

Highfield Middle School

Highfield Lane, Prudhoe, Northumberland, NE24 6EY

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good. Pupils make outstanding progress in English and good progress in mathematics and other subjects. Pupils speak well, read fluently and write to a high standard for their age. They use these skills well in all of their lessons.
- The quality of teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Teachers plan interesting lessons with a range of activities that involve pupils well. They explain new work clearly and ask questions that help pupils to develop good levels of understanding. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly so that they know how to improve. Literacy is taught consistently well in all subjects.
- Pupils are given impressive opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and each other. This helps them to develop into articulate and confident young people who behave extremely well. Pupils say that bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively. Outstanding behaviour helps pupils feel safe.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and varied curriculum with many additional opportunities to widen their horizons and deepen their knowledge. For example, links with a school in Zambia have not only extended pupils' cultural awareness, but also their understanding of ecological issues. The curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher and senior staff, including governors, lead the school with ambition and drive. There is a strong determination to secure the best possible experience for pupils as well as the highest standards. Leaders have successfully maintained excellent standards in English. Achievement in mathematics is improving so that it is now good. Professional development is making a good contribution to improvements in teaching. Future leaders are identified and nurtured into new roles and this helps to develop their full potential.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is mainly good and not enough is outstanding.
- Not enough pupils are making better than expected progress in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 18 teachers, as well as making many shorter visits to lessons to look at pupils work. Some of these observations also involved the headteacher and other members of the leadership team.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils and listened to others in Year 6 read.
- The views of 25 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), as well as two parents who contacted inspectors, were taken into account.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority who works with the school.
- The school's improvement plan and records of pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and safeguarding were examined.
- Thirty staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors took these into account.

Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Feerick

Additional Inspector

Jim Hall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Highfield Middle is smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is low compared to the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is lower than found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has recently gained the 'Diana' award for anti-bullying.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good and a greater proportion is outstanding by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to respond to marking and feedback so that they make even more rapid progress
 - more consistently matching the work set to the different abilities of pupils within each class.
- Improve achievement in mathematics, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6, so that a far greater proportion of pupils make better than expected progress by:
 - ensuring pupils have time to correct their work in order to improve their understanding
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use and practise their mathematical skills in a wider range of subjects
 - moving pupils on to more difficult work when they are quick to understand.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is improving in mathematics so that pupils reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 8. This is because progress in mathematics accelerates as pupils move through the school.
- Mathematics standards at the end of Year 6 have been broadly average for the last three years. This is because the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress has been lower than that found nationally. Far more pupils are now reaching higher levels of attainment so that currently achievement in Year 5 and Year 6 is improving.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons because teachers have high expectations and pupils work hard to achieve their targets.
- Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with attainment as expected in English and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, standards in reading and writing are above average and by the time pupils leave the school in Year 8, they have made rapid progress to reach standards that are well above expectations.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in English because literacy is taught well and because pupils are given many opportunities to develop their communication, reading and writing skills in a range of other subjects. As a result, the quality of pupils' writing is exceptional. Pupils do not yet have the same opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in a wide enough range of subjects.
- Pupils who are supported at school action, school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs make excellent progress in reading and writing, so that the vast majority reach levels appropriate for their age. These pupils also make good progress in mathematics.
- All pupils are avid readers and read regularly at school and at home. They reach high standards of fluency and understanding for their age.
- Pupils entitled to the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, achieve well in relation to their starting points. Their attainment is about a term behind those who are not eligible in English and mathematics. This gap is smaller than found nationally.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good with some that is outstanding and a small proportion that requires improvement. Teachers plan a variety of learning activities that maintain pupils' interest throughout lessons, so that pupils make good progress.
- Where teaching is good or better, it is because teachers have high expectations and set work that stretches the majority of pupils in the class. Teachers ask probing questions and give pupils time to think, expecting the majority to respond either by answering directly or by discussing their ideas with each other.
- Sometimes teachers do not use assessment information well enough to match the work set to the different abilities of pupils within the class or set. In mathematics, pupils are not always moved on quickly enough if they find the work too easy.
- Pupils' work is marked carefully so that they know what they need to do to improve. Marking is particularly effective in English where pupils are encouraged to respond to feedback by the teacher and improve the quality of their writing. This approach is not consistent in all subjects. For example, in mathematics, teachers sometimes correct pupils' work for them rather than expecting them to do it for themselves.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour extremely well, setting high standards for pupils to follow. There are warm positive relationships in classrooms so that pupils thrive as confident learners.
- Literacy is particularly well taught. Teachers use every opportunity to develop pupils' reading and writing skills, both within English lessons and in other subjects.

- Teaching assistants work well in partnership with teachers. They are particularly effective in ensuring the good progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This is because they successfully encourage pupils to work independently and to help each other in order to build their confidence.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in lessons is outstanding. Pupils have excellent attitudes to their work, they are keen to do well and cooperate enthusiastically with adults and other pupils.
- For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils worked in pairs to investigate number patterns generated by moving counters. Pupils concentrated throughout the lesson and helped each other to find solutions. This approach is typical throughout the school and makes an excellent contribution to pupils' independence and social skills.
- Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. Adults are excellent role models and this sets high standards for pupils to follow. Pupils understand the system for managing behaviour, which is applied consistently well so that disruptions to learning are rare.
- Pupils are delightful ambassadors for their school. Their behaviour in and around the school is courteous, helpful and respectful. They take responsibility for their own actions and for the well-being of others. Older pupils are matched with younger pupils as 'buddies' and help them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- This level of responsibility is also evident in the work of the school council. They recently accounted for their actions to the governing body, and have been instrumental in setting up a new ecology project focusing on recycling and reclamation within the school.
- Pupils have an excellent knowledge of different forms of bullying. They have been involved in making videos about bullying and have gained accreditation for their work. Pupils say that bullying does sometimes happen but that it is dealt with quickly and well.
- Pupils have an excellent knowledge of safety, in particular how to stay safe on the internet. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View say that their children are safe at school and two parents who contacted inspectors say that the school has provided incredible support for their children.
- Attendance is broadly average. The school has managed persistent absence well so that it has reduced significantly and is now much lower than average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is ambitious and relentless in her approach to securing a vibrant learning environment so that pupils gain in maturity and enjoy achieving as well as they can. The responsibility for realising this aim is shared by all who lead the school, including the governing body. Leaders have taken decisive action to improve standards in mathematics so that achievement is now good and improving. This improvement, together with the maintenance of high standards in English and the excellent behaviour of pupils, demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.
- Leaders regularly check the progress pupils are making and the quality of teaching. As a result, they have an accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This information is used well to identify precise and accurate priorities for the school improvement plan.
- The professional development of staff is at the heart of recent improvements. The performance management of teachers is rigorous and supportive and, as a result, the quality of teaching has improved. The most effective teachers are given opportunities to develop their leadership skills so that they are able to move into leadership positions if and when successful.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of interesting activities within lessons and outside the school day. There are excellent enrichment opportunities, such as residential visits and a vibrant

music curriculum. The school takes every opportunity it can to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of pupils.

- The school has good links with parents, sets regular homework and uses electronic communication to keep parents up to date. A very small minority of parents responded to Parent View. The majority of these parents say their child is happy, feels safe and makes good progress.
- The school has strong partnerships with other schools and external organisations, such as business ambassadors. These partnerships help to build pupils' aspirations and also support those pupils who are more vulnerable. Pupils are working with other schools to help them develop effective school councils.
- There are good systems in place that meet all safeguarding requirements.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school, in particular highlighting the issues about performance in mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an extensive knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This is because governors are involved in monitoring activities when they visit the school and discuss the progress of improvement plans during their meetings.
 - Governors make sure that targets for teachers are challenging and sometimes restrict pay awards if targets are not fully met.
 - Governors ensure that resources, including the pupil premium funding, are used effectively to raise standards for all pupils. In this way, it discharges its duty to promote equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination.

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 pupils' 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 pupils' 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

Unique reference number	122340
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	413011

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	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Skoyles
Headteacher	Pamela Kidd
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2010
Telephone number	01661 833922
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