



Morpeth Newminster Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122346
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281239
Inspection dates 21 June 2006 to 22 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Janet Palmer HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Mitford Road
School category	Community		Morpeth
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		Northumberland, NE61 1RH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01670 513621
Number on roll	516	Fax number	01670 513548
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Christine Foster
Date of previous inspection	1 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr Paul Lawrence

Age group 9 to 13	Inspection dates 21 June 2006 - 22 June 2006	Inspection number 281239
-----------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Morpeth Newminster Middle School teaches students aged 9-13. It is over-subscribed and mostly serves the town of Morpeth with a further 30% of students coming from outside the school's catchment area. The number of students receiving free school meals is below the national average and there are very few students with English as an additional language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The school's intake is stable and attendance levels are above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Morpeth Newminster Middle School provides a good education for its students with some examples of outstanding practice. The school is very well led by the headteacher, who is ably supported by an effective senior team and governing body. The school provides good value for money and has the capacity to continue to improve. The leadership has responded positively to issues raised at the last inspection, although communications with parents remains an area for further development. The planned development of the school web-site should help to better inform parents of forthcoming school events.

Students make good progress and standards are good, particularly in English and science where results in the national tests at age 11 are consistently above the national average. This is because the quality of teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of students and set them challenging and interesting work. However, there are some inconsistencies in the planning and marking of work by a small minority of teachers which are not picked up well enough by managers. Students do not always know what they need to do to improve. In Key Stage 3, teachers need to improve the assessment of students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship and monitor their participation in community based activities.

Students behave exceptionally well and they have very positive attitudes to their school work. They enjoy coming to school where they are well cared for and receive good guidance and support. The school provides many opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and staff work hard to ensure students feel safe and secure.

The school council enables the students' opinions to be heard and they have had some positive influence. However, their limited roles and responsibilities do not allow them to contribute as well as they should to the school and local community.

The curriculum is broad and balanced with a good range of popular extra-curricular activities. Effective links with local schools provide good opportunities for extended curriculum work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the monitoring of subject areas to ensure consistent quality of lesson planning and marking.
- At Key Stage 3, improve the assessment of students' subject understanding in citizenship and the monitoring of their participation in community activities.
- Further develop the role of the school council so they are more responsibly involved in the school and wider community.
- Widen further the communication with parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school and inspectors agree that achievement is good and standards are high. National data shows that standards at age 11 are above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Standards have been significantly above the national average, except in mathematics, for the past five years. Standards are especially high in Years 7 and 8 where students are meeting particularly challenging targets.

The school has a strong record of helping its students to make good progress, particularly in English and science. However, in 2005, there was a dip in the progress made by students in Year 5, particularly in mathematics. Extra help through 'catch up' programmes has boosted the achievement of a small number of lower attaining students who had not made enough progress since joining the school. In all year groups, students' current achievement is at least satisfactory and often good.

Looked after students, those with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as other students in the school.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students are enthusiastic learners; their exceptional behaviour and good relationships ensure trust, safety, consideration and cooperation in and around school.

The school rightly prides itself on successfully including all groups of students in school life. Incidents of bullying are low and students report that these are dealt with sympathetically and effectively. Exclusions are infrequent and attendance levels are consistently above the national average because students are committed to learning well and enjoy school activities.

The curriculum supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They acquire a respect for other cultures and religions and an understanding of relationships through a range of lessons and in assemblies. Charity work encourages their understanding of the needs of the wider community and in personal, social and health education they learn about social and moral issues associated with the misuse of alcohol and drugs. They are confident and socially aware and their future employment prospects are enhanced by work related learning activities.

The school council offers students some opportunities to influence change, act responsibly and their contribution has improved the school's healthy eating programme and environment. However, a significant minority of parents suggest that this could be further developed. Inspectors agree with this view.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and some is outstanding. Students of all abilities are challenged by demanding work and behaviour is very well managed. Those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in class by skilful learning assistants. Teachers nurture an excellent work ethic, which, when linked to the exemplary behaviour of students in lessons, and their obvious enjoyment of learning, makes the large group sizes less of a problem than it might otherwise be. Very noticeable also is the students' good capacity to work together.

Teachers know their students well and keep in touch with their individual progress. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used to good effect in many lessons. Digital projectors are particularly well deployed to enliven teaching and make learning interesting. Lessons are well paced and have a good variety of activity. Classroom displays are attractive and frequently referred to by teachers and students to enhance learning.

Although the marking of written work is generally positive and supportive, more could be done to tell students what they need to do to improve. Also, the quality of lesson planning is too variable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that has both breadth and depth. It goes beyond basic requirements by providing drama and swimming, and the opportunity to study French in Years 5 and 6. Additionally, the school offers an alternative curriculum for Year 8 students who may be at risk of becoming disaffected. Gifted and talented students are offered extra-curricular activities such as the 'Junior Maths Challenge'.

The school has good links with other local schools and this helps provide further curriculum opportunities and summer school activities. There are a wide range of extra-curricular sports and activities such as chess, science and a book club. These are popular and well attended.

Students gain knowledge and understanding about becoming an informed citizen through cross-curricular citizenship. However, teachers need to ensure that the citizenship programme at Key Stage 3 formally assesses students' subject knowledge and understanding and monitors the development of their participation in community activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school offers good care, guidance and support to its students. Transition arrangements are particularly successful with specialist staff guiding students very effectively from first schools and then on to high school.

Procedures for child protection, first aid and safety in school and on visits are robust. Students contribute to and benefit from good links with the local and wider community. Visiting speakers and specific lessons within personal, social and health education assist all groups of learners with careers advice.

Home - school liaison has improved through the appointment of a designated officer; swift action is taken to ensure students attend, are punctual and are happy in school. Guidance for all groups of students is good. Learners at risk know who to turn to for support and are appreciative of the care they receive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. This is demonstrated well by the very smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis, the high academic standards, the good quality of the teaching and learning and the excellent behaviour and work ethic of the students.

The headteacher's calm and experienced leadership is a significant force for good in the school. He is supported well by an effective senior leadership team and by increasingly effective middle managers, many of whom play a key role in the monitoring of the subjects and year groups. Most subject leaders teach across the year groups and are consequently well placed to support and monitor their colleagues' planning and assessment. However, not all subject leaders ensure that either lesson planning or marking is as good as it ought to be. The school's improvement plan shows the school's awareness of this and makes the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning its first priority. The school's self-evaluation is realistic and accurate.

Governance is both supportive and challenging, reflecting the hard work and professionalism of the governing body. Governors take their legal obligations seriously. Recent initiatives include a streamlining of their committee structure, heavy involvement in the school's recent staff restructuring and increasingly strong links with particular subject areas. Financial management is secure, as confirmed by the most recent audit reports.

The school has generally dealt well with the few issues from the previous inspection although the parental questionnaire returns indicate that communications with parents is still an area for further improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------	--------------

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	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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	3	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	2	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

08456 404045

To the students of
Morpeth Newminster Middle School
Mitford Road
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 1RH

21 June 2006

Dear students

I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for making us feel so very welcome. We enjoyed the opportunity we had to spend some time talking to you about your school. These were the things that we found:

The school is very well led by Mr Lawrence and all the staff are working hard to make sure that you get the best possible education. Students at Morpeth Newminster Middle School achieve good results, particularly in English and science.

Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. You are polite, enthusiastic and very hard-working. The inspectors were particularly impressed by how well you work together and how supportive you are of each other.

Your teachers are good at their job and find exciting and challenging things for you to do. There are a good range of subjects for you to study including French in Years 5 and 6, and it's good that many of you attend the sports and other clubs. You are not always clear about how to improve so we are recommending that all your teachers regularly set clear targets to help you achieve even better results. You can help them to do this by continuing to work hard and listen to their advice.

In school you are well cared for and are given good guidance and support. You told us that you enjoy school, feel safe and secure and bullying is properly dealt with.

Some of you work on the school council and get involved in community activities. We would like to see all of you have more opportunities to voice your opinions and participate responsibly in school and community activities. Also, we have asked the school to think about more ways to tell your parents about what is going on.

Finally, I would like to thank you for being so friendly and polite. We enjoyed meeting you and wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector