



Gosforth Central Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108519
LEA Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number 277993
Inspection dates 27 June 2006 to 28 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Peter Toft

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Great North Road
School category	Community		Gosforth
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2851793
Number on roll	504	Fax number	0191 2552123
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Ronald Eunson
Date of previous inspection	1 October 1999	Headteacher	

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Gosforth Central Middle School is a community school for boys and girls aged nine to 13. It has 504 pupils, 86% of whom are white British and 14% are from a variety of ethnic heritage backgrounds. Just over a tenth of pupils speak a first language other than English. The school is one of three middle schools serving an area of Newcastle in which a high proportion of pupils live in privately owned homes. A fifth of pupils come from a wider area, and the school is oversubscribed. Most pupils enter the school from three first schools with slightly above average attainment. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The school occupies new purpose-built accommodation.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Gosforth Central Middle School is a very effective school with some outstanding features. It has a particularly purposeful and happy atmosphere. Pupils receive a well-rounded education: they make good academic progress and they develop well in their four years here. Standards are high across the wide range of subjects, except that major aspects of design and technology are not effectively covered. Apart from this, pupils achieve well and they benefit in particular from the specialist subject teaching provided. The school goes to great lengths to ensure that all pupils are well cared for and provided with teaching and guidance which meet their needs. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English are given precisely tailored teaching to enable them to learn well and make good progress. The vast majority of pupils enjoy their learning. They rightly feel very safe, well known by the staff and that the adults in the school have their best interests at heart. Their horizons are broadened by the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities which the school provides. Behaviour and attendance are excellent. The school now operates in an excellent new building and its teachers make very good use of the resources available.

The teachers are very conscientious. In the lessons seen all of the teaching was at least satisfactory, much was good and some was excellent. Pupils would benefit if the very good practice seen in the teaching could be spread more widely throughout the school. Pupils' work is generally well marked but some of the learning could be strengthened were teachers to give the pupils a clearer idea of what they need to do to improve. The school is very well managed: governors, the headteacher and senior staff have a clear view of its direction, are well informed about its performance and are very effective in getting things done. Staff at all levels contribute well to the school's very smooth running. The school has improved since its last inspection and has the expertise and capability to develop further and to deal with the issues identified in this inspection. It gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the amount of very good teaching by extending the good practice seen in the best lessons among staff of the whole school.
- Develop the use of assessment in all lessons to ensure that pupils are clear about the standard of their work and what they need to do to improve.
- In conjunction with the private finance initiative contractor, resolve the remaining problems with the playing fields so that they can be used effectively by pupils.
- Ensure that the teaching of design and technology covers the full range of the subject delineated in the National Curriculum programme of study.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. The results in the 2005 national tests at the end of Year 6 were well above average, reflecting the consistently high standards attained in recent years. This represents good progress and achievement when compared to pupils' slightly above average attainment when they joined Year 5. Pupils meet the high expectations set by the school. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those of high prior attainment met, and in many cases exceeded, the challenging targets set for them. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieved well. The standard of work being done now in Year 6 is also significantly above average in quality. The school's efficient and reliable assessment systems show that attainment at the end of Year 8 is well above average in most subjects. The standard of the work done in Years 7 and 8 contributes to the pupils' well above average performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9 at the High School. Progress and achievement are good throughout the school, including the development of pupils' basic competencies. By the time they leave school they have above average literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils are eager to make the most of the very many opportunities provided by the school. Their enjoyment of school shines through in their excellent attendance and their enthusiastic attitudes to all aspects of learning. Pupils' excellent behaviour contributes to the school's calm and purposeful atmosphere in which they feel safe, secure and happy. Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds work and play together harmoniously. Pupils are eager to take on responsibility as buddies, peer mentors or ICT monitors who help to run lunchtime clubs. This and their many musical and sporting activities, make a very good contribution to the strong sense of community which pervades the school. Opportunities to contribute to the wider community through fund raising are frequent, cover a variety of causes and again are well supported by pupils. Pupils of all ages are involved in the election of house captains which allows them to see how democratic systems work.

The extensive personal, social, health and citizenship education programme has enabled pupils to gain a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. High attendance at after school sports clubs shows how well pupils have responded to the school's promotion of regular exercise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In over two-thirds of lessons observed teaching was good or better, and in a quarter it was outstanding. Teachers' expert subject knowledge is used very well to plan a good balance of activities, to cover content rigorously and to develop pupils' thinking through clear explanations and challenging questions. Pupils' learning is often enriched when teachers help them to make connections between subjects. In the best lessons teachers provide a range of activities which allow pupils to learn through different methods and then give them opportunities to evaluate their own or others' learning. These strategies encourage pupils to progress at a brisk rate and to develop independence and responsibility for their learning. Where lessons are satisfactory rather than good, teachers' use of assessment information to provide different levels of work is not so effective. In these instances learning is slower and pupils' progress is satisfactory rather than good.

Pupils say that learning is fun. They are particularly well motivated in lessons where they work collaboratively to meet demanding challenges set by the teacher. In these lessons, pupils pool their knowledge well to learn from each other, support each other and solve problems. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is usually high and this makes a very significant contribution to the rate at which they progress.

Well trained learning support assistants give good support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good planning by teachers ensures that these assistants use their time very efficiently and make a major contribution to pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Subjects cover National Curriculum programmes of study well, although significant elements of design and technology in the focus areas of systems and control, and resistant materials, are underemphasised. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of all groups, including those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language. The programme of personal, health, social and citizenship education is well established. Good provision is made for the teaching of ICT and for improving literacy and numeracy skills. There are opportunities for pupils to learn about Britain's cultural diversity and the different faiths of the nation's minority ethnic groups. Time and resources are effectively given to the teaching of French from Year 6 as preparation for transfer to the High School. The wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits, including sport and the arts, provide outstanding opportunities for pupils to extend their enjoyment and understanding of the curriculum. Residential visits and adventurous activities provide particularly stimulating experiences. Clubs are well attended and the school enjoys success in many competitions and

sporting activities. The school is now developing more opportunities for adults other than teachers to extend and enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are good. Every adult working in the school is committed to pupils' welfare and to helping them develop into confident and responsible young people. Child protection procedures are well established and understood and used appropriately by all staff. Rigorous risk assessments, particularly when out of school visits are planned, demonstrate a strong commitment to pupils' safety. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are vulnerable or who require help with a particular problem are well supported. There are very good links with the First Schools and with the High School to ease pupils' transition from one stage of education to the next. They are therefore well prepared for the move to Year 9. The school tracks pupils' progress as they move through the years but is looking to develop an electronic monitoring system to improve the efficiency with which assessments are used by managers and teachers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher has established herself very quickly at the heart of the school. She is maintaining the very effective procedures developed by her predecessor, with the strong support of the very capable senior management team. Whilst doing so, she is evaluating the school's strengths and deciding upon priorities for development. The good leadership and management exist at all levels of the school: the strong senior team contribute very well to development planning and day-to-day operations. This team is supported by very effective middle managers and teachers who manage their classrooms well. The staff of the school work very cohesively as a team. Senior and middle managers have a very good insight into how the school is performing and how the pupils are progressing. Their evaluation work is thorough and they have been well assisted in developing this by the local authority.

Governors play a substantial and very effective role in steering the school's development. They are well informed about how effectively it runs and contribute significantly to policy formulation. They bring a rich variety of skills to the school to benefit the education it provides.

The new building provides excellent and well-designed accommodation. Resources for learning are very good and those for ICT are rightly to be developed further. Buildings and grounds are well maintained though there have been problems in the past with cleaning. The continuing defects in the drainage and the long jump pit on the playing fields limit their use by the pupils. The staff have worked very effectively with the developers to ensure that the construction of the new building did not hinder learning. However, dealing with the teething problems, and attempting to develop,

for example, wall displays not in the original private finance initiative contract, absorb an inordinately large amount of senior staff time.

The school runs smoothly and its administration and financial management are strong. Relationships and communications between staff are excellent and all pupils are fully included in the life of the school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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The pupils of:

Gosforth Central Middle School

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29 June 2006

Dear pupils

After our visit to inspect your school I would like to tell you of our findings.

Your school is very good and some of the things it does are excellent.

Most of the teaching is good or excellent. The teachers and their assistants are very skilful in helping you to learn.

You are given a wide range of subjects to study. The range of extra-curricular activities is outstanding and this does a great deal to broaden your experiences.

Your time in school is safe, busy and interesting. Most of you enjoy your work and play there.

You are rightly proud of your new school and its wonderful new building.

You are keen to use the facilities well and to take good care of them.

The staff give you very good care and guidance.

During your time at the school you develop well as individuals and you learn to co-operate and get on with others.

Although the school is very good overall, improvements are needed to:

help to make all teaching as good as the best

ensure that you all know how well you are doing and what to do to learn more

ensure that the playing fields are in good condition and can be fully used

modernise the teaching of parts of design and technology.

Yours sincerely

Peter Toft HMI