

# St George's Church of England Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118844
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	313114
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clare Gillies

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 (total)	315
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gilbert Spencer
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Dyson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 January 2005
<b>School address</b>	Chequers Road Sheerness ME12 3QU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01795 877667
<b>Fax number</b>	01795 877690

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pupils come to the school from all over the Isle of Sheppey. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is well above average – almost one third of the pupils in Years 7 and 8. Most of these pupils have dyslexia or moderate learning difficulties. A very low percentage of pupils, especially in Year 6, are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school received a Healthy Schools Award in October 2007. The organisation of education on the island is changing from a three tier to a two tier structure in September 2009 when the school will open as a two form entry primary school. Year 5 pupils did not join the school in September 2008, but remained in their first schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the school is good. Pupils enter the school with below average standards and make good progress. They are happy and enjoy coming to school: 'It's the best school ever – I love it' was typical of their comments. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to lead healthy lives and enjoy physical education and sport. Standards in Years 6 to Year 8 in English, mathematics and science are meeting expectations. Standards are below expectations in French in Years 7 and 8 and below expectations in music in all years, but improving. Some Year 6 pupils lack confidence in speaking in class but, by Year 8, they are articulate and keen to contribute. Pupils have good information and communication technology (ICT) skills but, apart from science lessons, they do not use computers enough in other subjects to extend their learning. Careers advice and citizenship have been effectively included in the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 and 8, since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are good and have also improved with clearer marking that tells pupils how to improve their work. Training to improve teachers' questioning skills has generated better learning and lessons are more interesting with, for example, teachers using interactive whiteboards well to stimulate pupils' learning. Occasionally, teachers do not show pupils how the work they are doing is related to real life and their own experiences. The Christian ethos underpins the high expectations and atmosphere in the school; adults and pupils work together respectfully and thoughtfully. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and, as a result, they behave very well in lessons and play happily together. Pupils feel safe and know they are well cared for. They are welcoming and polite to visitors. The number of day and residential outings has increased. Gifted and talented pupils are catered for well and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as their classmates. Further improvement in pupils' reading and writing remains a key priority, for example with lessons specifically to encourage them to read and discuss books. Pupils certainly have the confidence to say what they think of them, for example 'It's boring and it hurts your eyes as there's so much writing!' Since taking up post two years ago, the acting headteacher, deputy headteacher and staff, well supported by the governing body, have moved the school forward. They have maintained high expectations through regular tracking of pupils' progress. Staff morale remains high as a consequence of their skilful management during this period of rapid change. The inspection team agrees with the parent who wrote: 'It is a lovely school with a happy atmosphere.'

### What the school should do to improve further

- Encourage teachers to show pupils how learning is relevant to their lives.
- Improve pupils' standards in French in Years 7 and 8 and music across the school.
- Use computers more frequently and effectively within all subjects to support pupils' learning further.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

In 2007, Year 6 pupils made good progress in mathematics and English given their starting points and their national test results were close to average. Pupils' reading has improved in the last couple of years and the school is now focusing on improving their writing. There is almost no difference between the progress made by girls and boys. For the last six years the school has taught the National Curriculum for Years 7 to 9 in two, rather than three, years which has contributed to good progress in Years 7 and 8. In 2007, about one third of Year 8 pupils took

the national tests normally taken at the end of Year 9. Practically all of them attained the expected level and several attained above this. These pupils made very good progress from Year 6. Good teaching in music is helping pupils to improve their progress but standards in French remain weak. At the last inspection, pupils were not producing satisfactory work in technology but now standards in all elements of the curriculum are satisfactory.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils appreciate their time at the school and particularly enjoy the residential trips, the sports clubs and the attractive school buildings and grounds. They are generous in supporting charities and the school council has organised fund-raising events such as wearing fancy dress for Children in Need. Pupils speak convincingly of the benefits they feel by adopting a balanced diet and many are committed to maintaining healthy lifestyles. The school encourages this strongly, through physical activity and support for cycling to school. Pupils feel the school is a friendly place where they enjoy and value their education and being with their friends. This is reflected in their slightly above average attendance, the low number of fixed-term exclusions and the absence of racist incidents. Bullying does happen, mainly involving thoughtless remarks, but staff deal with incidents swiftly and effectively. Pupils are confident that an adult will respond quickly and fairly to problems they may have. Sensible behaviour is reflected in the minimum amount of supervision by staff. Year 8 pupils apply to become Playground Activity Leaders and help younger pupils to play games. Pupils are well prepared for their next schools.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are typically good. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and manage minor behaviour issues well. Most pupils are attentive and concentrate. Teachers encourage pupils: 'You're right, go, go go', and some are skilful at making pupils think: 'What are you going to tell me to do now?' The school's focus on developing the style of questions teachers pose to pupils has led to better learning. Teachers stress subject specific vocabulary in lessons and encourage pupils to use these words. Occasionally they miss opportunities to explore with pupils how the learning is relevant to their lives or linked to something that they already know. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively, particularly in mathematics. However, pupils rarely use computers for research, writing or data analysis in subjects other than science. Teachers are adjusting their teaching for four mixed ability groups; some do this better than others. Nevertheless, it works well for all pupils when those who understand work quickly become 'Leading Learners' and help explain things to others in their class. Teaching has improved in technology and music since the last inspection.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Citizenship is now included within the personal, social and health education programme which has been thoroughly revised and improved as well. The school was involved in a local authority initiative that encouraged pupils to learn about and sign up to the Olympic Values. Such work brings to life citizenship studies of, for example, rights and responsibilities. Careers advice and guidance are extended by speakers from the fire brigade or the police, helping pupils to have

realistic ideas about the world of work. In ICT pupils develop skills that they will need in the workplace, but the use of these skills is not planned well in other subjects. The range and number of lunchtime and after school activities are limited although there are more trips and visits than at the time of the previous inspection. In addition, each year group has a residential trip which develops pupils' social skills and builds their self-esteem and confidence.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's strong commitment to pupils' welfare contributes to their happiness and positive attitudes to school life. At weekly meetings, all staff involved with each year group discuss in detail the support individual pupils need. The school introduces pupils to adult life by giving them positions of responsibility. In the past, the school council has played an important role in encouraging pupils to express their opinions. Elections for council members have not yet taken place this year, which is slightly delaying its potential value in shaping the school's direction. Support staff are persistent in pursuing non-attendance, but it has declined since the last inspection. Lunchtime groups to help pupils with anger management and/or thoughtless behaviour are effective and pupils value them. Learning support assistants are skilled and experienced and a great asset to the school's workforce. One of them organises support for pupils who prefer to stay inside quietly at lunchtime. Systems for safeguarding procedures are secure and all teachers receive regular training on child protection. Clear and effective systems to monitor pupils' progress and record standards mean that teachers know when to intervene if any pupils underachieve. This is seen in classes where pupils in a 'focus group' sit together with a learning support assistant. Pupils know their levels of work and how they can improve it.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The acting headteacher and the deputy headteacher are successfully ensuring that all pupils continue to receive a good education in their last year at the school. At the same time, they are efficiently preparing for the major change to a primary school, knowing that alteration works to the buildings will commence soon, and they have carefully planned the timetable and pupil groupings to minimise disruption to learning. The school runs smoothly and standards have been maintained and improved in some areas since the last inspection. Subject leaders are becoming increasingly active in monitoring and evaluating how well their subjects are taught although this is not always effective. For example, the use of computers in all subjects has not been monitored closely enough. The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher carry out lesson observations regularly, evaluate teaching and learning accurately and look at the content and presentation of pupils' books systematically. They prepare short, realistic action plans and ensure that changes are made. The school's capacity to improve is good. The school has strong links with the community. Pupils attend services in Minster Abbey, support a local neonatal unit and fund raise for people who need support in the wider world. The school is used by local groups such as the Brownies, and it has offered workshops for parents. There have always been strong links with other schools on the island. Governors ask detailed questions to check on progress and standards. Some governors have loyally supported the school for many years and are resolved to ensure a smooth transition to its new status. Financial management has been

improved in the last couple of years; members of the governing body have expertise in this and in other important areas, which they use to good effect.

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## Annex A

**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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

16 October 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of St George's Church of England Middle School, Minster ME12 3QU Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We much enjoyed meeting you and wish we had had more time to talk to more of you. You are at a good school and practically all of you say that you enjoy being there and feel safe and well cared for. You behave well in lessons and around the school and we agree with you that the buildings and the grounds are very attractive, with lovely views. We were impressed with your understanding of how to lead healthy lives and it was good to see many of you enjoying sport and being active – we hope you continue like that in the future. You are also generous raising money for charities. You make good progress in lessons because you are taught well and you work hard. As a result, you reach at least average standards. The only subjects where you need to get higher levels are French in Years 7 and 8 and music, so we have asked your headteacher to improve those. You are very good at using computers so we have suggested that, in all subjects, teachers use them more often to help your learning. Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are working hard to make sure that you all move on to secondary school with the skills you need to do well. We hope you will enjoy your last year at St George's and will be happy and successful in your futures. Best wishes Clare Gillies Lead inspector