

Richard Coates Church of England Middle School

Thornhill Road, Ponteland, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE20 9QB

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Pupils make good progress throughout their time in the school. Almost half of Year 8 pupils reach well-above-average standards in English and three quarters reach this standard in mathematics. Progress in mathematics in Year 7 and Year 8 is outstanding.
- The quality of teaching is good overall with some that is outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, explain new ideas clearly and plan lessons that interest pupils.
- There is a vibrant curriculum with a wide variety of rich experiences such as residential visits, sports teams and musical opportunities. This makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Christian values pervade the school, with high levels of respect and tolerance modelled by staff and emulated by pupils who are friendly, polite and cooperative. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively and pupils feel safe.
- Pupils with special educational needs make outstanding progress in English and mathematics.
- All leaders, including governors, lead the school with zest, drive and determination. The headteacher's strong belief that all pupils could and should succeed permeates the school. There are excellent systems to check on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching so that achievement is improving and the standards reached by the end of Year 8 are high.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is some teaching that requires improvement and not enough that is outstanding.
- Standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2 are average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 20 teachers as well as making shorter visits to lessons to look at pupils' work. Some of these observations also involved the headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils and heard others in Year 6 read.
- The views of 25 parents, who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View), were taken into account as well as the results of surveys carried out by the school.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and a school improvement adviser who works with the school.
- The school's improvement plan and records of achievement, teaching, behaviour and safeguarding were examined.
- Eleven staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors took these into account.

Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Steven Horne

Additional Inspector

David Griffiths

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Richard Coates Church of England Middle is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils who are looked after by the local authority and the children of personnel in the armed forces, is lower than the national average.
- About 30% of pupils transfer to the school at the beginning of Year 5 from primary schools in a neighbouring local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has recently gained the Artsmark Gold award and the Basic Skills Quality mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good and a greater proportion is outstanding by:
 - making sure pupils are given opportunities to respond to teachers' marking and feedback so that they can make even more rapid progress
 - improving questioning so that pupils are expected to think more deeply and explain their reasoning
 - ensuring learning activities are more often closely matched to the different abilities within sets and classes
 - ensuring the quality of work in pupils' books is consistently high with teachers providing individual feedback so that pupils know what to do to improve.
- Raise standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6 for all pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, by:
 - assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding during lessons and moving them quickly on to more challenging work as soon as they are ready
 - helping pupils to correct any errors and misunderstandings before moving on to new work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with attainment levels that are above average for their age in reading and writing and broadly average in mathematics. By the time they leave at the end of Year 8 they have made good progress in English with a good proportion reaching standards that are well above average for their age. Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 8 are exceptionally high because pupils make outstanding progress during Key Stage 3.
- Attainment in reading by the end of Year 6 is significantly higher than the national average. Pupils read widely, fluently and with good levels of understanding. The library is delightful and pupils' enjoyment of reading is further inspired by visiting authors.
- Standards in writing are above average, with increasing proportions of pupils reaching higher-than-average levels at the end of Year 6 and Year 8. This is because teachers give pupils frequent opportunities to practise and improve their writing whilst telling them clearly how they can reach higher levels.
- Attainment in mathematics at the end of Year 6 has been broadly average for the last two years. Current attainment is higher than this and standards are beginning to improve. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 are not always moved on to more difficult work quickly enough as teachers are not all checking pupils' understanding during lessons well enough, and there are not enough opportunities for them to learn from their mistakes by correcting their own work or by completing further examples.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons because the quality of teaching is usually good or better. Pupils are given clear targets so that they know how well they are doing and how to reach the next level.
- Pupils have very secure skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics and are able to use these skills to learn well in other subjects.
- Pupils who are supported at school action, school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs make outstanding progress. This is because their achievement is carefully tracked and they are exceptionally well supported.
- The attainment of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is behind that of those who are not eligible by two terms in English and three terms in mathematics. The gap has narrowed considerably in reading and writing because the school has used pupil premium funding well to provide additional support to eligible pupils. The impact of this support is less evident in mathematics than it is in English.

The quality of teaching is good

- The vast majority of teaching is good with some that is outstanding and some that requires improvement. In the best examples teachers have high expectations and plan challenging learning activities that inspire pupils to produce work of the very highest standard.
- For example, in a Year 8 English lesson the teacher read an extract from *The Woman in Black* to inspire pupils to discuss their image of the main character. Pupils were able to work together to discuss their ideas confidently and eloquently. Effective questioning allowed pupils to deepen their understanding and improve their descriptions.
- Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to explain their thinking, with some questioning that does not probe pupils' understanding in enough depth so that they can make even more rapid progress.
- All teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan systematic learning activities that are carefully explained so that pupils know what is expected in order to make good progress.
- The quality of work in pupils' books is good. Where teachers have high expectations, pupils work hard to produce work of an outstanding quality. These high expectations are not yet consistent

across the school.

- Pupils' work is marked regularly with good feedback to help them know how to improve. Teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunities to respond to feedback in a way that will help them to make even faster progress.
- Teachers assess pupils' work well in order to plan tasks that are matched to the needs of the majority of pupils in the class. The work set is not always matched closely enough to different abilities within sets and classes, so that it is sometimes too easy or too difficult for some pupils.
- Good support from teaching assistants and teachers for those pupils who are of lower ability or who have special educational needs helps them to make excellent progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are immensely proud of their school and their behaviour is exemplary. Teachers forge strong, positive relationships with pupils and use praise effectively so that pupils thrive in an atmosphere where there are high levels of mutual respect.
- Strong moral and Christian values permeate the work of the school with the well-being of individual pupils at the heart of it. This atmosphere makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is always good and is often outstanding. When teachers give pupils opportunities to work together they are able to cooperate extremely well.
- The school takes bullying very seriously and has recently received accreditation from the local authority for the exemplary work it does. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and say that minor incidents are dealt with extremely effectively.
- There are very few instances of poor behaviour and this is reflected in the fact that there have been no permanent exclusions for many years and only one fixed-term exclusion this year.
- Attendance is above average and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced.
- Pupils have a good understanding of safety, including how to stay safe when using the internet. They say they feel safe and they are safe.
- There is very strong support from parents, with all of those who responded to Parent View saying that pupils are well-behaved and that their children are safe and well looked after.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders work together as an exceptionally well-organised team. They have a strong belief that all pupils can succeed and their ambition is shared by all staff. This demonstrates the school's commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination.
- There are excellent systems to check the progress that pupils are making and information is used well to identify where additional support is needed. Teaching assistants have been trained well and are effective in their support for pupils who are falling behind. This means that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good or better progress.
- There are robust systems to manage the performance of teachers. Leaders regularly observe lessons and check the work in pupils' books. Teachers are given good feedback after lesson observations to help them know how to improve.
- Leaders have a detailed and accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and a comprehensive plan in place to tackle any weaknesses. They have a good capacity to improve because they have a track record in raising and maintaining high standards by the end of Year 8.
- The curriculum is excellent with a wide variety of enrichment opportunities such as residential visits, sports teams and opportunities to perform through music or theatre. Over 200 pupils are learning to play a musical instrument. This broad curriculum, together with activities that promote social responsibility in the community, helps to develop outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural values in pupils.

- All parents who responded to Parent View say they would recommend the school to another parent. Leaders have been particularly successful in raising the status of the school in the community so that it is now oversubscribed and the school of choice for many parents.
- The school takes the safety of pupils seriously and there are excellent systems in place that meet all safeguarding requirements.
- The local authority holds the school in high regard, so much so that it was asked to provide support for another school that needed help to improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very knowledgeable about the school, including the data on its performance. Governors provide challenge by taking part in monitoring activities; for example, they recently visited to investigate why mathematics attainment is lower in Key Stage 2.
 - Governors set demanding targets for the headteacher and listen to evidence about the performance of teachers before agreeing to pay awards. They are aware that some teaching requires improvement but have yet to provide the challenge needed to ensure all teaching is good or better.
 - They know that resources, including the pupil premium, are used effectively to raise standards.

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

Unique reference number	122370
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	412088

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 aided
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	446
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melanie Hinson
Headteacher	Paul Rusby
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2010
Telephone number	01661 823167
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