

# Gosforth Central Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108519
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle Upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	377770
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 December 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Tom Grieveson 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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	501
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christine Willoughby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lorna Anderson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 July 2009
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 29 lessons and 26 teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with senior leaders, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked in detail at the school's improvement plans, records of governor meetings, assessment and tracking information, arrangements to safeguard pupils and a large sample of pupils' workbooks. Pupils' inspection questionnaire responses and those completed by 236 parents and carers were evaluated.

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

- The quality and accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and the extent to which it is driving improvement.
- The effectiveness of the governing body in holding senior leaders to account for the school's performance.
- The extent to which the school is meeting the needs of all groups of pupils, given their starting points and capabilities, with a particular focus on how effectively teachers are using assessment information when planning lessons so that the needs of all pupils are addressed.

## Information about the school

The school is situated in the Gosforth area of Newcastle, about three miles north of the city centre. It is larger than most middle schools and receives many more applications for places than it can accommodate. The large majority of pupils transfer from three local first schools with about a fifth coming from a wider area of the city. Most pupils are White British with about 18% from minority-ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language (12%) is below the national average. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is about half that seen nationally. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools status, the Full International Award and the Inclusion Award.

**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

Gosforth Central Middle School provides its pupils with a good and improving education. The large majority of pupils make good progress. Attainment has been consistently above average at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 although there are some differences in the performance of different groups of pupils and between subjects. Effective leadership and good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures they also make good progress. Pupils' behaviour, their attendance and attitudes to work are exemplary and benefit from the high quality care, guidance and support which the school provides. Effective leadership from the headteacher and senior staff ensures that predominantly good teaching is supporting successful learning and is being underpinned by a curriculum which meets pupils' needs and interests well.

Teaching is mostly good. Teachers' lesson planning is detailed and informed by their relevant subject knowledge. Almost all lessons have good pace and, through pertinent questioning, teachers ensure that pupils are kept interested and challenged. In most lessons, teachers plan a variety of activities which enable pupils to work collaboratively, proffer different viewpoints and share ideas. In some subjects, including science, teachers make sure that pupils' literacy skills are extended and developed well. This, however, is not commonplace because there is a lack of coordination in how pupils' basic skills should be promoted routinely in all curriculum areas. There are excellent examples of efficient marking in pupils' English books, where clear information informs them about their achievements and how they can improve their work. This, however, is relatively rare in mathematics and is not embedded in some other subjects.

Leadership is good. Self-evaluation and monitoring have been extended so that senior leaders have a secure understanding of where improvement is required and this is successfully defining development priorities. Actions to promote better governance have been successful. Improved organisation and more efficient working have sharpened governors' understanding of the school's performance and their ability to hold senior leaders accountable for the quality of provision and pupil outcomes. There is good capacity to improve further and the school provides good value for money.

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

- Improve the quality and consistency of marking in pupils' books, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that feedback is forthright about pupils' achievements and is clear and detailed about how they can improve.
- Ensure that teachers take every opportunity to promote the development of literacy and numeracy skills for all groups of pupils in all subjects of the curriculum.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment is above average at the end of both key stages because the large majority of pupils achieve well from their starting points when they enter the school in Year 5. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Their needs are well understood because the leadership of this aspect of the school's work is clearly focused on meeting their requirements and well-honed support promotes pupils' needs effectively. At Key Stage 2, published test results for 2011 record variations in the performance of different groups of pupils and between subjects. There was an improvement in mathematics attainment compared to the previous year but a slight decline in English, largely because fewer pupils attained Level 5 than did so in 2010. Girls did better than boys in the proportion gaining Level 4 in English and mathematics. Girls also did better in gaining the higher Level 5 in English although more boys attained this level in mathematics. A small number of lower-attaining pupils underperformed when compared to this group of pupils nationally although the school's response to support these pupils is proving to be successful. At Key Stage 3, school assessment evidence confirms that pupils made better progress in mathematics than in English.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent and their enjoyment of school is reflected in high attendance. They are industrious in lessons and keen to improve. Pupils enjoy learning and engage enthusiastically in activities, participating fully in shared tasks. Almost all are self-motivated and willingly accept responsibility for completing their work. Most pupils participate in class discussions with enthusiasm, enjoying the challenge offered by teachers. The school is highly effective in encouraging pupils to engage in the many sporting opportunities on offer and to eat healthily. Pupils say they feel safe in school and express confidence in staff to support them. The effective development of key skills, including teamwork and self-reliance, underpins their very good preparation for the next stage of education at high school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are responsible young people who are keen to make a success of their time at school and contribute positively to school life. The school's international award is testimony to how well their understanding of other cultures and world faiths is promoted.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

**Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning**

2

Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	
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>2</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>2</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:	1
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching and the use of assessment data to support pupils' learning are mostly good. The quality of teaching overall ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this effectively to engage and interest pupils in lessons. Information and communication technology is often used effectively to promote pupils' understanding of subject content. Most teachers are adept at using a range of questioning skills which challenge pupils, deepen their thinking and help them to engage in discussion. These are used well to maintain good pace in most lessons. There are some good examples where teachers seek opportunities to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects although this is not routinely planned for or consistently evident everywhere. Pupils are keen to engage in activities, have very positive attitudes and show genuine interest in their studies. They articulate their viewpoints well with many showing confidence and well-thought-out responses. Pupils cooperate well in groups and work diligently when undertaking individual tasks. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities often through very good support from teaching assistants. Observational evidence confirms some outstanding teaching for these pupils. Pupils receive regular and accurate feedback in their English workbooks about their learning and progress and how they can improve their work. This is not routinely the case in mathematics, however, where marking is too often brief and contains minimal information about how pupils can improve their work.

A good curriculum contributes effectively to good academic outcomes and to pupils' excellent personal development. The school makes effective use of visitors and educational visits to extend learning and broaden pupils' experiences including through very good links with local firms and partnerships. Pupils speak highly of their enjoyment of the summer term themed weeks and the extra-curricular activities which are extensive and well-attended. The school has maintained its exemplary commitment to the care, guidance and support which it provides. Engagement with a variety of agencies is embedded into the school's work and offers excellent support to those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Guidance through pastoral and tutorial provision is strong and much appreciated by the pupils

<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

themselves. Transition and induction arrangements for entry into Year 5 and then into Year 9 at high school are well-established.

*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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and governors pursue an unequivocal focus on raising attainment and promoting effective learning. Self-evaluation has developed since the previous inspection so that leaders have a secure understanding of where improvement is required. Monitoring arrangements have been strengthened. The headteacher and senior team use the outcomes of this work to underpin actions which are driving initiatives in those aspects of provision which require most improvement. They recognise, for example, the importance of improving the consistency of teachers' marking and the need to routinely and consistently develop pupils' core skills in all curriculum subjects.

Changes to the structure and organisation of the governing body have deepened their knowledge of the school's performance and have brought greater efficiency to their work. They are now more actively involved and in a much stronger position to make informed decisions and to hold senior leaders to account. Work to formalise governor engagement with the school has been recognised as a model of good practice by the local authority. Statutory duties with respect to safeguarding and health and safety are good.

The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are very supportive of the school's work. About 10% of parents and carers, however, are critical of school-home communication. The school works extensively with a significant range of partners in promoting pupils' learning and well-being. Much of this work is excellent and makes an important contribution to pupils' academic outcomes and aspects of their personal development. The promotion of community cohesion is exemplary. The international award is testimony to the school's detailed evaluation, including the impact of its work with schools in other countries, with clear plans in place to maintain pupils' wide engagement with groups beyond the school. The school is a highly cohesive community where respect and cooperation amongst pupils are commonplace.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>

<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>

## **Views of parents and carers**

A very high number of parents completed the inspection questionnaire. Responses to almost all questions show very high satisfaction ratings. However, there were very real concerns expressed by some of the 10% of parents who expressed dissatisfaction with the information which they receive from the school, the help they receive to support their child's learning and the way parents' concerns are dealt with. Inspectors have considered these responses and have examined the school's current practice and additional measures which are shortly to be introduced. Findings show that existing practice is not dissimilar to that found in the majority of schools. However, senior leaders have accepted these points and shortly will be communicating with parents and carers about their intentions to improve matters.



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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Gosforth Central 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 236 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 501 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	108	46	122	52	1	0	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	121	51	110	47	3	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	69	29	140	59	22	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	89	38	127	54	13	6	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	90	38	127	54	3	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	27	137	58	23	10	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	28	142	60	13	6	1	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	31	134	57	8	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	71	30	141	60	10	4	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	81	34	125	53	10	4	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	25	127	54	23	10	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	94	40	118	50	4	2	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	116	49	108	46	7	3	1	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 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

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"><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 pupils' 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.**



9 December 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Gosforth Central Middle School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1UN**

On behalf of the inspection team, please accept our thanks for the manner of your welcome and engagement with us. A particular thanks to those pupils who joined us in meetings and to those we spoke to around the school, in the dining hall and the library. The report is now complete and I want to share our main findings with you.

We have found Gosforth Central Middle to be a good school with some exemplary features. Good teaching, a good curriculum and excellent care, guidance and support enables you to achieve well in your studies and to demonstrate excellent behaviour and attitudes to your work. Your headteacher and senior leaders show good leadership in making important improvements to take your school forward.

Your behaviour, attendance and the attitudes displayed towards your work are excellent. Well done! It was a pleasure to see the way in which you take part in lessons, work together and are respectful of the views of others. Your contribution to making the school a cohesive and well-ordered community is noteworthy.

Of course, all good schools can improve. We have asked the governors, senior leaders and staff to ensure that:

- your work is marked regularly in all subjects and that you receive accurate and regular feedback about how well you have done and how you can improve
- teachers in all subjects take every opportunity to help you develop your literacy and numeracy skills.

I know that you will have a contribution to make in helping the staff to ensure that these two matters are improved. Our best wishes for the future in achieving your goals and aspirations.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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