

# Dr Thomlinson Church of England Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122371
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	314282
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Keeler HMI

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	213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Gray
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Johnson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Silverton Lane Rothbury Morpeth Northumberland NE65 7RJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01669 620287
<b>Fax number</b>	01669 621919

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is a rural middle school with a smaller than average number of pupils on roll. Almost all pupils are from White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has achieved Healthy School Status, Football Association Charter Standard and the Eco School Bronze Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Dr Thomlinson Church of England Middle School is a good school with some outstanding features. The quality of care, guidance and support, pupils' personal development and the curriculum offered to all pupils are outstanding. 'Where every child matters, every child succeeds' is an accurate reflection of the ethos that pervades the school and underpins the good progress made by pupils.

Pupils enter the school with standards that are above average. They make good progress overall, and attain standards at the end of Key Stage 2 that are well above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This good progress is maintained in Years 7 and 8. Pupils leave the school with very high standards in the core subjects and this is reflected in their performance in national tests at the age of 14, two terms later. While pupils make good progress overall, there are inconsistencies in the rate of progress they make between English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good and during the inspection evidence of outstanding teaching was observed. When teaching is of a high standard, pupils are consistently challenged and motivated to succeed and this is reflected in their rate of learning. However, a small minority of teaching is satisfactory and it is in these lessons that pupils do not make as much progress as they could. The headteacher is aware of the need to raise the level of teaching so that it is consistently good and he is right to do so.

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding because it is extremely well planned and provides excellent opportunities for pupils to apply a range of skills, but particularly in literacy and numeracy in other subjects. This extends their knowledge, skills and understanding on a range of fronts and as such makes a significant contribution to learner's future economic well-being. Opportunities to enrich the curriculum are a feature of the school and pupils' self-esteem and confidence are enhanced by a range of school clubs and sporting activities.

There is a strong correlation between the excellent personal development of pupils together with the outstanding care, guidance and support provided by the school and pupils' achievement. Pupils feel safe, behave in an exemplary fashion and are maturing into responsible young people. Relationships with staff are very good; a genuine sense of care for the individual exists that underpins a strong sense of community. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that pupils enjoy school. The care and promotion of personal qualities is successfully establishing positive attitudes to learning which is why they are doing well.

The headteacher provides good educational direction for the school. Together with his deputy they know the school well. They have worked hard to establish a learning environment that places equal value on the welfare of pupils as well as their academic progression. The dedication and commitment of the senior leadership team to provide a good quality of education is recognised and valued by parents. However, subject coordinators are not sufficiently involved with monitoring and evaluating the impact of teaching and learning, in respect of their specific area of learning and also in terms of cross-curricular provision. Governors are extremely supportive of the work of the school. They have the welfare of the school very much at heart and demonstrate a good understanding of the future needs of the school. The school provides good value for money and the capacity to improve further is good.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is always good resulting in consistently good progress as pupils move through the school.
- Develop the role of subject coordinators so that they are more involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are very high and achievement is good. Pupils enter school with standards above the national average. They continue to make good progress ensuring pupils in general perform significantly above the national average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2. The school's own data, including teacher assessments indicate that good progress continues throughout Year's 7 and 8. Performance in the national tests at age 14, after two terms at the High School, show that pupils from Dr Thomlinson go on to achieve well above the national averages in all core subjects.

Pupils make good progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although inconsistencies are evident in the rate of progress between English, mathematics and science. This uneven trend is also apparent over time. Pupils' progress is variable due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and this was evident in lessons observed during the inspection. Furthermore, differences in the effective use of target-setting between subjects to aid learning also limits progress in some areas.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance and punctuality reflect this. Pupils' behaviour is excellent during lessons and while moving around the school. They display good manners and respect for adults and each other. Their attitudes to learning are exemplary; pupils listen carefully, respond positively to teachers' questions and are keen to learn. As a consequence, pupils are developing good working habits and this contributes to the good progress that they make. Pupils feel safe and value the close relationships that they have with their teachers and support staff. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils are confident that should the occasion arise, swift and decisive action would ensue. Pupils are expected to take responsibility, for example, as school helpers, sports leaders, supportive friends and serving on the school council. The recently formed 'student voice', provides an excellent opportunity for pupils to engage in the learning process through sharing achievements with their peers, carrying out research generated projects and feeding back to staff their perceptions of what they do in the classroom. As a result, pupils are confident, self assured young people with a strong sense of care. Pupils are acutely aware of what it means to adopt a healthy lifestyle particularly with regard to what constitutes a healthy diet. Pupils acknowledge the benefit of physical activities and enjoy the range of sporting activities that are available.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching, while good overall, is inconsistent as it ranges from satisfactory to outstanding across the school. As a result, the progress that pupils make varies from lesson-to-lesson. In all lessons, good relationships are evident; this is a strength of the school. Teachers treat pupils with respect and this is reciprocated resulting in good attitudes to learning. In good lessons there are some common features which help children make good progress. The purpose of the lesson is shared and reviewed. Marking and feedback from teachers and peers help students understand how to improve their work. A range of activities and information technology are used effectively to promote learning, maintain student interest and create challenge. Good questioning and clear explanations based on good subject knowledge promotes understanding and enhances progress.

There are, however, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching which impact on learning. In weaker, but nevertheless satisfactory lessons, pupils' lack of understanding is not noticed and acted upon quickly enough. Teachers often talk for too long. They impart knowledge rather than enable learning. In these situations there is insufficient time for pupils to think, engage with tasks or for the teacher to check the understanding of all students.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The school provides an excellent curriculum that reflects statutory requirements and meets pupils' needs well. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to apply and practice recently acquired literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. This does not happen by chance. It is the result of thoughtful and skilful planning. As a result, pupils are able to access new knowledge while enhancing their understanding in a range of subjects including; history, geography and science. Most importantly, it makes learning interesting and fun which in turn helps to motivate and inspire pupils to succeed. The care given to the curriculum planning process, increasing pupils' confidence in applying basic skills in different contexts is one of the reasons why they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and whole school events, such as an anti-bullying, health and well-being and careers weeks which are closely aligned to their needs and interests. These experiences provide pupils with the opportunity to realise personal goals while supporting their social and emotional development. In addition there is a high quality, personal, social and health education programme, which successfully underpins pupils' knowledge and understanding of healthy living, personal safety and good relationships.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. They are outstanding because of the clear links between the overall provision which results in self-confident, responsible individuals with good working habits. Each pupil is known and valued as an individual by all those who work in and with the school. Engaging with a wide variety of partners from education to business, the school works hard to successfully prepare students socially, emotionally and academically for the world beyond the school gates. Partnerships with parents and feeder

schools are an important aspect of this and there are a considerable number of highly effective strategies to ensure transition from one school to the next. The school places a high priority on providing feedback to pupils to help them improve. There are instances of exemplary marking, particularly in English, that is both evaluative, informative and linked to short-term individual pupil targets. The school works very hard to personalise the support it provides for pupils. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and gifted and talented students, have a vast corpus of opportunities available to them. This is impacting positively on their progress as well as on the wider school community. The school has very thorough and robust safeguarding measures in place and these are reviewed regularly. As a result of this outstanding care, guidance and support, attendance is excellent, exclusions are low and children are encouraged to flourish in a safe, enjoyable, happy school community.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher knows the school very well. The quality of self evaluation is good and as a result he has a very good understanding of the schools strengths and areas for improvement. The headteacher demonstrates good leadership skills and together with an innovative and supportive deputy headteacher, relentlessly and successfully pursue high standards within a caring, Christian community. The senior leadership team has successfully cultivated a strong sense of teamwork in which everyone works together for the benefit of all pupils. The school embraces national initiatives and works effectively with others to improve the school's provision. Subject leaders have an understanding of what needs to be improved in order to maximise pupils' progress. Action plans are in place in order to bring about improvement and they reflect the priorities outlined in the school improvement plan. However, the impact of initiatives with regard to how they are to make a difference on the performance of pupils is not always clear. Subject leaders do not get sufficient opportunities to monitor the quality of the curriculum and teaching and learning. This inhibits their ability to check and assess the implementation of agreed practice which would support the pursuit of consistent teaching and learning across the school.

Governors are extremely supportive of the work of the school and the headteacher in particular. Governors are challenging at times but most importantly have a good understanding of what makes the school tick.

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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?	1
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	1
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<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 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 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

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

28 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dr Thomlinson Church of England Middle School, Northumberland, NE65 7RJ

Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed watching you work and especially appreciated talking to you. You and your parents told me quite clearly that Dr Thomlinson Church of England Middle School is a good school and I agree with you.

These are some of the things that I particularly liked:

- your behaviour is excellent during lessons and as you move about the school
- you display very good learning attitudes and listen carefully to your teachers
- the quality of teaching is good and this helps you make good progress
- the school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and the senior leadership team, they understand the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to make it even better
- the quality of care, guidance and support is excellent and as a result you feel safe and this enables you to focus on your studies
- there is a strong sense of togetherness and a very caring atmosphere.

Your school is always looking for ways to improve. With this in mind, I have suggested that teachers responsible for specific subjects are given opportunities to check what is going on in lessons more often. As I have already mentioned, the standard of teaching is good overall, however, both I and your headteacher would like to see you challenged in every lesson in order to help you make even better progress.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler

Her Majesty's Inspector