

Berwick Middle School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 122354 |
| Local authority | Northumberland |
| Inspection number | 380454 |
| Inspection dates | 6–7 December 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Brian Blake HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Middle Deemed Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of students | 9–13 |
| Gender of students | Mixed |
| Number of students on the school roll | 355 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Margaret Shaw |
| Headteacher | Derryth Hope |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4 October 2010 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Fourteen part lessons were observed, which involved a total of 12 teachers. A range of documents was scrutinised and meetings held with members of the senior leadership team, two members of the governing body, and nominated staff. Informal discussions were held with other staff and a significant number of students during lessons and around the school. Inspectors also read 50 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, in addition to considering the views of those students and staff who completed separate questionnaires.

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

- The progress and overall achievement of middle- and higher-attaining students in English and mathematics.
- The safeguarding arrangements for students, including scrutiny of the school's single central register.
- The impact of the school's curriculum on improving outcomes for all students.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels.

Information about the school

This is a community middle deemed secondary school, with students starting at the school in Year 5, halfway through Key Stage 2, and leaving at the end of Year 8, when they go on to high school to complete the final year of Key Stage 3; this makes it much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. There are fewer girls than boys on roll. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. Almost all students are of White British heritage. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs is twice the national average. The school has Healthy School status.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Senior leaders and managers, especially the governing body, have successfully addressed the major issues raised during the previous inspection. There are no longer any inadequacies in leadership and management and safeguarding. Staff, students and parents are positive about the improvements already achieved, and are realistic enough about the time it will take to make the school even better. The governing body is now very active in the life of the school, and its effective challenge and support are helping the school to move forward. The new headteacher, in post since September, has quickly gained the confidence of all those connected with the school, and there is now a clear sense of purpose to improve provision and raise standards. Development planning is of a satisfactory quality across the school. It is still inconsistent in terms of focusing specifically on improving student outcomes in all stated priorities and actions, and in using clearer success measures to identify progress over the life of each plan. Nevertheless, all leaders and managers know the school's strengths and areas for development well. The school now provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education. The success of this work since the previous inspection indicates clearly that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Although much of the teaching is of satisfactory quality, there is a good proportion that is good or outstanding. There are currently some limitations in teaching because of too much teacher talk and too much direction of learning in lessons, both of which affect progress, especially for higher-attaining students. Some lessons, also, do not have a broad enough range of content to challenge all ability groups. However, the excellent working relationships and caring environment ensure that students enjoy attending school and behave well. As a result, students make satisfactory progress and achieve broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the time they leave at the end of Year 8. However, this overall satisfactory progress hides the fact that boys' writing is failing to keep pace with that of girls, particularly in terms of grammar, punctuation and general sentence construction, and that some students' work is poorly presented and not always picked up in teachers' marking.

Up to 40% of the 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?

- Raise boys' levels of attainment in writing, especially in the correct use of grammar, punctuation and general sentence construction by:
 - focused teaching of these aspects in all curricular areas
 - consistently challenging poorly-presented work
 - targeting further improvements in the marking by all teachers.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for all students from satisfactory to good, but especially for those identified as higher attaining by:
 - ensuring that lesson content more accurately matches the known range of abilities in the lesson
 - reducing teacher talk and direction in lessons and giving more time to activities that encourage independent learning.

- Improve leadership and management at all levels further by:
 - ensuring that all staff, but especially middle and senior leaders and managers, develop a consistent and shared approach to evaluating and monitoring the quality of provision throughout the school
 - ensuring that priorities and actions in all development planning focus on improvements in student outcomes by using clearer and more measurable success criteria, as an aid to evaluation and monitoring of provision.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of students

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The school's own baseline data for students starting in Year 5 show that attainment is broadly average. The school uses feeder first-school prior attainment data, together with its own generated data, to set an accurate starting point for every Year 5 student. This means that together with its own regular collection of assessment information as the students move from year-to-year, the school can accurately show that the students are making satisfactory overall progress in the core subjects of English and mathematics. By the time the students leave at the end of Year 8, attainment in these two core subjects is broadly average, with the exception that boys' writing is not keeping pace with girls because of less accurate use of punctuation, grammar and syntax. Overall, however, student achievement is satisfactory. This satisfactory rate of progress was seen in almost all lessons observed during the inspection. Although there is some minor variance in the progress of different ability groups, it is not significant, but it does mean that the potential of those higher-attaining students to make even better progress is more limited when compared to middle- and lower-attaining students. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the targeted in-class support from teaching assistants, and because the work is better matched to their known capabilities. This better match of content also applies

to middle-ability students. All students clearly enjoy their work and they engage enthusiastically in whole-class or group discussions; this accounts for the good quality of behaviour seen throughout the inspection. The students are attentive in class and are quick to get down to their work. However, the presentation of work is variable across the school and subject range, with some poorly presented writing and diagrams that do little to indicate that adequate time has been taken by the students to produce this work. It is also clear that this poorly presented work is not challenged by some teachers when marking students' books.

The majority of other outcome areas are good. For example, the students make a positive contribution to the school community, especially through the school council, with large numbers participating in the good quality and extensive range of extra-curricular sport on offer.

These are the grades for students' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 3 |
| Taking into account: | 3 |
| Students' attainment ¹ | 3 |
| The quality of students' learning and their progress | 3 |
| The quality of learning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | |
| The extent to which students feel safe | 2 |
| Students' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which students contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which students develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |
| Taking into account: | 2 |
| Students' attendance ¹ | |
| The extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching throughout the school has continued to improve since the previous inspection because of the increasing support and targeted interventions from senior leaders and managers. Lessons are characterised by thorough planning, well-organised activities that are well matched to the learning objectives, and very secure and trusting working relationships that allow students to develop many personal attributes, alongside their more formal learning. Teachers have successfully developed students' skills as informed listeners and good contributors to whole-class discussions. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and is used well to engage students in a range of learning activities. Where students make the best progress in their learning, the pace of teaching successfully challenges the learning needs of all abilities in the class. However, too many lessons, exclusively those of a satisfactory standard, do not take sufficient account of these different learning needs, particularly those of students identified as higher attaining. Teaching in these lessons is still far too controlled in terms of pace, content and outcomes. There are few opportunities

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

for these students to show independence in their learning, particularly in developing higher-order skills, such as analysis, hypothesising, summarising and abstract thinking, which could be used to help develop their potential as independent and self-motivated learners. Teachers' use of assessment information is gathering momentum so that the school now possesses a much clearer overview of students' attainment levels at the start of Year 5 and their rate of progress as they move from year group to year group. Individual target-setting is now accurately based on this assessment information, although the extent to which individual teachers use this to provide lesson content that challenges all abilities is still too variable in quality across the school.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and characterised by well planned and appropriately timed lessons for all areas of learning, including important aspects of students' personal, social and health education. The core curriculum of literacy and numeracy links appropriately with the students' work from their first schools and provides a platform for their subsequent work in the high school. The curricular needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those deemed to be of average ability are better met than for higher-attaining students. There is a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, which makes a positive contribution to students' achievements, and which they thoroughly enjoy.

The quality of care is a strength of the school and all adults are adept at talking to students and helping them when they most need some support. Students feel they can always turn to a teacher, if needed, which reflects well the positive relationships seen throughout the inspection. The quality of support in lessons is always satisfactory, but sometimes limited by too much teacher talk, which limits the time for targeted individual student support work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 3 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets students' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 3 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 3 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management have progressed well since the previous inspection. There is now a clear and agreed vision for raising standards and improving provision. All staff and governors are aware of, and are committed to successfully achieving, the actions within the five well-targeted priorities identified in the latest school development plan. As a result, staff are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities, but the extent to which these have been developed is still at an early stage. Senior leaders and managers know and understand the school's strengths and areas for further development, and the self-evaluation submitted for this inspection accurately judged almost all aspects of its work. The governing body has made impressive progress since the previous inspection. Governors are very effectively involved in the monitoring and evaluating of provision and are constantly seeking

further ways to develop their role so that they continue to challenge and support all staff, but especially senior leaders and managers, and themselves. As a result, their work is now well known by all staff in the school, with the governing body particularly influential in helping to develop a strategic direction for the school.

The school is alert and responsive to issues of equality and discrimination. For example, the prompt actions taken by the school to address some recent racist behaviour has been very successful. The school has effectively addressed all safeguarding concerns raised during the previous inspection. There is now a detailed single central register, which complies fully with legal requirements. The security of the site has also been improved and staff make all reasonable efforts to safeguard the students in and around the school. Senior staff and governor training in safer recruitment have been completed.

The school actively promotes a range of opportunities to help students and staff appreciate and understand life outside school. A range of extra-curricular trips, in particular, is contributing to the students’ developing awareness and appreciation of others, including those from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. The school has actively sought and successfully achieved productive links with a number of external partners in the local area; this includes links with local employers, some of which are providing opportunities for the students to learn about the world of work.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 3 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 3 |

Views of parents and carers

The response rate was around 14%, which is well below that normally seen in secondary school inspections. Of those parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority are positive about the school’s provision for their children. A very small number took the opportunity to write some additional comments, but there was no particular pattern to these. All of these findings and the comments, which were made anonymously, were shared with the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Berwick 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 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 355 students registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 30 | 60 | 20 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 30 | 60 | 19 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 20 | 40 | 27 | 54 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 21 | 42 | 27 | 54 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 23 | 46 | 24 | 48 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 17 | 34 | 28 | 56 | 5 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 20 | 40 | 27 | 54 | 2 | 4 | 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 | 46 | 21 | 42 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 21 | 42 | 28 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 18 | 36 | 27 | 54 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 14 | 28 | 29 | 58 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 22 | 44 | 25 | 50 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 28 | 56 | 21 | 42 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 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 students' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its students well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its students. |
| 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 students. 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).

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

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|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the students' 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 students 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 students.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets students' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| Progress: | the rate at which students are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the students' 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.



8 December 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Berwick Middle School, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 1LA

I am writing this letter to you, your parents or carers to tell you about some of the important things we found during the recent inspection of your school. First, however, I should like to thank all of you for the way you behaved throughout our visit and the confidence and good manners you showed when talking with inspectors. I should also like to thank those parents and carers who took the time to return the inspection questionnaire and, in particular, those who added some additional written comments. All the questionnaires were read very carefully.

The bullet points below highlight some of the key findings from the inspection.

- Berwick Middle School provides you with a satisfactory and improving quality of education. As a result the inspection team judges that the school no longer requires the significant improvement that the previous inspection said was necessary.
- You make satisfactory progress in your learning, which helps the overwhelming majority of you to achieve average standards in English and mathematics by the time you leave the school at the end of Year 8. However, inspectors found that boys' writing was not keeping pace with that of girls, especially in the correct use of grammar, punctuation and general sentence construction. The school is aware of this so we are asking all teachers in all subjects to make a special effort to improve these areas.
- Your behaviour is good, and significant numbers of you take advantage of the many extra activities offered by the school. Well done!
- Your teachers plan their lessons carefully and they have developed positive working relationships with you all; this is helping you to enjoy school and feel safe. However, we are asking your teachers to plan their lessons to take better account of all the different abilities of students, and provide more challenging activities for those of you who are capable of achieving high standards.
- Senior staff, especially the governing body and headteacher, are helping the school to improve. The inspectors were pleased with the quality of the work already concluded, but we are asking that even greater effort be put into ensuring that all the school plans, which identify what actions it intends to take

over the next year, focus much more on the standards the school would like you to reach.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake
Her Majesty's Inspector

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