

# St Mary's Church of England Middle School, Belford

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131222
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	295450
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ann Wallis

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	87
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Martin Straker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Heather Westcott
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Williams Way Belford Northumberland NE70 7NX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01668 213361
<b>Fax number</b>	01688 219451

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<b>Age group</b>	9–13
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Belford St Mary's is a new school which gained Church of England Voluntary Aided status on 1 April 2006. It was previously a community school called Belford Middle School. The school is much smaller than average and serves an area with a broad socio-economic mix. It draws pupils from the village of Belford and the surrounding rural area. A below average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. St Mary's has Healthy School and SportsMark awards and has Investors in People status. The school is subject to reorganisation proposals.

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## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school which has excellent links with the community it serves. The school is experiencing a period of change as it embraces Church of England Voluntary Aided status and also faces some uncertainty due to reorganisation proposals. During this time, the good and committed leadership of the headteacher and senior teacher, together with good governance and the support of all staff, are ensuring that pupils continue to achieve well. The school is a friendly and welcoming place where everyone is valued and the safety, well-being and enjoyment of pupils are at the heart of its work.

Most parents are supportive of the school and very positive about the education it provides. Their comments included, 'the school is well run and efficient', 'the staff are eager and willing to listen', 'my daughter's confidence has grown' and 'children are encouraged to have self-respect and to respect others'. A few parents had concerns about homework and behaviour and some wanted more frequent parents' meetings. The inspection judged pupils' behaviour as good and that the school communicates well with parents through reports, meetings and letters home.

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well throughout the school because teaching is good overall. Teachers know their pupils well and carefully match work to their needs so in most lessons they make good progress. In some lessons, where the pace is slower, pupils do not make such good gains in their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their work is very well organised and they receive effective individual support from teachers and teaching assistants.

Pupils' personal development and the care and support they receive are good. Pupils say they like school and they attend regularly. Pupils' personal development and the good curriculum are enriched by opportunities to contribute to, and links with, the local community. For example, they are given opportunities to develop their musical skills as members of the school orchestra and to play for local audiences in the community. Pupils' academic guidance is satisfactory because the school does not have a consistent approach to the way work is assessed. As a result, some pupils are unsure how to improve their work.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the pace of lessons to maximise pupils' achievement.
- Share good practice in order to adopt a consistent approach to assessing pupils' work to ensure they know how to improve.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Cohorts are small and therefore attainment on entry varies from year to year. Pupils who took Key Stage 2 tests in 2006 came into the school with broadly average standards and made good progress to reach just above average standards at the end of Year 6. Given their capabilities and starting points, pupils achieved well and this achievement placed the school in the top third of schools nationally. School targets were met and those for the higher grades were exceeded because higher attaining pupils achieved particularly well, especially in mathematics. In Years 7 and 8, work seen in lessons and in pupils' books indicates that they are making good progress and achieving well.

School data show that in 2006 pupils left Year 8 with higher than expected standards and achieved well, particularly in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because they receive good individual and specialist support from teachers and teaching assistants.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and are enhanced by the school's strong links with the community. Most say they enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average. Pupils behave well and have good relationships with their teachers and with each other. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy. They enjoy keeping fit by taking part in sporting activities and after school clubs such as gymnastics. They are given an excellent range of opportunities to contribute to the community, for example, as members of the orchestra, in helping with the over sixties lunches and in fund raising through activities such as the school sponsored walk. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. A residential visit to nearby Holy Island is used to good effect to enrich pupils' cultural and spiritual development. Pupils develop good teamwork and leadership skills through enterprise activities as varied as making bags and toy ducks and recycling mobile phones.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good and lead to pupils achieving well. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. Most pupils want to learn, respect their teachers and work hard. Lessons are well planned and teachers are knowledgeable about most subjects. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and ask probing questions which test all pupils, including the highest attainers. Some lessons are conducted at a slower pace and, as a result, there are times when some pupils lose interest and their pace of learning slows. Teachers and pupils make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to display resources, research information and manipulate data. In some lessons, pupils are encouraged to assess their own and each other's work which leads to good learning and a clear understanding of how to improve. This is an area the school is developing and it recognises that good assessment practice is inconsistent across the school. Work is displayed and praised when appropriate which helps to increase pupils' confidence.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and all statutory requirements are met. In spite of the school being very small, creative staffing arrangements ensure older pupils are taught by specialists in almost all subjects. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are developed well. Booster classes provide extra help for pupils before they take national tests. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit greatly from the very good curriculum support they receive. Pupils say how much they enjoy the wide range of residential trips, visits and after school clubs. They particularly like taking part in outdoor activities such as canoeing and visiting the beach to study biology. Pupils also say they would like more opportunities to take part in competitive sport. The curriculum is further enriched through the school's many important

links with local organisations such as the church and the youth group. The comprehensive personal and social education curriculum ensures pupils are well informed about health and safety issues and are aware of career opportunities. Good links with both the first and high schools ensure that transition between schools is made easy and pupils are well prepared for their new learning environments.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Pupils' personal care and support is very good. The academic guidance they are given is satisfactory. In this close-knit and very supportive community, teachers know their pupils very well and take great care to ensure they are safe and can turn to an adult in school if they need help. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are firmly in place. Outside agencies are used well to support pupils who have particular learning difficulties. The successful 'ears 2 U' programme helps to increase pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

The school communicates well with parents through reports, meetings, parents' evenings and letters home. Pupils' views are listened to through the school council.

The academic guidance given to pupils is not yet consistent across the school. Because of variations in the way in which their work is assessed, not all pupils are sure how well they are doing or how to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good and lead to good achievement and personal development for all pupils. The leadership of the headteacher is good and she is very well supported by a talented senior teacher. Communications within the school are excellent so staff feel well supported, trusted and valued. During a period of change for the school, creative and committed leadership is ensuring that staff morale remains high and pupils continue to achieve well. Appropriate priorities for development have been identified and the school continues to build on its excellent links with the church, community and other partners to maximise opportunities for pupils. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well but is not complacent. It is consulting widely and is now refining the self-review process to make the best use of assessment data. Hence the school has good capacity for improvement. Governance is good. Governors are supportive of the school and are becoming more fully involved in monitoring and reviewing its work. Resources are well deployed and finances are well managed. The school facilities are very well used by the community for adult learning, youth and childcare provision. The school provides good value for money.



## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.



## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

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**Annex B**

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

5 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Middle School, Belford, Northumberland, NE70 7NX

Thank you for giving me such a warm welcome when I visited your school last week. I really enjoyed seeing your good work and hearing about all the things you liked about school.

You attend a good school and these are some of the good things I found.

- You reach above average standards in your work and achieve well.
- You are keen to take responsibility and help others, both in your school and in the local community.
- Your teachers and classroom assistants teach you well and take good care of you.
- Your school is well led and managed.

This is what I have asked your school to do now.

- Make sure you work at a good pace in all of your lessons to achieve the best you can.
- Make sure you understand how well you are doing and how to improve your work.

To help St Mary's improve even further make sure that you always do your best.

I wish you all every success in your education.

Best wishes

Mrs A Wallis

Lead inspector