

Hugh Sexey Church of England Middle School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123897
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	395311
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2012
Lead inspector	John Carnaghan

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	620
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gaynor Thomas
Headteacher	Jenny Venning
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2007
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Age group	9–13
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Carnaghan

Additional inspector

Rob Isaac

Additional inspector

Helen Prince

Additional inspector

Kate Rick

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 29 lessons, taught by 26 teachers over 15 hours. They held meetings with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at its policies, assessments and records as well as questionnaires from pupils and 180 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized middle school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school that provides pupils with excellent experiences and ensures they are very well equipped for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils make very rapid progress at school and attainment by the end of Year 8 is well above expectations. They benefit from challenging teaching and a positive learning environment. The rigorous use of assessment information means any variations in progress are quickly identified and addressed. The achievement of all groups, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is outstanding.
- Excellent teaching and a rich vibrant curriculum provide pupils with memorable learning experiences. As Year 5 pupils said of their lessons, 'Teachers inspire us, they try to push us but not overmuch.' Informal and formal assessment enables staff to clearly understand if pupils find learning easy or difficult and adjust their teaching accordingly, so pupils are always rigorously challenged.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are very keen to learn. They are considerate, courteous and highly cooperative, making an excellent contribution to the safe, positive learning environment. They have a very clear understanding of safe and unsafe situations and how to act to keep themselves secure.
- Leaders and managers focus closely on improving learning opportunities for pupils. They monitor the school in depth using first-hand observations and sophisticated analysis of assessment data to provide a clear picture of the school's provision. They manage performance rigorously and leadership of teaching is a significant strength. For example, leaders have been proactive in improving teaching, tackling concerns directly and promoting best practice. The outstanding curriculum offers varied, exciting opportunities to pupils and fully promotes their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents and carers hold very positive views of the school but do not have enough in-depth information on their children's curriculum or ongoing assessment.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on work with parents and carers to ensure that families are more fully informed about the school curriculum and their children's progress.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enter the school with attainment that is broadly similar to that expected for their age. They leave school having reached attainment levels that are well above age expectations; this represents outstanding achievement. The school uses its accurate assessment information to identify groups of pupils whose performance may be falling short of its challenging targets. It then acts decisively to ensure that these pupils' learning is fully supported, using various intervention strategies and skilled staff to boost their progress. This means that there is a strong consistency in achievement between different groups of pupils. The needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well known; the consistent support given allows these pupils to make similar progress to their peers.

The school is rich in literature of all kinds, well promoted by the lively and engaging library. Pupils show a love of reading, developing great confidence and demonstrating literacy skills that are well above expectations. Attainment in reading by the end of Year 8 is well above expectations.

Lessons promote excellent learning. An outstanding Year 5 mathematics lesson typified best practice. The tasks and style of the lesson were closely tailored to this lower-ability class so that there were brief games, problems to solve and practical measuring activities to be done. All staff worked cohesively to promote learning and, in a positive atmosphere, where enthusiastic pupils basked in adults' praise. Staff were particularly adept at involving and motivating pupils with statements and other special educational needs. The progress made by all pupils was excellent.

Parents and carers express very positive views of their children's progress. They are right to do so; given their starting points, the achievement of all groups of pupils is outstanding.

Quality of teaching

Teachers show consistently high expectations and an ability to challenge all pupils. As a result, almost all pupils make rapid and sustained progress. Teachers provide rich learning experiences through well-planned and prepared activities that ensure learning builds step by step and that no time is lost in lessons. High-quality written feedback and the perceptive use of targets mean most pupils fully understand their

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next learning steps. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and pupils are questioned very perceptively; staff regularly check pupils' understanding and adjust lesson activities as appropriate. Lesson plans take account of the range of abilities in lessons, offering the correct degree of support and challenge to all groups.

The pace of lessons is consistently brisk and pupils respond most positively to this challenging environment, showing great enthusiasm for learning. Cultural awareness is promoted well through, for example, composing music for a film sound track. A reflection on the relationships between the animal kingdom and mankind in a science session was continued in a subsequent art and design lesson and deepened pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Pupils develop high literacy, communication and numeracy skills. This is because these skills are exceptionally well taught and developed across all the subjects of the curriculum. A love of reading is fostered very well through the well-resourced and staffed school library. In one lesson seen, pupils used high levels of communication skills and teamwork as they worked to solve complex mathematical problems.

The school deploys its well-qualified teaching assistants to where needs are greatest. The skilful support they provide enables pupils to overcome barriers to learning. The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is excellent. Parents, carers and pupils are rightly positive about teaching at the school, one typical comment being, 'My son comes home excited and inspired by the way lessons are taught.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons and around the school are excellent. The vast majority show strong respect for teachers and other adults and towards one another. They follow instructions closely and respond well to praise from staff. Pupils are typically very considerate in the school's narrow corridors and outside areas are well ordered.

The code of conduct is well known to all and widely adhered to. Teachers are consistent in its application, leading to high expectations of pupils' conduct. For the very few who find consistent good behaviour difficult, there is systematic support from teachers and an opportunity to work in the inclusion 'pod' until the issues are resolved. The school is very proactive in raising awareness of and dealing with bullying of any kind, although pupils report that such incidents are very rare. The school has recognised the potential for concerns over cyber-bullying and has done a lot to raise parents', carers' and pupils' awareness of this area, ensuring that if this form or any other form of bullying occurs they are immediately addressed. Discussions with pupils indicate that they have every confidence this would happen.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and report it is a very safe place where behaviour is a real strength. Parents and carers correctly judge the school as safe, although a very few have concerns over behaviour. Inspection evidence points to exceptionally good

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behaviour being the norm. A systematic analysis of absence by pupil group has enabled the school to target particular groups of pupils and this has led to a steady rise in attendance, which is above average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leaders demonstrate an uncompromising focus on pupils' progress. They have successfully maintained high levels of achievement over a considerable time and consistently pursue school development and improvement.

Assessment information provides the school with an accurate understanding of its performance, and is used very perceptively to drive attainment forwards and to ensure that teaching is as good as it can be. Staff are routinely asked to account for pupils' progress and these interviews trigger numerous professional development opportunities. Middle leaders have been given increased responsibilities and are more accountable. These factors ensure consistently very effective teaching and learning. Members of the governing body work closely with staff, have a good understanding of the school and share their ambitions. The school's capacity for further improvement is excellent.

The precise tracking of each pupil enables the school to see where some may be faltering and require additional advice or assistance. Interventions are closely targeted to individual needs and led by well-trained staff, with the outcomes monitored closely to ensure their success. In this way, the school ensures equal opportunities for all pupils. Very effective pastoral care arrangements help pupils with emotional and other issues, and ensure there is no discrimination. Safeguarding has a high priority and is very efficiently undertaken; the school fully meets requirements.

Pupils' attainment on entry is quickly identified and what they learn is fitted to their personal needs. This provides an exceptional curriculum that is broad, balanced and flexible. It is enhanced by numerous additional learning experiences, particularly in sport, music, modern foreign languages and the creative arts. Pupils enjoy numerous visits to places of interest and benefit greatly from the expertise of visiting specialists in a wide range of disciplines. An outstanding range of partnerships enhances the school's provision. Close liaison with linked first and secondary schools has developed a more cohesive curriculum and assessment pattern across the full age range. Links with an inner city London primary school and schools in Sweden, Spain and Greece help expand pupils' horizons. Partnerships with schools in challenging circumstances have offered valuable support, demonstrating the school's commitment to excellence in education both at home and across the country.

Pupils' great consideration for others demonstrates the school's core values. There are many opportunities for reflection and the support of others. Cultural development opportunities are rich and broad in art and design, music, drama and with the wider world. Excellent promotion of moral and social development means that most pupils leave school well prepared for the next stage in their education as responsible,

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mature citizens.

Parents and carers enjoy many opportunities to discuss their children's progress at both thrice-yearly formal consultations and more informally at regular coffee mornings or tea afternoons. The school rightly plans to build on this by offering more sophisticated curriculum and assessment information on line.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 June 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Hugh Sexey Church of England Middle School, Wedmore
BS28 4ND**

Many thanks for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we recently visited your school. It was a genuine pleasure to talk to such mature and eloquent pupils. We would like to congratulate you on your excellent behaviour.

Hugh Sexey Middle is an outstanding school. The excellent teaching you enjoy means that you make rapid progress in your time at school and your attainment levels are well above those expected by the end of Year 8. The school makes sure you are thoroughly prepared for the next stage in your education. Teaching is outstanding; lessons are enjoyable and challenging, and keep you all working at full stretch.

The headteacher, leaders and managers run the school extremely well. They ensure that teaching is as good as it could be and that you have excellent learning opportunities. We have asked the school to:

- improve the information provided to your parents and carers about your progress and the curriculum you study.

All of you can help by maintaining your highly positive approach to learning and the school in general. It was a pleasure meeting you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan
Lead inspector

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