

# St Mary's Church of England Middle School

Coombe Road, Puddletown, Dorchester, DT2 8SA

**Inspection dates** 14—15 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Pupils make good progress over their four years at the school and attain high standards before moving to the next stage of their secondary education. They feel very well cared for.
- Teaching is good and improving because senior leaders work effectively with staff to identify how lessons can be even better.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. They are happy, safe and proud of their school.
- Leadership and management are good. The Chair of the Governing Body, headteacher and senior leaders know the school well. They work with a shared commitment to high expectations for each pupil's personal and academic development.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted and developed strongly across all aspects of the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding, because not all teachers plan work which is precisely matched to the full range of pupils' learning needs.
- Marking and written feedback does not always provide pupils with precise guidance about how they can improve their work.
- There are too few opportunities to share the most effective teaching methods with all staff.
- Not all leaders have the skills necessary to enable them to analyse and interpret data to see how well all groups of pupils are performing against similar groups nationally.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and teaching in 21 lessons, taught by 20 teachers. Five lessons were observed jointly with members of the school's leadership team. Inspectors observed an assembly and made a number of shorter visits to lessons.
- They looked at the quality of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and the planned learning to match the range of pupils' abilities. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and aspects of literacy and numeracy development.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and pupils from each year group. Inspectors met with the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, the school's external improvement partner and members of the school's senior and middle leadership teams.
- Inspectors took into account the 46 responses to the parental online questionnaire (Parent View) and direct correspondence to the inspection team from four parents and carers. The 33 questionnaires completed by staff were considered.
- The team observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including the meetings of the governing body, its central safeguarding records, monitoring records and the performance of staff.
- The school improvement plan and self-evaluation documents were scrutinised along with the information the school presented as an overview of pupils' current attainment and progress since starting the school, records of pupils' attendance and logs of behaviour incidents.

## Inspection team

Sarah Hill, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Christine Emerson	Additional inspector
Teresa Hill	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Mary's Church of England Middle School is a middle deemed secondary school. It is smaller than the average secondary school. It opened in June 2012 as an academy with the same name, and in the same buildings as the predecessor school, as part of the government's academy converter programme. When its predecessor school, St Mary's Church of England Middle School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils eligible for free school meals, those from service families and those who are looked after by the local authority) is low compared to the national average. The school has no pupils on roll from service families.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both low compared to the national average. The school has a higher proportion than found nationally of pupils from Romany or Gypsy heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- No pupils attend off-site alternative provision.
- The school meets the current government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is a member of the Dorchester Area Schools' Partnership known as DASP and is a Church of England school within the diocese of Salisbury.

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

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding, and all is at least consistently good, by making sure that:
  - the most effective teaching methods are systematically shared with all staff so that all pupils benefit from the good practice evident in the school
  - all teachers plan work which meets the needs of the full range of abilities, particularly for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
  - all teachers' marking is regular and provides detailed feedback which precisely outlines the next steps pupils need to take to improve their work.
- Raise achievement further to secure outstanding pupil progress by ensuring that leaders and managers, at all levels, have the skills to:
  - rigorously analyse the school's assessment data against similar pupils nationally to enable them to accurately evaluate the impact of teaching and interventions for all groups of pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- When pupils join the school in Year 5, their recorded starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 2, are above average. Pupils make good progress over their four years at the school. At the end of Year 8, pupils move to the next stage of their secondary education with high levels of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The school's tracking shows that pupils' progress in Years 7 and 8 is particularly strong in English, mathematics and science. During Year 8, the school uses externally marked and validated tests usually taken by pupils at the end of Year 9. The results show that pupils make exceptional progress in mathematics by the time they leave the school. Pupils' progress in English since joining the school is rising at a faster rate than in previous years.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are well developed across the school. Pupils have high levels of reading skills and read widely. Support for pupils who join the school with lower than expected reading ages is well developed. This is helping pupils to tackle the same work as their classmates across the wider curriculum.
- In recent years, as now, the achievement of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding has been in line with or better than that of other pupils in the school when compared with their average point scores at the end of Year 6; and they have made the equivalent of at least eight and 12 months more progress in English and mathematics respectively than that made by pupils who were not eligible.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is in line with that of their classmates. The achievement of the very small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is also similar to that of their peers. Pupils from Romany and Gypsy backgrounds make rapid progress in the time they are in school. Their overall achievements benefit from the well-thought-through partnerships with the community.
- In the best lessons pupils' achievement is rapid because the work is well matched to pupils' needs across the full ability range. Year 8 pupils in a geography lesson made outstanding progress because the learning intentions were shaped to each pupil's needs through directed and demanding questioning. Pupils made good use of the balance between teacher input and time for their own thinking and discussion. Progress was strong because pupils' understanding was developed before they began writing explanations of the effects of air pressure on weather. Their literacy skills were sharply developed through honing their word lists in preparation for the writing challenge.
- A very high proportion of parents and carers who responded to the online Parent View feel that their children are making good progress.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and supportive. A collaborative atmosphere encouraging good pupil progress is evident in all classrooms. School records and evidence gathered during the inspection show that the quality of teaching is improving and that the quality of teaching overtime is at least good.
- Teaching is typified by clear and direct questioning which sets high standards and engages pupils in deepening their thinking and understanding. Careful planning using good subject knowledge is evident across the school. Where the work is demanding and well matched to the range of learning needs, pupils enjoy rising to the challenge and engage enthusiastically.
- In the most effective lessons teachers share clear learning intentions and assess pupils' progress regularly, using searching questions to check pupils' understanding. In a Year 5 English lesson, pupils' standards and pace of learning were exceptional. Their study of myths and legends was thoroughly planned to meet the needs of all learners. Strong assessment techniques and

periodic well-paced paired work were integrated throughout the lesson. This set high expectations and allowed any misconceptions to be quickly addressed resulting in confidently engaged pupils.

- Teachers manage classes well. In a few lessons, tasks are not adequately adapted for some pupils who have special educational needs. Where teachers do not consistently adjust activities, pupils who have special educational needs are not supported to secure the highest rates of progress.
- On a few occasions a small number of more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Open-ended tasks are sometimes given too little structure without informing pupils of the assessment criteria. This slows their progress because tasks are not sufficiently well matched to their abilities.
- Teaching across all subjects helps pupils to develop their literacy skills through opportunities to read aloud and to develop their speaking and listening skills. Opportunities for extended writing were evident in pupils' books and during the lessons observed.
- The best marking is frequent and gives pupils clear guidance about what they need to improve. This is not always the case; precise guidance and the opportunity for pupils to respond to teacher's marking is sometimes lacking.
- Teachers create and use opportunities well to promote social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Year 6 pupils shared a persuasive writing project to consider whether or not a mosque should be sited locally with deep thoughtfulness and consideration of people of other faiths.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils keenly told inspectors that they felt very safe in school. They have confidence in the school's support structures. The pupils, including pupils of all minority backgrounds and those with special educational needs, think that bullying is rare. If it does occur they said it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The school's Year 8 trained 'Bullying Ambassadors' are known by other pupils and provide effective support during break and lunchtimes. Pupils have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and spoke confidently about how to keep their friends and themselves safe.
- Pupils' attitudes around the school are very positive and different groups interact politely. They treat each other with respect. They are particularly welcoming to visitors.
- They value the opportunities the school provides and the extensive opportunities for recognition and reward. Those pupils who join the school's nurture groups value the support they receive.
- Pupils flourish in the school's calm focused atmosphere. School records confirm that instances of poor behaviour are rare and exclusions are very low. In lessons pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and low-level disruption is very rare. Their behaviour for learning is not yet fully developed to the point where all pupils take ownership and direction of their own learning.
- As a result of effective close working with families and across the wider community, pupils' attendance continues to improve. The attendance of pupils of Romany and Gypsy backgrounds is higher than for similar pupils nationally. Across the school, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is falling sharply because of the work the school invests in working with families and its established nurture groups.
- The school's promotion of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a strong feature throughout the school. During the inspection, pupils demonstrated their reflective understanding of how Comic Relief was driven by giving to others while taking part in collaborative fun-led activities.
- Almost every parent and carer who responded to the online Parent View felt that their child is safe and happy at school.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher leads the school with strong moral purpose, supported by senior leaders and staff alike. The leadership and management of the school have enabled the school to maintain good outcomes for its pupils. The school is now in an enviable position to build on these strong outcomes.
  - There is an increasingly streamlined approach to continuous school improvement with a greater focus on raising the quality of teaching and increased time for middle leaders to monitor the work of their teams.
  - Systems for staff performance management are clear and developing to include all aspects of teachers' work. The mix of announced and unannounced lesson observations is effectively identifying how lessons can be even better. However there are too few opportunities to share examples of the good practice in teaching across the school.
  - The introduction of more frequent collection of attainment data and sharing with parents and carers has raised expectations. The collation and analysis of these data to inform sharper accountability of teachers and middle leaders are under development. Leaders and managers at all levels do not apply the skills of analysis to robustly compare the progress of pupils in the school with similar groups nationally. This includes the evaluation of activities funded through pupil premium and the government's funding for Year 7 pupils known as the Year 7 catch-up premium.
  - The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination well. This is particularly evident in the rapid progress in attendance and achievement for those pupils of Romany and Gypsy background, the progress of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and for the very small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.
  - Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and meet current requirements.
  - The curriculum is broad, balanced and offers pupils a variety of opportunities, including a wide programme of extra-curricular activities which integrate with the taught curriculum. There is a coherent approach to the pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
  - The local authority provides very light touch support for this good school. Close contact is maintained through a range of local authority purchased services including the training and support for the Governing Body. The school commissions effective support which gives an external professional view as to the school's performance on a termly basis.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body provides robust and unwavering moral leadership to the school. Governors know the school's strengths and areas for further development, with greater emphasis on comparing the school's outcomes against national, in addition to local, standards. Governors are appropriately informed and ensure that staff pay and performance are directly linked to pupils' achievement. Governors have set high standards for senior leaders to secure improvements in the quality of teaching. As a result, measures are in place to ensure that there is no inadequate teaching and teaching which requires improvement is eradicated. Governors visit lessons and participate in staff training days for their professional development and monitoring of standards. They make good use of the training and support offered by the local authority. Governors are aware of how the school uses the pupil premium funding, though they are not all totally aware of the impact of the support provided on pupils' progress.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138189
<b>Local authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	413102

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	483
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Wendy Holden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carl Winch
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01305 848293
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