

St Peter's RC Middle School

Northumbrian Road, Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 6DB

Inspection dates

23–24 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- In 2013, attainment in mathematics in the national tests for pupils in Year 6 was lower than in the previous year and this situation has persisted over time compared to reading and writing.
- Not enough pupils make the expected amount of progress in mathematics at the end of Year 6. Some pupils lack basic understanding of, and strategies to work out, mathematical problems.
- Teaching is not consistently good and some inadequate teaching remains in Years 5 and 6. Teachers' expectations are not sufficiently high to motivate and challenge pupils. Mundane tasks and whole-class teaching restrict pupils' engagement in their learning and their progress.
- Marking is inconsistent. It does not provide enough information so that pupils know what they have done wrong and how they can improve their work.
- Monitoring activities are insufficiently robust to bring about improvements where they are most needed in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Governors are not focused enough on pupils' performance and the quality of teaching. They accept information and lack the skills necessary to help them undertake this important work effectively.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well, understand how to and why they should keep themselves safe. They are courteous and polite to others, adults and visitors.
- Good teaching promotes good learning in some subjects.
- Senior leaders and governors have the welfare of the pupils at the centre of their discussions when considering the future direction for the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 part-lessons at both the Cramlington and Bedlington sites.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the headteacher from St Benet Biscop High School, senior leaders, members of the governing body, school staff and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their work in lessons, looked at their books, heard pupils read and met with a group of pupils from all year groups.
- Prior to the inspection, there were no responses to the on-line survey, Parent View; none was received during the inspection.
- Inspectors also took account of the 18 questionnaires returned by members of the school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at progress data, performance management information, records relating to behaviour and safety as well as documents concerning safeguarding.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Marianne Young, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nigel Drew	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average middle deemed secondary school.
- The school is federated with St Paul's First School and St Benet Biscop High School. The first school and St Peter's operate with one headteacher and governing body but legally are two separate schools.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are educated on the St Peter's site in Cramlington. They share this site with some of St Paul's First School.
- The Year 7 and 8 pupils are educated six miles away at the St Benet Biscop High School in Bedlington.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is broadly average. The pupil premium funding is additional government funding provided for children in local authority care, those from armed service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational need is above average.
- In 2012, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 particularly by:
 - making sure that the information about pupils' capabilities is used properly when lessons are planned so that all pupils are challenged correctly
 - engaging all pupils in lessons and ensuring that they contribute to their learning
 - ensuring that marking in all subjects is of the highest quality and sets out clearly to all pupils how they should improve their work
 - seeking out and implementing outstanding practice.
- Raise attainment and progress in mathematics for all groups of pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management in order to increase the pace of school improvement by:
 - bringing about a consistent approach to monitoring activities on both sites
 - making use of the information gathered to set measurable targets and clear priorities so that leaders and governors can measure whether these are being met, whether the quality of teaching improves and if all pupils are making the progress of which they are capable.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved and so that governors fulfil their statutory duties fully. Governors must develop a mechanism so that they can measure the performance of all pupils and the quality of teaching so that they can hold leaders to account effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' prior attainment on entry to St Peter's RC Middle School is broadly average. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 were above average in 2013. These results, although above the national picture for reading and writing, were lower than those in the previous year when pupils' prior attainment was significantly above that seen nationally. Results in mathematics in 2013 were almost 20% lower than in the previous year.
- The progress made by pupils in Years 5 and 6 in 2012 was significantly below that seen nationally for most groups of pupils except for boys, more-able pupils and those pupils supported by pupil premium funding. Girls made much less progress than boys in mathematics. Consequently, underachievement was evident.
- In 2013, from a lower starting point, more pupils than seen nationally, made expected progress in reading and writing. However, the proportion of pupils making expected progress in mathematics was much lower than the previous year and the national picture. As a result, not all pupils are making the progress of which they are capable in this important subject because they do not have a clear understanding how to solve basic mathematical problems.
- School data and lesson observations, confirm that progress in Years 7 and 8, although inconsistent, is better. From a lower base, pupils in these year groups generally make faster progress in mathematics than in English. This was confirmed by work in pupils' books and during lesson observations.
- Pupils are willing to learn. When given clear direction, tasks that match their capabilities and involve them in their learning, they work well and make good progress.
- The school has been successful in reducing the attainment gap for pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding and their peers, especially at the end of Year 6. Although these pupils make good progress by the end of Year 8 in writing, their progress is as expected in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils who are disabled and pupils who have special educational needs achieve well and make good progress.
- Pupil premium and the Year 7 'catch up' funds provide a wide range of interventions, including smaller-group tuition for mathematics lessons and to ensure eligible pupils' involvement in all activities in and outside of lesson time.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching between year groups is inconsistent and this affects the progress all pupils make. There is not enough good teaching for pupils in Years 5 and 6 in particular; some inadequate teaching was observed. Where teaching is weak, teachers make insufficient use of the information about pupils' capabilities in order to plan precisely what pupils are to learn rather than do. Teachers give instructions but opportunities are sometimes missed to involve pupils, hear their ideas and to check their understanding. Consequently, in the weakest lessons, inspectors saw that pupils lack basic understanding of how to approach a task or spend too long doing simple whole-class tasks that do not move their learning forward.
- When pupils are involved in lessons, enabled to discuss their ideas, and share their findings because activities are well sequenced, learning moves at a brisk pace and pupils make good progress. Questions are phrased well so that pupils have to think carefully and explain their answers. Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly and provide regular feedback so that misconceptions can be corrected.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 told inspectors that learning in many of their lessons is fun. A similar response was not evident from younger pupils who spoke of doing the same work again and having to wait for others to finish before moving on. When inspectors observed lessons and looked in pupils' books, they could confirm these comments.

- The quality of marking is inconsistent with the best found in lessons for older pupils. Some comments are diagnostic and indicate the way forward. However, in Years 5 and 6 particularly, many books have ticks, a numerical score and 'well done' comments which do not help pupils understand how to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- Pupils are polite to each other, adults and visitors. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were keen to discuss their school and happy to identify what they enjoy. Older pupils welcome the wider variety of subjects and clubs on offer. However, pupils in Year 6 described with enthusiasm the outdoor activities that take place regularly on Fridays. Their excitement was evident when talking about going on walks and camping. These activities contribute significantly to enhancing pupils' social and moral understanding.
- At both sites, pupils respond well to instructions in lessons and their attitudes to learning are generally positive. Most pupils are keen to learn and want to succeed. Even when lessons are less than engaging, pupils behave well despite their attention wandering at times.
- Pupils have a clear understanding about keeping themselves safe, including when using technology and are confident that any bullying or misbehaviour will be dealt with severely by adults.
- Attendance is improved compared to this time last year. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent remains high, often due to holidays being taken during school time.
- There were no responses from parents regarding behaviour. However staff are unreservedly positive about behaviour.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Providing the best quality education for all pupils is uppermost in leaders' thoughts. Consequently, educating pupils in Years 7 and 8 at the Bedlington site has been well considered. This enables these pupils to benefit from a wider curriculum, a range of clubs out of lesson time, specialist teachers and more resources than would be the case if the previous system had remained. Pupils recognise the advantages of being 'at the big school' and know that they make faster progress than before. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were not so enthusiastic about their curriculum which is often subject to last minute changes which means some subjects are not taught regularly. On both sites, however, pupils' understanding of life in multicultural Britain is underdeveloped.
- The headteacher's time is divided between the two sites and she has additional responsibilities with another school in the Catholic group. Monitoring activities take place on both sites and, although staff meet regularly, there is an inconsistent approach in gathering and interrogating the information about the quality of teaching and attendance, for example. Consequently, information is not questioned robustly and priorities for development lack rigour. Understanding where good practice is to be found and using it effectively is underdeveloped. For example, weaknesses in mathematics in Year 5 and 6 have been allowed to persist for too long.
- Data are monitored regularly but this information is not used well enough in Years 5 and 6 to inform which pupils are doing well and why.
- Performance management targets are set and assessed against the teacher standards. Despite coaching and professional development for staff, some activities, for example marking, have not had the desired effect.
- The impact of the local authority's support and challenge over time in helping the school to improve has been minimal. Regular visits occur, mainly at the Cramlington site where the local authority officer attached to the school can gain first-hand information. This is not the case at the Bedlington site. Despite identifying over time, weaknesses at Years 5 and 6, and supporting governor training, which is appreciated, school leaders have not been challenged robustly

enough. As a result, there has been insufficient improvement in the key aspect of mathematics.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors give freely of their time and have strong links with the diocese and the community. They receive information about the performance of the school regularly from the headteacher. However this information, together with the school development plan, is mainly descriptive and lacks measurable indicators so that governors can challenge leaders. This makes it difficult for governors to understand strengths and weaknesses in teaching and the use of performance management for pay. Governors do ensure that the performance management of the headteacher meets requirements. Governors meet regularly with a range of senior leaders but these are mainly to receive information or consider procedural matters. They know that the school receives additional funding but ensuring that the funding, for example, pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' monies, has the intended impact on particular pupils, is underdeveloped. During the inspection, safeguarding arrangements met current requirements, but the inspectors drew governors' attention to some deficiencies on the school's website.

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	122368
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	412936

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev. Simon Lerche
Headteacher	Mrs Felicity Penny
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2010
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