

# Richard Coates Church of England Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122370
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	340137
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Moira Fitzpatrick

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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	460
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Melanie Hinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Rusby
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Thornhill Road Ponteland Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE20 9QB
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's data on pupils' attainment, tracking data, work files and action plans for departments, the school's improvement plan and policies and procedures including those relating to safeguarding. They also considered the views of parents as expressed in the 149 parental questionnaires that were returned during the inspection.

- the attainment of pupils when they join the school in Year 5 and the progress they make during their time in school
- the impact of curriculum developments upon pupils' attainment and personal skills, since the previous inspection
- how effectively the new leadership and management structure is contributing to the school's development.

## Information about the school

This is an average sized middle school set in an area of broadly average socio-economic status. Almost all pupils are from a White British heritage. There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, though there is a higher than average proportion with a statement of special educational need. Pupils join the school in Year 5 from a large number of primary and first schools scattered over a wide area. Their attainment on entry is broadly at the expected level for their age.

The school has undergone significant changes to staffing since the previous inspection. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2007 and new appointments were made to the senior leadership team in September 2009. Since 2007, the school has received numerous awards, including the International School Award, and the Anti-bullying Award. The school is over-subscribed and there has been a sharp increase in the number of pupils joining the school from the local town.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

This outstanding school has made excellent progress since the previous inspection because of the clear vision, high expectations and excellent communication skills of the headteacher. The senior leadership team has been restructured and expanded to extend responsibilities and to ensure that staff have the support and training to carry out new duties. Middle leaders too have developed their role since the previous inspection and now make a significant contribution to the school's improvement. Staff morale is high and the school exudes a vibrant and positive ethos which is firmly rooted in its Christian values. Governors have been highly supportive of the headteacher's drive to improve the school's environment to one which is fresh, welcoming and very well resourced with computers and other technological aids to learning. Links with parents and carers are outstanding in their breadth and detail, so that parents feel they are well informed and valued partners in their children's learning. Links with local schools provide an excellent platform for developing and sharing good practice. Academic standards and pupils' personal development have improved and much of the provision for learning has become outstanding. Given the rapid improvements since the previous inspection, the school has demonstrated an outstanding capacity for further improvement and provides excellent value for money.

Pupils' attainment is high and their progress is good whatever their starting point. Standards in national tests have been well above average in recent years and school data show that pupils are on course to maintain these high standards in the coming year. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good overall and sometimes it is outstanding. There has been good improvement to the quality of teaching since the previous inspection, as a result of improvements to assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress. Teachers are increasingly setting challenging targets for pupils. They do not all make clear how these can be achieved. As a result, pupils are not always sure about what they need to do to succeed in some lessons. The excellent curriculum provides an ideal vehicle for pupils to follow the school motto: Let Your Light Shine. Carefully planned provision ensures that pupils are well motivated learners, who have plenty of opportunity to pursue their special interests and develop their individual talents. To the delight of many parents and pupils, the school's excellent provision for information and communication technology (ICT) enabled students to access learning from home during the recent closures caused by snow.

Pupils are cared for, guided and supported extremely well. The school provides thorough and personalised support for pupils who need it. Staff set an excellent example in their caring attitudes so that pupils feel safe and secure in school and willingly follow their example in dealings with each other. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

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development is outstanding. Pupils accept responsibility readily, both for their own learning and progress and for helping others. They learn tolerance and respect in an ethos that teaches: everyone is different, everyone is special. Excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning, good attendance and punctuality all contribute to pupils being extremely well prepared for the next stage of learning.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the consistency of advice given to pupils on how to improve their work so they know precisely what to do to reach their targets.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 are typically high in English, and well above average in mathematics and science. School data and inspection evidence show that a high level of attainment is sustained to the end of Year 8 when pupils leave the school. Current data also shows that standards in mathematics are rising this year. The school attributes this to improved systems for tracking pupils' learning, so that underachievement is spotted quickly and remedial action taken. There are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups of pupils at the school, regardless of background or ability. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils clearly enjoy school. They are eager and confident learners. Their love of learning is seen in their excellent behaviour, which ensures that lessons run smoothly and that time is very well used for learning. Pupils are cheerful and courteous with one another and support each other well in lessons. Inspection evidence shows that they produce a good volume of work, with pride shown in their presentation and in the effort that goes into tasks. Their hard work and good concentration ensures that they make good and sometimes outstanding progress in lessons. This is reflected in school data which shows that the vast majority reach the expected level for their age, and more than expected, exceed that level.

Pupils say that bullying is 'very rare' and that when it does occur it is low level and speedily dealt with by staff. They have a strong sense of personal safety because they have a good understanding of the dangers associated with internet use and drugs misuse. They know the potential risks in some subjects and are well prepared for activities in science, physical education and design and technology. Pupils' excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles is reflected in high levels of participation in sport and a strongly developing trend of healthy eating. They make a strong contribution to school life through the school council and give to the wider community through many generous collections for various charities, including their support for a school in Tanzania. Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual. By the time they leave the school, they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of learning with good basic skills and excellent personal qualities.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers have high aspirations for their pupils. They use their good subject knowledge to challenge pupils to think carefully through skilful questioning in class discussions and to make accurate assessments of pupils' learning. They set the correct level of challenge for new learning. Lessons are carefully planned so that learning is structured to enable pupils to meet the objectives of the lesson. Teachers use a variety of well thought out activities which match the different learning styles of pupils. Excellent relationships underpin lessons, giving pupils the confidence and desire to succeed. They work hard and show great enthusiasm for their learning.

Their excellent behaviour is an important factor in enabling good progress in lessons. Dedicated teaching assistants are well briefed and offer good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are becoming more involved in the assessment of their own and each others' work. In some subjects, such as English and mathematics, they are given regular and very clear guidance on how to improve. However, this is not always the case. Inconsistencies in the advice given to improve means that sometimes pupils are not clear about how to reach their target and this can

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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reduce their rate of progress to satisfactory in some lessons.

The curriculum is relevant, well organised, creative and filled with memorable experiences. It is very well adapted to meet the different needs of individuals and groups. Changes to the curriculum, since the last inspection, have been linked to developing the school's ethos through reorganising the curriculum into life skills and themed activities, such as One World Week. These changes have improved pupils' knowledge of how they learn and have given them excellent opportunities for learning independently, for example, through the huge expansion in the provision for ICT. This high quality provision has promoted the development of sophisticated ICT skills, while increased time for ICT in Year 5 ensures that any unevenness in basic skills when pupils arrive in the school is quickly ironed out. The use of English specialist teachers in humanities subjects has very successfully tackled the issue of pupils' writing, which was raised at the previous inspection. Excellent partnerships with the local schools' network support the school's drive to continually improve standards in all subjects, ease transition between each stage and encourage pupils to learn from and support each other. Extra-curricular provision is excellent in its quantity and range. Provision for music, including instrumental tuition is particularly impressive, as is the amount of sporting activities on offer. High uptake of these and the many out of school visits reflect the enthusiasm which this rich curriculum generates in pupils.

The high quality of care, support and guidance is fully endorsed by pupils and their parents or carers. One pupil expressed a strong sense of security and confidence with the comment, 'I feel protected in school.' Staff know pupils and their families very well and are alert to any changes in mood or performance that might indicate a problem. Parents are delighted with the regular communication, through news letters, timely parents' evenings and formal reports, all of which keep them well informed of their children's progress and school events. All pupils are taught the importance of personal safety, how to stay safe and what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Well targeted support for vulnerable pupils is provided promptly because of the school's very effective tracking systems. Sensitive and well adapted support for individual pupils and their families is an outstanding feature of the school's provision. Excellent links with local schools ensure that transition arrangements are effective and that pupils are very well prepared for the move into and out of the school. Procedures for improving attendance are excellent and have almost eliminated persistent absence.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

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## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has transformed leadership so that all staff now play a significant part in both identifying and leading areas for improvement. This has enabled the school to improve quickly across all areas of its work. Changes to the senior leadership team have given a clearer focus to the work of individuals so that effective teams have developed that are able to share good practice quickly for the benefit of pupils. Improvements to teaching and learning since the last inspection can be attributed to these recently introduced systems and unquestionably are embedding ambition at all levels in the school. Middle leaders have developed their skills swiftly in response to the challenges set by the headteacher. Many have developed exemplary practice in their management, for example, of assessment data to provide carefully tailored learning opportunities and precision teaching to overcome any difficulties that pupils have. This underpins the school's excellent promotion of equal opportunity, ensuring that individual needs are met for all pupils, including the most vulnerable.

Governors too, offer excellent support and challenge for the school. They have ensured that safeguarding procedures meet all requirements and are exemplary in the meticulous way they are implemented. The school's evaluation of its own community is accurate and comprehensive. Because of this it makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion because the curriculum is planned with this knowledge in mind.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Views of parents and carers



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Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Those who have older children in Years 7 and 8 are delighted with the way the school has developed since the previous inspection. Parents are particularly pleased with the care that is taken of their children and with how well the school communicates with them. Many comments commended the school for the efficient and clear way it dealt with the recent upheavals caused by snowy weather. Parents have been quick to recognise how well the curriculum has developed and applaud the many opportunities now provided for out of school and extra-curricular activities through frequent music performances, trips and sporting events. Many endorse the view of one parent who commented, 'I am astonished at how my daughter's confidence has grown since she started at the school.'

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Richard Coates Church of England Middle School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 149 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 460 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	52	68	46	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	95	64	53	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	75	50	66	44	4	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	72	48	73	49	2	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	85	57	62	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	38	87	58	4	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	44	78	52	4	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	72	48	70	47	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	74	50	69	46	2	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	78	52	65	44	5	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	62	42	80	54	4	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	108	72	39	26	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	93	62	54	36	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



Dear Pupils

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank all of you for the friendly welcome and kind help you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and your relationships with staff and each other. This was especially noteworthy when we took into account that the snowy weather had kept you indoors without a break for the whole week that the inspection took place. Well done all, no wonder your teachers are so proud of you. You will be delighted to know that we judged your school to be outstanding. This means that it is in a small group of schools where most things are of high quality and that your school does some things that other schools can learn from.

Here are the strengths in your school, some of which you told us about:

- you are well taught; so all learn well, make good progress and reach high standards from your different starting points. However, we think you could have more help on how to improve in some of your lessons
- the curriculum is excellent and gives all of you many opportunities to find out what you enjoy and what special talents you have. You certainly have many memorable and exciting experiences during your time in school
- we agree with you that adults look after you exceptionally well. They keep a close eye on how you are doing and want you to feel safe, happy and successful in school
- your school is extremely well led and managed. Your headteacher, governors and teachers know exactly what they need to do next to keep the school among the best in the country
- finally, you are all developing excellent personal qualities through your hard work, caring attitudes and generous support for others who are not as fortunate as you.

This is preparing you well to be successful and compassionate citizens of the future.

Our best wishes to all at Richard Coates for a successful year, and keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely,

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