

# Inspection of a good school: Ovingham Middle School

West Road, Ovingham, Prudhoe, Northumberland NE42 6DE

---

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

## Outcome

Ovingham Middle School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Jenny Bullock. This school is part of Cheviot Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the co-chief executive officers (CEO), Simon Taylor and Alice Witherow, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Carvin.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend Ovingham Middle School are encouraged to aim high. The school has high expectations of pupils' conduct and achievements. Pupils enjoy striving to do their best and meet these expectations. Pupils have embraced the 'heart' values. They understand how these values guide their choices and attitudes. They speak clearly about tolerance and respect. These values are evident in the relationships seen around school. Pupils learn about bullying and recognise that it is unacceptable. They are encouraged to challenge it, if it happens. Most pupils explain that adults would take any reports of bullying seriously. Some pupils feel that it is tackled less effectively.

Pupils enjoy their academic lessons. They also talk with enthusiasm about the wide range of opportunities they have outside of the classroom. Pupils relish the sporting opportunities that the school offers. The school has ensured that all pupils can enjoy physical activity, through both competitive sport and inclusive participation opportunities. There are also numerous opportunities beyond sport, including debate clubs, theatre trips and Spanish film club.

Despite some turbulence in staffing, leaders have ensured that pupils are receiving a high-quality education. Pupils trust the adults in school to help them and keep them safe. Pupils are happy and achieve well here.

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

Pupils at this school achieve well academically. The school has prioritised creating an ambitious and broad curriculum. Pupils at key stage 3 study both French and Spanish to prepare them well for high school. Leaders have clearly outlined the knowledge that

pupils will learn. This knowledge is sensibly organised so that pupils can build on what they already know. Leaders have considered how the curriculum can support pupils' wider development. This is clear through the choice of books that pupils read in English for example, that help to teach them about diversity and discrimination.

The school has organised the curriculum so that pupils of all ages are taught by subject specialists. Staff have secure subject knowledge and teach the curriculum well. The school has introduced retrieval tasks to help pupils remember what they have learned over time. Teachers use modelling effectively to help pupils understand new information. Some teachers use a range of questioning strategies to carefully check what pupils know. This is particularly the case in mathematics. However, this is not happening consistently well across all curriculum subjects.

Teachers have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has ensured there is equal ambition for these pupils. Pupils with SEND are well supported to achieve well, alongside their peers.

The school has recently focused on developing the culture of reading. Pupils who find reading difficult receive regular support to help them catch up. All pupils have independent reading time built into their timetable. Some pupils are avid readers.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They are polite and keen to talk with visitors. Most pupils are motivated and engaged with their learning. Teachers address any low-level disruption in lessons. If pupils do not behave as well as they should, there is a clear behaviour system in place. However, not all staff use this consistently. This can lead to some perceptions of unfairness from pupils.

Pupils learn about important issues in their personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons. Pupils talk with maturity about equality and diversity. They explain everyone is 'accepted for who they are' at this school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, online and in the community. They learn about both river and rail safety.

The school has ensured that pupils are prepared to take their next steps towards the employment. Through PSHE lessons, visiting speakers and careers fairs, pupils learn about the range of jobs and occupations that they can aspire to.

Staff say they are well supported by leaders. Their workload is well-considered, and any concerns would be listened to. Staff explain being proud to be part of this school community. Governors and the central trust team are closely involved in the evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have a sharp focus on the school's priorities.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Some staff do not use questioning consistently well across all curriculum subjects. This means that sometimes, some pupils' gaps in learning are not precisely identified or addressed. The school should ensure that ongoing staff professional development continues to focus on the effective use of questioning in all curriculum subjects, as a part of effective assessment.
- Some staff do not apply the new behaviour policy with consistency. This leads to some perceptions of unfairness from pupils. The school should embed the high expectations of the new behaviour policy so that it is applied and implemented consistently.

## 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 predecessor school, Ovingham Middle School, to be good in December 2012.

## 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 146894  |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Northumberland  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10297459  |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Middle deemed secondary   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy converter   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 9 to 13   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 340   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | Board of trustees   |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                      | Paul Carvin   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Jenny Bullock   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://ovinghammiddleschool.net">http://ovinghammiddleschool.net</a> |
| <b>Date(s) of previous inspection</b>      | Not previously inspected  |

## Information about this school

- Ovingham Middle School joined the Cheviot Learning Trust in September 2023, following a merger of two existing trusts.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision for one day a week. The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, both deputy headteachers and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator. They also met with representatives

from the governing body, including the chairperson and the vice chairperson. An inspector met with a representative from the trust board and one of the co-CEOs. The inspector also met with external support and challenge partners who work with the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- An inspector also met with leaders responsible for reading and personal, social, health and economic education.
- Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils at social times.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. They also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Katie Spurr, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Bernard Clark

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2024