

Ponteland Middle School

Callerton Lane, Ponteland, Northumberland, NE20 9EY

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make excellent progress in English and mathematics to reach standards that are well above average by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 8.
- Achievement is also outstanding in science, music, modern foreign languages and physical education, and at least good in all other subjects. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their respective subjects and use their enthusiasm and love of learning to plan interesting lessons that motivate pupils to do well.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and set challenging work so that pupils make rapid progress in lessons.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and accurately and teachers usually give good feedback to help pupils know how to do better. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to improve their work so that they can make even more rapid progress.
- Pupils are proud ambassadors for their school. They have an extremely positive attitude to learning and work hard at all times. High levels of mutual respect pervade the school so that incidents of poor behaviour, bullying or racism are rare.
- Leaders, including governors, have the highest expectations of themselves and the staff they lead. Their enthusiasm and drive is shared by all who work in the school. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully so that any underachievement can be identified and addressed quickly. As a result, standards are high and continuing to rise. The quality of teaching was outstanding at the previous inspection and rigorous performance management has helped it to remain so.
- The curriculum is outstanding. A large number of pupils participate in an extremely wide variety of extra-curricular activities and this makes an excellent contribution to their achievement, particularly in music and sport.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons taught by 25 teachers, as well as making shorter visits to look at pupils' work. Some of these observations also involved the headteacher and other leaders.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils and heard others in Year 6 read.
- The views of 100 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, teaching assistants, members of the governing body and a school improvement professional who works with the school.
- The school's improvement plan and records of pupils' achievement, records of the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and safeguarding were examined.
- Thirty two staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors took these into account.

Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Horton

Additional Inspector

Peter Eves

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ponteland Middle is smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is much lower than 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 vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that found nationally.
- A significant minority of pupils leave the school before the end of Year 8 to join private secondary schools with a different starting age in neighbouring areas.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has been awarded the Sportsmark and International School awards.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education and provides support to other schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress even further by giving pupils more opportunities to improve their own work by:
 - ensuring pupils more consistently know the criteria that will help them to reach the next level and providing timely feedback to help them get there
 - providing more regular opportunities for pupils to correct or improve work that they have recently completed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress in many subjects across the school because the quality of teaching is outstanding.
- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Their progress accelerates as they move through the school so that the standards reached by the end of Year 8 are much higher than those found nationally.
- Assessments at the end of Year 6 show that attainment in writing has improved significantly over the last three years, so that it now matches the higher than average attainment seen in reading and mathematics. Pupils continue to make excellent progress in writing to reach very high standards by the end of Year 8. Pupils use their extensive vocabulary to produce well organised, beautifully presented written work in English and many other subjects.
- Pupils read every morning at school and many say they enjoy reading at home too. The vast majority read extremely fluently for their age.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in mathematics so that almost three quarters of pupils reach above national expectations and about half do even better than this by the time they leave at the end of Year 8.
- Achievement in other subjects is always at least good and often outstanding. Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points, particularly in science, music, modern foreign languages and physical education.
- The most able pupils achieve exceptionally well, particularly in writing and mathematics. Their achievement is also very high in physical education and music where there are outstanding opportunities for these pupils to thrive, particularly through additional enrichment opportunities.
- Pupils supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs make good and often outstanding progress. This is because the school tracks their progress extremely carefully and makes sure they are supported well in lessons.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium were four terms behind other pupils in reading and writing and two years behind in mathematics at the end of Year 8 in 2013. The number of eligible pupils in any year group is so low that meaningful comparisons from year to year are difficult to make. Inspection evidence shows that these pupils are making at least good progress and gaps in the current Year 8 are much narrower as a result. This improvement demonstrates the school's outstanding commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is always at least good and often outstanding.
- Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subjects and routinely use a wide range of strategies to challenge and inspire pupils. They have high expectations so that pupils make rapid progress in many subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching in science, music, art, technology and physical education is also particularly strong. Pupils enjoy these practical subjects where a lively and well-organised approach helps them to make excellent progress over time.
- Teachers explain carefully and methodically. They then ask questions that expect pupils to explain their thinking. This approach helps teachers to know whether or not pupils understand.
- Teachers give pupils good opportunities to apply their reading, writing and numeracy skills in a range of other subjects.
- Pupils' work is assessed regularly and accurately in all subjects and this helps teachers to pitch the work set at the right level. Where teaching is outstanding, pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to reach the highest possible standards because the teacher shares this information with them in advance. For example, in an English lesson, pupils made excellent

progress in re-drafting and improving their writing. This is because the teacher shared the criteria that helped pupils to assess each other's work and this in turn helped pupils to know what they needed to do to reach the next level.

- In some subjects, this feedback is provided by the teacher at the end of a unit of work and this does not always allow pupils to know how to reach even higher levels while their work is in progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and accurately and usually give good quality feedback to help pupils know how to improve. Sometimes pupils are given opportunities to respond to marking in order to improve their work, but this is not consistently the case.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and have specific roles. For example, one higher level teaching assistant organises an on-line reading and spelling programme that has had an excellent impact on helping pupils to catch up if they fall behind.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils thrive in a positive, calm, working atmosphere where staff model the highest standards of respect and behaviour for pupils to follow. As a result, the behaviour of pupils is exemplary in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils are confident, polite and articulate. They enjoy school and participate fully in lessons and the wider life of the school. As a result, attendance is well above average and very few pupils are persistently absent.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to their work. They work hard in lessons and produce a lot of work which is presented with care and pride. They make an exceptional contribution to their own learning.
- Teachers manage behaviour exceptionally well. Incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare and dealt with effectively so that exclusion is hardly ever used.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and others. For example, the pupil council have carried out their own survey to review the school's anti-bullying strategies. As a result, some pupils are currently being trained as ambassadors and have presented their ideas in school assemblies.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of different forms of bullying. They say that bullying hardly ever happens and when it does, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Parents have high levels of confidence that the school keeps their children safe and pupils also say they feel safe.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher leads a strong team of senior and middle leaders who share her dynamic vision and determination. This team has created a culture of positive thinking alongside high expectations of all who work in the school.
- Senior and middle leaders have an extremely accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The achievements of pupils are regularly checked and any underperformance is dealt with effectively. For example, there has been a concerted drive to improve the quality of pupils' writing over the last two years and this has led to rapid improvement.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and use the information gained to set rigorous objectives. As a result, the quality of teaching is constantly improving and is never less than good.
- An outstanding curriculum makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils study a broad range of subjects taught by extremely knowledgeable staff. Participation in sport is extremely high, all pupils have at least three hours a week and this helps to ensure their health and physical well-being. This broad curriculum is

further enhanced by a plethora of enrichment activities. Almost half of pupils are learning to play a musical instrument and school teams are extremely successful in a wide range of sporting competitions.

- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View say that they would recommend the school to a friend. Parents are kept well informed, for example through regular newsletters and pupil progress meetings.
- The school is a caring, safe environment where safeguarding practices meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides support through an independent school improvement professional who provides excellent feedback to school leaders and governors.
- School leaders have been instrumental in working in partnership to support other schools, for example by sharing the effective system for tracking pupils' progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including pupils' achievement data. Individuals and groups of governors have clear roles which they execute thoroughly. For example, one governor has been involved in a review of special educational needs provision in the school and this has resulted in improvements to pupils' progress. As another governor said, 'we obsess about pupil progress'.
 - Governors have a detailed understanding of the performance of teachers and other staff. They have high expectations, are involved in pay decisions and have taken action where performance has been below that expected.
 - The governing body has bid successfully for substantial grants to upgrade sport facilities. The primary school sport funding has been added to this so that pupils and the community will have access to additional facilities.
 - Pupil premium funding is being used to provide additional teaching for pupils who are eligible and the gap between their attainment and that of non-eligible pupils is beginning to close as a result.

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	122329
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	427230

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	553
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Bell
Headteacher	Dr. Caroline Pryer
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2008
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