

# Whytrig Community Middle School

Elsdon Avenue, Seaton Delaval, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE25 0BP

## Inspection dates

14–15 January 2015

|                                |                      |                      |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Good</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Good                 | 2        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                 | 2        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Good                 | 2        |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Good                 | 2        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The inspirational executive headteacher, with the support of governors, head of school and middle managers are leading the school very well. His vision and drive, underpinned by high ambition, help to provide a strong sense of purpose. As a result, the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils from all backgrounds, including the disadvantaged and those with special educational needs achieve well.
- Teachers and support staff work hard to ensure that pupils can do well. Increasingly, staff make learning thought-provoking, motivating and challenging which captures and holds pupils' interest.
- High quality care and support ensure that pupils are kept safe and can thrive in the encouraging school atmosphere.
- Middle leadership is increasingly confident in using their skills to add to the drive of school improvement.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and respond very positively to teachers' clear expectations by working hard and behaving well, both in lessons and at social times. They are considerate, polite and respectful.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well, providing a wide, varied and interesting range of opportunities to develop both academically and personally, including in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This prepares them well for the next stage in their education.
- Successful partnership-working within the federation of schools and with the local authority is a definite strength in the school's substantial improvement.
- Strengthened and highly committed governance makes an effective contribution to the school's constantly improving performance.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A very few lessons require improvement, as occasionally not enough is demanded of pupils. This is because tasks are not consistently well-matched to their abilities and opportunities are missed to stretch pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding even more.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed to share existing inspiring and imaginative teaching methods.
- Not all marking provides well-defined steps for improvement in pupils' work.
- The layout and presentation of pupils' work, especially in mathematics, is not always sufficiently accurate and refined.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons, including six paired observations and work scrutiny was carried out with the executive headteacher and the head of school. In addition, 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.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and had discussions with the executive headteacher, head of school, parents, subject leaders, and other staff. They also spoke to governors, the local authority school improvement adviser and the local authority head of service.
- They 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 improvement plan and records relating to pupils’ progress and behaviour.
- The inspectors took account of 23 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 11 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Hargreaves

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This middle-deemed secondary school is a much smaller than average-sized school.
- The school is in a hard federation with another middle school and a high school. The high school headteacher acts as executive headteacher for the school. All three schools share the one federated governing body. Each school in the federation is subject to a separate inspection report published on the Ofsted website.
- 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.
- Approaching half the pupils are disadvantaged and therefore eligible for support from pupil premium funding. This is much higher than the national average. 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.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school provides a breakfast club each day for school pupils.
- A higher than average number of pupils join the school at other than the usual time.
- In September 2014, the school relocated to refurbished accommodation on the site of the federated high school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that increased proportions of pupils make sustained, rapid progress and achieve highly by:
  - ensuring that the imaginative practice that exists in the school is shared even more widely
  - raising expectations even higher of what pupils of all abilities can achieve in all subjects, including in the accuracy of layout and presentation of their work
  - making certain that all tasks are closely matched to the individual abilities and interests of all pupils
  - making sure that teachers' questioning constantly stretches each pupil's thinking and understanding and well-defined steps for improvement are given.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher's confidence in just how successful the school can be has been central in the substantial improvement. All leaders and managers, staff and governors share his determination to ensure that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed. Parents particularly appreciate the sensitive management and well-organised recent move to the new building. Parent confidence and trust in the school have risen sharply.
- Systems to check on pupils' progress and the effectiveness of teaching are rigorous. The checking and evaluation of pupils' performance information is thorough and presented in concise and succinct ways. Consequently, judgements of performance are accurate and staff, including middle leaders, are well aware of the key priorities for improvement.
- Decisive action, including well-focused staff training, is ensuring that middle leaders are better equipped to be effective at driving improvement. All subject areas are improving quickly with inconsistencies in subject performance systematically eliminated.
- A high priority has been placed upon improving the quality of teaching and classroom support since the previous inspection. This has been very successful as a result of the effective nurturing of staff skills. The management of performance is robust, because it closely links the outcomes for pupils to staff performance and their salary progression. Well-thought-out training ensures a fast pace in the development and extension of staff skill and expertise.
- The good curriculum provides an extensive range of interesting activities and experiences. This includes a wide range of visits, including residential experiences, such as to the battlefields of Northern France, and a broad range of visitors. Increasingly, topics are linked in interesting ways, such as visiting local art galleries to identify an artist of choice before embarking upon challenging work in the classroom that leads to pupils producing art work in a similar style. The effective promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development can be seen in the high levels of respect and tolerance pupils demonstrate in their relationships with their classmates and staff.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development is very well organised and helps prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. This includes appropriate careers information, guidance and experience of work, such as the annual visit to the Nissan car production plant for older pupils.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. This is evident in the narrowing of gaps in the attainment of the disadvantaged pupils with classmates and similar pupils nationally.
- The primary school sport funding is used successfully to sustain high levels of participation and enjoyment. Active lifestyles for all pupils are successfully promoted in a broad range of sport. Staff coaching skills enhanced and pupils are encouraged to pursue higher levels of sporting skills, such as playing table tennis at county level.
- Safeguarding and child protection meet requirements. Procedures are firmly established and much effective practice is adopted in the day-to-day management and care of pupils.
- Parents play an increasingly active role in their children's development and well-being, because senior leaders are successfully developing a strong sense of family within the school.
- The local authority has a precise view of the school's performance and of the improvements that have been made in the last two years. It challenges and supports senior leaders in equal measure and provides highly positive support for the collaborative working across the schools in the federation.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body have an accurate view of data and of how well the school is performing and what areas require further improvement. They methodically check on the quality of teaching and learning and have been resolute in the drive to improve quickly. They have displayed much commitment to ensuring that the move to new accommodation was a success. Performance management is used effectively to hold staff to account, including making sure pupil premium and sport funding have the intended impact on raising standards, skills and closing gaps in performance.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is the product of a caring and friendly school atmosphere which reflects the school's highly positive ethos. Pupils work hard and are very aware of the boundaries that are set for their conduct.

- The start of the day is calm and well organised, including in the breakfast club. This positive tone continues throughout the day. Pupils clearly enjoy school and are keen and eager to do well. This is evident in their above average attendance, which is much improved in the last two years.
- In lessons pupils behave consistently well and show a willingness to learn. Even when the tasks they have been set do not fully capture their interest, their behaviour is rarely less than good.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. In discussions with pupils, they report that there is very little inappropriate behaviour or bullying in the school. They draw attention to the fact that staff are always close at hand to share a worry or concern. Any issues are resolved promptly.
- Pupils are well informed about bullying in its various forms. They are taught to recognise risk and danger and are knowledgeable about the dangers of new technology, including cyber-bullying. Pupils are sensible and safety conscious, for example, when using a Bunsen burner to heat a strip of magnesium in a crucible in a science laboratory. Pupils thrive on responsibility, such as adding their voice when facilities in the new building were being organised.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good, including the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, with occasional examples of inspiring and innovative practice. Past weaknesses evident in the previous inspection have been tackled successfully, particularly in the level of demand made of pupils in lessons.
- Teachers and support staff enjoy excellent relationships with pupils. This is evident in the buzz amongst pupils at work in classrooms and their eagerness with which they become engrossed in activities. Increasingly, pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, consider problems and explain their conclusions or solutions fully. Activities provided are ever more effective at capturing and holding pupils' interest.
- When progress is quickest and achievement highest:
  - staff establish high expectations of what pupils of all abilities and starting points can achieve, including in the presentation of their work
  - teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and carefully match activities to their individual abilities
  - skilful questioning constantly checks, tests and draws out pupils' knowledge and understanding
  - interesting use is made of themes and topics to trigger pupils' thinking and encourage them to think imaginatively and critically.
- On those very few occasions when the quality of learning requires improvement:
  - tasks are not always tailored well enough to pupils' abilities, resulting in variable levels of challenge and demand
  - questions do not probe and stretch pupils' knowledge and understanding far enough
  - opportunities are missed to add that essential spark to provoke pupils' thinking and hold their attention.
- When achievement is highest, interesting activities quickly capture pupils' interest and fuel their thoughts and judgements. For example, in an English lesson a group of Year 6 pupils were observed totally absorbed acting as detectives, their imagination excited when composing a poem combining the magic and passion in the evidence gathered of the life of the Lady of Shallot.
- Most teachers mark and assess work both carefully and accurately. They make sure that pupils are in no doubt as to what they have done well and what needs to be improved to reach and exceed their challenging targets. Misconceptions are spotted and corrections expected and completed. Pupils respond very positively, especially in English, to the thought-provoking questions that staff pose. Now and then, opportunities are missed to provide additional challenge through providing well-defined steps for further improvement.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils enter the school with skills that are below average. Speech, language and the understanding of number are sometimes weaknesses. Pupils of all ages have settled really well in their new environment and routines.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2014 national tests, standards were broadly average in reading, writing,

mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. An above average proportion reached the expected level in writing. Almost all pupils make the progress expected of them in all subjects and the proportions exceeding expected progress in reading and writing are similar to the national averages and a little below in mathematics.

- Decisive action taken by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching has accelerated pupils' progress and raised achievement and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. In mathematics, the progress has at times been rapid since joining the school. This is because more is expected and demanded of pupils of all ages, abilities and starting points. Current Year 6 pupils are on course to achieve average standards in writing and mathematics and above average standards in reading. This represents good progress from their individual starting points. Well-planned action helps to improve spelling accuracy constantly, thus enhancing the accuracy of pupils' writing.
- This pattern of faster progress and higher achievement continues into Years 7 and 8. Standards at the end of Year 8 in 2014 assessments were marginally above the standards expected for their age, although higher in mathematics than in reading and writing. Current Year 8 pupils are on track to attain above average standards by the end of the year. Increased proportions are reaching higher levels as a result of the thought-provoking and sometimes imaginative teaching, for example, working on problem-solving which links science, technology, engineering and mathematics in ways that inspire pupils of all abilities.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well, because their needs are pinpointed accurately and intervention and support is effective.
- All other groups of pupils are also achieving well, although for a few pupils attainment is a little lower, because they sometimes join at other than the normal time and even though they settle quickly, they do have gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- The achievement and attainment of the most-able pupils is rising steadily, because teacher expectations have been raised and more learning captures their interest and fires up their imagination. This is evident for example, when writing about the feelings of desperation felt by soldiers as they jumped out of trenches and charged into no-man's land. Then after the end of battle, describing the emotion felt by frightened soldiers writing back home to a sweetheart.
- Gaps in attainment between the disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, both within school and with similar schools nationally, are narrowing. In 2014 tests at the end of Year 6, disadvantaged pupils were close to three terms behind other pupils in mathematics and reading and one term behind in writing, both within school and other pupils nationally. Inspection evidence confirms the school predictions that the current gaps are less than one term in all subjects.
- Wide and varied opportunities are provided for pupils to read widely and often. Extra funding is used effectively to enable disadvantaged pupils whose skills sometimes lag behind those of their classmates to catch up. Consequently, pupils' fluency, accuracy and comprehension are steadily improving. Their vocabulary is extended well. Pupils' enjoyment of reading is evident in their developing grasp of an array of themes that a diverse range of authors uses.

## 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

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 122335         |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Northumberland |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 428950         |

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

|  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Middle deemed secondary             |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                           |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 9–13                                |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                               |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 181                                 |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                  |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Susan Dungworth                     |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | John Barnes                         |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 16 January 2013                     |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0191 2371402                        |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 0191 2371830                        |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | admin@whytrig.northumberland.sch.uk |



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