

Wellfield Middle School

Kielder Road, South Wellfield, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE25 9QW

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school motto 'we care' is central to the work of the school. Pupils feel safe and happy and are proud of their school.
- Pupils' attainment is above average at the end of Year 6 and well above expectations for age at the end of Year 8, when they leave the school.
- Pupils make good progress during their time at school, particularly in writing and mathematics. Pupils can express themselves very well both orally and in writing, and these skills can be seen in a range of lessons.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress at school due to the high-quality support they receive.
- The quality of teaching is good. Some is outstanding. Teachers use a range of techniques to spark the interest of the pupils. They give pupils good opportunities to learn and pupils are keen to do well.
- Teachers mark work in a way which helps pupils do better next time.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to other adults. They are given opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and each other, helping them to develop into confident and articulate young people.
- Special features of the curriculum help to support the emotional development of the pupils, and link directly to the aim of the school to show that 'we care'. 'Be spirited' is a lesson where pupils develop empathy and a deeper level of self-knowledge.
- Middle and senior leaders, together with the governing body, have been effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning, and the rate at which pupils are making progress. The school continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. In lessons, the most able pupils are not always making the progress of which they are capable because work is not always sufficiently challenging.
- The progress pupils make in reading is slower than in writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons, and made many shorter visits to lessons to look at pupils' work. They also visited assemblies and extra-curricular activities.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school's improvement plan; the school's own evaluation of its work; the school's data for tracking pupils' progress; the work pupils were doing in their books; documentation relating to safeguarding; documents relating to the monitoring of the quality of teaching; and information about teachers' professional development.
- The inspectors observed pupils in lessons, at break times, and around the site.
- Discussions were held with members of the leadership team, two groups of teaching staff (including middle leaders) and two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector looked at the Ofsted on-line questionnaire, (Parent View), prior to, and during, the inspection. In total, there were 25 responses at the conclusion of the inspection. The main findings from these responses were shared with the headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke with a significant number of pupils and staff during lessons and around the school. They spoke formally to two groups of pupils and asked about their perceptions of life at school.
- Inspectors read 16 paper-based inspection questionnaires returned by staff at the school.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Harrison

Additional Inspector

Barbara Waugh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wellfield Middle School, deemed secondary, caters for pupils from Year 5 to Year 8. This means that it is significantly smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those whose parents are in the forces and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and supported through school action is high.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

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:
 - making sure that pupils have more opportunities to think, learn and work independently
 - ensuring that work is always challenging and carefully matched to the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able
 - further developing performance management systems so that the quality of teaching is improved.
- Raise standards and improve the rate of progress of pupils in reading by:
 - embedding the school-wide reading programmes such as 'red-readers' and 'reading hit squad', so that recent improvements in standards of reading continue
 - increasing the focus on the developing use of a wider range of vocabulary in lessons
 - monitoring rates of progress in pupils' ability in reading more closely in order to ensure that different groups of pupils are all making excellent progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of Year 5 pupils start at the school with standards that are above average in English and in mathematics. They make good progress from their starting points so that they achieve above average standards overall at the end of Year 6, and well above those expected for age at the end of Year 8. Pupils' progress is best in mathematics, followed by writing, then reading.
- Data show that standards reached and progress made by pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 has continued to improve. From being above average in previous years, in 2013, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was well-above average and the proportion making the expected progress has also improved, and is now in line with national averages.
- Standards reached by pupils with special educational needs have improved rapidly. This is due to excellent teaching in the classroom and extra support given to these pupils. Disabled pupils are also very well provided for, and these pupils also make good progress.
- Pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, achieve well in relation to their starting points. In 2012, their attainment was about two terms behind those not eligible in English and mathematics. In 2013, this gap had reduced to one term. Their progress is improving strongly.
- Sometimes, the most-able pupils are not making as much progress as they could. In some lessons, opportunities are missed to offer these pupils more stretching tasks, or to free them to follow trains of thought independently. Their progress overall is good, however.
- Progress in the wider curriculum is good. For example in art, geography and science, pupils learn at a good rate because they are highly motivated and learn through practical activities and interesting tasks.
- Pupils are good at communicating both orally and in writing. In lessons, their ability to give full and detailed answers with justification and reasoning is strong.
- Pupils participate well in physical education and extra-curricular sports. Primary school sport funding is having a positive impact on rates of participation and in supporting staff development to enhance teaching skills.
- Pupils show an interest in reading and are involved in a range of activities within lessons or at lunchtime to help them make progress in reading. Those who need extra support are part of the 'red readers' and 'reading hit squad'. Standards in reading are above average, but not as high as those in writing and mathematics. Sometimes, pupils have too few opportunities to widen their vocabulary or to enhance their reading skills.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most of the teaching seen during the inspection was good. Some outstanding practice was observed.
- In the very best lessons, teachers' good relationships and the way teachers organise their classrooms help pupils to learn well. They ensure that they plan their lessons to make sure all pupils are given work that gets the best out of them. They use interesting and exciting teaching methods which ensure that the pupils enjoy their learning. As a result, there is a buzz in the classroom. These teachers expect the very best from all of their pupils. Teachers mark work in a way which helps pupils do better next time.
- For example, during a Year 6 geography lesson the teacher used a wide range of strategies to spark the interest of the pupils, including the use of tablet computers, a 'snowball' activity where pupils 'threw European countries into a box', and an investigative approach to developing knowledge about Europe. The combination of absorbing activities and high expectations led to outstanding progress.
- The development of both literacy and numeracy was outstanding in a Year 8 science lesson.

Students made hypotheses, questioned each other, and wrote at length about their experiment. Their understanding and ability to express complex concepts was impressive.

- In a Year 6 literacy lesson, both the teacher and the teaching assistants worked with pupils with special educational needs to help them make progress in their reading. This had a striking impact on their confidence and skills. School programmes such as 'red-readers' and 'reading hit squad' are beginning to have an impact on standards across the school. In other lessons, however, opportunities are missed to develop pupils' wider vocabulary and to hone their reading skills.
- Not all teaching is this good. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to ensure that the most-able pupils are fully challenged. At other times, pupils are not given the enough chance to work independently. Occasionally, teachers do not plan lessons which meet the needs of all of the pupils in their class.
- However, parents, teachers and pupils say that the standard of teaching at school is good overall, and inspection evidence confirms this view.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good and, in lessons where pupils are expected to work together and learn from each other, it is excellent. Pupils are extremely kind and considerate towards each other, staff and visitors. They are polite and courteous and are keen to do well. This creates a warm and positive climate for learning.
- The school works hard with parents and pupils to ensure that the school is a caring place where all are included. Each week, a lesson called 'be spirited' focuses on personal and emotional development, and pupils consider concepts such as empathy and self-awareness. This, combined with new procedures to praise good behaviour and to monitor behaviour which is less good, is having a positive impact on the atmosphere in school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and say they feel very safe in school. They also have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying, about which they have few concerns. They know that any incidents will be dealt with quickly and effectively by the school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and do so regularly. They arrive at school and to lessons on time. Exclusions are rare, due to strong systems at school and an ethos which assumes that good behaviour is the norm.
- Pupils contribute to the school and take on responsibilities in a variety of ways, such as being members of the school council. Older pupils regularly help and support other pupils around the school. This makes a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The leadership and management are good

- Governors, senior leaders and middle leaders have had, in the main, a positive impact on the quality of teaching and the rates of pupils' progress. They have identified the school's areas of strength and areas where improvements are needed. Plans for further improvement are clear and focused on the key priorities. As a result, the school is improving.
- The curriculum is interesting and varied. Pupils enjoy learning about a variety of topics. In themed learning each year a topic is covered in depth; for example, in 2013 Africa was the focus. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including magic club, origami, 'boxercise', judo and girls' football, among others. A range of events, for example, the mathematics roadshow, enrich the formal curriculum.
- Senior leaders have used performance management and the appraisal process successfully to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, teachers currently at school meet the Teachers' Standards. School leaders agree that this process can be further developed to increase its impact on teaching and pupils' progress.

- Systems and processes to track the performance of pupils are effective. The use of progress data by staff is inconsistent, however. Leaders are developing a more refined approach to the monitoring of progress in reading.
- The school takes any form of discrimination seriously and pupils thrive in the school environment. Equality of opportunity has a high priority and the school is aware of the need to further challenge the most able pupils.
- The school works well with parents. Their responses to Ofsted's 'Parent View' survey show that parents are supportive of the school and are proud of its achievements.
- Many staff completed the voluntary questionnaire for the inspection. Their answers convey a level of pride in the school and commitment to the pupils.
- The school meets statutory responsibilities for safeguarding.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school since the time of its last inspection. It has contributed to the improvement in both the quality of teaching and the rates of progress of the pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are effective in challenging the school to improve. They are very committed to the life of the school, and make regular visits to the school and receive regular reports from the headteacher about the school's performance. They bring a wide range of expertise to the school. As a result, they are aware of the relative strengths and areas for improvement in the quality of teaching and use performance management as a tool to ensure standards are rising. They have evaluated the school's appraisal system, understand the arrangements to link pay to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, and have challenged the headteacher to ensure that performance targets are met. They track the use of pupil premium funding and have a good understanding of the impact of this spending. Their leadership is ensuring that gaps in progress and standards are closing for these pupils.

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	108649
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	425699

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	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Tipple
Headteacher	Steve Collinson
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2012
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