

Inspection of St Matthias Academy

Alexandra Park, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 2BG

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Aileen Morrison. The school is part of the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Alun Williams, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tony Wells.

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils come to St Matthias Academy with negative experiences of education. However, the school swiftly transforms their attitudes, enabling them to engage with learning successfully. Pupils are very positive about the personalised support they receive from staff, particularly when they feel anxious. They feel safe and well cared for.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to interact successfully with their peers and adults. Carefully structured routines enable pupils to learn without disruption. Pupils learn how to manage their emotional responses to situations around them and behave well. Pupils are kind, empathetic and respectful to others.

Through the well-structured curriculum, pupils learn a range of subjects well. The daily reading focus enables pupils to improve their comprehension and understanding of a breadth of texts. Through reading, pupils are supported to reflect on the issues in their communities and the world beyond.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive through bespoke support for their social and emotional needs. Through carefully tailored approaches, pupils develop confidence and aspirations for their next steps. One parent's comment echoed the views of many: 'Since attending St Matthias, my child is like a different child – the staff are just amazing.'

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

The school has high expectations and aspirations for pupils. Leaders' vision for the social, emotional and academic success of pupils is shared by all staff. On pupils' arrival at the school, staff check what pupils know and do not know. This enables the school to provide an appropriate curriculum that addresses gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school identifies pupils' SEND needs swiftly and ensures that the curriculum meets these needs. Through the curriculum, pupils build on their prior knowledge with confidence. Learning resources have been carefully structured to ensure that pupils learn progressively more complex concepts. However, at times, staff do not adapt their teaching of the curriculum to ensure that all pupils are able to apply their learning independently. For example, in mathematics, some pupils do not have fluent knowledge of core operations, which hinders them in solving more complex problems.

The school has prioritised literacy, particularly reading, in all subjects. Through well-planned reading activities, pupils learn to read with fluency and understanding. Pupils are immersed in a range of texts designed to generate a love of reading. For some pupils, an effective early reading programme is in place to support them to read. Oracy lies at the heart of learning at the school. Through discussion, pupils develop their understanding of subjects.

The school prioritises attendance. Through well-structured routines and supportive relationships with staff, pupils gradually increase their attendance. Each pupil's attendance is closely monitored and bespoke support is provided. Leaders and staff are relentless in

ensuring that pupils, parents and carers understand the link between regular attendance and pupils' achievements.

The personal development of pupils lies at the core of the school's curriculum. Many pupils have social and emotional mental health issues and the school provides personalised support. The development of each pupil's character is central to the work of the school. Pupils learn to regulate their emotions and develop effective social skills. For many pupils, the school has a transformative impact in enabling them to re-engage with learning and the world around them.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is well structured. Pupils' experiences in the world beyond school inform the development of the programme. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of the internet and how to keep themselves safe when online. Pupils are well prepared for re-integration into mainstream schools and colleges. The careers programme enables pupils to consider their next steps with knowledge and ambition.

Governors and the trust know the school well. They provide rigorous challenge and support in equal measure. The overwhelming majority of staff are proud to work at the school and feel that leaders are supportive of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not consistently ensure that staff adapt the ways in which they teach some areas of the curriculum. Consequently, some pupils are not prepared well enough to apply their learning independently. The school must ensure that staff make appropriate adaptations so that pupils learn successfully in all subjects.

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	144285
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	10344800
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tony Wells
CEO of the trust	Alun Williams
Headteacher	Aileen Morrison
Website	https://www.stmatthiasacademy.org.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Matthias joined Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership trust in 2023.
- The school operates from three sites serving key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above the national figure.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is well above the national figure.
- Many pupils who attend St Matthias have SEND.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and members of the leadership team.
- An inspector held discussions with the CEO of the trust, a member of the board of trustees and the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors visited the three sites of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science and PSHE. In each subject, inspectors met with senior and curriculum leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with staff to consider their views.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers who responded to the confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the Ofsted online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Hilary Goddard	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Thomas	Ofsted Inspector
Tonwen Empson	Ofsted Inspector

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