

Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School

Lindisfarne Road, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1AX

Inspection dates 22–23 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Senior leaders and governors have not shown sufficient capacity to make the necessary improvements since the previous inspection.
- Actions taken to address the recommendations in the last inspection report have been too slow and too ineffective.
- Despite overall attainment being average at the start of Year 5 and above average when the pupils leave at the end of Year 8, gaps in the performance of different groups have not closed since the previous inspection, and some have widened in 2013. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are one or more terms behind their peers in English and mathematics, a trend that has continued over the past two years.
- Overall, pupils' progress is inadequate and not improving.
- There is still too much teaching that requires improvement and not enough that is consistently good or better to bring about the improvements needed in attainment and progress for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement. The great majority lack a real enthusiasm for learning because much teaching is too directed, with too few opportunities to really challenge pupils' thinking and apply new or past knowledge to everyday life. This is particularly so in mathematics.
- Work set for targeted pupils withdrawn from some lessons is too variable in quality, with some that really helps the pupils to learn and some which does nothing to move them forward.
- The local authority has provided inadequate support for the school since the previous inspection.

The school has the following strengths

- Attainment for higher and some middle ability pupils improves as they move through the school.
- There is some good teaching and occasional outstanding teaching.
- Some successful work has been done to accelerate the progress of Year 7 pupils supported by the government's funding aimed at helping them catch-up with their peers.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 28 lessons taught by 18 teachers, as well as a number of teaching assistants working in the classrooms. All teachers were offered and most accepted feedback given by inspectors.
- The lead inspector looked at the Ofsted on-line questionnaire, Parent View, prior to and during the inspection. In total, there were 76 on-line responses in addition to two letters and one note of a telephone call made to the inspection service provider for this inspection; all were taken into account as part of this inspection. The collective findings from these responses and those from the 20 staff questionnaires were summarised and shared with senior leaders at the final feedback meeting.
- A range of documents was considered and meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, and two members from the steering group of governors, which works directly with the school on behalf of the fully federated governing body. A meeting was also held with a local authority officer who has recently taken over a link role with the school.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of pupils and staff during lessons, and observed the pupils in assembly, at breaks and in their general movement around the school site.
- 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

Brian Blake, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Patrick Hargreaves

Additional Inspector

Clive Petts

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Alnwick Lindisfarne is a middle-deemed-secondary school with pupils starting in Year 5 and finishing at the end of Year 8. This means the school is significantly smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is in a hard federation with The Duchess's Community High School, Alnwick the Duke's Middle School and Alnwick South First School. Each of the four schools has its own headteacher. There is one federated governing body, with each of the four schools having a nominated group of governors who form a steering group, which works directly with the school and reports to the full governing body.
- The proportion of pupils who need extra help with their education, through school action support, is below average. The proportion of pupils who need more specialised support, namely, those at school action plus and those who are disabled or have a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those who have been in the care of the local authority for more than six months, and those whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces are supported by additional government funding called the pupil premium. The proportion of these pupils currently in school is below average
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve all teaching to a consistently good or better standard, by:
 - creating a climate for learning, with high levels of interesting and well-targeted activities, that enthuses and motivates pupils to want to learn
 - reducing the time teachers spend talking in order to maximise pupils' learning time
 - ensuring that all teachers recognise when to move pupils on to more challenging and open-ended activities that test their thinking and promote their independence in learning
 - challenging pupils to link their learning in mathematics to everyday life
 - ensuring that all teachers make the best possible use of the directed improvement time (DIT) initiative, which allows the pupils to modify, refine, correct and improve upon previously completed work
 - ensuring that all withdrawal lessons for pupils who need extra help with key literacy and numeracy skills are challenging enough to help them make good or better progress
 - making sure pupils understand which aspects of their personal attributes and qualities are needed to help them achieve their learning targets.
- Increase the capacity of leaders and managers to drive school improvement, by:
 - formulating a more accurate self-assessment of the school's strengths and areas that need to improve

- ensuring that the school development plan provides a clearer vision for school improvement and is shared more openly and regularly with parents
 - making sure that all information used to review school development plan priorities provides governors with regular, accurate and up-to-date progress measures
 - using up-to-date performance information so that prompt and decisive action is taken to improve the progress of all pupils and close the gaps in performance between different groups, especially those known to be eligible for free school meals
 - ensuring any assessment of the quality of teaching is linked specifically to improvements in pupils' attainment and progress
 - ensuring that parents have access through the school's website to all the information the school is required to make available.
- A review of governance is recommended with particular emphasis on the school's use of pupil premium funding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- The school has been unsuccessful in bringing about the improvements required to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their ability, make either expected or better than expected progress. Consequently, the school does not secure equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- Overall attainment when the pupils start at the school in Year 5 is broadly average, as it is by the end of Year 6. However, there is significant variation in the attainment of different groups. Pupils whose attainment is low when they join the school, and those known to be eligible for free school meals, do less well than their peers nationally.
- The school is responsible for one half of the progress pupils make between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. National test result outcomes show that rates of progress across the whole key stage (Year 3 to Year 6) have not improved enough and remain too slow. The 2013 Key Stage 2 results show that, despite a modest increase in pupils' progress in English, performance in mathematics dipped so that the trend of inadequate progress has continued. This applies, most significantly, to lower-ability pupils, some with special educational needs, and those known to be eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are at least one or two terms behind their peers in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- By the end of Year 6 the attainment of more-able pupils is broadly in line with their peers nationally in reading and writing but a little lower than this in mathematics. The proportion of more-able pupils making expected or better than expected progress in reading and writing is average, but it is lower than this in mathematics.
- A faster rate of progress is beginning to be seen in Years 7 and 8, especially for the Year 7 catch-up group (those for whom the school receives additional funding because they were below the expected Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2). By the end of Year 8, overall attainment is above the level expected for pupils of this age but there are still gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils. This means that the same pupils who underperformed at the end of Key Stage 2 are still underperforming by the time they leave the school, especially in reading and mathematics where they remain one or more terms behind their peers.
- Although senior leaders have been aware of this trend of inadequate progress, particularly as it was an area for improvement in the previous inspection report, their actions since that time have been too slow and unsuccessful.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement to bring about the necessary improvements in the progress of all pupils in the school and especially in closing the gaps in the performance of different groups.
- Some teachers direct and control pupils' learning too much which limits their opportunities to work independently. In these over-directed lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of the pupils' abilities to take responsibility for their learning. Teaching does not often enough get pupils to think about the links with previous learning and challenge them to improve their skills. Not enough teaching in mathematics is strong enough to promote consistently good learning.
- Most teachers adopt a similar approach to teaching their lessons by clearly communicating the intended lesson objectives with the pupils at the start. However, some spend too long doing this which limits the time pupils have for engaging in planned learning activities.
- In discussion with inspectors, and through scrutiny of workbooks, pupils generally show that they have a clear idea of their National Curriculum targets. However, teachers do not provide enough guidance on how pupils can develop their personal qualities and take more responsibility for learning in order to achieve greater success.
- Some teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. In better lessons, the pace of learning is

fast and challenging for all pupils. Pupils' engagement and enthusiasm in these lessons create a very positive learning climate. As a result, pupils show high levels of interest, make good use of prior knowledge, and demonstrate a desire to improve their work. Two lessons observed by inspectors during the inspection had all of these characteristics. In a Year 8 dance lesson, pupils showed an increasing ability to refine, modify and adapt their work with increasing complexity of movement. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, the pupils rose to the challenge of thinking about a problem, developing their use of mathematical language and applying their understanding to events in their everyday lives. However, not enough teaching reaches the standards reflected in these lessons, particularly in mathematics.

- Teachers' marking has improved as a result of the school's initiative, DIT, which encourages pupils to correct errors. However, it is not applied consistently to ensure that all pupils refine, modify and improve upon previously completed work.
- The support for underperforming or lower ability pupils is too variable in quality to ensure that all make at least the progress expected. Some of the withdrawal lessons observed during the inspection were very beneficial, for example, in developing fine motor skills with dyspraxic pupils, or for lower-ability pupils in helping them to develop their basic mathematical knowledge and understanding. In contrast, some reading interventions do not challenge pupils, or move their learning forward, as the material used is too easy.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Although the majority of pupils show a level of enthusiasm for their work in lessons when it is interesting and challenging, too few show a genuine thirst for learning, characterised by drive and individual initiative to want to know more. This means that in most lessons, the pupils are compliant and get on with their work, rather than developing initiative, enquiry, research or independent approaches which feed their personal enthusiasm for their work. Too few lessons use and develop these qualities consistently as an aid to pupils' learning.
- The vast majority of pupils say they enjoy attending school, feel safe and that teachers are helpful and friendly. There are few instances of disruptive or challenging behaviour that affect pupils' learning.
- The vast majority of pupils respond well to staff guidance and direction. They understand the rules of the school and follow these when in lessons or when moving around the building, in between lessons, at break and lunchtimes. Most movement is prompt and safe, which ensures that no time is lost due to poor punctuality.
- The attendance of pupils is generally high when compared to all secondary schools, but more in line when compared to middle-deemed-secondary schools. The attendance of different groups varies, but is generally lower for boys, pupils in receipt of free school meals and those receiving additional help with learning at school action plus. Fixed-term exclusions are below average, with a greater number among those pupils in receipt of free school meals and/or at school action plus.
- Responses from parents, including those on Parent View, were positive in the main. However, there are some areas of disagreement. These relate to how the school responds to any concerns raised, information about progress, how well the school is led and managed, the behaviour of pupils and how the school deals with bullying. Inspectors found no direct evidence of bullying during the inspection and noted that recorded incidents had been dealt with appropriately. Pupils who spoke with inspectors felt that challenging behaviour, including bullying and any misbehaviour on buses, did not make them feel unsafe and were not ignored by staff.

The leadership and management

are inadequate

- Senior leaders and governors have not shown sufficient capacity to bring about the necessary improvements since the previous inspection. Actions taken have been too slow or too ineffective to make any significant inroads into addressing the inadequate progress of pupils over the past

two years, and especially in closing the gaps in attainment and progress between different groups. This applies, in particular, to those supported by the pupil premium. While senior leaders and governors are now giving much greater attention to the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils, these actions are too recent to have adequately addressed underperformance. Neither senior leaders nor governors are clear enough about why the overall performance of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding has gone down this year. This means that systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision, including teaching and its impact on learning, are not sufficiently robust or accurate.

- The school development plan highlights a number of areas for improvement, which are directly related to the recommendations in the previous inspection report. However, it fails to focus specifically enough on actions which will close gaps in performance through improved teaching. In addition, insufficient success measures and too few milestones, make it difficult to ensure that senior leaders, staff and governors have a clear overview of the progress being made over time. These same weaknesses extend to the three core subject plans. While each gives attention to raising standards, closing gaps and improving teaching, there is too little recognition of the link between effective teaching and improving pupils' attainment and progress. Currently, the school does not inform parents and carers of the key priorities of this plan, which therefore limits their ability to share in its vision for future improvements.
- Leaders' evaluation is overly optimistic about the provision across all areas, including the quality of teaching. Leaders, including those with subject responsibility, judge teaching to be generally good despite inadequate progress in the past two years overall and for groups of pupils, including those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding.
- The local authority has had a 'light touch' approach to monitoring the school, which means that one visit only is made, during the autumn term, to discuss the most recent performance data. During the last academic year, the local authority recognised that this is insufficient, given the trend in progress and gaps in the performance of different groups since the previous inspection. However, this has not resulted in an increase in visits by local authority officers. Neither governors nor the headteacher have great confidence in the support or challenge provided by the local authority despite the provision of some very good data by its data unit.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. However, there are some tensions, particularly for those pupils who undergo a ten-week intervention programme to boost their key literacy and numeracy skills. Not only do they miss half or more of the same subject lesson over the ten week period of the intervention, but some of these interventions in reading are not fit for purpose because the work set is too easy.
- The school ensures that all safeguarding procedures are compliant with regulations.
- The school currently receives additional funding as part of the government's physical education and school sport initiative. Provision has been extended, with further additional plans in place, including the use of local coaches. Full roll-out is at too early a stage for its quality to be evaluated.
- Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.

■ The governance of the school:

- Since the previous inspection, governors have not demonstrated sufficient capacity to hold the school to account for the inadequate progress of different groups of pupils. The steering group of governors, working directly with the school on behalf of the full governing body, is efficient in its approach to liaising with staff. However, the governors' ability to link the quality of teaching over time with outcomes for pupils is a weaker aspect of their work because of the school's over optimistic self-evaluation of the quality of teaching. This also has an adverse impact on the quality of the performance management arrangements, despite evidence to show that some staff have not been moved up the pay scale because they have failed to meet expectations of performance. Some recent improvements in governance are increasing the focus on underperforming groups of pupils and on improving the quality of teaching. The governors' knowledge of spending the pupil premium funding is very clear and is published on the school website. However, there are gaps in other information required to be published by

governors. For example, there is no information about the admission arrangements or the full duties of governing bodies in relation to special educational needs, or links to the local authority's composite prospectus or the Department for Education performance tables.

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	122347
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	428931
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	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Walker
Headteacher	Lynn Rose
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2012
Telephone number	01665 602534
Fax number	01665 605994
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