Inspection of St Matthew's CofE Aided Infant School, Cobham

Downside, Cobham, Surrey KT11 3NA

Inspection dates:	5 and 6 November 2024
The quality of education	**Outstanding**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Outstanding**
Early years provision	**Outstanding**
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since October 2013. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very happy in the nurturing atmosphere at St Matthew's. The school's values of 'responsibility, friendship, justice and wisdom' sit at the heart of all that the school does. From the start of children's time in early years, the school helps children to develop independence and confidence. Each adult is an excellent role model for the pupils that they support. Older pupils look out for their younger peers and show them how to conduct themselves.

Pupils thrive at this school and learning comes alive. The school's curriculum helps pupils to secure a deep knowledge of each subject that they study. The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils live up to these and are confident and articulate learners. Because of this, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), attend well and achieve highly by the time they leave Year 2.

Pupils develop a very strong sense of character. They are thoughtful and reflective. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of different faiths and cultures. They represent their school at community events, including at the local cenotaph. They understand the importance of such moments and want to be part of them.

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

The school has implemented a rigorous and ambitious curriculum. It clearly details the specific knowledge pupils will learn. Staff are experts in delivering the curriculum. They have excellent subject knowledge. They model new learning consistently well across all classes. As a result, pupils make strong progress through the school's reading, writing and mathematics curriculums. Any pupils who struggle to keep up with the pace of any curriculum, including phonics, are quickly identified. These pupils receive focused support to help them to catch up. Consequently, pupils grow to be confident and able readers, writers and mathematicians.

Staff focus their teaching on the important knowledge that the pupils need to learn across the full curriculum. Pupils revisit key knowledge they have learned regularly. For example, the curriculum allows pupils to come back to the same artists and key historical figures each year. This helps pupils to embed their previous learning before teachers move the learning on. Teachers check how well pupils are learning the curriculum effectively. They then make any modifications that are necessary to fill any gaps in pupils' knowledge.

The school is meticulous about removing any barriers to pupils' progress. They identify needs very early. They then make targeted adaptations for pupils with SEND so these pupils can learn effectively. All disadvantaged pupils have full access to the whole school offer, both within the curriculum and as part of wider events such as summer fetes.

Children make an excellent start in early years. They settle seamlessly into the school's highly effective routines for learning. In the Reception Year, there is a sharp focus on developing children's communication and language skills. There is a very strong focus on

vocabulary development. For example, staff use words such as 'estimate' and 'industrious' routinely in early years. This broadens pupils' vocabulary at a very young age.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. This is because the school's expectations for behaviour are very clear and consistently applied. In the dining room, pupils show their beautiful manners. The playground is a harmonious place. Pupils look after an abundance of equipment and ensure everyone has someone to play with. As a result, pupils want to attend as often as possible. There are very few pupils whose attendance is a concern. The school has highly effective systems in place to support families so that their children attend school regularly and punctually.

The provision for pupils' wider personal development is exceptional. Pupils demonstrate tolerance and fairness, and understand the concepts of democracy and respect. Carefully selected visits to the local church, a mosque, botanical gardens and key national landmarks help pupils to develop a strong awareness of cultures and faiths as well as developing their curriculum knowledge. All pupils have access to a wide range of clubs and are keen to be part of these. As a result, their character development is very strong.

Those responsible for governance are extremely knowledgeable about the school. They use their experience well to challenge and support leaders. The school is outward-looking. Staff value working with and learning from colleagues from other schools to hone their practice. They are overwhelmingly proud to work at the school. Parents and carers are equally positive about the school. Parents typically refer to the school as 'wonderful', 'nurturing' and surpassing their expectations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	125178
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10341581
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison Boothby and Laurence Jones (co-chairs)
Headteacher	Katharine Hutt
Website	www.stmatthewsschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 October 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is located in the Diocese of Guildford. Its last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) took place in June 2019. The school's next SIAMS inspection is due by July 2027.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school childcare provision.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects, including writing, science, art and computing.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders within the school. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing board, including the co-chairs, and educational representatives of the local authority and diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of governing body meetings and behaviour incident logs.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View and an inspector also spoke with parents on the first day of the inspection.
- The views of staff were gathered through interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection, as well as the staff survey.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views throughout the inspection, including through the classroom visits and group discussions, as well as at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Chris Parker, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Katherine Russell	Ofsted Inspector

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