

Inspection of a good school: St Matthias School

Deans Road, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV1 2BH

Inspection dates:

26–27 November 2019

Outcome

St Matthias School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where staff know pupils well. Leaders work hard to ensure that everyone feels part of the school's diverse community. Pupils feel happy and safe at the school. This is because leaders have created an environment where pupils are well supported and cared for.

Leaders expect pupils to try hard in school. They do not tolerate disruption in lessons or at social times. Behaviour around the school is generally calm and orderly. In lessons, most pupils are polite and respectful of their teachers. Pupils know where to go if there is a problem. Where there are accusations of bullying, staff deal with these swiftly.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils, including those who find learning difficult. Everyone gets access to a good-quality curriculum. They insist, for example, that all pupils should learn GCSE Spanish to appreciate other cultures. Staff plan many opportunities for pupils to have different learning experiences. Pupils have recently taken part in voting for the youth council. They have also taken part in an exhibition about Islam.

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

Leaders have high expectations about what pupils should learn. In many subjects, the curriculum is well planned so that pupils build on prior learning. The order in which topics are taught helps pupils to improve their knowledge.

This is particularly the case in English. Teachers have clear intentions about the curriculum. Topics are carefully sequenced to ensure that pupils' work is increasingly challenging. Teachers use questioning skilfully to check that pupils understand their learning. This helps develop pupils' use of key vocabulary and their ability to share ideas with others. In Year 9, for example, pupils were able to use the term 'semantic field' when exploring nature in poetry.

There are similar strengths in history. Teachers have a clear idea about what they want

their curriculum to achieve. At key stage 3, pupils learn about important historical events in chronological order. Pupils also have chances to revisit prior learning. In Year 7, for example, pupils have a clear understanding of how medicine has developed over time.

This is not the case for all subjects. In modern foreign languages, teachers are not planning learning activities as well as they could. They do not use assessment effectively to help pupils remember more and develop their language skills in greater depth.

In mathematics, some pupils do not have a thorough understanding of the full range of topics. Teachers model learning effectively so that pupils can understand new ideas. However, in key stage 3, pupils do not all learn the same topics. Leaders have not thought carefully enough about the order and sequencing of these topics to help all pupils make strong progress.

Many pupils participate in extra-curricular clubs. Pupils take part in a range of sporting activities and fixtures. A large proportion of those that take part are from disadvantaged backgrounds. The school also runs a successful jiu-jitsu club each week. Teachers provide strong careers support and guidance. Pupils visit the Skills Show in Wolverhampton and Year 11 pupils are taken to visit local colleges and universities.

Most pupils behave well in lessons. They show a positive attitude to their learning and are confident learners. When off-task behaviour does occur, teachers act quickly to ensure that it does not continue. Leaders have ensured that strong systems are in place for managing pupils' behaviour. However, the number of pupils who receive fixed-term exclusions and those who are permanently excluded from the school remains high.

Leaders provide a high level of support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's deaf resource base provides specialist teaching to develop deaf pupils' reading skills. Pupils are fully integrated into school life and are well supported by teaching assistants in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils with SEND are given strong pastoral care and academic support. This helps them to be successful in their subjects.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a strong understanding of safeguarding issues in the local community. Staff receive regular training and know what to do if they have a concern. Leaders meet regularly to discuss concerns about the school's most vulnerable pupils. Where necessary, referrals to external agencies are made in a timely way. Pupils are taught about safeguarding issues through a detailed personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum and form time. They are clear how to keep themselves safe and what they should do if they have a concern.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have a clear ambition for modern foreign languages. Their desire to enter all pupils for GCSE Spanish means that the number of pupils completing the English Baccalaureate combination of subjects is significantly above the national average. However, teachers in Spanish are not planning learning effectively in order to meet the needs of all pupils. Leaders need to ensure that teachers use assessment more effectively to help pupils deepen their knowledge of Spanish.
- The curriculum in mathematics is not as well thought out as it could be. Teachers are not clear as to why different groups of pupils in the same year group study different topics. Leaders should ensure that the rationale about how topics are sequenced and planned for is clear so that all pupils make better progress.
- Leaders have taken decisive action since the previous inspection to improve behaviour. This has created a calm and purposeful learning environment. However, the number of pupils who receive a fixed-term exclusion or who are permanently excluded remains high. Leaders should ensure that the number of pupils who are excluded is reduced.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged St Matthias School to be good on 17–18 March 2016.

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 are 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	104387
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10111742
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	828
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Phil Lambert
Headteacher	Dean Coombes
Website	www.st-matthias.com/
Date of previous inspection	17–18 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school uses one alternative provider, The Orchard Centre.
- The school has a resource base for pupils with a hearing impairment.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher and deputy and assistant headteachers.
- We also met with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), subject leaders and a range of other staff.
- ☐ We spoke on the phone with a representative of the local authority.
- ☐ We met with three members of the school's governing body.
- ☐ We focused on English, mathematics, Spanish and history during the inspection. We considered the school's curriculum plans, visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. We also met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects.
- ☐ When inspecting safeguarding, we looked at the school's procedures for recruiting staff. We considered the quality of staff training, and the procedures to keep pupils safe.
- ☐ We reviewed leaders' records for pupils who move to other schools and attend alternative provision. We spoke to a range of staff about their experiences of working

in the school, and a range of pupils about their experiences of school.

Inspection team

Mark Howes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Linda McGill

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