

Inspection of Whytrig Community Middle School

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

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is an inclusive environment where pupils value each other. They respect and celebrate difference. There is a strong sense of community and pupils feel responsible for each other. Pupils spoken to would all challenge bullying if they saw it. Parents and carers and pupils agree that if bullying does occur, it is dealt with effectively by staff. Pupils feel safe and happy here. They are rightly proud of their school. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils who have previously found school difficult thrive and flourish here.

Leaders are highly ambitious in their vision for the school and what pupils can achieve. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are extremely well supported. As a result, they achieve as well as they should. There is a clear focus on developing spoken language. Pupils express themselves clearly and are keen to talk about their learning. Pupils are enthusiastic in lessons and learn well. The school teaches pupils to be resilient and independent.

This school serves its local community. Leaders responded well to the pandemic and are particularly proud of the support that they provided for pupils and their families. For example, governors delivered free school meals to some pupils during lockdown. Leaders place equal importance on pupils' well-being and their academic success.

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

Leaders have driven considerable improvement since the school's previous inspection. All pupils access a broad and ambitious curriculum. Leaders have carefully considered how pupils will build their knowledge over time. In most subjects, pupils can clearly explain their learning. In a few subjects, important knowledge is not as precisely identified. Occasionally, curriculum planning in Years 7 and 8 does not follow on logically from Years 5 and 6.

Pupils with SEND are extremely well supported in this school. This is reflected in how much pupils learn and remember. Pupils with SEND have positive attitudes towards their learning. Teachers work hard to make sure that all pupils can achieve their best. Teachers think carefully about what pupils will find difficult and they adapt the curriculum with this in mind. Where teachers are not specialists in a given subject, leaders have put effective support and training in place. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 benefit from specialist teaching from high-school staff.

Teachers generally question pupils well in classrooms to check gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not consistently addressed. Assessment is being used to help teachers plan. However, this is not systematic. At times, pupils do not understand how to improve their work.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have prioritised reading. Pupils read daily. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their reading routines. However, the school is not

assessing struggling readers' needs precisely enough. Leaders have plans in place to address this.

Behaviour in this school is exemplary. Teachers manage behaviour very well and pupils value how consistent and fair members of staff are. Pupils are well engaged in lessons and show a thirst for learning. Their commitment is impressive.

The culture and relationships are exceptional at Whytrig. Both staff and pupils flourish here. Pupils are respectful and supportive of each other. Even the most vulnerable pupils were clear with inspectors about feeling safe and valued in school. Pupils who join the school during the year settle extremely quickly. They thrive in this nurturing environment.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. Pupils are taught to be respectful of others. They learn about mental health, sexual harassment and diversity issues in an age-appropriate way. They learn about healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe. Many pupils keenly take part in a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including sports, dance and drama. The school makes sure that disadvantaged pupils have access to all opportunities. Leaders encourage attendance for these pupils.

School leaders have shared their inclusive vision for the school with staff, pupils and parents and this is evident. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND are extremely well supported. Staff feel valued and that their workload is considered by leaders. Governors have strengthened their practices since the previous inspection and now hold leaders to account effectively. Governors understand the school's strengths and priorities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in how to identify pupils who might be at risk. There are clear and robust systems in place for staff to raise a concern. Staff are vigilant in their care of pupils and knowledgeable about the potential local risks that pupils might face.

A key strength of safeguarding in this school is how well pupils are taught to keep themselves safe. Pupils understand risks, especially online, and are confident in how to seek help if they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum planning in most subjects is ambitious. There are high expectations of what pupils should know in these subjects. However, in a few subjects, this is not the case. In these subjects, curriculum planning does not have high enough

expectations of what pupils should learn. Leaders need to make sure that they have thought deeply about the precise knowledge that pupils should know over time so that they can achieve as well as they should in all subjects.

- Sometimes, opportunities to help pupils address the gaps in their understanding or knowledge are missed. This is also the case for some pupils in reading. Leaders must ensure that teachers check how much pupils know in individual subjects and that they tailor the curriculum to help pupils learn and remember more 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	122335
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10200715
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	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susan Dungworth
Headteacher	John Barnes (Executive Headteacher) Jonathan Souter (Head of School)
Website	www.svf.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 and 6 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is in a federation with Astley Community High School and Seaton Sluice Middle School, called the Seaton Valley Federation. The headteacher is executive headteacher across the three schools. The federation also shares a single governing body.
- Since the previous section 5 inspection in June 2018, there have been changes in the governing body. A number of governors have left and new governors have been appointed.
- The school has an additional SEND resource provision on site, catering for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. This additional resource provision is also accessed by pupils from Astley Community High School.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation

- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior leaders and governors, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with the school improvement partner working on behalf of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history and physical education. For each deep dive, 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.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum plans from other subjects. Inspectors also visited additional lessons.
- Inspectors met with leaders, members of staff and pupils to evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding in school. They looked at records of actions taken by leaders to protect pupils at risk. They also looked at bullying logs. Inspectors checked whether members of staff understood the safeguarding policy and procedures. They checked whether pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online.
- Inspectors visited the additional SEND resource provision on site and spoke to staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan, the local authority school improvement partner reports, minutes of governing body meetings and several policies.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at break- and lunchtime. They met formally with groups of pupils from all year groups.
- Parents' views were taken into account by considering the 35 responses to Parent View, including the 28 written responses. Inspectors also considered the 33 responses from staff to their online inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Katherine Spurr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jill Bowe

Ofsted Inspector

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