

Inspection of St Matthew Academy

St Joseph's Vale, Blackheath, London SE3 0XX

Inspection dates: 16–17 October 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

We spoke to lots of pupils who all said they enjoy school. They welcome the emphasis teachers put on doing well in lessons. They also appreciate the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects. Pupils in the secondary achieve strong examination results. However, the range of subjects they study in Year 9 is not broad enough. The school is changing this.

Pupils find their learning enjoyable. Across the school, relationships between teachers and pupils are strong. Pupils are polite and respect other people. Their behaviour is strong. Teachers are able to teach without any interruptions so that everyone can learn.

Pupils enjoy the days for personal development when they focus on a particular topic, such as keeping safe online. Many pupils involve themselves in the wide range of opportunities for learning outside the classroom. These include debating, visits and sports. Pupils have won impressive awards for their achievements.

All the pupils we spoke with feel safe in school. They are not worried about bullying. They know that staff will sort out any problems they might have, and that they will be helped to do well in their examinations.

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

The school has improved a great deal. It now provides pupils with a good quality of education. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to achieve as much as possible, academically and socially. They are putting a great deal of thought into what pupils should learn in each subject to prepare them for life after school. They focus on what helps pupils learn best in classrooms, day to day. Leaders are clear that learning how to be good citizens is as important as academic achievement. They also ensure that teachers' workload is considered by not insisting on unnecessary administrative and assessment activities.

Children in the Reception class settle into school well. Staff put much work into helping children to learn early mathematics and to speak, read and write. Phonics is taught carefully. Children get to know the sounds that letters make and develop their early reading skills confidently. Teachers have appropriate expertise and plan lessons thoroughly. This helps children to be ready for the work in Year 1. They know how to behave and are doing more things for themselves as they get older.

Primary-aged pupils make good progress in most subjects. Progress in reading and mathematics is strong. Improvements to pupils' writing are helping to make sure that they are well prepared for work in the secondary school. Leaders are rightly putting an emphasis on making sure that pupils can read and write fluently. This is working, and more primary pupils are doing well in English. In secondary, pupils build up a good knowledge of different writing styles. By the end of Year 11, pupils write confidently and creatively.

Leaders are rightly proud of giving primary pupils good teaching in a wide range of subjects. Subject specialists teach Year 5 and 6 pupils art, music, and design and technology. Reception children benefit from expert dance teaching.

In many subjects, in both primary and secondary, long-term plans make clear the topics that pupils will be taught and in what order. This correct ordering of subject content means that pupils learn the basics before going on to more difficult work.

In Years 7 and 8, pupils are taught the full range of national curriculum subjects. Learning in most of these subjects is set out well over the course of these two years. In a few areas, such as art, design and technology and science, leaders are revising their plans to make sure that each topic builds on previous learning.

Leaders have correctly identified that pupils should learn a broader range of subjects in Year 9. Changes to this arrangement are proposed for September 2020. Leaders have already given more lesson time to history and geography. These changes are having a positive effect.

Across the school and in most subjects, teachers adapt their teaching plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This helps pupils with SEND to achieve as well as others.

The school's offer is much more than academic or examination subjects. Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs, including arts, dance, choir, drama and photography. There are many sports opportunities, such as rowing, basketball and football, at which pupils excel. The Duke of Edinburgh Award is particularly successful. Pupils told us that they value the work they do on keeping safe and looking after their health. For example, they found a recent personal development day that included cyber bullying and mental health helpful.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take their responsibilities for the protection and care of pupils very seriously. They ensure that children are safe in school. Leaders keep a close eye on pupils they know are facing difficulties in their lives. The safeguarding team's fortnightly meetings pick up these pupils quickly. The designated safeguarding leads work closely with the local authority to get pupils the right help.

Regular training for staff ensures that they know how to spot potential signs of abuse, neglect or pupils who are finding things difficult. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns and report these to the safeguarding team.

Leaders keep detailed records of the action they take to help pupils. This allows them to ensure that pupils get the right support from outside agencies at the right time.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders in art, design and technology and science are redesigning their subject plans. This is intended to help teachers build pupils' knowledge and skills in a more ordered, understandable way. Leaders, including middle leaders, need to ensure that curriculum planning in all subjects is effective in this way.
- At present, the curriculum in Year 9 is not sufficiently broad. Leaders have clear plans to improve this from September 2020. They have made a start by deepening pupils' learning in some subject areas. Transition arrangements have therefore been applied. Leaders need to ensure that plans to broaden the curriculum in Year 9 are realised.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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're 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	135264
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10110357
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	945
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of trust/Chair of governing body	Pat Barber
Headteacher	Miranda Baldwin
Website	www.stmatthewacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 June 2017

Information about this school

- St Matthew Academy is a Roman Catholic all-through school for pupils aged 4 to 16.
- The school is a stand-alone academy sponsored by the Archdiocese of Southwark.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held meetings with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Southwark, the director of education for Lewisham local authority, and members of the governing body, including the chair.
- We considered the views of staff from meeting with staff and from the responses of 64 staff to the confidential questionnaire. We also considered parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey.
- We reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- During the inspection, we focused our activities on reading, English, mathematics, geography, art, and design and technology. Inspectors met with curriculum

leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils, spoke to teachers and looked at pupils' work in these subjects.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ogugua Okolo-Angus	Ofsted Inspector
Jacques Szemalikowski	Ofsted Inspector
Ben Thompson	Ofsted Inspector

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