



Gosforth West Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108520
LEA Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number 285451
Inspection dates 19 June 2006 to 20 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Andrea Lyons HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Jubilee 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 2853060
Number on roll	326	Fax number	0191 2855189
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Paul Black
Date of previous inspection	1 March 2005	Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Thomas

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
9 to 13	19 June 2006 - 20 June 2006	285451

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Gosforth West Middle School is a slightly smaller than average middle school, situated in a socially advantaged area of Newcastle. Most of its pupils come from neighbouring first and primary schools, but a significant and increasing number come from a wide range of schools in other areas. Some of these catchment areas are significantly socially disadvantaged and are culturally diverse. The school has a higher than average number of pupils who speak English as an additional language, have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who are eligible for free school meals. Many pupils join the school in Year 7 and some recently in Year 6. The school is increasingly popular: admission requests for Year 5 have more than doubled for this academic year. It has very good links with the local very popular high school, and is planning to enter into federation arrangements with it.

When the school was inspected in November 2001 and September 2003 it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Following further monitoring, it was placed in special measures in March 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school no longer requires special measures.

Gosforth West Middle School is a good school, with some outstanding features. Standards are consistently improving and are now at or above average in most subjects. English has improved considerably, although some developments have not yet had time to show their full impact, and pupils' spelling and handwriting skills are still less well developed than their higher level reading comprehension and descriptive skills, which are good.

Pupils are well behaved, confident and courteous. They enjoy school and are rightly proud of it. There is a strong sense of community, and both staff and pupils thrive on the evident culture of high expectations and mutual support. There is a very purposeful approach to learning. The quality of teaching is good, and often outstanding. Pupils make good progress by the end of Year 8, although a significant number start from a low baseline, particularly with regard to speaking and listening and literacy skills. Pupils with English as an additional language or learning difficulties and/or disabilities currently make good progress, but this is at risk as the school's provision in these areas is not sufficient to manage the increasing numbers of pupils with these needs.

The senior team provide outstanding leadership and management, and are supported by an excellent middle management team of phase and subject leaders. There is a strong commitment to developing responsibility and ownership in all members of the school which has paid great dividends. Together, staff and pupils have transformed the school in a very short time, which is a very significant achievement.

It now provides good value for money and is in a strong position to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop pupils' English, particularly their handwriting and spelling skills, so as to bring English standards up to the level of mathematics and science.
- Ensure that there are sufficient management and specialist teaching resources to meet the needs of pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards reached by pupils in Year 6 are broadly average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Pupils' performance in mathematics, in last year's tests, was significantly above average, and in science was slightly above average. However, performance in English was below average. Despite this lower performance in English, the school maintained its trend of improvement, which has been above the national trend over a four year period.

The school's action to improve standards in English has led to improvements that have impacted on the learning of all pupils, so that progress in different subjects is becoming more even and generally good. While there are still improvements to be made to standards of handwriting and spelling, action taken this year has improved the overall quality of pupils' writing, much of which is lively, well structured and a pleasure to read.

By Year 8, standards are above the expected level in mathematics and pupils' achievement is good. Results in English show there has been significant improvement in standards for these pupils from their starting points in Year 6. In science, the good standards found at the end of Year 6 have been built upon and pupils have progressed well. In other subjects such as information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography, music, art and design and design and technology, standards are better than are usually seen by the end of Year 8.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language are well supported to learn as well as their peers, and often make additional gains.

Many pupils enter the school with a comparatively low level of attainment and go on to make good progress. Overall, the achievement of pupils is now good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their attendance at school is above average and unauthorised absence is low. They enjoy coming to school and say that they feel safe. They say that bullying is rare and that when it does occur the school is good at eliminating it. Behaviour has improved substantially since the previous inspection and is now good. Pupils confirm that it is rare for learning to be slowed by inappropriate conduct. Exclusions for poor conduct have reduced because behaviour has improved and because there are good alternative arrangements within school for those who misbehave.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good, and often outstanding. Over two thirds of the lessons observed were good or better; a third were outstanding. This is because lessons are very well planned, with a good range of activities and learning styles, and because teachers are dynamic and focused on high achievement. Lessons are briskly paced and build well on pupils' previous learning. A particular strength in the outstanding lessons is the precision with which teachers ensure that specific points are made, repeated and checked without holding back the pupils' enjoyment or the flow of their learning. The developing system of assessment is enabling pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. Teachers know pupils well, and use assessment data effectively

to group pupils and match work to ability. Recently, a group of subject leaders have pooled their information about children at risk of underachieving to establish specific teaching groups which are then taught intensively in key areas. These pupils are making progress above the levels predicted for them. However, some weaknesses in pupils' spelling and handwriting remain generally and these undermine pupils' standards both in other subjects and in English, even where their higher level reading and writing skills are well developed.

A positive, relaxed and purposeful atmosphere in lessons makes a good contribution to pupils' evident enjoyment of their learning. Teaching assistants have the potential to make a significant contribution to teaching and learning, but their skills are not always used effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which is developing well this year as a result of the desire to broaden pupils' experiences and create more productive links between subjects. As part of the drive to raise standards in literacy, teachers now plan effectively to develop these skills in science and the humanities subjects. The same careful planning is applied to both numeracy skills and ICT, so that pupils have frequent opportunities to consolidate and extend their basic skills. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development through personal, social and health education which ensures pupils know how to stay safe and adopt healthy lifestyles.

The range of visits and visitors organised by the school has a positive impact on pupils' learning and is helping to improve standards in English. This year visits to local museums and the football stadium have given pupils good first-hand experiences on which to base their writing. The range of out-of-school activities is good. These are well supported and provide a route for new interests and talents to be developed, as well as improving pupils' social skills. They are much appreciated by pupils who think there is plenty of variety, 'something for everyone'.

Planning and provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have improved as past difficulties have been resolved. Effective action planning has identified what needs to be done to improve provision further in the short term, which is a timely development given the increasing number of pupils joining the school who need additional support for learning. The provision for pupils who have English as an additional language is of good quality. However, there is not sufficient teacher time available to meet the needs of the increasing number of these pupils. This means that there is a risk that pupils' good progress will be affected.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. A particular strength of the school is the positive behaviour management strategy, which ensures that pupils know what is expected of them and what the consequences are if they misbehave. This makes pupils

feel confident and secure that the school is a safe place to be and that they are treated fairly. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils say that they know who to turn to if they are worried. They confirm that the teachers are welcoming, fair and firm when necessary. Staff have a good knowledge of personal circumstances which might affect pupils' well-being and provide good support.

Child protection procedures are in place and appropriate staff training is currently being arranged. Health and safety arrangements are adequate and risk assessments are carried out extremely thoroughly. Attitudes to healthy living and the importance of regular exercise are promoted strongly and effectively. There are good procedures to help pupils settle into Year 5 when they transfer from their first schools and to ease the transition to the high school at the end of Year 8.

Whole-school assessment and tracking procedures have developed well this year and are now being used effectively to raise standards. Regular assessment of pupils' learning now informs teachers of how well pupils are doing and what they need to plan as the next steps in learning. Pupils too have become more involved in assessing their learning and now take responsibility for assessing their own work and that of their peers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. This is because of the remarkably high standard of senior staff, and the extent to which they have encouraged and developed a whole school commitment to improvement. The associate headteacher's strategic management and vision for the school are outstanding, as is the specific school improvement work undertaken together with the assistant associate headteacher and the assistant headteacher. This quickly and securely established a positive learning environment with high expectations of both staff and pupils. Key systems such as effective behaviour management, data management and target-setting are now in place and working well. The senior team is increasingly well supported by a group of excellent subject and phase leaders, who are developing very good practice, particularly across the curriculum and in specific intervention to raise standards. This group, together with all staff, have been enabled to build on their existing skills and develop new ones to a high level. However, there is not sufficient management or specialist teaching input to bring provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities up to this high standard. Very good developments over this year have set this area on the right footing but staffing arrangements are only part time and temporary, which is not enabling longer term strategic planning.

There is a very clear sense of purpose and community throughout the school. The school seeks parents' and pupils' views regularly, and acts on suggestions received.

Self-evaluation and planning are excellent, and the school is well placed to improve yet further over the longer term. The governing body has provided very strong support, and the school has worked very effectively with a range of partners such as the local authority, and the local high school. The school is in a good position to develop these

strong partnerships further through its plans to enter a federation with the high school. This is a very positive and exciting development.

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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	1	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	3	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	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	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

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The pupils of:

Gosforth West Middle School

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Tyne and Wear

NE3 1DY

21 June 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We all enjoyed meeting you very much. You told and showed us many interesting and useful things about your education.

We think that your school is a good school, with some outstanding features. It no longer requires special measures, or any other kind of category. It is a good school.

We think that the teaching in your school is good. A third of what we saw was outstanding – that is a very high proportion. You're very lucky to have the teachers you do! They provide well planned lessons which have a good variety of activities to make sure that you enjoy what you are learning and can remember it and build on it. They have developed extremely good systems so that they know who needs help with what, when. Then they can provide specific work to help you move on quickly. They are also developing excellent ways of helping you assess your own and your friends' work.

You are all making good progress in your work.

We thought your behaviour was good, and we were impressed with how you support each other and celebrate everyone's successes, and more importantly, everyone's efforts. You told us that you feel safe in the school and know who to approach if you are worried. We think that the senior team – Mrs Thomas, Mr Sheppard and Mrs Rees – are outstanding leaders and managers – the best! And they are very well supported by other leaders and all the staff. Most of all, we were impressed by how well you have all, staff and pupils, worked together to improve the school. There is a real feeling of community and shared endeavour. You have literally transformed the school from one which had a number of difficulties into one which is not just satisfactory, but good and sometimes better than good. Doing that in such a short time is real credit to all of you, and you should be extremely proud. Your school is now out of special measures and we're confident it will carry on to be even better. The sky's the limit now!

There are two areas for improvement. One is to increase some specialist teacher time. The other is one you can help with. This is to improve your handwriting and spelling skills. Your understanding and descriptive English skills are now good, and it was a pleasure to read your writing. However, sometimes that is let down by mis-spellings of fairly easy words and poor handwriting. So we have said that now staff should focus on developing your handwriting and spelling skills. It won't be hard for you – given the high level of your other skills, it's a lot easier to do this! It will just take a bit of practice and application, and it will be well worth it.

Thank you again for the friendly and polite welcome you gave us. It was a pleasure to be in your school. Please accept our sincere congratulations on this absolutely excellent result, which is down to all of you as well as the staff. Well done!

With very best wishes

Andrea Lyons Moira Fitzpatrick John Paddick

Her Majesty's Inspector Additional Inspector Additional Inspector