

Inspection of a good school: Marden Bridge Middle School

Lovaine Avenue, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear NE25 8RW

Inspection dates:

3–4 March 2020

Outcome

Marden Bridge Middle School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Marden Bridge Middle School is an improving school. Parents are full of praise for the staff. Senior leaders have high expectations. They are steadily improving the curriculum and the quality of teaching. Lessons are well planned and challenge pupils to think deeply. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They relish the academic challenge and the rich variety of extra-curricular activities.

Provision for pupils' personal development is a real strength. There are many excellent sporting and cultural opportunities. Pupils quickly grow in confidence. They develop into active young citizens. Most pupils are articulate and determined young people. Across the school, there has been a groundswell of interest in climate change. This has led to the formation of an eco-committee. Members of staff accompanied pupils when they attended a climate change protest event recently. A strong careers programme helps pupils to develop employability skills and fosters aspirations.

Pupils treat each other well. They are tolerant and understanding of different groups in society. They are polite and friendly towards members of staff. They are respectful and kind to members of the school community with disabilities. As a result, there is little bullying. If it does happen, pupils trust the staff to deal with it.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher and other senior leaders are successfully improving the school. Their relentless focus on improving the curriculum and the quality of teaching is paying dividends. The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is no narrowing of the curriculum as pupils approach their key stage 2 national tests. Subject leaders make sure they cover the content set out in the national curriculum. In most subjects, teachers set suitably challenging work. They introduce knowledge in a well-planned sequence. This helps pupils to build their understanding of topics progressively. Teachers use homework imaginatively to extend learning. Many pupils are avid readers and enjoy reading around

the topics they study in class. They enjoy learning and display a thirst for knowledge. Consequently, in most subjects, pupils are making good progress.

Results in reading and mathematics were disappointing in the 2018 key stage 2 tests. The governors increased their level of scrutiny. Since then, leaders have provided effective training and have supported teachers to sharpen their practice. The teaching of reading is now more effective. Mathematics teachers plan lessons together and use assessment well to check what pupils know. Mathematics lessons include a good balance of reasoning and problem-solving. The standards attained in reading and mathematics in 2019 improved sharply. In 2019, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly above the national average. However, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) attained less well. Leaders are working hard to narrow this gap. They are focusing teachers on how they can help pupils to remember more knowledge.

The wider curriculum does much to develop pupils' character. Provision for pupils' personal development is a real strength of the school. Life Studies lessons, assemblies and tutorial time help pupils to develop as young citizens. They have a good understanding of current affairs, democracy, diversity and the law. Pupils have excellent opportunities to meet employers and higher education providers. A wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs cater for pupils varied interests. Participation in sport and the arts is high. Uptake of music tuition is high, and many pupils perform in the orchestra and choir. Others develop their interest in politics through the politics, philosophy and ethics club. Many pupils are highly articulate and passionate about issues such as climate change.

Standards of behaviour are high. Pupils conduct themselves well across the day. Pupils enjoy friendly and courteous relationships with the staff. It is rare for a pupil to be removed from a lesson for poor behaviour. Leaders strive to be inclusive and only exclude pupils as a last resort. There have been no permanent exclusions from the school in recent years. Incidents of bullying are also rare. Leaders record all incidents and take swift action to stop things from escalating. Pupils trust the staff to deal with bullying.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make thorough checks on adults who work in or visit the school. All members of staff have received the necessary training. They know what procedures to follow if they have a concern. The safeguarding team, led by the deputy headteacher, meets weekly to review the list of pupils who are vulnerable. They are quick to act if they have concerns. They keep careful records of the steps they take to protect children. Leaders work effectively with external agencies, when required. Although leaders have a relatively light caseload of child protection work, they ensure that staff are regularly briefed and remain vigilant.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of teaching, although stronger now than at the time of the last inspection, is still variable. There are a small number of subjects where teaching is less effective. This is slowing the progress pupils are making in these subjects. Leaders should continue to provide bespoke support for these teachers. Leaders should check carefully whether the support they provide improves teachers' performance and leads to effective learning.
- Some pupils do not retain knowledge they have been taught well enough. This includes disadvantaged pupils and some pupils with SEND. Teachers have begun to develop strategies to help pupils revisit and recall previously taught knowledge more often. Currently, staff are experimenting with how to do this most effectively. Practice across subjects is therefore variable. Leaders need to carefully evaluate whether these emerging strategies are helping pupils to know and remember more. They should then share the best practice and help teachers to embed this within the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 19–20 April 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	108635
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10134950
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	555
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Colin Marsh
Headteacher	John Newport
Website	www.mbms.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 April 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, governors have reorganised the senior leadership team and have created a deputy headteacher post. The current chair of the governing body was appointed shortly after the last inspection.
- The school does not place any pupils in alternative education providers.
- The school is a member of the North Tyneside Learning Trust.

Information about this inspection

- We met the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. An inspector met the chair of governors and four other governors. Discussions were held on various topics with groups of pupils.
- An inspector met a representative of the local authority.
- We focused on the quality of the curriculum in mathematics, history and art. Inspectors met the curriculum leader of each subject, visited lessons, talked to pupils, looked at a sample of books and talked to subject teachers.

- We also met some other members of staff to discuss the use of assessment, careers education and homework.
- We met the special educational needs coordinator. We looked at several support plans together and visited lessons to see how well support was being delivered.
- We walked around the school at different times of the day to check on punctuality, behaviour and conduct. During these times, we held informal discussions with pupils. We also spoke to different members of staff, including support and administrative staff to gauge their views on pupils' behaviour and conduct.
- We looked at the checks the school makes on adults who work in the school. We talked to senior leaders responsible for safeguarding and looked at records of the actions they have taken to protect pupils at risk. We spoke to pupils to gauge how safe they felt and to what extent they know how to keep themselves safe. We also checked whether members of staff understand and abide by the school's safeguarding policy.
- We looked at the 121 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We also looked at the 42 responses to the survey for staff and the 116 responses to the pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Toni Spoors

Ofsted Inspector

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