

Tweedmouth Community Middle School

Billendean Terrace, Spittal, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 2DJ

Inspection dates 3–4 December 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Rates of progress, achievement and attainment in Key Stage 2 are too variable, with insufficient proportions of pupils exceeding expected levels, particularly in mathematics.
- Expectations of what each pupil can achieve, regardless of their starting points, are not always high enough.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make is not always fast enough to close the wide attainment gaps in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is sometimes inconsistent. As a result, not all younger pupils, including the most able, make the progress of which they are capable.
- Not all teaching takes full account of available assessment information and, as a result, tasks are not consistently challenging enough, including for the most able and talented pupils.
- Marking does not make it clear enough how pupils can improve their work and corrections are not always demanded.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed in all subjects to practise pupils' mathematical skills in practical and visual ways and foster their critical thinking, reasoning, decision-making and detailing of their solutions.

The school has the following strengths

- A warm, friendly and caring school atmosphere has been created by staff in which pupils feel secure and valued.
- A consistent pattern of good teaching in Key Stage 3 prepares pupils well for their next stage of education.
- Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through an interesting range of school activities and events.
- An interesting curriculum captures the interests of all pupils well.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour are reflected in their above average attendance.
- The strong governing body is demonstrating vision and strong drive and determination to improve the quality of education that the school provides.
- The recently strengthened leadership team has a firm focus on the school's main priorities for improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 lessons, including five paired observations and work scrutiny carried out with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and undertook learning walks around the school in order to check on the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils and had discussions with the headteacher, middle leaders, staff, governors, parents and the local authority school improvement adviser.
- The inspectors also examined a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, the school's view of how well it is doing, the monitoring of staff performance, the school's improvement plan and records relating to pupils' progress and behaviour.
- The inspectors took account of 56 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 23 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Colin Scott

Additional Inspector

Irene Lavelle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average sized middle school which caters for pupils aged nine to thirteen.
- The school works in partnership with a group of Berwick schools consisting of first and middle schools and the secondary academy.
- Almost all of the pupils are of White British backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- Currently, there is a higher than average proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. This funding is for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A very few pupils are from service families and are supported through the services premium.
- The school provides a breakfast club each day for school pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is at least good, to establish a consistent pattern of rapid progress and high achievement, especially in the teaching of mathematics in Key Stage 2 by:
 - raising expectations even further of what all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, can do and achieve
 - using available progress information to tailor activities that are set at the right levels for pupils of all starting points, including the most able
 - sharing the thought-provoking, practical and visual methods that exist in the school even more widely to drive home pupils' understanding and foster their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving
 - regularly checking and testing pupils' understanding in lessons and adjusting approaches to make certain any misunderstandings and misconceptions are eliminated
 - providing pupils with clearly defined steps for improvement and constantly challenging inaccurate and muddled layout and presentation of work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Recently strengthened senior leadership, effectively supported by the governing body, is increasingly effective in improving the quality of learning and eradicating underachievement. The checking of the school's performance correctly identified strengths and areas for improvement. Increasing rigour in the checking of pupils' performance pinpoints weaknesses, resulting in improved accuracy and quality of intervention and support programmes. Consequently, inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' learning are being eliminated increasingly effectively.
- Middle leaders are ever more confident and skilled, adding to the momentum of sustained improvement. This is evident in the consistent pattern of progress in Years 7 and 8 and the successful action taken to raise standards, such as in reading. Increasingly, middle leaders are more analytical and reflective when checking on the quality of teaching over time and raising expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The stronger leadership of teaching and learning is carefully nurturing staff talents and skills. Staff are responding positively to the well-thought-out training that is provided, although now and then opportunities are missed to share existing imaginative practice even more widely. Performance management ensures that pay progression is not automatic.
- The curriculum is rich and varied, with a broad range of interesting activities, visits and visitors. For example, the strong links with the Newcastle Eagles professional basketball team are used not only to enhance basketball skills, but also extend pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity in modern Britain. The firm emphasis on literacy is leading to improved standards for pupils' year on year. Numeracy across the curriculum is being strengthened in the drive to improve skills, although the full impact has yet to be seen for younger pupils. Together, this all helps to prepare pupils well for the move to Year 9.
- The primary school sports funding is used effectively to maintain high pupil participation levels and enjoyment, improve staff coaching skills and promote higher skills in a broad range of sports.
- Positive links with parents and the wider community help to broaden pupils' personal development and well-being. An example is visiting Holy Island a short distance down the coast to discover its historical significance to the area or attending a carol service.
- The local authority has an accurate view of school performance and challenges and supports in equal measure. It provides strong support for the collaborative working across local schools, which are a developing strength, improving the quality of transition between the schools.
- Safeguarding meets requirements in ensuring that pupils are kept safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring much determination, experience and expertise to their role. This is evident in their drive to ensure that local schools work closely together to improve all aspects of school provision. Under the incisive leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body, governors demonstrate an accurate grasp of school strengths and areas for improvement. This is apparent in their action to strengthen senior leadership since the previous inspection, bolstering the leadership of teaching and the school's special needs provision. Governors challenge and hold leaders to account in positive ways. They have a clear view of the quality of teaching and check on the impact of pupil premium funding carefully. They ensure that performance management is robust.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is the result of a positive school ethos which permeates the whole school. In corridors, classrooms, playgrounds and in the dining hall pupils are polite and considerate. At the start of the day, the breakfast club provides a happy family atmosphere at the start of the day. Through the effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils learn the importance of British values such as tolerance and respect effectively.
- In conversations, pupils report that low-level disruption is infrequent and, if it occurs, it is managed effectively by staff. Pupils are well informed about the different forms of bullying, including when using new technology. They comment positively on the helpfulness of school staff who listen to and resolve any concerns or worries they may have. School records and parent feedback confirm this to be the case.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are sensible and safety conscious. Whether in the playground or in a workshop or laboratory using tools and equipment, pupils are able to

recognise and appreciate risk and danger.

- Those pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are well supported, cared for and managed by a committed staff. As a result all pupils, regardless of their backgrounds, are able to join in and fully participate in all school activities and achieve success.
- Pupils are polite, thoughtful and helpful. They thrive on the responsibilities that they are given, such as training as a sports leader and taking responsibility for supervising games and activities. Their enthusiasm is reflected in their above average attendance.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The impact of teaching and learning is at times uneven. This results in pupils in Years 5 and 6 not making consistently good or faster progress in mathematics and now and then in writing. Consequently, some pockets of underachievement in writing are not always being eradicated quickly and low standards in mathematics not rising rapidly enough.
- Despite the positive climate for learning in classrooms and high quality staff role models, at times insufficient use is made of the available information about pupils' progress to make sure that activities are closely matched to individual abilities, talents and needs. This is especially the case in mathematics where the curriculum is not always rich enough to motivate younger pupils effectively.
- When pupils' progress is variable and requires improvement:
 - expectations and demands made of pupils are not always high enough, such as in the accuracy of work layout and presentation;
 - planned activities are not tailored closely enough to stretch knowledge and understanding and opportunities are missed to reinforce concepts and eradicate misunderstandings in practical ways;
 - questioning does not always check and test pupils' understanding rigorously enough;
 - written feedback in exercise books does not always provide well-defined steps for improvement.
- When progress is quickest and achievement higher:
 - methods adopted capture that essential spark to provoke thinking and stretch knowledge and understanding;
 - activities are closely matched to individual abilities and are continuously adapted to eliminate misconceptions and misunderstanding;
 - probing questions accurately identify and correct any misconceptions;
 - problem-solving tasks motivate pupils and encourage partner discussion and critical thinking.
- In lessons, when expectations are high and progress faster, interesting and imaginative use is made problem-solving challenges to inspire pupils' thinking. An example of this is assuming the role of a character from the novel *Carrie's War* answering questions from classmates about their motives and emotions.
- Marking is positive and helpful in providing praise and identifying what pupils have completed well. However, corrections are not always expected to be made and guidance for improvement is not always challenging enough for pupils of all abilities and starting points.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The rate of pupils' progress is good in all subjects in Years 7 and 8 and in reading in Years 5 and 6. However, overall, pupils' progress and achievement require improvement, because there is too much variation in the rates of pupils' progress, especially in mathematics, in Years 5 and 6.
- On entry to school, pupils' skills are broadly average, although in mathematics they are often much lower. In national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2014, standards were average in reading, broadly average in writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling and below average in mathematics. In reading, most pupils made progress at the expected rate, with close to half exceeding expected rates. In writing, while not all pupils progressed at the expected rate, the number who exceeded expected rates was a little above average. Too few pupils in mathematics made or exceeded expected progress.
- Positive action has been taken by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school. The positive impact of this can be seen in pupils' accelerating rates of progress in reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling by the end of Year 6. Consequently, standards are rising steadily. Improvements in the quality of teaching of mathematics are helping to quicken progress, but the challenge to pupils'

thinking and demands in their work are too uneven across all abilities and needs, especially in Years 5 and 6. As a result, standards are not rising quickly enough.

- The more consistent pattern of faster progress in Years 7 and 8 ensures that standards are at least above average at the end of Year 8 in English and mathematics. This prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- Those pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs make similar progress to that of their classmates in each key stage. More sharply focused intervention and support programmes, closely matched to individual needs, are beginning to add to the drive to accelerate progress and raise achievement. This includes mathematics.
- Most able pupils are making better and improving progress because teaching is setting more challenging activities for them. Increasingly, teachers are demanding more of them and making good use of homework to extend their knowledge and understanding. Growing proportions of pupils are reaching the highest levels by the end of Year 8, especially in reading and writing.
- The school is working diligently in its drive to narrow the gaps in standards between non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged pupils. At the end of Year 6 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils were four terms behind in mathematics, just over one term behind in writing and in line in reading, when compared with similar groups nationally. Gaps within school were close to two terms in mathematics, one term in grammar, punctuation and spelling and broadly in line in reading and writing. Inspection evidence and school data show that the gaps are closing steadily. However, the rate of closure is faster in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6.
- The school works hard to foster an enjoyment and love of reading. Consequently, pupils read widely, confidently and fluently. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors, themes and interests and have ample opportunities to practise their reading.

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	122348
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	449179

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	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Bruce
Headteacher	Chris Durie
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2010
Telephone number	01289 307480
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Email address	admin@tweedmouth.northumberland.sch.uk

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