

Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122347
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380453
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2012
Lead inspector	Andrew Johnson 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	426
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Walker
Headteacher	Lynn Rose
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted secondee
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two working days' notice. Inspectors observed 27 lessons taught by 20 teachers, as well as visiting lessons for shorter periods, observing assemblies and registration periods. In total, they spent approximately 19 hours observing teaching. Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, other staff, and members of the governing body and talked to groups of students from each year group. Documents were examined, including those related to improvement planning, the quality of teaching, and records of current achievement. Inspectors considered the views of the 232 parents and carers, 100 pupils and the 23 staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaires.

Information about the school

This is a large middle school, although smaller than an average-sized secondary school. It is set in a rural location but serves a diverse population. The proportion of students who are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is around average. A below average proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The large majority of students are of White British heritage. The school met the government's national floor standard for primary schools last year, which sets the minimum standards expected for attainment and progress at the end of Year 6. The school has maintained a number of awards since the previous inspection, including Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark and Healthy School status. The school has a specialism in technology.

The school is part of a federation that includes another local middle school, a first school and a high school and shares the same governing body and executive headteacher.

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

- This is a satisfactory school. It is no better because the achievement of different groups of students varies considerably, depending upon their age, gender and background. Teaching, although satisfactory overall, does not consistently close the gaps in achievement between groups. Leadership, although satisfactory, is not good because it does not have enough impact on outcomes for students. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Most students join the school with average levels of ability in English and mathematics. By the time they leave, their overall attainment is also average. However, there is inconsistency; older students, girls and those not known to be eligible for free school meals reach higher academic levels than their peers. Groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Students' progress in reading, writing, and mathematics is slowest in Key Stage 2.
- Teaching is satisfactory and no better because of the inconsistent impact it has on developing students' skills, knowledge and understanding. The curriculum is satisfactory; students make satisfactory progress in most subjects. In the best lessons, teachers personalise learning to meet the needs of students with a wide range of abilities, and all groups make good progress. In the less effective lessons, the opposite is true and progress is slower.
- Students' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Inspectors observed students being respectful to each other and adults. The school provided convincing evidence to show that this is a typical picture. Students have good attitudes to learning in lessons. They feel safe and incidents of bullying are rare.
- Leadership is satisfactory. It is not yet good because the management of staff performance has not resulted in universally good provision. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The majority of parents or carers are happy with the education of their children; however, a significant minority indicated they had some difficulty communicating with the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all groups of students, particularly those in Key Stage 2, make good progress in reading, writing, and mathematics by:
 - improving the quality of and focus on, the teaching of literacy and numeracy across all subjects
 - ensuring the marking of students' written work offers better advice to students on how they can improve spelling, handwriting and grammar
 - improving communication with parents and carers so they can become more involved in supporting the learning of their children.

- Make sure that teaching and learning is good or better by:
 - ensuring lessons provide students with sufficient opportunities to learn independently and thus develop deeper understanding
 - ensuring all teachers personalise learning activities so that students, particularly the more-able, are always challenged by their work
 - ensuring that teachers and additional support staff work together more effectively to identify and support individuals who are not making good progress
 - always following up marked work, including homework, to check that students respond and make the necessary improvement.

- Improve the impact of leadership at all levels by:
 - clearly communicating ambitious targets to everyone involved in the school
 - sharing the school's accurate self-evaluation more widely to ensure all staff know where strengths and areas for improvement are to be found
 - implementing existing plans more effectively to improve the achievement of different groups of students
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice in teaching and support more widely and effectively
 - improving communication with parents and carers, so that all are aware of how the school supports their children and how they can be more involved in supporting learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory; however, inspectors observed much good learning in lessons and little that was inadequate. Most students enjoy school and are keen to learn, however, their positive attitudes and the impact this has on learning are sometimes diluted by the pedestrian nature of some teaching. Most students enjoy reading and develop effective comprehension and understanding by the time they leave the school, although the development of good reading and writing is less consistent in Key Stage 2. Marking is done frequently but students are not always given enough advice on how to improve their spelling, grammar and presentation. Students make the best progress in lessons where activities are carefully planned to meet their individual needs and prior attainment.

During the four years that students attend the school, most make satisfactory progress. However, achievement varies between groups. For example, girls tend to attain higher levels than boys in English; students in Key Stage 3 usually make better progress than those in Key Stage 2; and students known to be eligible for free school meals make less progress than their peers. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

Data gathered by the school indicate that most students start Year 5 with average levels of attainment, although many have attained above average standards in their previous schools at the end of Key Stage 1. By the time they leave Year 8, most students' attainment is in line with that expected and in some subjects above average. They reach the highest standards and make the best progress in information and communication technology and design technology, which are the school's specialist subjects. Imbalances in the performance of different groups and subjects have been recognised by the school and measures have been put in place to close the gaps, however, as yet, the necessary improvements have not shown through. A large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires are happy with the progress their children are making and a high proportion would recommend the school to others.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although inspectors observed much variation. Most parents are happy with the quality of teaching their children receive, although a few commented on a lack of communication about homework and ways in which their children were being supported.

In the best lessons, teachers use tailor-made activities to meet students' needs. They engage students in activities that develop deeper understanding and promote high levels of interest. For example in one lesson, students were fascinated by the reasons for Jackson Pollack's artistic work, and in another enjoyed the challenge of using computing skills to research the environmental impact of radioactive power. In lessons, where teaching has less impact on learning, teachers focus on ensuring students complete tasks at the same rate, resulting in some more-able pupils making slower progress. In these lessons, students behave in a passive way and do not develop their ability to learn independently. The quality of the teaching of reading and writing is satisfactory overall, but again there is variation and teachers of some subjects do not take enough care to ensure that students' literacy skills improve.

Students are clear about their targets. Appropriate homework is set in most subjects and marked. However, teachers do not always follow up the impact that homework or marking has on progress. Support received by students to reduce the number of basic spelling and grammatical errors is inconsistent and does not lead to consistent improvement. Students usually behave in a sensible way in lessons and are keen to learn and this makes a good contribution to their personal and social development.

Teaching assistants provide good pastoral care, particularly to disabled students and those with special educational needs. These students make satisfactory progress in lessons; however, teaching assistants are not sufficiently involved in developing students' learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of students is good and they feel safe. Attendance rates are above average and few students are persistently absent. Very few students are excluded from school. Few lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. Bullying is rare but when it does happen, students told inspectors they know how to recognise it and who to approach for support. They had confidence that it is dealt with properly. The atmosphere in corridors and social areas is calm and students are polite and friendly to visitors. Students told inspectors that this is what their school is usually like.

The behaviour management system is used effectively to prevent poor behaviour and reward those who behave well. Younger students particularly appreciate the online reward system. Students show each other respect, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, disability or special educational need. Occasionally, incidents that happen outside school, or on buses, spill over into the life of the school. Despite the best efforts of staff, a few parents or carers still express concerns regarding the way the school handles these issues. The personal and social curriculum enables students to understand how they can keep themselves safe, including when they use computers. Assemblies make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Students show respect for their environment and help keep the building and grounds clean and tidy.

Behaviour cannot be judged to be outstanding because in lessons where learning is satisfactory, students are too passive and not fully engaged by learning activities.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers make a satisfactory contribution to improving students' achievements and the quality of teaching. Appropriate professional development opportunities and performance management are in place for teachers. However, the school recognises that more could be done to enable support staff to contribute more to students' learning. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. In particular, its membership of a federation enables governors to ensure that self-evaluation is robust and accurate. The school tries hard to ensure that children do not fall back as a result of transferring between schools, but recognises that more could be done in this respect.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and adequately promotes students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. All appropriate policies and procedures are in place to promote equality and tackle discrimination. The school recognises that some vulnerable students do not achieve as well as their peers and is working hard to close their gaps in performance, all be it with limited success so far. Arrangements to ensure students' safety meet government requirements. Leadership is not good because the ambitious targets which have been set have not been reached in all parts of the school. Leaders have made an accurate self-evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement; however, targets for improvement are not fully understood by all staff. Existing plans are well founded and focus on improving the achievement of different groups and the quality of teaching. However, the implementation of plans at subject level is not always effective. Leaders recognise that there is good and outstanding teaching in some parts of the school but efforts to share this more widely do not always work. Communication with parents and carers is generally successful but a significant minority feel uncertain about the contribution they can make to support their children.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



3 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School, Alnwick NE66 1AX

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for the warm welcome you gave us and explain our findings. We think your school provides you with a satisfactory education. There are several reasons for this. For example, most of you reach the expected standards by the time you leave Year 8 but a significant minority do not. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and sometimes better and you behave well and feel safe. The school is well led and managed in most areas, but there are some significant areas for improvement.

The majority of parents or carers who responded to the questionnaire were happy with what the school provides. Almost all of the students we spoke to and those who returned the questionnaires enjoyed school. However, we still think the school could do more to build on its strengths and resolve its weaknesses.

The headteacher, staff and governors have already identified most of the areas for improvement and are working on them. They agree with us that the main priorities are to:

- make sure that all groups of students, particularly those in Key Stage 2, make good progress in reading, writing, and mathematics
- make sure that teaching is always good or better and students are always challenged by their work in lessons.
- improve the impact that leaders across the school have and develop better lines of communication with some parents and carers.

You can continue to play your part by working hard and attending regularly. We would like to send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Johnson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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