

Gosforth Central Middle School

Great North Road, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE3 1UN

Inspection dates 24–25 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The new headteacher, governors and senior staff have a very clear understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards further, particularly in writing, at the end of Key Stage 2. Their actions to substantially improve the focus and impact of teaching on learning have already resulted in improving achievement this year.
- Teaching is good because expectations are usually high. Teachers plan interesting activities that capture pupils' interest and imagination. They explain new learning carefully and skilfully question pupils to deepen their understanding.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points as they move through the school. By the end of Year 8, they reach standards that are above those typical of their age.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is exemplary. Pupils feel safe and learn about how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations.
- The unique talents and abilities of every pupil are highly valued by the school and they have many opportunities to learn from a rich curriculum both within school and beyond the school day.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They have a great love of learning, are curious, questioning and greatly enjoy the wide range of learning opportunities provided by the school. Their positive attitudes contribute greatly to their learning.
- Relationships in the classroom are excellent and add to the very positive learning ethos in the school. Older pupils provide excellent role models for younger ones. They take care of each other and their environment and are very well mannered, polite and respectful.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is regularly outstanding, because teachers do not always match activities carefully enough to pupils' needs and abilities.
- The marking of pupils' work does not provide enough clarity for them to know how well they have achieved nor what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils are not always given time to respond to their teachers' guidance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a wide range of lessons, including two that were observed jointly with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Pupils' work from across wide range of subjects was closely analysed in order to ascertain pupils' achievement over time and also the impact of teachers' marking on their progress.
- Inspectors talked to pupils in lessons, during playtimes and over lunchtime and in addition, met with several groups of pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers. Inspectors also met with members of the governing body including the Chair and a meeting was held with the School Achievement Partner appointed by the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Year 5 read and discussed with pupils the books they were reading.
- A range of documents was analysed, including those relating to the school's self-evaluation. Others included minutes of meetings, development plans, assessment information, documents relating to safeguarding attendance and behaviour records.
- Information for parents published on the school's website was examined.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through the 132 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), together with those of 3 parents who spoke to inspectors. They also evaluated 31 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Janice Gorch, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Additional Inspector
Barbara Waugh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a middle-deemed secondary school which is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are of White British Heritage. A significant minority is from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils whose learning is supported by the pupil premium is lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more teaching is regularly outstanding, so that pupils are able to make exceptional, rapid gains in their learning which result in high and sustained achievement by ensuring that:
 - expectations of what pupils can achieve are always exceptionally high
 - pupils' prior learning is taken into account when planning lessons so that activities are always carefully matched to pupils' needs and abilities.
 - the evaluation and marking of pupils' work provides pupils with a good understanding of both what they have achieved and precisely what they need to do to improve
 - pupils are given time to respond to the guidance they have been given, re-draft work, complete corrections and revisit misconceptions.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management, including governance are good. The new headteacher is driven by a powerful and dynamic vision of excellence for all members of the school community.
- In the short time since her arrival, she has implemented significant change, strongly supported by the senior leadership team and governors. A cultural shift is taking place and staff are rising to the challenge of significantly increased expectations and clear lines of accountability for the progress of their pupils.
- Middle leaders are fully involved in the changes that are sweeping through the school and are taking on proactive, leading roles in developments.
- Leaders have rightly analysed national assessment data at the end of Key Stage 2 and in response, acted to improve the quality of pupils' writing rapidly. They have trained staff on how to develop writing, so that pupils have many rich and varied opportunities to apply their skills in many subject areas.
- Rigorous systems have been put in place to collect and use assessment data regularly in order to identify pupils who are struggling with their learning and to inform planning at a whole-school level. Assessments are now carefully checked for accuracy through external moderation. Rapid intervention to quicken progress has already closed gaps in the attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- Pupil premium funding is used to good effect, not only through rapid intervention as above, but also by providing a range of support for families and pupils. An innovative outdoor learning programme has dramatically improved pupils' confidence, self-esteem and communication skills, enabling them to take part fully in learning during the school day.
- The leadership of teaching is good and increasing in its effectiveness. Senior and middle leaders carefully monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Their findings are used both to support teachers and also to ascertain what training might be needed for individuals and for the whole school. Teachers say they greatly value the wide range of opportunities they now have to improve their skills and increasingly, to share ideas with other teachers.
- The rich, varied and stimulating curriculum, which extends well beyond the school day, is a strength of the school. It plays an essential part in broadening pupils' life experiences and contributes substantially to promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school pays close attention to promoting pupils' personal development and has provided many opportunities to develop a strong understanding of the modern British values, including respect for the law, public institutions and services, tolerance and respect for others and respect for democratic processes. Pupils enjoy the many activities they have to learn of their national heritage through trips and visits, for example to York, Arran and the Lake District.
- Although the school does not provide formal careers lessons the students are provided with effective advice and guidance to ensure they are well prepared for the next stage of their schooling.
- Pupils and parents speak enthusiastically about the range of sports that is available through the primary school sport funding. This has been used to enrich and broaden the sports curriculum further, which has included specialist coaching in fencing, cricket, pistol shooting and squash.
- Keeping pupils safe is a very high priority for the school. Systems and procedures for safeguarding pupils are meticulous and meet statutory requirements. The school site itself is extremely secure.
- The local authority provides valuable support for the school through the work of the 'School Achievement Advisor'. He has an incisive understanding of the school and so is able to advise, guide and challenge leaders as they implement change.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They undertake regular visits so that they have a first-hand, accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. This enables them to support the headteacher in developments effectively, offer advice and provide challenge.
 - They bring to the school a great wealth of experience and skill, but also find time to undertake regular training so that they are up to date with educational change.
 - Governors have a good understanding of both national and school data and ask searching questions relating to areas of underperformance. They monitor the progress of current pupils carefully and have a detailed and thorough understanding of the school's actions to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils.
 - They have ensured that all pupils have equal opportunities to access learning, both in school and through the very extensive wider curriculum, and that the school fosters good relationships and

tackles discrimination robustly, should it ever occur.

- Governors have thoroughly evaluated the headteacher's recommendations relating to performance management and are ready to tackle underperformance. They value, recognise and reward staff who have excelled in their performance.
- The management of financial resources is sound and the school benefits from the very high level of expertise within the governing body.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They are very well mannered, respectful to each other and adults, take great pride in their school and readily offer the hand of friendship to other pupils. They are very supportive of each other and there is a caring ethos that pervades the school. One pupil summed up the feelings of a whole group saying, 'There is always someone looking out for you'.
- Pupils arrive at lessons ready to learn, settle in quickly and are keen to play an active part in lessons. They are eager both to ask and answer questions and are able to work well, both alone and in groups. Pupils are hungry for knowledge and take delight in learning new skills. All groups of pupils are thriving in this warm, friendly, stimulating environment where it is safe to be inquisitive, ask questions and explore learning.
- For example, in geography, pupils showed that they could work both independently and over an extended period of time. They reviewed their own progress and made decisions as to their next steps in the development of their rainforest project.
- Pupils are quick to offer help to others and readily take on responsibilities, both in the classroom and the playground. Younger pupils greatly value the help of the older ones who take on roles as peer-mentors during lunch and break times. Pupils have many opportunities to take on leadership roles. Inspectors were impressed with the well-developed communication skills demonstrated by the Year 8 house captains. They led an assembly for their peers on 'managing change', linking their ideas eloquently to their forthcoming transition to high school in September.
- Pupils say bullying is extremely rare and any difficulties or concerns that do arise are dealt with quickly. They are well aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, homophobic and racist bullying. The youngest of pupils are able to explain why bullying is so harmful and should always be dealt with straight away.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. Pupils say they feel safe and parents are in agreement.
- Pupils have many opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including using the Internet and social media, roads and railways. The school welcomes outside organizations, such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, to talk with the pupils and develop their awareness of danger and how to look after themselves and each other.
- The school is vigilant in the recording the very few incidents of poor behaviour. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is consistently above average. The school ensures that all pupils and parents are fully aware of the importance of good attendance and staff work hard to support families who find working with schools difficult.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching across a wide range of subjects is consistently good and on occasions, outstanding. The impact of teaching has improved this year as a result of effective use of assessment data which has informed the planning of lessons. As a result, all groups of pupils are making good progress.
- While expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are high, they are not always high enough to allow pupils to make outstanding progress regularly. Learning activities which have been planned by teachers are interesting and stimulating, but are not always hard enough to really stretch and challenge pupils. As a result, they are held back from exploring learning to the full depth of which they are capable.
- Teachers use their specialist knowledge well to bring their subjects to life, so that pupils see them as

relevant and intensely interesting. In all lessons seen, pupils readily asked questions and sought additional help, as needed. Their efforts were always valued and contributions welcomed.

- The new headteacher, supported by her senior team, has rightly widened the responsibility for the development of literacy, in particular writing, well beyond English lessons. All staff are now working closely with pupils' individual writing targets and have embedded focussed writing opportunities clearly within their different subject specialisms. As a result, pupils' written communication skills are improving rapidly.
- Pupils read a variety of texts and read regularly for pleasure. The school library is used well and pupils have enjoyed talking to authors who have visited the school. Year 5 pupils explained enthusiastically how their teachers read an exciting paragraph in a new book, but then stop at a most intriguing moment! They then urgently want to read the book and discover the story for themselves. Pupils who have found reading difficult in the past have made good progress and are able to use a range of strategies to help them read. As a result, the majority have caught up with their peers.
- Pupils enjoy learning mathematics. In Year 8, a very able group of young mathematicians were greatly challenged as they explored transformations of graphs. They confidently sketched their own cubic and reciprocal graphs and went on to discuss the algebraic functions that would reflect and translate them. The pace of learning was rapid. Pupils helped each other to learn and their teacher skilfully questioned them, deepening their understanding. As a result, they were able to propose possible solutions to the problems at hand.
- In all years, pupils learn well in mathematics through a carefully crafted programme of lessons, although attention to mathematical presentation and marking is too variable. The headteacher is aware that, unlike writing, best practice in mathematics has not been shared with all teachers and is not seen as an integral part of the teaching of other subjects.
- The needs of pupils for whom learning is very difficult are met exceptionally well. Great care and attention is given by teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that their learning is both stimulating, challenging and very well matched to their learning needs.
- In most subjects, pupils' work is marked. In some lessons pupils are given constructive and helpful feedback and the opportunity to improve their work. The quality of marking is variable and pupils do not always know how well they have achieved. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to re-draft work, complete corrections and revisit misconceptions, and so valuable learning is lost.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The progress made by all groups of pupils during their four years in the school is good in reading, writing and mathematics. They are well prepared for learning as they move on to complete their secondary education.
- In recent years, the school has checked on the attainment of pupils rigorously as they enter the school in Year 5, so that they are able to monitor their progress from their individual starting points accurately. Cohorts vary but in all years, pupils' skills and attainment on entry are at least those which are broadly expected for their age.
- In national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, standards were well above average in mathematics, and broadly average in reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling. They were below average in writing. However, the new headteacher has acted swiftly to address this and standards in writing across Key Stage 2 are rising rapidly.
- The achievement of more able pupils is good. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 and above in mathematics was significantly above national averages. The proportion reaching Level 5 in reading and writing was broadly average. However, by the end of Year 8, the most able pupils reach very high standards because their progress has quickened over time.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress during their time in the school. Inspectors were impressed with the planning, care and consideration that enables pupils to benefit from well-planned learning programmes and make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects. For example in science, pupils' work demonstrated good development and good use of key vocabulary. Pupils demonstrated a sound grasp of fundamental concepts. They showed great attention to detail in design technology, demonstrating a very good understanding of design processes and an ability to reflect and evaluate their work.
- Regular, effective use of data enables actions to be taken quickly where progress slows in English or mathematics. Where necessary, pupils receive additional lessons which are carefully planned by the heads of English and mathematics so that progress is quickly restored. The impact of change is clear and evident.

- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014 the attainment of disadvantaged students was four terms behind both other pupils in the school and those nationally in reading and writing. It was four terms behind other pupils in the school in mathematics and three terms behind others nationally. During Key Stage 2 these pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally. Over the four years that they are in the school, disadvantaged pupils frequently make better progress than is normally expected for pupils of their age, so that any gaps are closing rapidly.

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	108519
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	461885

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	504
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	D Brown
Headteacher	S Webb
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2011
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