

# Alnwick the Dukes Middle School

Hope House Lane, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1UN

**Inspection dates** 26–27 September 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement is not rising quickly enough, particularly that in reading in Key Stage 3.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good enough to have the desired effect on raising achievement.
- Information about what students can and cannot do is not always used well enough to plan work that stretches all of them. As a result, students do not progress as well as they could.
- In some lessons, teachers do not check often enough how well students are learning or give them clear ways of checking for themselves.
- Leaders and managers are not bringing about improvements as quickly as they might do.
- Not all staff have a clear understanding of the key features of good and outstanding teaching.
- When leaders judge the quality of teaching they do not always focus enough on how well students are learning.
- Middle leaders do not monitor and evaluate students' progress and the quality of teaching sufficiently well in the areas that they lead.
- Governors do not hold the school to account rigorously enough in relation to the students' academic achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school is a very orderly community and students say that there is little they would want to change about their school.
- Students behave well and feel very safe. They are very polite and courteous and look after each other well.
- Students enjoy lessons and, when given the opportunity, are keen to be fully involved in knowing how well they are learning.
- Attendance is broadly average and has improved. The number of exclusions has been reduced significantly.
- The school is working increasingly well with the parents of students who are underachieving to maximise improvements.
- The school has put in place some effective initiatives to improve reading, although it is too early to see the full impact of this work.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 teachers teaching 14 lessons. Three observations were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and carried out analyses of students' books and other work.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, child protection, development planning, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and the teachers' professional development.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, including the executive headteacher of the federation, and also with governors, students and the local authority.
- The 10 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the 18 responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed.

## Inspection team

Alison Thomson, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

David Griffiths

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average size middle school.
- The school is part of the Aln Community of Schools, a local hard federation that includes another middle school, a first school and a high school. These schools share the same governing body and executive headteacher.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, is lower than average.
- Almost all students are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students supported by school action and those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are higher than average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards for the minimum expectations of attainment and progress in English and mathematics
- Since the previous inspection there has been a significant turnover of teachers in the school.

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

- Raise pupils' achievement in all subjects, particularly in reading in Key Stage 3, through ensuring that more teaching is consistently good or better by:
  - using more effectively the assessment information about what students can and cannot do to plan lessons that challenge all students effectively
  - regularly checking throughout lessons how well individual students are learning
  - giving clear criteria for success in lessons so that students know how well they are learning
  - embedding all the initiatives to raise achievement in reading, some of which are relatively new, so that they have maximum impact.
- Improve aspects of leadership and management to bring about improvements more quickly by:
  - ensuring that all teachers have a clear understanding of the key features of good and outstanding teaching, through more focused, continuous professional development, so that they can improve their teaching effectively
  - when observing lessons, always having a close focus on students' learning and progress when judging the quality of teaching
  - developing the role of middle leaders in the effective monitoring and evaluation of students' progress and the quality of teaching in the areas that they lead
  - providing the governors with timely, on-going information about the progress of students to help them to hold the school to account more effectively for academic achievement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Inspectors saw many lessons where students' achievement was good. Nonetheless, achievement requires improvement overall. Students are keen to be actively involved in their lessons. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson about manipulation of negative numbers students eagerly discussed their ideas in pairs prior to whole-class discussions. This enhanced the good progress they made.
- Students enter in Year 5 with varied attainment, but it is generally average overall. By the time they leave in Year 8, their attainment is still broadly average, which means that the progress they make requires improvement. The progress that they make varies in each class and in different subjects. Progress in mathematics tends to be better than in English, particularly in reading.
- Achievement in reading in Key Stage 3 is weak, but improving, however. There are many initiatives in place to help improve reading, such as whole-school guided reading sessions. One student told the inspectors how much he enjoyed a visit from a famous author and how that had encouraged him to read more often. Inspectors listened to students read and this confirmed that achievement in reading had improved, but still requires further improvement.
- Basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are well incorporated into other lessons, especially so with literacy skills. This was seen in many lessons including in a Year 6 science lesson, where key words were stressed and basic aspects of writing, such as using capital letters at the beginning of a sentence.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs requires improvement, to the same extent as that of other students in the school. However, these students do have proactive support from teaching assistants, which helps them to access their work.
- The progress of students known to be eligible for pupil premium also requires improvement, although there is evidence from the school's data that gaps between the progress these students make and their peers are closing.

### The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The overall quality of teaching over time requires improvement, although the school's records show that teaching is improving. During the inspection, good teaching was seen in a number of lessons, but none was outstanding. The teaching in some lessons required improvement and in one lesson it was inadequate.
- In the best lessons, work is closely matched to the abilities of all groups of students and offers challenge. For example, in a Year 8 history lesson on whether Henry VIII was a man or a monster, all groups of students made good progress with work that made them think deeply about the issue. However, sometimes the work is too easy and does not stimulate the students enough.
- In some lessons, teachers check how well individual students are learning throughout the lesson, but in those lessons where progress slows, not enough attention is given to this. In addition, students are not always given clear ways to be able to say how well they are learning. When they are given clear criteria for success, they rise to this challenge and make better progress.
- Teaching assistants work effectively with disabled students and those who have special educational needs, both in lessons and in small group activities. Sessions to improve both reading and writing were observed when students mostly made good progress.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in lessons. Students could explain to the inspectors about the Hindu faith and also what life for children is like in African countries and China.

- Although it was early in the academic year, many instances of good, supportive marking were seen with specific comments to help students know how to improve their work. However, the quality of marking is variable, both within and between subjects. Some of the best marking was seen in mathematics and in English. Discussions with some Year 8 students showed that sometimes they commented on each other's work. They said that they found this enjoyable and helpful.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students are very polite and courteous and behave well. This view is supported by parents and carers and by staff.
- The inspectors saw good behaviour in almost every lesson. Students' very positive behaviour impacts on their learning well. When given the opportunity, they enjoy checking their own work and that of others. Around school, at break times and during lunchtimes students are considerate of each other.
- Students shared their views willingly with the inspectors and talked confidently about their experiences in school and on visits. They say that behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school.
- Older students told the inspectors that behaviour has been good for some time and that hardly any bullying of any kind occurs. They say that the very little that does occur is dealt with by the school right away and that there are many adults to turn to for help and advice.
- Responsibility roles, such as being a member of the school council, lunchtime helpers and reading mentors, who go to the nearby first school to read with the younger children, are much coveted. One reading mentor told the inspectors that it helps his own reading to listen to and correct the mistakes of the younger children.
- Students told the inspectors that they feel very safe in school and the responses to Parent View indicated parents' strong agreement that the school keeps their children safe. Students were observed behaving very safely in practical lessons and they showed they had a very good understanding of safety issues surrounding the use of computers.
- Attendance has improved and is securely in line with national averages. The number of exclusions has been significantly reduced.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have improved many aspects, such as behaviour, attendance and the integration of literacy into many subject areas. However, improvements are not occurring as quickly as they might, particularly the impact on how well students are achieving.
- The leadership and management of teaching and learning are bringing about some improvement in teaching. The sharing of good practice across the federation is helping this. However, the continuous professional development of teachers requires improvement to enable them to understand clearly the key features of good and outstanding teaching. Talking with teachers revealed that not all are entirely clear about how to improve their teaching. In addition, leaders do not always focus enough on the learning that is taking place when judging the quality of teaching.
- The school tracks the progress that students make in each subject and underachievement is identified. Appropriate strategies, such as small-group teaching and one-to-one support are put in place to help those students to catch up, but not always in a timely way.
- At present the role of middle leaders is not fully developed in monitoring and evaluation in their areas, both in the progress students make and also in the quality of teaching.
- The school values all students and strives to enable all to do well. The differences in achievement between different groups of students are closing. This includes those students

supported by the pupil premium. Strategies, such as closer links with parents concerning progress and a summer school to boost standards, are having a positive impact. One student told the inspectors just how much he had gained from the summer school and how he now felt more confident about his work.

- The curriculum meets the needs of the students increasingly well. Students enjoy a wide range of visits and visitors. Their understanding of cultures other than their own is being addressed effectively through strategies such as Chinese pen pals.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- The support from the local authority is limited. The school does not buy into extended support and in consequence receives only one visit per year.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - takes initiative and is helping to address underachievement, for example in reading
  - the governing body is relatively new in its makeup and is still evolving in terms of the frequency and depth of support it provided for the school
  - governors are not given on-going, timely information about students' progress to be able to hold the school to account sufficiently for academic achievement.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupil's needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupil's needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122353
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	402091

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

<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>	199
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Walker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dawn Morton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26–27 May 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01665 602037
<b>Fax number</b>	01665 602037
<b>Email address</b>	admin@dukes.northumberland.sch.uk



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