

South Tynedale Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122327
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	301976
Inspection dates	15–16 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Hancock HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	259
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nancy Burnham
Headteacher	Mr Michael Routledge
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	Park Avenue Haltwhistle Northumberland NE49 9BA
Telephone number	01434 320491
Fax number	01434 320410

Age group	9–13
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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

South Tynedale has a large rural catchment area stretching from the Scottish borders to Cumbria. A significant number of children have long journeys to school. The school is subject to reorganisation proposals and a federation with the local first school is proposed to start in April this year. Levels of deprivation are average, although the incidence of rural deprivation is higher. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Attendance is above average and there are no students from minority ethnic groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

South Tynedale is a good and improving school. Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have successfully steered the school in the right direction and capacity to improve is good. For example, the school has significantly improved provision in information and communication technology (ICT) where outstanding achievement was seen.

All pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and the already above average results continue to improve. Achievement and standards are good overall. The school knows there is too much variation between results in all subjects with science and mathematics being stronger than English; it is taking effective action to address this.

The proportion of good teaching and learning is high and staff know individual students well. Behaviour is good and attendance is above average. The curriculum is good and the range of activities outside school time is a particular strength. Personal development is good and students are effectively guided and supported. Parents feel their children are safe, well cared for and enjoy learning.

Very strong leadership by the headteacher is making sure managers at all levels are being held to account. The quality of leadership, management and governance is good and self-evaluation is accurate. The school knows itself well and identifies the right areas for improvement. Resources and some poor accommodation are effectively deployed to give good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English to match pupils' performance in mathematics and science.
- Increase achievement and standards in all lower performing subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Standards when pupils start at the school are slightly below average. They make good progress and achieve above average results by the end of Year 8. A comment by one parent reflected the views of many others, 'my children have made a lot of progress and have been rewarded with certificates, house points and even a letter home.'

Since the last inspection, overall pupil performance has met and exceeded targets, and in 2007, results were well above the local authority average for middle schools. The best results are in science which are significantly above the national average, and mathematics which are above average. Not all pupils are making similar progress in English and the school is taking effective action to improve results.

Although never less than satisfactory, there is variation in achievement and standards across all the National Curriculum subjects. The school knows making sure results in all subjects match the performance of the best in the school is the key to further improvement.

The attainment of boys and girls is similar in the results although the school has identified a recent trend of girls doing better than boys. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made good progress including those with statements of special educational need. This is largely the result of dedicated support provided by specialist teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is above average. They say that if bullying occurs, it is dealt with effectively by staff. Spiritual, moral, and social development is good, cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' understanding of the many different cultures is not as well developed. The social maturity of pupils is a strength developed through their participation in a broad range of different group and team work activities.

Behaviour is good. Pupils behave in a very responsible manner in lessons and around the school. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award and recognises that not all pupils choose healthy eating options. Pupils value the wide range of opportunities provided for them to reflect on issues important to themselves and their community. They are enthusiastic about their roles as school leaders, taking responsibility for key areas such as ICT and helping others to become more involved in sporting activities. Students have the basic skills and personal qualities to support them well in their next stage of education and into the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The proportion of good teaching and learning is high and some is outstanding, for example in science and ICT. In lessons, teachers create a strong feeling of security for pupils who respond with confidence to challenging questions, give good support to each other and work hard to meet the lesson objectives that are set for them.

Teachers give clear explanations and use a variety of tasks to maintain interest. They have the ability to capture and hold pupils' attention and to promote their enjoyment. Teachers make effective use of ICT to enliven lessons and use praise in encouraging pupils to improve their work. Lessons are planned carefully to meet the needs of individuals and focus on what is needed to succeed so that pupils are quite clear on what they are being asked to do.

Target-setting for individual pupils is well advanced in mathematics, science, humanities and ICT, but in some subjects, not all feedback to pupils on how to improve is as effective as it might be. In a science lesson, pupils' practical work was especially well conducted, paying close attention to the importance of safe working methods. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for and make the same progress as their classmates, supported by well deployed teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and provides opportunities for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to make good progress. There is a good balance between subjects which support pupils' personal development and those which concentrate on their subject achievement.

A particular strength is the range of enrichment, extra-curricular and residential activities available to pupils through extensive links with local schools, the adjacent sports centre and

other external partners. The Basic Skills programme focuses on essential learning to ensure that all pupils possess the tools to make good progress.

The school's work in personal, social and health education and in citizenship education is well organised. It is flexible enough to meet the different needs of groups of pupils and to respond to local circumstances. All pupils have a good allocation of time for physical education, including swimming in the summer months in the local open air pool.

The use of ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection. Work seen was of a high standard and computers are used successfully to support learning in a number of subjects. Other links between subjects are being introduced, notably in history and geography.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is good. Teachers know their pupils very well and respond effectively to individual needs. Child protection procedures are in place, and staff have participated in comprehensive training.

Effective procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety are properly underpinned by risk assessments. Transition procedures prepare pupils well for moving to the school, and on to the high school. The school has an extensive range of links with the local authority, external agencies and families that it uses exceptionally well to promote the care of pupils and provide support for vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership is good and the school is well managed. The headteacher has a clear vision and high expectations for what he wants pupils and staff to achieve. Leadership at all levels has brought about improvement to date and staff know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. This is evident in the quality of the school's self-evaluation which rigorously and accurately identifies areas for improvement.

Parents are very supportive of the school and speak warmly of its openness. The chair and vice chair of governors know the school well and actively support and challenge it. They are able to manage resources well to ensure that the school gives good value for money, drawing on the experience of the other governors who have scrutinised particular aspects of the school's work. Governors and school staff work closely with other providers and organisations to enhance pupils' learning.

There are well-established systems for checking how well the school is performing and information gathered is used to set challenging targets. Senior leaders, governors and staff form an effective team who do all they can to make sure that pupils, whatever their starting points, make the best possible progress.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South Tynedale Middle School, Northumberland, NE49 9BA

Thank you for all your help when I inspected the school with my colleagues on 15 and 16 January. Please would you pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires and say we took all their views into account. I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school.

- South Tynedale is a good and improving school.
- The headteacher, managers and governors are successfully steering the school in the right direction.
- You make good progress and results are above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Personal development is good and you are well cared for.
- The curriculum is good and the range of activities outside school time is a particular strength.

Your teachers and the staff work very hard and want to make the school even better. To help them do this, I have asked if they could:

- Raise your standards in English so that they are as high as those for mathematics and science.
- Increase your progress and standards in the subjects where your performance is relatively low.

I wish you every success in all you do in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector