

# Whytrig Community Middle School

Elsdon Avenue, Seaton Delaval, Whitley Bay, Northumberland NE25 0BP

## Inspection dates

5–6 June 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Good</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, leaders and governors have not managed to eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Pupils' progress over time is inconsistent. Although improving, current pupils' progress is too variable in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The roles and responsibilities of leaders lack clarity. Some middle leaders do not hold others to account as well as they should.
- Leaders and governors do not use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils or those with below average attainment effectively.
- Senior leaders' plans to improve the school are too vague. They do not always include actions or activities that link closely to the original aims and objectives of the plan.
- Systems to assess and monitor pupils' learning lack precision. Leaders place too much emphasis on pupils' attainment instead of pupils' progress.
- Some teachers lack confidence and the ability to deepen pupils' understanding when they teach outside of their subject specialism.
- Pupils' reading skills are underdeveloped. Pupils' progress in reading is not strong because leadership in this area lacks strategic oversight and planning.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching accurately identify weaker practice but do not lead to robust actions or support to improve it.
- Some governors do not fully understand pupils' progress information. Consequently, they do not always ask searching questions of leaders in this regard.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Teachers provide a vast array of opportunities for pupils that ensure that they are well prepared to meet adolescence head-on.
- Pupils behave in a caring and considerate manner. They are proud to be members of this school.
- Leadership of attendance and behaviour is strong. Over time, attendance and the standards of pupils' behaviour have improved.
- Teaching assistants are respected, valued and extremely effective in their role. They provide superb support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - clarifying leaders' roles so that they know what they are responsible for and who they should hold to account
  - ensuring that plans to improve the school are precise and actions closely match the intended aims and/or objectives
  - developing governors' understanding of pupils' progress information so that they are better prepared to ask searching questions of leaders
  - refining assessment systems so that they provide leaders, governors and teachers with pertinent information relating to pupils' progress
  - ensuring that the results from leaders' checks of teaching lead to actions that improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
  - improving the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils or those who have below average attainment
  - developing and implementing a strategic plan to systematically improve pupils' attainment in reading.
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make at least good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that teachers:
  - use pupils' prior assessment information to plan lessons that meet the needs of pupils from their different starting points
  - have opportunities to further develop their subject knowledge beyond their specialism
  - consistently apply the school's assessment policy
  - raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve.

External reviews of governance and of the use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- An increasing proportion of parents send their children to the school because they believe it is improving. In some respects, this is true. However, leaders have been unable to secure consistently strong teaching that leads to pupils making at least good progress.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment carefully. They conduct observations in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work, and hold regular discussions with teachers in relation to pupils' learning. Nevertheless, when leaders identify weaker teaching, their words and actions do not address the issues successfully. This is because leaders are sometimes too slow to implement strategies, and support is not well matched to the individual teacher's needs.
- The school's assessment information centres on pupils' attainment over time. Consequently, leaders do not routinely analyse how much progress pupils make from one assessment to the next. Teachers sometimes have an over-generous view of how well their class are doing because the attainment information provided by leaders suggests pupils are reaching the expected standard or higher. Some pupils are capable of making much stronger progress over time.
- Teachers' targets and leaders' plans to improve the school do not include enough detail or rigour to achieve their aims. This is despite including aspects of the school's provision which need to improve the most, such as pupils' progress, the quality of teaching, and leadership and management.
- At the time of the previous inspection, leaders had successfully managed to relocate the school to a shared site within the federation. New systems and ways of working ensured that leaders could alleviate the potential pitfalls of two schools sharing one site. Pupils, parents and teachers are pleased with how the middle school and high school coordinate provision and share resources. However, senior leaders have not yet ensured that both sets of subject leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Consequently, some subject leaders in key stages 2 and 3 do not hold others to account effectively because they are unsure if this falls within their remit.
- Leaders, including governors, do not ensure that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils or those with below average attainment is used effectively. For the last two years, and despite receiving additional support in reading and/or mathematics, approximately 50% of Year 7 pupils with below average attainment did not improve to reach the expected standard for their age. In addition, disadvantaged pupils continue to make progress that is well below the average for other pupils nationally.
- Additional funding to improve the quality and breadth of physical education (PE) and sports provision in school is having a positive impact. Specialist teachers of PE take classes and support other staff in the delivery of the PE curriculum. Furthermore, many extra-curricular sports clubs and activities take place at lunchtime and after school. Pupils' attendance at these is high and pupils are keen to represent the school at most sports competitions.

- Pupils benefit from an extensive curriculum. Leaders create the school's timetable to enable pupils from the middle school to access lessons in the high school. As a result, pupils are often taught by subject-specialist teachers in laboratories, computer suites or workshops. This promotes earlier development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in addition to supporting the excellent transition arrangements between Years 8 and 9.
- Leadership of attendance and behaviour is strong. Leaders' actions are informed by accurate analysis of pupils' absences and instances of poor behaviour. Leaders have introduced established systems to monitor and reward good attendance and behaviour. Therefore, pupils now attend more often and the quality of behaviour continues to improve.
- Some members of staff told inspectors that they value the training opportunities leaders afford them. For example, one teacher described recent external training linked to grammar in writing as 'transformational'.
- Leaders' actions to develop pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues are very effective. Through assemblies, discussions with their teachers and visiting speakers, pupils learn about a range of issues related to civic responsibility, religion, tolerance and society. One pupil spoke for others when saying, 'We welcome everyone to this school.'

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is improving. Recent changes to the membership of the governing body have increased its capacity and added a broader set of skills and experiences to the group.
- Members of the governing body conduct regular skills audits. They are reflective and ensure that they participate in committees that closely match their employment background, skills and interests.
- The chair of the governing body is experienced and committed to the school and federation. She holds other governors to account and follows up on any governor absences from meetings. She acknowledges that governance can improve further and readily accepts advice and guidance to strengthen the work of the governing body.
- Governors are less confident in their understanding of pupils' progress information. For example, some governors told inspectors that pupils' outcomes in 2017 were much stronger than in 2016. They were not. In part, this is due to leaders' over-reliance on analysing pupils' attainment. Consequently, governors do not always ask searching questions of leaders in relation to how much progress pupils are making.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture of safeguarding in school where pupils' safety is paramount. When asked if they felt safe in school, one pupil replied, 'Yes! The teachers really care about us.' Pupils have a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe online. They say that school assemblies are informative and often offer

appropriate advice in relation to their safety.

- Leaders routinely conduct detailed checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils. The systems to record this information are well organised and are monitored closely by senior leaders and governors.
- Members of staff with responsibility for the leadership of safeguarding carry out their role diligently. They have developed effective partnerships with professionals and outside agencies to ensure that pupils in need of immediate support receive it. Staff attend appropriate safeguarding training and leaders provide regular updates. This ensures that all staff know their safeguarding responsibilities and can identify signs of abuse or harm should they appear.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable. Detailed planning and high expectations from teachers are evident in some subjects. In others, less effective planning and lower expectations slow the progress pupils make over time.
- In some lessons, teachers do not use pupils' prior assessment information to plan lessons that are sufficiently challenging. Teachers sometimes use 'off-the-shelf' pupil workbooks that, by their nature, do not match certain pupils' needs. Consequently, some of the activities are too easy or too hard for some pupils because teachers do not adapt tasks to meet the needs of pupils from their different starting points.
- On occasion, teachers do not demonstrate secure subject knowledge. This is noticeable when teachers discuss unfamiliar topics with pupils. Furthermore, a lack of detailed subject knowledge sometimes leads to teachers marking pupils' work as correct when it is not. As a result, pupils move on to their next topic with gaps in their knowledge or understanding.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work does not always follow the process described in the school's policies or improvement plans. In some classes, teachers follow the policy and persistently ask pupils to correct errors or redraft written work. However, in other classes, pupils do not act on teachers' feedback and this remains unchallenged by the teacher. This leads to pupils often repeating the same mistakes.
- Some pupils are unable to evaluate their current strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, they are unaware of what they need to do, or in how much detail they need to do it, in order to improve their own learning.
- Pupils are provided with the opportunity to read in school and at home. Pupils read with their class teacher and occasionally in lessons when they complete their work. Leaders test pupils' reading skills formally on an annual basis. However, weaker readers continue to struggle because leaders do not use reading test results to inform their intervention plans. Equally, teachers do not sufficiently direct pupils to choose reading books that match their reading ability. Consequently, pupils' progress in reading is variable.
- Teaching assistants are highly effective. They are intrinsically involved in pupils' learning. Teaching assistants offer bespoke support to the pupils they are assigned to support as well as other pupils who require intervention. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive excellent guidance. This is because teaching assistants have a

detailed understanding of each pupil's specific needs. This, in addition to effective working relationships between each pupil and member of staff, is ensuring that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress over time.

- Teachers have the skills to immerse pupils in their learning by using technology creatively or implementing innovative ideas to 'grab' pupils' attention. For example, in a Year 6 art lesson, pupils watched a video clip created by the teacher, demonstrating how to accurately roll modelling clay. The video clip reduced the need for pupils to gather around the teacher and provided multiple opportunities for pupils to play the clip again at the front of the classroom. Similarly, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils worked well in teams to analyse a written extract from 'Wallace and Gromit'. Pupils were content to accept leadership roles or receive direction from their 'leader'. The article interested pupils and they were successful in their quest to identify a range of grammatical terms and specific examples of punctuation.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils were fulsome in their praise for the school when they told inspectors about the many lessons, assemblies, activities and opportunities they have to learn about the importance of staying healthy and looking after their emotional well-being. Activities that encourage pupils to walk to school, run a mile or improve their cycling skills are a regular occurrence in school. Year 6 pupils were involved in breakfast yoga recently, prior to their final assessments. Pupils say that it helped reduce their anxiety and improved their concentration for the rest of the day.
- Staff are caring and sympathetic, and know each pupil very well. They carefully develop pupils' understanding about the world and adolescence in an age-appropriate way.
- Teachers reinforce positive messages linked to anti-bullying during anti-bullying week, student council meetings or house activities. Bullying rarely happens. If it does, teachers are swift to deal with the issue. Pupils have full confidence in the teachers in this respect. They say they are listened to when they share problems with teachers. In reference to bullying, one Year 8 pupil said, 'Kids here are too nice to bother with anything like that.'

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils move sensibly around the building and in the playground. They are thoughtful and polite, often holding doors open for visitors or helping teachers with tasks.
- Leaders have recently introduced new behaviour management systems that mirror those found elsewhere in the federation. Teachers consistently apply rewards and sanctions and pupils have an excellent understanding of what is expected of them. Inspectors did not see any instances of disruptive behaviour during the inspection.

- The proportion of pupils who were excluded for a fixed period was higher than the national average in 2016. Since then, improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their learning have led to a decrease in temporary exclusions. Leaders manage pupils who display less positive attitudes to learning in the 'inclusion base' located within the high school. Leaders' high expectations and meticulous planning in this area lead to pupils simultaneously keeping in touch with their classwork and modifying their behaviour for learning. As a result, few pupils are referred to the inclusion room more than once and there have been no repeat fixed-term exclusions this year.
- Pupils are punctual to school and lessons. Effective routines and swift transitions between activities and classes ensure that very little learning time is lost during the school day.
- In lessons where activities do not match pupils' starting points, some pupils are reluctant to fully engage. Teachers do not always draw less confident pupils into lessons or assess their understanding as the lesson develops. Therefore, a small minority of pupils sometimes 'fly under the radar', making less progress than they are capable of.
- As a result of effective systems to track, monitor and intervene in absence, pupils' overall attendance is higher than the national average and continuing to improve. Conversely, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is increasing marginally but remains below the national average.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Although improving between 2016 and 2017, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who reached the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. In addition, pupils' progress in reading and mathematics in 2017 placed the school in the bottom 10% of schools nationally.
- The progress current pupils make is variable. This is partly because some teachers' expectations of pupils are too low and/or their planning does not consider pupils' different starting points. Subject leaders do not have an incisive understanding of pupils' progress due to the school's over-emphasis on attainment information. Consequently, pupils who make the least progress are not always known to teachers, meaning they do not receive adequate support or intervention.
- Scrutiny of current pupils' English workbooks highlighted that their writing skills are improving, including in Year 6. Pupils who enter the school with attainment which is average or high make much stronger progress than in the past. In their written work, pupils can successfully describe settings and characters. They intersperse paragraphs with dialogue using correct punctuation and mostly accurate spellings. Pupils who enter the school with lower attainment do not make as much progress because they have not yet mastered the basics, such as paragraph formation or basic punctuation.
- Historically, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes have been poor, including in mathematics. Again, although improving in 2017, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 who reached the expected standard or higher in reading, writing and mathematics was below others nationally.
- Current disadvantaged pupils make more progress than in the past, partly because

they attend school more often. However, the proportion making strong progress to reach and exceed the expected standard remains too variable in key stages 2 and 3.

- By the time most pupils reach the end of Year 8, they are extremely well prepared to make the transition to high school due to the strong emotional support and guidance they receive in school. However, pupils who make less progress in key stage 2, and who do not make up ground in Years 7 and 8, enter the high school with gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Consequently, a proportion of pupils are not ready for the academic rigour of GCSE courses.



## School details

Unique reference number	122335
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10042226

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 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Elizabeth Dungworth
Executive headteacher	John Barnes
Head of school	Jon Souter
Telephone number	0191 2371402
Website	<a href="http://www.whytrig.northumberland.sch.uk">www.whytrig.northumberland.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@whytrig.northumberland.sch.uk">admin@whytrig.northumberland.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	14–15 January 2015

## Information about this school

- This middle-deemed secondary school is smaller than the average-sized school.
- The school is in a hard federation with one other middle-deemed secondary school and a high school. Each school within the federation has its own head of school. An executive headteacher oversees the work of the federation.
- Responsibility for the school rests with one federated governing body.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.

- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English reading, English writing and mathematics.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons across the school. Some of the observations in lessons were carried out with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils, visited tutor groups and observed pupil interactions during social times.
- Inspectors listened to a group of Year 7 and 8 pupils read.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, analysis of performance information, action plans and evaluations, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and pupils' work.
- Inspectors took into account the 13 responses from parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. No pupils returned Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. Twenty-one members of staff completed Ofsted's online staff survey; all of these responses were taken into consideration.

## Inspection team

Lee Elliott, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Karen Gammack

Ofsted Inspector

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