

Dr Thomlinson Church of England Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122371
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	359238
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Hancock HMI

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	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Hindle
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Cape
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Silverton Lane Rothbury, Morpeth Northumberland NE65 7RJ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 16 part-lessons which involved a total of 12 teachers and held meetings with members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors met and talked with students in lessons and around the school. They observed the school's work and looked at 59 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and others from students and staff. Students' work and school documentation, such as safeguarding information and records of students' progress, were examined.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress and learning of boys in English, girls in mathematics and pupils working at higher levels.
- How far the school's performance and the quality of teaching have been maintained and improved since the last inspection.
- The impact of recent changes in leadership and management on attainment and achievement.

Information about the school

Dr Thomlinson is a small rural middle school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. All students speak English as their first language and there are very few from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Dr Thomlinson provides a good education for its pupils. Attainment in English and mathematics has improved this year after a dip in national test results at Key Stage 2 following the previous inspection. This is the result of effective action to move the school forward, for example by improving the school's systems for monitoring the quality of its work and the progress pupils make. Subject leaders are held more fully to account for individual progress in all subjects and school improvement is driven by good leadership and management. A new headteacher, deputy and assistant headteacher are making sure the drive for improvement continues and capacity is good. They are well supported by the governing body and rigorous self-evaluation ensures the strengths and areas for improvement are well known. Resources are effectively deployed to achieve good value for money.

Inspection evidence confirms school data that learning and progress are good. This is because the action taken to improve the achievement of all pupils is making a good impact, especially on boys in English, girls in mathematics and those working at higher levels. There is a positive climate for learning which is enhanced by well- above-average attendance and good behaviour. Pupils feel safe and they are well cared for, guided and supported. The school's strategy to promote community cohesion is good and pupils have a strong sense of spiritual, moral, social and cultural responsibility. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are provided with work which is well tailored to their needs.

Attainment in English and mathematics by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8 has been significantly above local authority averages and national benchmarks for the last three years. The school is securing gains across all year groups and knows more can be done to further improve achievement and attainment, particularly for pupils working at higher levels. Inspection evidence confirms the proportion of good quality teaching has increased and some outstanding teaching was seen. The school is taking effective action to make sure teaching is consistently good because it knows pupils are not always fully challenged in every lesson. Assessment practice has improved and is well used to ensure pupils are doing as well as they can. Equality of opportunity is promoted well, there are good safeguarding procedures in place and the extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles is good. The curriculum is making a good impact because leaders and staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs. Strategies to promote community cohesion and partnerships are good and the contribution made by pupils to the community is an outstanding feature of the school's work.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve achievement and attainment, particularly for pupils working at higher levels by:
 - analysing progress more frequently
 - challenging pupils to think at higher levels.
- Make sure teaching is always good by:
 - ensuring all pupils are fully stretched in every lesson
 - making sure work is matched to different needs more effectively
 - sharing best practice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Learning and progress are good because pupils are eager to do well and concentrate for long periods of time in lessons when the work captures their interest. Pupils' good behaviour and ability to work well together make a strong contribution to the positive climate for learning. They think carefully before answering questions and reply confidently. The pace of learning is best when work constantly challenges pupils and is well matched to their prior attainment. For example in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on coordinates, the understanding of pupils quickly increased because the different tasks set according to the level they were at very effectively challenged them to plot the positions of cruisers and battleships. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because well-timed intervention and individual programmes supports their learning well.

Attainment is significantly above average by the time pupils leave the school from broadly average starting points for many pupils. School data indicate that Key Stage 2 test results are on track to be significantly higher in 2011 following the decline in the first two years following the last inspection. Inspection evidence confirms attainment is rising, especially for boys in English, girls in mathematics and pupils working at higher levels. The school knows more can be done and is making the right changes to further raise attainment and progress.

Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle and regularly take part in physical and other activities. They say they feel safe in school and their sense of spiritual, moral, and social and cultural responsibility is well developed as a result of the strong Christian and school ethos. Enrichment activities make a good contribution to preparation for future lives and the world of work. Pupils' contribution to school and community life is outstanding, for example they lead their own charity events and they are involved in local council decisions such as the consultation on the Rothbury playground.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The good quality teaching has been maintained and improved since the previous inspection. Recent gains in attainment and achievement are the result of a higher proportion of good and better teaching. The best teaching is characterised by clearly understood routines and challenging tasks completed at a brisk pace. Intervention is sensitive and understanding is frequently checked. The teaching is less effective when work is not tailored well enough to challenge and meet the needs of all pupils in the class. The school recognises that it needs to share best practice more widely to further speed up progress and the pace of learning.

Assessment practice is good because teachers check learning regularly and provide clear advice to help pupils improve their work. The school knows that more frequent analysis of pupils' progress is an important priority to further raise attainment and achievement. The good curriculum increasingly meets pupils' needs and is enhanced by a wide range of activities, for example the many lunchtime clubs such as the orchestra, choir and sports clubs. Work with partners to support learning is a strong feature of the good care, guidance and support provided for pupils. They settle in quickly in their first year due to the good transition arrangements.

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

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Robust action by the new senior leadership team and good governance has made sure the school continues to improve. They have a clear vision and know what has to be done to continue the upward trend. Subject leaders are held more closely to account and the school knows the capacity of middle managers to monitor and evaluate the progress of individual pupils can be expanded. The accuracy of self-evaluation has improved and areas for development are well known.

The school's promotion of equality of opportunity and community cohesion is good because local, national and international links are well developed, for example through links with a church school in Sierra Leone, visits to other faith communities and music festivals. The good safeguarding procedures pervade all aspects of the school's work and meet current requirements. They were praised during a recent incident when a gunman was hiding in the area and the school remained open. Engagement with parents and carers is good, their views are taken into account, and work with a wide range of partners promotes learning well.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The responses from the very large majority of parents and carers agree that the school is well led and managed, and keeps their children safe. They were pleased with their child's experience and all said their child enjoys school. The large majority said the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. The small number of concerns reported by parents and carers were investigated during the inspection and no pattern was found.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dr Thomlinson 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 215 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	47	29	49	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	66	19	32	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	53	24	41	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	41	32	54	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	39	35	59	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	39	30	51	4	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	41	31	53	3	5	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)	23	39	30	51	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	41	31	53	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	39	24	41	8	14	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	42	20	34	6	10	4	7
The school is led and managed effectively	25	42	27	46	4	7	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	44	28	47	3	5	1	2

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



1 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dr Thomlinson Church of England Middle School Rothbury NE65 7RJ

Thank you for all your help when I inspected the school with my colleagues. Please would you pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires and say we took all their views into account. I thought you might like to know what we found about your school.

- Dr Thomlinson provides you with a good education.
- Attainment is above average at the end of Year 8.
- The proportion of good and better teaching is improving.
- You feel safe and the care, guidance and support you receive are good.
- The contribution you make to the community is outstanding.
- Senior leaders and governors are making the right improvements to help you achieve even more.

Your teachers and the staff want to make the school even better. To help them do this, we have asked if they would:

- further improve your achievement and attainment
- make sure teaching is always good and better.

I know the staff would appreciate your help and I wish you every success in all you do in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector

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