers to use a wide range of highly effective teaching strategies that support pupil learning.
- Lessons in the secondary phase are consistently good. The best lessons build upon prior learning and combine thoughtful teacher input with a range of challenging tasks, including individual, pair and group work by pupils, with learning actively monitored by the teacher.
- Formal assessment in each phase follows school policy and contributes to departmental and school monitoring, evaluation and review.
- High energy levels amongst all staff teaching religious education make for a lively focused learning environment. They work as a team, are well-led, and contribute to the whole school's professional learning.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good

- Leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- The primary phase curriculum meets this requirement. The timetable provides for 10% of curriculum time teaching religious education based on '*The Way, the Truth and the Life*' programme which covers the content of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. Religious education is comparable to other core curriculum subjects in terms of budget, staff professional development, resources and staffing.
- Leaders have supported staff in embedding the programme focusing on the needs and interests of the pupils. Complementary materials need now to be more fully developed to support pupil learning through increased professional development of staff leading to more innovative ways of delivering the curriculum.
- The curriculum design provides opportunities for relationships and sex education (RSE) as well as pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.



- The subject leader for religious education is committed to school improvement and has engaged fully in professional development.
- School leaders undertake regular monitoring tasks, learning walks, lesson observations and book scrutinies, ensuring the monitored time committed for religious education is comparable to English and mathematics.
- The school would benefit from further moderation tasks with neighbouring Catholic schools in order to share practices and expectations.
- The secondary phase teaching team has been significantly strengthened in recent years, including a recently appointed subject leader. This has enabled school leaders to develop a detailed plan to progressively meet the curriculum requirement of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales of 10% curriculum time devoted to religious education in Years 7-11, beginning with Years 7 and 8 in September 2023. The current curriculum does not meet this requirement.
- The GCSE Religious Studies specification currently taught meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and Archbishop of Southwark but the Key Stage 3 curriculum is not in line with the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The publication of the new Religious Education Directory (RED) this year provides an opportunity to plan its introduction alongside the increase in curriculum time. The structure of the new RED is already being adopted in the curriculum development underway in Year 7.
- A group of primary phase teachers spoke to the inspectors and commented on how well they felt supported to deliver the religious education curriculum. They said they felt challenged to give of their very best, were provided with the resources to do so, and felt their well-being, and that of the pupils, was an ongoing concern of school management. Secondary specialist religious education teachers spoke of their desire to further their subject knowledge, particularly in light of the new RED.



COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good

- St Matthew Academy is a prayerful community where pupils' response to and participation in collective worship is good. A calm and peaceful ethos permeates the school and reflects the pupils' good behaviour and consideration for others.
- Pupils enjoy and respond maturely to opportunities for worship across the school and are respectful of and happy to participate in prayer and liturgy. Pupils are engaged and given opportunities to reflect and deepen their faith because occasions of prayer and worship respect their religion and belief.
- From the earliest age, pupils act reverently and show respect when participating in acts of worship. The regular opportunities for prayer and liturgy demonstrate the school's commitment to and pupils' acknowledgement of its identity as a Catholic prayerful community.
- The inspection took place as news of the Turkish-Syrian earthquake was received and secondary pupils readily responded with special prayers at tutor time and during religious education lessons.
- Pupils who volunteer to be 'Light Bearers' are representative of the range of religion and belief of the school community. They meet weekly in the chaplaincy room to develop their understanding of their roles which include helping to design and lead liturgies and writing bidding prayers. Under careful staff guidance, this they undertake with increasing confidence and enthusiasm.
- The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of many pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background. They have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths. This is reflected in the manner in which many pupils participate in prayer and liturgy. Pupils expressed the view that their participation in prayer and liturgy inspires them to 'Let their Light Shine'.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good

- Prayer and worship is integral to the lives of the school community and part of the daily experience of all pupils and staff.
- There is a clear policy for collective worship which outlines the manner and timing of occasions for prayer and worship. In addition to daily occasions in assemblies or tutor time, other occasions are marked throughout the year by liturgical celebrations and sometimes with Mass.
- The feast of St Matthew and Remembrance Day are examples of annual occasions when parents and friends of the school are invited to attend.



- The programme of retreats is gradually being re-introduced, commencing with Year 7.
- The pandemic also interrupted many of the links with local parishes but these are also being re-established. The sacrament of reconciliation is available to pupils during Lent through the good offices of a local parish priest.
- The termly prayer book contains a range of prayers and identifies the themes for collective worship for the term. These are thoughtfully chosen and responsive to pastoral priorities and to pupils' religious diversity.
- The school prayer room and adjacent chaplaincy office provide a valuable focus which is still being developed. The apprentice lay chaplain holds a number of regular weekly events in this chaplaincy area which are increasingly well supported. Scheduled liturgical dance with Year 1 pupils took place during the inspection. Muslim students use the prayer room during Ramadan.
- Primary phase classrooms have prayer focal points, which are updated to reflect the liturgical seasons, but are not always part of class liturgies. Secondary phase religious education classrooms display a crucifix.
- There are regular opportunities for staff prayer including the weekly staff briefings.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good

- Leaders are experienced in planning and leading prayer and liturgy that engages pupils and staff.
- They understand the nature and purpose of prayer and liturgy and have an evident understanding of the Church's liturgical year. They use this to very good effect in leading the school in its knowledge and understanding of Catholic rites and practices.
- Leaders model good practice for pupils and staff and frequently involve pupils in prayer and liturgy that precedes assemblies. They are committed to furthering their understanding of Catholic spirituality and liturgical practice in order to ensure the highest standards of celebration at St Matthew Academy.
- Leaders provide staff with a thoughtful programme of professional development to help their understanding of Catholic prayer and liturgy and its celebration in school.
- Leaders and governors regularly review prayer and liturgy as an integral part of the school's self-evaluation.