

Inspection of Morpeth Chantry Middle School

Mitford Road, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1RQ

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They attend regularly and play joyfully with their friends in the playground. Those associated with the school describe its caring and respectful ethos as a notable strength. Inspectors agree. There are lots of smiles across the school.

Pupils are attentive in class for most of the time. There is very little low-level disruption in lessons. When asked about bullying, pupils sit upright and respond in disbelief that someone could question behaviour in 'their' school. Pupils say they can fall out with each other from time to time, but they soon make friends again.

Teachers expect pupils to work hard in lessons. The quality of pupils' written work and their answers to teachers' questions are much stronger than they have been in the past. Pupils are learning more. They are keen to win praise points and do well for their teachers.

Pupils take part in lots of after-school clubs, represent the school in sporting events and visit places they have not been before. Careers education is a strength. Leaders have developed many original ideas to help pupils learn about different career and academic pathways, including visiting speakers, enterprise days and teambuilding opportunities.

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

The headteacher, governors and staff have had to deal with a lot over the last few years in order to make necessary improvements to the school during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, they have been successful in their efforts to keep pupils safe, provide remote education and improve the school further. Staff morale is high. The headteacher inspires those who work at the school. Staff say leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Staff enjoy coming to school. They want the very best for every pupil they teach.

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum over the past few years since the appointment of the headteacher. The curriculum in a lot of subjects is well considered. In English, for example, teachers ensure that pupils learn poetry, practise writing, and read challenging texts in order that they remember more over time. Teachers also question pupils effectively, using challenging vocabulary so that pupils repeat the same words themselves.

However, there are a few subjects where the curriculum is not well thought out. This affects pupils' learning and progress over time. This is because curriculum plans do not identify clearly what knowledge pupils should know inside-out. As a result, some teachers do not emphasise or deepen pupils' understanding in parts of the curriculum that matter the most. This has a knock-on effect when pupils try to learn

more challenging concepts, because they do not fully understand what has gone before.

There is a strong culture of reading across the school. The leaders with responsibility for reading work closely with pupils' previous schools to identify early those pupils who need support with their reading. Some staff are trained to teach phonics, and others receive regular training linked to the teaching of reading. Pupils read each day. They enjoy reading and say there are many books to choose from across the school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well known to staff. Teaching assistants and teachers care for and support these pupils skilfully so they can develop personally and socially. Most teachers take note of the additional support these pupils need to learn well, and they plan lessons to meet their needs. However, the information teachers receive about pupils' additional learning needs is too vague. It does not highlight well enough what teachers can do to help pupils with SEND learn more or behave better in lessons. This leads to some pupils with SEND making less progress than they are capable of and/or losing focus in class.

Pupils are tolerant and accepting. They celebrate differences and clearly understand their role in creating a happy school and society. This is, in part, due to the opportunities in lessons and after school for pupils to develop personally or improve their physical and mental health.

Members of the academy council and trustees provide strong leadership. They work closely and understand their responsibilities in detail. Trustees ask searching questions of leaders, ensuring leaders are held to account for every aspect of their work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The leaders and staff with responsibility for safeguarding are appropriately trained and know what they should be doing to keep pupils safe. Staff receive regular safeguarding training that is closely linked to the risks pupils may face in the locality and beyond.

Pupils say they feel safe. They know how to stay safe online. The pupils spoken to during the inspection described in the same way the steps they would take to report a concern about themselves or a friend. Pupils like the letter boxes in each classroom, made available to them to share with staff any worries or concerns that are private to them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have introduced an ambitious curriculum. Pupils are learning more than they have done in the past. However, the school’s curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects. From time to time, pupils do not have the background knowledge they need to be able to learn new content as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans make clear what end points the curriculum is building towards. They should identify what important knowledge pupils need to know and what they need to be able to do to reach those end points. Leaders have already taken action to plan next year’s curriculum in some subjects and to train staff in how to deliver it. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- The information teachers receive relating to pupils with SEND lacks sufficient detail. Some pupils have specific needs that require specialist support in the classroom. Teachers do not have the information they require to ensure that support for pupils with SEND is precisely matched to their needs. Leaders should ensure that they provide teachers with more information about the needs of pupils with SEND and the teaching strategies that are best placed to ensure pupils with SEND make stronger progress over time.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	137747
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10200646
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	574
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Carvin
Headteacher	Bryan Stewart
Website	www.chantry.the3rivers.net
Date of previous inspection	18 March 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Three Rivers Learning Trust, a multi-academy trust.
- The school is a middle school. Pupils start the school in Year 5 and leave at the end of Year 8. Most pupils move to a local high school in Year 9.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide students in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average.
- A new headteacher took up post in September 2018. A new deputy headteacher took up post at the start of this academic year.
- Most pupils attending the school are White British.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and they have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors undertook deep dives into the following subjects: English, geography, science and languages. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with senior and curriculum leaders, teachers, trustees, governors and support staff.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with the school improvement adviser and a national leader of education who has been supporting the school.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils and observed interactions during social times.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including behaviour and admissions records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and curriculum documentation.
- Inspectors took into account the 146 responses from parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Forty-seven members of staff completed Ofsted's online survey for staff, and 119 pupils completed Ofsted's online pupils' survey. All of these responses were taken into consideration.

Inspection team

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