

St Matthew's Primary School

Wenlock Street, Luton, Bedfordshire LU2 0NJ

Inspection dates

22 February and 20–21 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have been slow to demonstrate significant improvement in raising standards in key stage 2.
- Outcomes require improvement because the majority of pupils in key stage 2 are not making strong progress in most subjects.
- Governors have not been challenging leaders about pupils' achievement rigorously enough.
- In planning for future improvement, disadvantaged pupils' achievement is not a high enough priority.
- The school's evaluation of its performance is too generous and lacks incisiveness.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is uneven across year groups and classes. It is not consistently good.
- Teaching does not routinely challenge pupils to deepen their thinking and move them on quickly when they show that they have understood.
- Work set for pupils in most subjects is frequently too easy for the majority of pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Provision in Reception is outstanding. Children are supported expertly by early years staff and, as a result, they make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Pupils make good progress in Year 1.
- The school promotes its strong values and inclusive ethos effectively. The community is harmonious and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Pupils behave well, enjoy school, attend regularly and feel safe.
- The leadership team promotes teamwork effectively and is skilful in recognising and enabling staff to develop professionally.
- Safeguarding is effective. Documentation and record-keeping are exemplary.
- The majority of staff enjoy working at St Matthew's and most pupils and parents speak highly of the school.
- The building is an inviting, well-kept place for learning. Resources and equipment are of good quality.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and governors should ensure that:
 - the pace of improvement in raising standards increases in key stage 2 to match the progress made by children in the early years and pupils in Year 1
 - governors prioritise their work sufficiently to secure rapid improvement and hold leaders to account for pupils' achievement
 - self-evaluation is accurate, with a strong focus on evaluating the impact of teaching on learning
 - plans for improvement are succinct, with explicit, challenging targets set to raise disadvantaged pupils' achievement in key stage 2 in all subjects.
- Improve the consistency in the quality of teaching across year groups and classes by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are sufficiently and appropriately challenged in their written work across the full range of subjects
 - deepening pupils' thinking and understanding through effective questioning
 - adjusting learning quickly when pupils show that they have understood and are ready to move on.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- School improvement work has been slow to show a discernible impact on raising standards in key stage 2 and tackling underachievement successfully since the previous inspection.
- Evidence gathered through the regular monitoring of teaching and learning has not been analysed in sufficient depth to establish the root causes of pupils' underachievement, nor has there been accurate identification of weaknesses in teaching. Judgements about teaching, learning, assessment and outcomes for pupils are too generous.
- Leaders do not focus sharply enough on improving outcomes for underachieving groups. The school's current evaluation of pupils' learning fails to mention the achievement of disadvantaged pupils or pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These groups stood out as pupils who did not perform as well as others in 2016. Subsequent targets for these pupils are not included in the school's plans for improvement.
- Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils and funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not had sufficient impact on improving their outcomes.
- Too many planned actions are included in the school's plans for improvement for them to be manageable and effective. The school improvement plan is too long and complicated to be a useful tool in pinpointing for staff why the actions are relevant and what they must focus on to improve outcomes in pupils' learning.
- In response to pupils' poor achievement in the 2016 national tests, the school commissioned the local authority to provide more support for the school this academic year. This support is beginning to have an impact on improving the progress pupils are making in Years 5 and 6. However, the local authority's view of current pupils' achievement and the school's overall effectiveness is too generous.
- The headteacher, supported ably by the deputy and other key leaders, has created a culture and ethos within the school community that strongly reflect and promote fundamental British values of fairness, equality of opportunity, respect and tolerance. Staff lead by example in setting the tone and pupils readily follow suit, as reflected in their tangibly good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teamwork is a strength and staff pull together, responding positively to new ways of working. For example, teachers in Years 5 and 6 are enthusiastically trialling new methods of teaching to improve pupils' comprehension in reading and reasoning in mathematics. Leaders are confident that these changes are making a difference, but they are too new to provide substantial evidence of rapid and sustained progress in every class.
- In the response to the staff survey, many staff commented that the headteacher supports, values and encourages them to progress and develop professionally. The headteacher is astute in spotting talent and potential in staff, then signposting them towards further training and qualifications. Many teachers and leaders have been

'home-grown' and developed using this effective approach.

- The school is outward-looking. Leaders capitalise on opportunities to work with professionals in other local schools and services and embrace the support offered by local authority advisers. The school has, for example, signed up to the local authority's 'spotlight on standards' initiative, a four-year programme of continuous focus on raising standards.
- The curriculum is well organised and responsive to pupils' current interests, as well as to local and national events and festivals. Team leaders ensure that pupils learn all that they should in the national curriculum and in the right order. Themes for learning are enriched with educational visits and journeys to extend pupils' experiences and to provide them with chances to apply what they learn in school in different situations and contexts.
- Spending of the sports funding is effective in extending the range of sporting activities for pupils to try and opportunities for them to participate in competitive sports and other sporting events with other local schools.
- Leaders engage readily with parents and go the extra mile to support them. Responses to Parent View and discussions with parents during the inspection confirm this unequivocally. The school actively seeks to involve them so that they are better placed to help their children at home. For example, Year 6 parents accompany their children to 'Saturday school' and this gives them an insight into what their children are learning.

Governance of the school

- Governors fulfil their statutory duties and responsibilities appropriately.
- Governors know the school well, but accept that they have not looked at pupils' achievement in enough detail in the past. They have made a strategic decision to form a small group with a specific remit to monitor pupils' achievement and to improve their skills in interrogating more effectively the school's in-house information about learning and national, published data. This is a work in progress but it is too recent to determine that it is having any impact.
- The chair of the governing body is knowledgeable in governance, and understands the need to both support and challenge school leaders. Even so, minutes of previous meetings of the governing body do not show that governors have interrogated leaders about pupils' achievement to present a suitable level of challenge.
- The governing body monitors the progress towards the school's priorities set out in the school improvement plan. While governors have ensured that all targets are linked to pupils' outcomes, they have not placed disadvantaged pupils' achievement as a high enough priority. For example, despite these pupils' previous underachievement, they have not insisted that specific targets are set this year for their progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Governors monitor the spending of the pupil premium, the funding for special needs provision and the physical education and sports premium for primary schools, but they have not measured their impact on pupils' learning well enough.
- The governing body is accurate in identifying that community involvement, the communication with parents and the school's work to promote pupils' well-being and

personal development are strengths of the school's work.

- Between them, governors possess a wide range of backgrounds, with professional skills in finance, education, media, working with children in care and support for vulnerable families, which are an asset to the governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, including governors, give safeguarding a high priority. Excellent teamwork ensures that all staff with safeguarding roles ensure that pupils are safe. Clear lines of communication, fully understood by all staff, make sure that information is passed on.
- Regular and thorough safeguarding training means that staff are vigilant, know what to look for and fully understand their responsibilities to protect pupils. They know and follow robust procedures.
- Record-keeping is of a consistently high quality, enabling leaders to retain an overview of child protection cases and to supervise the actions being taken to support the most vulnerable pupils.
- Foster parents and parents whose children have complex emotional, communication or learning needs confirmed that the school excels in the quality of care, guidance and support it provides, not only for their children, but for them too. They endorsed other pupils' views in discussions and the pupil questionnaire that their children feel safe at school.
- Risk assessments are thorough. Key information about pupils who are most vulnerable is logged and shared with relevant staff. Risk assessments precede educational visits and journeys. Healthcare plans are kept on file, taken on every trip and adhered to.
- The school works closely and effectively with families and outside agencies. For example, the school works with charities and the police to provide information-sharing sessions for parents so that they know the signs to look for in child exploitation and the 'Prevent' duty.
- The single central record of statutory checks on all staff and adults working with pupils is completed properly to ensure their suitability to work with children. Requirements for recruiting staff are followed carefully and documents to evidence this are held securely in staff files.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is improving but it is not consistently good.
- The quality of teaching is uneven across year groups, classes and subjects. It is outstanding in Reception and strong in Year 1. In other year groups, it varies in its effectiveness in ensuring that pupils make rapid and sustained progress.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations for pupils to write longer pieces that require them to sustain and develop their ideas in English and across the full range of subjects.

- Teaching is structured and well organised but frequently learning is constrained by too much emphasis on completing the task without sufficient account taken of whether the task is too easy or too difficult. The work is not consistently well matched to pupils' wide-ranging abilities.
- The use of probing questioning to deepen pupils' thinking and understanding, especially in whole-class sessions, is limited in some classes, especially in stretching the most able pupils.
- In mathematics, teaching does not consistently provide enough challenge. Learning is not adjusted quickly when pupils show that they have understood and are ready to move on. Teachers' subject knowledge is not secure in some classes. Work seen in pupils' mathematics books confirmed that teaching is inconsistent in providing regular opportunities for pupils to reason, explain their thinking and solve problems.
- The teaching of phonics is systematic from an early age. This contributes to pupils' improving achievement in key stage 1 in reaching the expected standard in the national phonics screening check. Even so, pupils who read to inspectors used a fairly limited range of strategies to make sense of the text to become well-rounded readers.
- Teaching assistants support effectively the pupils they are deployed to work with. They encourage independence to reduce over-reliance on adult help. Strong support matched to the needs and abilities of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to access the same curriculum as others and make progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well, form strong relationships with them and manage their behaviour effectively.
- Classrooms are inviting, interesting and well-organised spaces for learning. Written annual reports on children's learning are of excellent quality.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- One parent commented that 'staff work hard to ensure that all children are happy' and that, through the school's extra-curricular and social activities, pupils are well rounded, happy and confident. The evidence gathered by inspectors supports this view.
- Pupils are well cared for by everyone. The school is child-centred and responsive to individual needs. Pupils who have special educational needs, disabled pupils, looked after children, those with medical needs and those with emotional mental health and/or disabilities all enjoy a positive experience at the school.
- Pupils new to the school settle in quickly and make friends.
- Playtimes run smoothly and pupils choose whether to use climbing and games equipment or just to sit quietly and have a chat with their friends. Some pupils told inspectors that they would like more variety. Levels of supervision are good.
- Pupils confirm that they feel safe at school, which is also the view of parents. Pupils know about bullying. Around a quarter of the 59 pupils who responded to the pupil questionnaire confirmed that bullying happens but teachers are usually good at

resolving it.

- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Inspectors noted that some pupils did not have sufficient knowledge about age restrictions for the use of social media.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy school and look after tools, toys, books and other resources carefully. They listen attentively most of the time and follow adults' instructions quickly, without fuss.
- The way in which pupils move around the building calmly and considerately is impressive, taking into account the large numbers of pupils who can be on the move at the same time.
- Pupils mix with each other well. They show respect towards each other and adults. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum. Many of the comments pupils made demonstrated that they are reflective, thoughtful individuals who are prepared well by the school to be good citizens in the future.
- Incidents of serious breaches in adhering to the school's behaviour policy are infrequent and exclusions are rare.
- Overall, pupils' attendance is average. The breakfast club and catch-up classes have helped to raise vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils' self-esteem and promote their regular attendance.
- Pupils generally show positive attitudes to learning. Even so, during the inspection, they did not show that they were able to make decisions for themselves and often waited for the next instruction from an adult. Also, when they were taught as a whole class, sometimes pupils lost interest and engagement.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes are uneven across the key stages. In the early years and Year 1, pupils are currently making rapid and sustained progress. From Year 2 to Year 6, it is more variable.
- In the 2016 national tests in Year 2, standards rose for the first time to significantly above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standard was also above average. All groups achieved well, including most disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the most able and pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- By the end of Year 2, most pupils reached the standard expected in the national phonics screening check. This means that they are able to break words down to read unfamiliar words and blend sounds together to write them as they move through key stage 2.
- The results of the 2016 tests in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 are starkly different to those of younger pupils. Few Year 6 pupils reached the expected

standard or made sufficient progress in reading, English spelling, punctuation and grammar and mathematics. Attainment was exceptionally low overall and boys' achievement was markedly lower than that of girls in reading and mathematics. Pupils were not well prepared academically for the transfer to secondary school.

- These results do not show enough improvement since the previous inspection in 2013, when inspectors set raising standards as the main area for improvement.
- In particular, the overall performance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was well below average in 2016.
- The school's information about pupils' learning shows that, currently, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making better progress in some, but not all, classes.
- Work seen in pupils' books in key stage 2 shows variation in progress in English and mathematics across year groups and classes. Pupils in a few classes are making stronger progress than others. Boys' attainment is generally lower than that of girls.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.
- Most-able pupils make similar progress to other pupils. Even so, some of the most able pupils struggle to talk about and explain what they are learning.
- The written work seen in subjects other than English and mathematics does not provide substantial evidence that achievement in other subjects is good. Pupils of all abilities frequently complete the same tasks, such as cutting and sticking pictures, labelling diagrams and colouring in worksheets, regardless of their ability. These activities do not challenge those pupils who are capable of much more.
- Most pupils read widely and often. A new approach in the teaching of reading for pupils in Years 5 and 6 has rekindled their enjoyment of reading.
- Pupils' handwriting is generally well formed, legible and fluent.
- Pupils excel in a wide range of physical activities during and beyond the school day. Specialist teaching in physical education enhances the provision. This contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to regular participation and good achievement.
- Music is a subject where pupils achieve well and they enjoy musical experiences. Specialist music teachers contribute to pupils' learning of instrumental techniques.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Provision, in terms of teaching and the range of stimulating activities provided inside and outdoors, is outstanding.
- Children make rapid progress from their starting points, including disadvantaged children, children who speak English as an additional language, the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Year on year, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen significantly from below the national average to above it. This means that, when they move into Year 1, they are prepared well for what they will be learning.

- Detailed assessment of children’s development in all areas of learning is continuous. All staff contribute to capturing secure evidence of children’s learning to substantiate that they are making strong progress in all areas of learning. Judgements are checked with other schools and staff in Year 1 to confirm their accuracy.
- Staff are adept at knowing when to intervene to move children’s learning forward and when to step back and allow them to work things out for themselves. They question children effectively to deepen their understanding. In their high-quality conversations with children, staff model spoken language extremely well to develop their language and communication skills speedily.
- The setting provides rich opportunities for children to develop their early skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Phonics is taught well, enabling children to draw upon their knowledge to write, for example, invitations to their friends. The children eagerly engaged an inspector in conversation about who they had written to, what they had written and why.
- Key staff know each child and their family extremely well. Strong relationships between staff and children give children the confidence to talk about and share their feelings with an adult if they are anxious or upset. Their physical and emotional well-being is supported sensitively.
- Children’s behaviour is excellent because staff have high expectations for children to behave well and routines are so well established. Children are self-motivated and make choices independently about the equipment and toys they want to use, which they select themselves without adult help.
- Children develop superb attitudes to learning. They are proud of their own work and the achievements of other children, such as those selected as being a ‘star writer’. They respond to questioning eagerly and follow instructions carefully.
- Excellent leadership of the early years is evident in ensuring that high-quality provision has a profound impact on children’s achievement. A parent commented that they were ‘impressed and astonished’ at their child’s achievements. A strong culture of mutual respect underpins all learning and care. All of the early years welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	109552
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10023430

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	818
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley McCullagh
Headteacher	Jane Thomas
Telephone number	01582 723 970
Website	www.stmatthewsluton.com
Email address	adminmp@stmatthews.primaryluton.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets the Department for Education’s definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has expanded significantly from three classes in each year group to four.
- Mobility is high, with new pupils starting and/or leaving the school throughout the school year.
- Between 10% and 50% of the pupils in each year group are disadvantaged pupils.
- More than half of the pupils on roll speak English as an additional language.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- The school has its own family centre with a family team that offers a programme of support for families.
- The school is in the process of reopening an alternative provision to provide temporary education for up to six pupils from local schools in Luton with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs are provided on site. These are managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Following the original one day inspection, undertaken by an Ofsted Inspector in February 2017, Ofsted decided that additional evidence was needed to secure the judgements. On 20 April, one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMI) returned with an Ofsted Inspector to gather further evidence about pupils’ learning and achievement and to complete the one day inspection. The HMI subsequently converted the inspection to a full section 5 inspection and was joined by four Ofsted Inspectors the following day. Evidence from each of the two days of the short inspection was taken into account.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups.
- Pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 read to inspectors and talked about their books.
- Inspectors looked at pupils’ written work in their mathematics books and in their learning books (where pupils record work in all other subjects) in every class in key stage 2 and in all but one class in key stage 1.
- The school provided information about the progress that pupils are making currently. Published information about pupils’ attainment and progress in relation to all pupils nationally was considered.
- Pupils were observed at play during breaktimes and in assemblies. Inspectors spoke to pupils while they worked in class and more formally in groups.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, the coordinator of special educational needs and other staff who support vulnerable pupils, year group leaders, the chair and two other governors and five parents or carers. An inspector met with two representatives from the local authority.
- The views of 61 parents who responded to Parent View, 99 members of staff who completed the staff questionnaire and 59 pupils who completed the pupil questionnaire were considered. The responses of 466 parents who returned the paper copy of Ofsted’s questionnaire were considered.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school’s documentation, including policies and record-keeping for safeguarding and case studies of vulnerable pupils. The single central record of statutory suitability vetting carried out on all staff, volunteers and governors was checked.
- The school’s information about how well it is performing and its plans for future improvements were evaluated. Minutes of the governing body’s meetings were examined.

Inspection team

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Teresa Skeggs	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Skingsley	Ofsted Inspector
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