

Wellfield Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108649
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	377795
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2012
Lead inspector	Margaret Farrow 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	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Tipple
Headteacher	Stephen Collinson
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Margaret Farrow
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Michael Hill

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Ofsted Seconded Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Twenty-three lessons were observed involving 16 of the school's 18 teachers. Of these, three were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, senior leaders and staff. Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan and key safeguarding information. They also evaluated inspection survey responses from 156 parents and carers and others completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Wellfield is small when compared to the average sized secondary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average. The school holds the Healthy Schools standard. The school meets the current government's floor standard. Privately run pre-school and after-school provision is based within the school grounds and is subject to its own regulatory inspection. The most recent report can be viewed at www.Ofsted.gov.uk

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Wellfield is a satisfactory school. It has a number of strengths, including the promotion of pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils' behaviour is good and at times exemplary, in lessons, in corridors and around the school. Common to all lessons are good relationships between staff and pupils.
- Pupils enter Wellfield in Year 5 with above average levels of ability in English and mathematics and leave Year 8 with attainment that is also usually above average. Taking their starting points into account, the progress pupils make during their time in school is satisfactory.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory: around half is good and some is outstanding. However, it is not consistently good enough to make sure that pupils always make the best possible progress in lessons, particularly lower- and higher-ability pupils.
- In satisfactory lessons, teachers do not always use the assessment information they have about pupils well enough to plan activities matched to their current levels of ability. When this happens pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress.
- Pupils know their targets in all subjects. Targets are not always challenging and pupils not always helped to understand what they need to do to achieve them. Their work is marked regularly, however, guidance provided does not always help them know how well they are doing or guide them on how to improve further.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs improving. For example, they know the role of middle managers needs to be developed further. They also know improvement planning, monitoring and evaluation strategies need to be sharper, in order to identify underachievement more quickly and to be able to hold middle managers and staff to account more robustly for the progress and achievements of their pupils.
- Leaders welcome external scrutiny. They recently secured an external review to help them to identify strategies to support their drive to hasten pupils' progress and improve accountability across the school. Actions developed are already making a difference to pupils' progress in lessons but it is too early to see their full impact.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to hasten pupils' progress in lessons so that it is at least good teachers should:
 - make sure lesson planning and delivery always take account of pupils' current levels of ability with activities that are well matched to these starting points, particularly for lower- and higher-ability pupils
 - ensure individual pupils' targets are challenging, are based on what pupils have already achieved and pupils know what they need to do to achieve them
 - provide opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility in their learning, and to develop independent, investigatory and collaborative approaches further
 - ensure the good quality marking and feedback used by some teachers is consistently practised across the school.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on pupils' progress by:
 - sharpening school improvement and subject planning to include measurable, realistic and timely targets based on rigorous evaluation of the school's work
 - extending responsibilities and accountability of middle managers by involving them in more regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' work, tracking of pupils' progress and in the school's self-evaluation process
 - adding rigour to the current pupil progress meetings between leaders and teachers
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice in teaching clearly evident in school.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Evidence from lesson observations, book scrutiny and the school's current assessment information shows that pupils make at least satisfactory progress in their lessons and their achievement is broadly average. Pupils' attainment in Year 6 English and mathematics tests has been above average for a number of years. In 2011, results in English fell to average. This was mainly due to a dip in boys' writing. As a result of actions taken to improve matters, such as targeted support in lessons and more interesting activities, the gap between this group of boys, now in Year 7, and that of the girls is narrowing and they have caught up to at least where they should be for their age. Book scrutiny and lesson observations show no discernible difference between the progress of boys or girls in other classes across the school. Book scrutiny also shows that pupils take pride in their work; they work productively and display good quality presentation skills. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers due to the effective support they receive from teachers, well deployed teaching assistants, and, where necessary, additional individual or small group sessions.

All parents and carers who responded to the inspection survey report that the school helps their child to develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics and virtually all consider that their child is making good progress. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are usually above average by the time they leave school, but, as identified in the key findings, pupils' progress is average.

Quality of teaching

Virtually all parents and carers consider their children are well taught. Teaching is judged satisfactory because, while there are strengths, it is not consistently good enough across the school to make sure all pupils make the best possible progress. In satisfactory lessons, planning is not always precise enough and activities not always sharply matched to pupils' current abilities, resulting in mainly whole class activities where work lacks challenge, especially for higher-ability pupils. Nevertheless, in all lessons good relationships between adults and pupils build their confidence and self-esteem successfully and promote their positive attitudes to learning. They speak articulately and thoughtfully when responding to questions or when seeking clarification about their work. Pupils' social development is of high quality and they are generally sensitive to the needs and interests of their peers when working in groups or pairs; taking turns and encouraging each other.

Where teaching is good or better, as in some mathematics lessons seen, teachers' skills in, and enthusiasm for the subject, infect pupils with a sense of enjoyment, challenge and fun. Detailed, careful planning and a good range of interesting activities ensure pupils can progress well from their starting points. Teachers' good use of open-ended questioning probes pupils' understanding and challenges them to solve problems successfully. Good quality feedback from teachers and pupils' accurate self-review leave pupils in no doubt about how well they are doing and what they need to do to achieve at the next level.

In satisfactory lessons, the quality of teaching is often held back by satisfactory curriculum planning which sometimes leads to lessons which are more mundane; providing limited opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively or to develop independent research or investigatory skills and with too much teacher direction. Homework is regular and accessible on the school's website. Pupils are able to access a highly popular homework club at lunchtimes to complete work in a safe environment, well supervised and supported by adults and pupil mentors from Key Stage 3.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning are strengths within the school. Attendance rates are above average and pupils arrive punctually and generally enthusiastically to lessons. Where lessons are interesting and engaging, pupils thrive and their behaviour is excellent. Even in more satisfactory lessons, pupils remain keen to learn and take part. Exclusions are rare, as are incidents of bullying in any form. Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection survey consider the school deals effectively with bullying; however, a small number wrote additional comments of concern. Inspectors investigated the issue thoroughly with pupils throughout the two days. Pupils say that bullying does occur occasionally but they spoke convincingly that it is tackled quickly once a member of staff is informed. Younger pupils feel issues are more about falling out with friends and one or two commented that it was often name calling. The headteacher and deputy headteacher were informed about the comments made where it would not jeopardise the anonymity of the parent or carer and are taking action to follow up these concerns with pupils.

Almost all parents, carers, staff and pupils who responded to their surveys believe children are safe in school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors also say they feel safe and teachers or other adults will listen to them if they have concerns. Pupils are well taught about the risks to which they may be exposed, both within and outside school and have positive approaches

to managing their own safety when taking part in practical activities in classrooms, or when moving around the school and in the open spaces outside.

Leadership and management

Leaders' vision for the school has been rightly refreshed to take account of their refocused ambition to ensure all pupils not only attain well but also make outstanding progress. This is now the key priority and sits alongside the well established 'Be Spirited' priority that promotes pupils' personal development excellently; as a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. School improvement priorities are changing to take account of learning from external and internal review of the impact of the school's work. However, success measures and monitoring and evaluation arrangements within the school development and subject development plans are not yet rigorous enough to ensure all staff are held to account fully for the achievements and progress of their pupils.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is very involved in the life of the school. It carries out its responsibilities to safeguard pupils effectively and arrangements meet current statutory requirements. It knows what is working well and what needs to be better. However, the information it receives has not always been comprehensive enough to enable it to challenge leaders fully on the progress pupils make. Plans are in place to tackle this.

Leaders are open and honest, they are looking beyond the school boundaries to learn from the best and have tackled issues arising from the previous inspection satisfactorily. They have an accurate view of the school's weaknesses and are already taking action to improve matters. Current assessment information and evidence from lesson observations indicate that pupils are on track to attain above-average standards in the 2012 Key Stage 2 tests in both English and mathematics, and Year 8 pupils are well on the way to achieving their targets by the time they leave school. Leaders have satisfactory capacity to improve further.

In order to drive improvement, leaders have developed a range of professional development opportunities for staff. Developing literacy across the curriculum has been a recent focus. Discussions with teachers and book scrutiny show that this is being embraced by them and particularly so in the science department. Leaders are currently developing more robust strategies to monitor the quality and impact of teaching, for example through regular lesson observations and through pupil progress meetings where teachers discuss the progress of individual pupils and the actions they will take to tackle any identified underachievement. However, actions are in the early stages of development and leaders are aware they need to be even more rigorous. Leaders also know that the curriculum is satisfactory and it is currently being reviewed. However, the curriculum is enriched well through the wide range of out of school activities and school productions that pupils can take part in, and which they say they really enjoy. Opportunities include activities that pupils themselves lead. Pupils particularly like the 'theme days' where they work with pupils across the school on interesting projects.

The school places a great emphasis on ensuring equality and tackling discrimination of any kind. For example, strategies now in place are hastening Year 7 boys' progress in writing and narrowing the gap between their performance and that of the girls. Staff target out of school activities to pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. This adds to their enjoyment and to their successful inclusion into school life.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



19 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wellfield Middle School, Whitley Bay, NE25 9QW

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making us welcome when we inspected your school. We have judged that Wellfield is a satisfactory school. It has a number of strengths, particularly your good and sometimes exemplary behaviour, your attendance and your positive attitudes to learning in lessons. The school promotes your spiritual, cultural moral and social development very well, particularly through the Be Spirited programme that you all take part in and the theme days where you work with pupils across the school on interesting projects. It is good to see that you enjoy taking part in the wide range of out of school activities available. It is particularly impressive that some of you lead these activities. As we went around the school we saw you were often caring and considerate of one another and you have developed successful relationships with your teachers. You say you feel safe in school and that although bullying is occasionally an issue, you think it is tackled quickly once an adult is informed. You attain standards that are usually above those found nationally and make generally satisfactory progress from the time you start school in Year 5 to the time you leave in Year 8. In order to help more of you make good or outstanding progress we have asked the school to:

- make sure the information teachers have about how well you are doing is always used to meet your different levels of ability in lessons and informing the targets they set for you
- make sure teaching is always good or outstanding and that marking and feedback to you is informative and helps you improve your work
- make sure senior leaders and staff are more involved in checking how well actions being taken to improve the school are making a difference to your progress in lessons.

Once again, thank you for making us so welcome. I wish you all the best for the future. You can help your teachers by keeping up your good attendance and continuing to try hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector

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