



Richard Coates Church of England Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122370
Local Authority Northumberland
Inspection number 292386
Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007
Reporting inspector Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Thornhill Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Ponteland, Newcastle upon Tyne
Age range of pupils	9–13		Tyne and Wear, NE20 9QB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01661 823167
Number on roll (school)	473	Fax number	01661 821183
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Harry Howell
		Headteacher	Mr John Daniels
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Richard Coates School is situated in Ponteland in Northumberland and serves that village, the local rural areas and the west of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. The full ability spectrum is represented in the intake but overall attainment on entry to the school is average. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a very small number from Asian or Chinese backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Richard Coates is a good school. Christian values are at the heart of its work and pupils from different social, cultural and faith backgrounds feel welcomed and well cared for. It has the confidence and support of the vast majority of parents. Standards are above average and pupils' progress and achievement are good. The small number of pupils with Asian or Chinese backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make the same progress as others. Pupils have good literacy and numeracy skills and the personal qualities for future success. Despite good basic skills, there are many pupils who struggle to write fluently when called upon to do so at length.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and secure and have a good understanding of what they must and must not do to be healthy. A small number of parents are concerned about behaviour and bullying. The inspection found that, although there are a few pupils who have difficulty adjusting to the disciplines of school life, they are well managed. Behaviour is good in the classroom and around the school. Pupils report that minor incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Attendance is above average and there is no unauthorised absence. Pupils are involved in a variety of charitable projects in the community and the older ones watch over Year 5 during break and lunchtimes. There are good opportunities to influence school improvements through the work of the school council. Pupils know right from wrong and they have good social skills. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is also good. All pupils receive the care and support they need and this aspect of the school's provision is very good. For example, the school makes very effective use of outside agencies and specialist staff to help those youngsters who are in any way vulnerable.

The school has a rigorous system for monitoring progress to identify and address weaknesses in pupils' performance. This has contributed significantly to the rise in standards. The quality of teaching ranges from outstanding to satisfactory and is good overall. The challenge facing the school is to ensure that all teachers use the school's agreed policies for teaching and learning. There is inconsistency, for example, in the quality of marking and in the use of the rewards' system. The school's curriculum is good, with good specialist teaching in Years 7 and 8. Although there is insufficient planned use of computer technology in lessons, the school is tackling this issue with success. There are extensive enrichment opportunities and extra-curricular activities and the take-up is high. This is particularly so in music and sport, which do much to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem and to foster creativity and enjoyment.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is committed to equality of opportunity and to maintaining Richard Coates as an inclusive school. He is well supported by able colleagues and by knowledgeable governors. There is no complacency and all look to ways to improve. Building work is being undertaken which, when complete, will greatly enhance the learning environment. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection and the school's capacity for further improvement is good. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by improving pupils' ability to write fluently and at length in a variety of contexts.
- Ensure that school policies and practices for teaching are implemented consistently and regularly by everyone.

Achievement and standardsGrade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 were above average in 2004 and improved further in 2006. There was a significant dip in performance in English and science in 2005; boys did badly that year and underachieved. The school's effective response has led to much better progress for pupils in that year group. Their end of Year 7 assessments and the quality of work now that they are in Year 8 confirm that standards have risen to above average and that progress is good. The boys improved significantly in that time and now achieve as well as the girls. Those pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well. In 2006, the school met its challenging target in mathematics and exceeded it in English.

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Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils' behaviour is good in class and around school and pupils report that the rare incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils work and play well together and their social development is good. There are good opportunities for them to exercise responsibility and to contribute to the local community through charity work. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance levels are above average. The school council is an effective forum for pupils to air their views and to influence developments. Every encouragement is given to them to adopt healthy lifestyles and pupils respond positively. For example, all have two hours of physical education and games each week and many attend the

extra-curricular sports activities. The school also provides a daily choice of healthy meals. Pupils have the basic skills and personal qualities to make the most of the next stage of their education and to provide for their future economic well-being. Cultural education is developing strongly to raise pupils' awareness of the breadth of ethnic traditions found in the wider community. This results in pupils having a good understanding of the cultural diversity of British society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive and encourage pupils to want to learn. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and teach accurately and in ways that help pupils learn. They set appropriately challenging learning targets and pupils understand what they have to do to achieve them. Lesson activities are generally well planned. Pupils are well managed, discipline is maintained and lessons proceed according to plan. The use of new technology is variable. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively by most teachers. However, there is insufficient use made of computers to help pupils learn. Marking and assessment are good overall, with some excellent examples in some areas but occasionally inadequate practice in others. There is scope, for example, for more rigorous marking in Year 8 science books. The small amount of outstanding teaching seen was characterised by very high expectations of what pupils could achieve, challenging work that fully stretched pupils, and the lesson proceeding at a vigorous pace.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is relevant to the needs of pupils and prepares them well for transition to the next phase of education. The curriculum is enriched through the provision of French for all pupils and an extensive programme of out of school and residential visits, for example, to Ford Castle. Exchange visits take place with a school in Italy and there is a skiing trip to Norway. There is a good range of after school clubs and activities, particularly in music. Almost one in three pupils learns to play a musical instrument. Enterprise links with the local business community and Northumberland Education Business partnerships help develop pupils' good economic awareness. There is insufficient planned use of information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects and, out of lessons, pupils have limited access to computers. These shortcomings are now being addressed successfully by the coordinator and by the provision of a new library with ICT access. Good provision is made for pupils to understand the importance of safety issues and the need for a healthy lifestyle. Overall, the curriculum provides well for all groups of pupils but in Year 7 only girls do dance.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school's atmosphere is calm and purposeful. The school liaises closely with a range of service providers to ensure the care and support provided to vulnerable children and their families is good. The school's procedures for child protection are in place and arrangements to keep pupils safe follow current national guidelines. The school is conscientious in addressing risks both at school and when pupils are out on activities. Pupils say they feel safe and well supported by trusting relationships with adults. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by staff; their individual education plans are good and help to meet their learning needs effectively. This is also the case with the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school makes good use of assessment data to guide pupils' academic progress and to set appropriate learning targets. The vast majority of pupils know what they need to do to improve and meet the targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher sets Christian values at the heart of the school's work and is committed to equality of opportunity for all pupils and the removal of any bar to their academic and personal development. He is supported in this by his senior leaders who work effectively as a team. The school is rigorous in its evaluation of performance and in taking action to remedy weaknesses, as is evident in the progress being made now by Year 8. School policies and procedures, however, are not always implemented consistently and regularly by every teacher. Planning is good. The priorities for development are appropriate and centre on promoting high quality care and education, and on raising standards. The governors know the school well and play their part in shaping its future direction. The school is well staffed. There is an appropriate range of high quality resources to support pupils' learning and they are used well to secure good value for money. Building work is being undertaken which, when complete, will greatly enhance the learning environment. There have been good improvements since the last inspection, particularly in the monitoring of pupils' progress and in evaluating the work of departments. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Richard Coates Church of England Middle School

Thornhill Road

Ponteland

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE20 9QB

11 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the welcome you extended to us during our recent visit and the time many of you gave to talk to us about your school. You impressed us with your courtesy and the way you work well together. You are confident young people who enjoy your work and take full advantage of the wide range of activities available outside of lessons. We wish there had been an opportunity to listen to your music because we heard a great deal about how well you play.

You are attaining above average standards and you make good progress and achieve well. Some of you in Year 8 will have been disappointed with your results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 but you and your teachers have worked hard. You have now reached above average standards in your work and have made very good progress. We wish you well when you move on to the high school in September.

There are many things in your work to be proud of. You have the skills and personal qualities which will enable you to succeed in your education. You behave well, work hard and show consideration for others. There are pupils whose social and cultural backgrounds are different from most and yet they are accepted as part of your community and enjoy all that the school has to offer.

There are two things for you and your teachers to work on to raise standards even further. Some of you do not write well when called upon to do so at length. This is not just in English lessons but in other subjects. Your extended writing needs to be more fluent and accurate and you need to adapt your style for different purposes. Secondly, there are a few occasions when agreed lesson procedures are not followed consistently by every teacher. You have told us that you find this either confusing or frustrating and is something you would like to see put right.

Thank you again for showing your school off to us. We wish you all every success.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower

Lead Inspector