

Inspection of St Matthew's Church of England Primary School, Ipswich

Portman Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 2AX

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Outstanding
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The headteacher of this school is Darren Gates. The school is part of the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan multi-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jane Sheat, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Tom Brooke.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for at this school. Pupils' well-being is an integral part of the school's strong values. Pupils say everyone is kind and staff help them with their work. Pupils enjoy learning. They are determined to achieve their best. Many pupils make strong progress from their starting points.

Children make an outstanding start to their education in early years. They settle quickly into class routines and make exceptionally strong progress from the start.

Pupils' behaviour is good in class and around the school. Pupils know and follow the school's behaviour approach. The school is a calm and purposeful place for learning.

Pupils have lots of friends at school. Pupils from many different cultural and faith backgrounds get on well together. If someone is unkind, staff rapidly sort this out. Pupils are confident to talk to staff if they are anxious or worried about anything.

Pupils enjoy a range of sports and other clubs. There are many curriculum-linked visits and visitors. These enrich pupils' learning and promote their personal development effectively.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent sums up the views of many: 'My children love this school and are thriving here.'

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

The school has a well-designed, carefully sequenced curriculum. In most subjects, the school has selected the important knowledge pupils must learn so they are ready for the next stage in their education. Pupils make good progress in gaining understanding and developing their skills. The school has a consistent approach to checking what pupils have learned in each lesson. Teachers use assessment well to build on pupils' prior learning.

In a few subjects, the school has not sufficiently considered all the specific learning requirements. It has not organised the important knowledge that pupils need to remember. This means that pupils are less secure in using their knowledge and understanding more complex concepts.

The school has a strong understanding of the needs of pupils with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In all classes, teachers make effective adaptations to learning activities. Pupils with SEND are included in lessons and work with their peers. The school works closely with external experts. All pupils with SEND get the help and support they need. This helps them to make strong progress.

Reading is of the highest priority. Children make excellent progress with learning phonics in Reception. Children who start early years with no knowledge of English make equally strong progress. Children start to read simple sentences very early on in the school year.

Effective phonics teaching means all pupils learn to read by the end of Year 3. Pupils who struggle with reading are determined to learn. Pupils develop a love of reading and books from the word go. Older pupils read a wide range of books. They talk enthusiastically about the books they read. They challenge themselves to read different authors and types of books.

Pupils are polite and kind to each other. Pupils mostly listen attentively to their teachers and concentrate hard in lessons. Very occasionally, pupils are distracted. However, they understand the consequences and, with a reminder, are quickly back on track. The school carefully monitors any behaviour incidents. The school works with pupils and parents to sort these out.

The majority of pupils attend school every day and arrive on time. There are cases where parents take extended holidays. The school works unstintingly with a range of agencies to make sure pupils attend every day.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. The school's motto, 'whatever you do, do it with all your heart', is evident in how pupils approach their school life. Pupils learn to keep themselves safe online and in the local community. Pupils benefit from the school's strong values and ethos, which are the foundation of all aspects of their personal development.

Children love learning in the early years. They listen with great interest to their teachers. Learning activities are well designed and hold children's interest. Staff have high expectations for what all children can achieve. Children from many backgrounds learn and play well together. Children are exceptionally well prepared for Year 1.

The school is effectively supported and suitably challenged by governors and by the trust. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They have no concerns about workload. Staff value links with other local and trust schools and receive helpful professional development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the school has not fully considered all the specific learning requirements. It has not sequenced the important knowledge and skills that

pupils need to gain proficiently, which means pupils do not make the progress they are capable of in these subjects. The school should review its curriculum plans in these subjects and ensure that all important knowledge is precisely identified and carefully sequenced, so that pupils build on their prior learning and make strong progress across the curriculum.

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	146229
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10268137
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	408
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tom Brooke
Headteacher	Darren Gates
Website	www.stmatthewsprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich multi-academy trust in March 2019.
- The predecessor school was inspected in June 2015. It was judged as good in all areas.
- The school is a Church of England school. The school had a section 48 inspection in 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection is not scheduled during this academic year, but will be within eight years of the previous inspection.
- There have been some changes in leadership since the last inspection. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher are in place.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers, a group of governors, and representatives from the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Trust.
- Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding lead and the safeguarding governor. To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and scrutinised provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, geography, mathematics, design technology and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also talked to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke to parents dropping off their children at school. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. The inspectors considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

Julie Winyard, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Thomas	Ofsted Inspector

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