

Tweedmouth Community Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122348
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314274
Inspection dates	11–12 June 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	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Stanbury
Headteacher	Mr Chris Durie
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2005
School address	Billendean Terrace Spittal Berwick-upon-Tweed Northumberland TD15 2DJ
Telephone number	01289 307480
Fax number	01289 305543

Age group	9-13
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Tweedmouth Middle is of average size. Pupils are aged 9 to 13 and most come from the Tweedmouth and Spittal areas of the town of Berwick. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for a free school meal. Most pupils are of White British origin and very few have English as an additional language. Average numbers of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities although an above average proportion has a statement of special educational need. The school has Investors in People status and a Sportsmark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Tweedmouth Middle is a good school where pupils achieve well. The school takes great care of all its pupils and promotes their personal development well. Pupils' happiness, safety, health and well-being are at the heart of its work. Pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility and develop skills which help prepare them well for later life. The school has an excellent link with a neighbouring special school and all pupils in Year 8 have the opportunity to work alongside children with, often severe, learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This experience both increases their awareness of the needs of others and develops their self confidence well. Both pupils and parents are very positive about the education the school provides. Parental responses to an inspection questionnaire included such comments as, 'The care and support provided for my daughter have been exemplary.' and 'The school is excellent at giving pupils a very varied curriculum supplemented by lots of visits and trips.'

Although attainment on entry to Year 5 fluctuates pupils most often enter the school with below average standards. They make good progress as they move through the school to reach average standards when they leave at the end of Year 8. In national tests taken at the end of Year 6 pupils have achieved best in mathematics and science and least well in English for the last three years. Few pupils have reached the higher levels in English. The school has recognised this weakness in English and taken effective action to raise standards which are now beginning to have an impact. The school's own data, results of practice tests and the work seen in pupils' books all indicate that standards in English are rising and most pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets this year. The school library has been completely restocked and now contains more relevant, interesting and challenging texts which have stimulated pupils' enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of, reading.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. In most lessons teaching is knowledgeable and lively and well planned activities engage pupils' interest. Relationships are good and pupils behave well and are keen to learn. The assessment of pupils' work and the monitoring of their progress are not yet consistent across the school so not all pupils are always clear about how to improve their work. Pupils follow a stimulating curriculum which meets their needs well. They are very appreciative of the wide range of visits, sports clubs and other enrichment activities which the school provides.

Leadership and management are good and are promoting good achievement and personal development for all pupils. Following a period when there have been frequent changes of leadership, the new headteacher has brought stability to the school and raised morale. Accurate self-evaluation of the school's work is taking place, areas of inconsistent practice are being identified and this is leading to improvement. For example, a whole-school approach, which builds on existing good practice, is beginning to improve the rigour and consistency with which pupils' work is assessed and their progress monitored.

Inspection report: Tweedmouth Community Middle School, 11–12 June 2008 7 of 11 Document reference number: HMI 250701 September 2007
Inspection report: Tweedmouth Community Middle School, 11–12 June 2008 5 of 11 Document reference number: HMI 250701 September 2007

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, particularly the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels.

- Implement more consistent approaches to assessing pupils' work and monitoring their progress in order to give them more explicit guidance about how to improve their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are 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.

Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 5 fluctuates but is usually below average. 2007 Key Stage 2 test results show that pupils reached average standards and achieved well from their below average starting points. School targets were met. Less able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved particularly well. Pupils achieved best in mathematics and science but less well in English where few pupils achieved the higher levels.

In Key Stage 3, pupils continue to make good progress. School test data indicates that in 2007 whilst Year 8 pupils reached broadly average standards overall results were considerably higher in mathematics than in English. The school has recognised that pupils' achievement, is not as good in English as it might be, particularly of more able pupils. Appropriate action has been taken to address this weakness. Standards are beginning to rise because monitoring of pupils' progress is becoming more robust and the texts they study are more relevant and challenging particularly for more able pupils. Pupils currently in school were seen making good progress in lessons. School data and work seen in books also indicates that pupils are making good progress and are on track to meet their targets in English and exceed them in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils is good. Pupils' say that they like the school and that they feel safe and secure. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Their good attendance is testament to their high levels of enjoyment as is their eagerness to take on roles such as house and form captains. The number and regularity of fixed term exclusions is low and the trend is declining due to effective improvements in the management of behaviour across the school.

Pupils are encouraged to eat and drink healthily, to adopt healthy lifestyles and to contribute well to the community. A number of Year 8 pupils have been trained as Young Sports Leaders and they enjoy supporting younger pupils in a range of healthy activities. The school council is very active and has helped to devise an improved system of advanced meal planning in the dining hall which has been welcomed by other pupils. These experiences help to prepare them well for their future lives.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. A high level of spirituality was created by the haunting music playing in the hall as Year 7 and 8 pupils entered for an assembly. The moral and social message from a local minister of 'YOU can make a difference' was well received by pupils who responded very well to a number of challenging questions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and consequently, pupils make good progress. Lessons are typically well planned and conducted at a brisk pace so pupils achieve well. Relationships are good. Teachers manage their classes well and make good use of praise and rewards so that most pupils enjoy learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language make good progress because they receive constructive individual help from specialist staff and teaching assistants. In the very best lessons activities are so varied and interesting that all pupils are engrossed in their work and make rapid progress. In a very few lessons the pace of learning is slower because activities are not as well matched to the needs of all pupils. Sometimes tasks set are too long and not sufficiently challenging for all pupils so their interest wanes. In some subjects and year groups there are examples of good marking and assessment of pupils work. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school so not all pupils are clear about how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Pupils benefit from a wide and balanced range of activities in all subjects, enriched by visiting speakers. Extensive and popular extra-curricular activities, and opportunities at a residential outdoor activities centre where pupils say 'we set challenges so that we can test ourselves', help develop team-building skills, and add to pupils' personal, physical and social development. Other aspects of personal and social education are well taught through a recognised programme, and are further enhanced through a partnership with first and high schools where pupils voice their ideas and concerns to a wider audience. The school successfully develops pupils' awareness of their own and the wider community through an established link with a school in Uganda, a neighbouring special school and through local studies which strengthen pupils' knowledge of their community and its history. Pupils' numeracy and information and communication technology skills are developed well. The school is implementing schemes and ideas from the new National Curriculum to improve provision in English and this is beginning to have a positive impact on improving pupils' literacy skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good with outstanding features. The school has a very wide spectrum of pupils from differing backgrounds and provides an excellent quality of pastoral and emotional support to vulnerable pupils and those with low self-esteem. All teaching and support staff provide an exceptionally high level of dedicated care and welfare support to all pupils in the school including a few with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's arrangements for the vetting of staff meet with the latest national guidelines and accident and medical administration systems are robust. Assessment is effectively used to guide and support pupils. They are aware of targets for improvement on classroom walls and in exercise books. However, there is some inconsistency in the monitoring of pupils' progress and in the use of marking to focus pupils' attention on what steps they need to take to improve further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The impact of the good leadership of the recently appointed headteacher is already seen in close monitoring of teaching and learning, accurate self-evaluation and clearly identified priorities for development. Middle and senior managers support the headteacher well. The roles of talented subject leaders are developing as they become more involved in strategic planning and more accountable for the work of their areas. This is helping to drive up standards and increase pupils' enjoyment of learning, particularly in English. A whole school approach, which builds on existing good practice, is beginning to improve the rigour and consistency with which pupils' work is assessed and their progress monitored.

Governance is good. Governors are well informed, supportive and closely involved in the work of the school. Finances are well managed, the school makes the best use of its ageing, but well maintained, accommodation and provides good value for money.

The school has successfully addressed issues from the previous inspection. Standards are rising and new leadership is harnessing the skills of all staff. Hence 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	3
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

13 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Tweedmouth Community Middle School, Northumberland,
TD15 2DJ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school last week. We were particularly appreciative of the honest way in which you talked with us and gave us your views about Tweedmouth Middle school.

This is what we have said in our report.

- Yours is a good school where you achieve well.
- Your behaviour is good and you are keen to learn.
- You are very well cared for and receive good guidance from all staff in your school.
- Teaching and learning and the curriculum you study are good.
- Your school is well led and managed.

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

- Improve standards in English particularly the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels.
- Make sure you are always clear about how well you are doing and how to improve your work.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Wallis

Lead inspector