

Ovingham Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122341
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314271
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Prof Neville Harris
Headteacher	Mrs Ricky Williams
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Ovingham Prudhoe Northumberland NE42 6DE
Telephone number	01661 833215
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Age group	9–13
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ovingham Middle School is about the same size as other middle schools across the country. It is due to be part of the reorganisation of local middle schools into a two tier system in 2014. The school serves a mainly rural area of south Northumberland which is more socio-economically advantaged than is the case nationally. A below average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are of White British origin and very few have English as an additional language. Below average numbers of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has Investors in People status and a Sportsmark Gold Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ovingham Middle is a good school and the personal development of its pupils and the care guidance and support they receive are outstanding. The school has a very welcoming and friendly ethos and this is clearly an environment in which pupils really enjoy learning and feel safe and secure. Pupils' health, safety, happiness and well being are at the heart of the schools' work. The school takes great care of its pupils and gives them excellent personal support. Their progress is very carefully monitored and extra help is always available for those who need it. Pupils really enjoy taking responsibility and contributing to the community and show a great deal of care and respect for others. They work very well together and develop good skills which prepare them well for later life.

Parental responses to an inspection questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive. Their comments included, 'I was very impressed with the structured lessons and the high expectations set', and 'the school really has made a difference to the confidence and overall happiness of my children'. Parents and pupils are particularly appreciative of the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities which the school offers. Pupils speak very enthusiastically of activities which include sport, music and even the 'Doctor Who' club.

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Year 6 national test results have been above average for the last four years. Pupils achieve best in mathematics and science where standards are often well above average. Test results in English dipped in 2007, particularly in writing. The school has responded promptly to this and a range of strategies has been put in place to bring about improvements in pupils' writing. The impact of these is now clearly seen in lessons where pupils are achieving well and most are on track to meet their challenging targets in English.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use a variety of interesting resources to stimulate their interest. Children respond well to the good teaching they receive. They work hard and take real pride in what they are doing. There are examples of good marking of pupils' written work, where detailed, constructive feedback is given. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school.

Good leadership and management enable pupils to achieve well. The headteacher provides strong leadership. She is well supported by governors and a talented senior leadership team. Together they have established a clear sense of direction for the school which is firmly focused on raising standards further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in pupils' writing in order to improve test results in English.
- Ensure that teachers' marking consistently gives useful guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Pupils enter the school half way through Key Stage 2 and leave before the end of Key Stage 3. Therefore the results of national tests which are taken at the end of each Key Stage have to be interpreted with care. Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with above average standards. They make good progress in Key Stage

2 and in national tests at the end of Year 6 reach above average standards. In 2007 pupils achieved best in mathematics and science and least well in English where challenging targets were not met. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 3 and results of school tests indicate that in 2006 Year 8 pupils reached standards which were well above those expected for their age. In 2007 school test results were lower in English but given pupils' capabilities and starting points their achievement overall remained good. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally well. Pupils achieve particularly well in mathematics, science and physical education.

The school is very keen to raise standards in pupils' writing and improve results in tests in English to match those gained in mathematics and science. A range of strategies have been put in place to bring this about and the impact of these was evident in many of the lessons seen. Current pupils were seen achieving well in lessons and detailed school tracking data indicates that they are making good progress and are on track to meet challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding and make a very positive contribution to their good achievement. Pupils really enjoy school and their attendance is good. Those spoken to showed delightful and extremely positive attitudes to their work. Their behaviour is exemplary and excellent relationships pervade the whole school. Pupils feel very safe in school because they say there is an absence of bullying, and, if it did happen, staff would deal with it swiftly and effectively. Pupils are very well trained as peer mentors and through this gain a good understanding of how to take responsibility for themselves and their friends. Pupils appoint their own house captains and sports leaders; those appointed are proud and willingly represent their peers. The school seeks, and listens to pupils' views through the representative school council. Pupils enjoy contributing to their community by taking part in a wealth of fund raising activities. The school has a strong focus on pupils successfully acquiring information and communication technology (ICT) skills as effective preparation for the next stage of their education and for later life. The school provides very good physical activities for all. This, and the teaching of an awareness of the need for a well balanced diet, contribute very well to pupils' development of a healthy lifestyle. In lessons very good consideration is given to social and moral issues associated with the misuse of drugs and how to look after the environment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and enable pupils to achieve well. Some teaching is outstanding. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Pupils discuss and share ideas in a very mature way when working in pairs and groups. Many teachers use a variety of teaching methods and make good use of ICT to display interesting resources which capture pupils' interest. Teachers plan lessons carefully and share the lesson objectives with pupils so they are clear about what they should be learning. Pupils' learning is checked regularly during the lesson so those who need it can be given extra help. Teachers and teaching assistants give constructive individual help to pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so all achieve well. Most lessons are challenging

and conducted at a good pace. Evidence of the school's focus on raising literacy standards was seen in lessons in both mathematics and science where pupils were given good opportunities for extended writing and careful attention was paid to the spelling of technical vocabulary. In a minority of lessons teachers have lower expectations of their pupils, activities are not as varied and interesting and the pace of learning slows down.

Marking of pupils' written work is satisfactory overall. Some work is marked very thoroughly and pupils are given detailed feedback on how well they are doing and how to improve their work but this good practice is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and provides opportunities for all pupils to make good progress, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a good balance between subjects on the timetable with excellent enrichment through activities such as enterprise days and residential visits. A particular strength is the outstanding range and extent of extra-curricular clubs and activities available to pupils in music, sport, science and the arts. One pupil spoke very enthusiastically about the skills he had learnt at cookery club and recited a list of the mouth watering dishes he had cooked. 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. Pupils have a good allocation of time for physical education. All of this contributes well to pupils' enjoyment, health and well-being. Pupils' basic skills in numeracy and ICT are developed well. Pupils' literacy skills are improving as a result of the schools current focus on this area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. All staff give the welfare of pupils a very high priority and pupils feel very well supported by the trusting relationships they have with all adults. The extremely caring ethos of the school ensures that all pupils are very happy and feel secure. This enables them to learn effectively and make good progress.

Pupils are given wide and varied opportunities to take part in sporting activities and to choose food from the well balanced school lunch menus. Child protection procedures are very well established and understood by all staff who have benefited from regular training. Rigorous and very detailed risk assessment, for activities both on and off the school premises, demonstrates a very strong commitment to pupils' safety. Safeguarding requirements are in place. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or require help with a particular problem are very well supported by all staff. The school sets all learners challenging targets and has very effective procedures to monitor and guide their progress towards them. Good links with other schools sensitively ease pupils' transition between the various stages of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and are leading to pupils achieving well and their personal development being outstanding. Senior leaders feel valued and good quality professional

development ensures that their talents are being nurtured and their role developed further. Leaders and managers monitor the work of the school carefully and a regular cycle of self-evaluation and planning ensures they have an accurate view of the schools' strengths and weaknesses. For example, when test results dipped in English, an extensive range of strategies were put in place to raise standards. These include high quality staff training, booster classes in literacy, very close monitoring of pupils' progress and the provision of additional support for those pupils who need it. The impact of these strategies is now seen in the good progress pupils are making towards achieving challenging targets and in the quality of their written work.

Governance is good. Governors know the school well and provide good support for the headteacher. Finances are carefully managed and resources have been used well to provide, for example, an attractive and welcoming school reception area. The school provides good value for money. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Weaknesses in the provision of French and citizenship have been addressed successfully and the school is well placed to improve further.

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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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

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

8 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ovingham Middle School, Northumberland, NE42 6DE

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school last week. We were particularly impressed with your exemplary behaviour and the enthusiasm with which you talked about your school.

Your school provides you with a good education.

These are some of the many good things we found out about your school:

- You reach above average standards and achieve well.
- The care, guidance and support your school gives you is outstanding.
- Your personal development and the mature way you behave is outstanding.
- Your school is well led and managed.
- You are well taught. Lessons are interesting and varied so you enjoy learning.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

- Raise standards in pupils' writing in order to improve test results in English;
- Ensure that teachers' marking of your work always gives you useful guidance on how to improve your work.

You can help your school to improve even further by working with your teachers to do the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Ann Wallis

Lead inspector