

# Inspection of a good school: Berwick Middle School

Lovaine Terrace, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 1LA

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Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2023

## Outcome

Berwick Middle School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Berwick Middle School play a very active part in school life. All pupils attend at least one extra-curricular activity, either at lunchtime or after school. This enables them to explore interests beyond the academic curriculum. The atmosphere around school is calm and orderly. Pupils are very polite and conduct themselves well due to the high expectations of staff.

Pupils focus well in lessons. They take pride in their work and many pupils contribute to class feedback and discussion. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are equally as keen to participate in lessons and additional activities. They are fully included in all aspects of the school and the special educational needs coordinator knows and meets pupils' needs well.

There are mixed views on bullying. The vast majority of pupils say that bullying is rare and that staff deal with it well if it does happen. However, a minority of pupils do feel that bullying happens and are not fully confident that it would be dealt with well. Leaders do ensure that clear messages are given about bullying and, if known about, leaders do not tolerate it.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about their children's experiences at the school. One comment received states that 'all teachers go above and beyond to help the children. We are very lucky to have a school like this'.

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

Leaders have improved the curriculum of late. Curriculum leaders have planned the topics and units that they want pupils to learn. However, the important knowledge that pupils need to know is not always clearly identified. This means that it is not sufficiently clear how one part of pupils' learning links to another. It also means that pupils in different classes do not always complete the same tasks.

In lessons, teachers use recall activities to check that pupils have remembered previous learning. For example, in English, pupils are regularly given opportunities for punctuation practice. Pupils say this helps them from making the same mistakes. Pupils in Year 6 in 2022 did not achieve as much as they might have. Their learning was significantly interrupted due to the pandemic and time away from school coinciding with important transition points. Leaders have carefully considered the curriculum for current pupils to ensure that any lost learning is covered before pupils move to high school.

Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as other pupils. Staff use information about each pupil well to provide additional resources and help. This is done expertly and enables pupils with SEND full access to class work. Some pupils with SEND access additional support with their reading. This is taught by a trained teaching assistant who carefully encourages pupils to find meaning in what they are reading. Several pupils in this group have the confidence to read aloud.

Leaders have prioritised reading for all pupils. Weaker readers are quickly identified through testing, and intervention is put in place. Some pupils access phonics teaching and others work on their fluency or comprehension. This helps them to catch up. A love of reading is part of the school culture. Book swaps are so popular that a recent event saw over three hundred books brought into school! Pupils have their reading books on desks and get the opportunity to read for pleasure every day. This develops their enjoyment and enthusiasm for reading.

The personal development programme is carefully planned. Several pupils are on the school council, and staff have ensured that all pupils are represented here. Many pupils say that it is okay to be different in school and that everyone should be respected. Leaders know that sometimes not all boys are as respectful to girls as they should be. The deputy headteacher has begun work on further plans to address this, and some of this work has already started. For example, pupils involved in disrespectful incidents are quickly picked up by learning mentors and have sessions on why their behaviour is hurtful. This leads to pupils swiftly understanding why their actions were wrong.

Staff are proud and happy to work at the school. They feel very well supported by the leadership team and value the professional development opportunities that they are provided with.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher and safeguarding leader have moved reporting and recording systems online so that there is a clear record of safeguarding concerns. These are well kept and show evidence of timely responses to any concerns raised. Staff and governors receive safeguarding training. They know how to identify signs of abuse and neglect.

Pupils get safety information relevant to their local context. For example, water safety and the dangers of vaping are two recent areas that leaders have ensured are covered. There

are regular visits to school from others in the community who deliver assemblies on areas such as fire safety and online safety.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school's curriculum is not sufficiently planned and sequenced in all subjects. It is not clear what important ideas and concepts pupils need to know in detail. Pupils' learning in some subjects is not as developed as it could be. Leaders need to make sure that pupils' learning is planned and sequenced in such a way that they have the opportunity to explore significant topics, ideas or concepts that build on what they already know over time.

## **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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2017.

## **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.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122354
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255799
<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9 to 13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	338
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Clare Shaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Glen Bird
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.berwickmiddleschool.org.uk">www.berwickmiddleschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school currently has no pupils accessing alternative provision.
- Pupils enter the school in Year 5 and leave in Year 8.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, design and technology and art. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, meetings with staff and pupils and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, responses to Ofsted's staff survey, and responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, together with free-text responses from parents.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. They observed the school at these times.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic

began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

### **Inspection team**

Jessica McKay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nick Horn

Ofsted Inspector

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