

St Mary's Church Of England Middle School

Williams Way, Belford, Northumberland, NE70 7NX

Inspection dates

11–12 December 2012

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a good school that has improved significantly since its previous inspection.
- The school provides a welcoming, caring environment where learning is much enjoyed.
- Teaching and learning across the school is good and there is some that is outstanding. Teachers are enthusiastic and students describe their lessons as fun.
- All groups of students make good progress and leave at the end of Year 8 with standards that are above those found nationally.
- Learning support assistants provide good support in lessons, so that those students who have additional needs make good progress.
- Students' behaviour is excellent and they promote safety extremely well for others.
- The school offers an extensive range of learning opportunities and their promotion of students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Senior leaders work well together and lead the school very effectively. Staff are most positive about all aspects of the school and are very proud to work there.
- Governors are highly involved with the school and offer a good degree of support and challenge.
- Parents and members of the local community think very highly of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally teachers do not give students work that stretches them, or guide them sufficiently so that they know how well they are learning.
- Teachers do not share well enough with each other the things they do best and not all teachers know clearly how to improve their teaching.
- Subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight teachers teaching 12 lessons. One observation was conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and carried out analyses of students' books and other work.
- The inspector listened to some students read and observed sessions where guided reading activities took place.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, development planning, the quality of teaching and information about teachers' professional development.
- Meetings were held with students, school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The 16 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey, and the 10 responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

Alison Thomson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized school of this type.
- Most students are White British.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium is average.
- The proportion of students supported by school action is average and the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average.
- The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure more teaching and learning is outstanding by:
 - always giving all students work that stretches them to accelerate their progress
 - sharing effectively with students ways that they can tell how well they are learning
 - sharing amongst teachers what they do well and ensuring school leaders give teachers clear guidance about how they can improve their teaching
 - further involving subject leaders in checking the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter in Year 5 with attainment that is slightly below average. They make good progress and leave in Year 8 with attainment that is securely average in mathematics and above average in English.
- Students' attainment has improved greatly since the previous inspection because of good leadership and management, better teaching and more rigorous checking of students' progress.
- During the inspection, achievement in almost all lessons seen was good and in some lessons it was outstanding. Students work extremely well together, whether it be learning how to block attacks in netball, debating the factors that affect the rate of evaporation in science or rehearsing for this year's production of Cinderella, and this contributes to good or outstanding progress.
- Progress in reading is good and rapidly improving, through daily reading sessions. The inspector observed some of these sessions and was impressed by the mature way the students discussed aspects of their books with each other, clearly enjoying the activity.
- Disabled students, those with special educational needs and those eligible for pupil premium also make good progress. This is because of the good support they receive from learning support assistants in class and also on a one-to-one basis and in small groups.
- Students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills are particularly good and prepare them very well for their future. Those skills are seamlessly woven into as many lessons as possible and students are often asked to evaluate how all those skills have improved. For example, how an information and communication technology lesson improved their literacy, numeracy and even art skills.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good and in some lessons it is outstanding.
- Parents agree that the quality of teaching is good.
- Relationships between students and adults are excellent and there is a very purposeful atmosphere for learning in the classrooms.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and students say that they make their lessons enjoyable by giving them lots of interesting things to do.
- Teachers generally plan their lessons well with work that is modified for the students' different abilities and makes them think deeply. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson students were asked to consider the effects of long-term mobile phone texting on a person's ability to write high-quality prose. Occasionally, however, some of the work lacks enough challenge to accelerate the students' progress as well as it might do.
- Teachers usually share with pupils how they can tell if they are learning well. However, this is not the case in all lessons and progress slows as a result.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well in many lessons. For example, Year 6 were thinking about the work of Martin Luther King and what it was like to be discriminated against, or Year 7 were debating how they could tell the time of year Jesus was born.
- Learning support assistants use very effective questioning to ensure that students who have specific needs understand their work. This was seen in many lessons, including a Year 7 mathematics lesson on the equivalence of fractions.
- The marking in books is generally good, particularly so English, with some helpful specific comments on how students can improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour has improved greatly from what it was at the previous inspection. There is much evidence from staff, parents and members of the community that it has been outstanding for some time now. Students themselves rate behaviour as nine out of 10.
- Students say that they feel extremely safe at school. They understand well the different forms that bullying can take and say that when occasionally people fall out it is sorted out very quickly. When asked what they liked about their school, one student said, 'We're just like a big family.'
- Students told the inspector that the school's system of rewards, such as gaining house points and the introduction of prefects, were some of the initiatives that help to promote excellent behaviour. The inspector observed the prefects discussing modifications to the school's anti-bullying policy with the headteacher.
- Students' outstanding behaviour has a highly positive impact on their learning. This was exemplified particularly well in a Year 5 design and technology lesson where students enthusiastically used checklists to tell for themselves the level they were working at and what they needed to be able to do to reach the next level.
- There are many opportunities for students to take on responsibilities, through roles in the school council promoting the views of others, to sports leaders organising sports for younger pupils, to listening to others read and helping out in the library. Everyone seems to have a job and thoroughly enjoys doing it.
- Students understand e-safety well and promote it for others by writing their own guidelines about how to keep safe on the computer.
- Attendance of all groups of students is consistently above average.

The leadership and management are good

- Members of the senior leadership team complement each other very well and have brought about improvements very quickly since the previous inspection. They understand the steps the school needs to take next to become even more successful.
- The staff questionnaires showed that staff are extremely positive about all aspects of the school and are keen to do the best for the students.
- Systems for checking how well students are progressing are most rigorous. Any underachievement is picked up and addressed early allowing students to catch up well.
- The quality of teaching has improved overall through training and lesson observations. However, currently there are not enough opportunities for teachers to share with each other aspects of their teaching that are particularly successful. In addition, not every teacher is informed clearly by leaders how to improve his or her own teaching.
- Gaps between groups of pupils' performance are closing rapidly, reflecting the inclusiveness of the school and the good equality of opportunity. Discrimination is not tolerated at all.
- The curriculum helps all students to learn well. It is imaginative and skilfully adapted to the interests of the students. Who would not enjoy designing their own website for a 'classy' product or carrying out a practical investigation into the effect of exercise on the human body?
- Opportunities to enhance students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Experiences such as designing their own stained-glass window depicting aspects of Christianity and life in Northumbria, performing in the school orchestra at many events and hosting the Pearl of Africa choir from a school in Uganda, have a profound impact on the students. One student told the inspector that they were very lucky not to have to fetch water from a well each morning or walk 14 miles to school.
- The school's safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides good support for the school and has been instrumental in helping it to improve.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is very closely involved with the school and there is no doubt that governors have helped the school to move forward. Many governors are frequent visitors to the school and gain a good understanding of the quality of teaching, sometimes by observing teachers in the classroom. They undergo training in many areas and have an increasingly good knowledge of the data relating to the students' progress. This is helped by the school's clear analysis. Governors hold the school to account well and they are fully involved with the allocation of the school's finance, including the funding for students eligible for pupil premium and teachers' pay linked to their performance.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 131222 |
| Local authority | Northumberland |
| Inspection number | 402453 |

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

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| Type of school | Middle deemed secondary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 9–13 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 79 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Sebastian Moss |
| Headteacher | Lynne Brookes |
| Date of previous school inspection | 3 February 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01668 213361 |
| Fax number | 01668 219451 |
| Email address | admin@stmarysmiddlebelford.northumberland.sch.uk |

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