

# Gosforth Central Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108519
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	324788
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Johnson HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	504
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Christine Willoughby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lorna Anderson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Great North Road Gosforth Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE3 1UN
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 2851793
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 2552123

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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

Gosforth Central Middle School is situated to the north of Newcastle city centre. It is larger than most middle schools. Most pupils are of White British origin, although a growing number come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is above the national average. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds although the proportion eligible for free school meals is lower than in most schools. The school is one of three middle schools serving an area of Newcastle in which a high proportion of pupils live in privately owned homes. A fifth of pupils come from the wider area, and the school is oversubscribed. Most pupils enter the school from three first schools. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school occupies new purpose-built accommodation. The school holds the Healthy Schools award and the 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

Gosforth Central Middle School is a good school where pupils make outstanding gains in their personal development. Almost all pupils make good academic progress and reach high standards. The school successfully ensures that pupils are very well cared for and provided with excellent support and guidance to meet their needs. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English are given excellent support and this means they make good progress.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is reflected by the awareness and consideration which they show to one another and adults. Pupils gain a good understanding of the diverse cultures represented in Britain. They participate in many visits both home and abroad. Visitors from different backgrounds are welcomed and pupils take part in carefully planned assemblies and cultural activities. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme has a real impact on pupils understanding of the wider world. The Africa week, taking place at the time of the inspection, was excellent in many respects; it drew together teachers in sharing good practice, expanded curriculum links and enabled children from different groups to work well together.

The vast majority of pupils are very keen to learn and enjoy school. They feel very safe because bullying is so rare and staff know them so well. The good curriculum is well tailored to meet their needs and interests. Behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school and attendance is above average. The new building provides an excellent environment which is conducive to learning.

Almost all lessons are good and teachers are very conscientious. Systems to track pupil progress have improved since the last inspection and are now used consistently by staff. This information is shared with parents through reports and parents evenings. Almost all parents feel that their children are making good progress in lessons. Pupils would benefit if the very good practice in mentoring and support in Year 6 and 8 were spread more widely throughout the school. Pupils' work is generally well marked although this could be done more consistently to ensure that pupils are always given a clear idea of what they need to do to improve.

The day-to-day management of the school is very good and staff at all levels contribute to this. In the last three years there have been significant changes to the governing body and senior staff. Leaders have successfully developed a shared sense of direction and have accurately identified strengths and areas for development. New governors are very keen to support the school in any way they can and they are ably assisted by more established members of the board. However, at the moment they are not in a position to fully monitor the impact of some key policies and procedures.

All leaders recognise the school's next steps should be to confidently move forward and plan to ensure all aspects of its work are outstanding. Plans are in place to achieve this; however, they are not always linked to measurable targets or fully linked to self-evaluation. The school has improved since its last inspection and has a good capacity to develop even further. It gives good value for money because pupils' achievement is good, their personal development is excellent and they are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the self-evaluation process is more closely linked to plans for improvement.

- Expand the use of mentoring and support for under-performing groups to ensure that all pupils reach or exceed their targets.
- Enhance governor's ability to hold leaders to account and to measure the impact of school policies.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

When pupils join the school in Year 5 most have above average levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make steady progress in the core subjects in Year 5 and 6 and when they take national tests at the end of Year 6, the vast majority attain standards that are above average; although there has been a slightly declining trend in recent years.

Generally pupils attain higher standards in reading than in writing; the school is aware of this and has put in place effective measures for improvement. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls has closed in recent years, particularly in English. The school identified that a small proportion of pupils whose prior attainment was below that expected on entry to the school are not making up ground sufficiently quickly. Recently it has put in place a range of measures that have resulted in improved test scores for this group.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are set personalised learning targets and make good progress. Pupils with high prior attainment are set challenging targets which they usually meet or exceed. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve well. The school's accurate assessment system shows that attainment at the end of Year 8 is well above average in most subjects and overall progress is good. This ensures that when pupils leave the school they are in a good position to thrive at High School.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They are very keen to learn. Pupils behave in a mature and responsible way in lessons and cooperate well with each other and staff. Pupils feel very safe in school and almost all parents believe that their children are safe and very well cared for by the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their high levels of attendance. Through their school council pupils express their views and make decisions about the day-to-day running of the school. For instance they decided it would be a good idea to develop themed days in which the dinner menu reflected food from specific countries or continents. The high take-up of healthy school lunches reflects how much pupils and their parents value them and understand the importance of a healthy diet. Almost all pupils enjoy participation in sports activities. The roles of house captain or school council members are highly sought after and provide opportunities for pupils to accept responsibilities and participate in democratic activities.

Pupils make a good contribution to the wider community through sports and musical activities, fundraising and enterprise activities. However, this has not yet been extended to give pupils an insight into how decision making takes place in the local community. Pupils develop good workplace and other skills, for example during the inspection week, pupils developed excellent listening, team working skills and as one pupil commented 'great patience' through their themed work.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers plan lessons well to provide a variety of enjoyable and challenging activities that result in good progress. Teachers create a positive working environment and as a result most pupils make good progress. Students with learning difficulties and or disabilities are well supported in lessons by their teachers and support assistants and make good progress.

In the best lessons information technology is used to stimulate and motivate pupils and enhance the quality of learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and often use open ended questions to consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding. On occasions however, teachers can spend too much time on the introductory part of the lesson and pupils can lose a little interest and concentration.

Although most pupils make good progress in lessons the school identified a few who were not doing as well as they should. They introduced a programme of 'assertive mentoring' which has enhanced the progress of pupils in some subjects in Year 6 and 8. The exercise books examined by inspectors suggested that the school policy on marking is not applied consistently enough. The school plans to develop its work with parents to enable them to support their children's learning more effectively.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs and interests of the learners well; it is relevant and accessible to all. Pupils say they enjoy the interesting range of subjects they study. The school is working hard to develop more links between individual subjects so that core skills can be improved in all lessons. A key strength of the curriculum is the high rate of participation by most pupils in the extra-curricular activities at lunchtimes and after school. However, the school needs to develop their tracking systems to monitor the participation of different groups of learners in these activities.

Good links with partner schools allow pupils to benefit from specialist teaching and resources. For example high school staff teach German, French and Italian in extra sessions before the start of the school day. Good progress in literacy and numeracy together with opportunities to develop enterprise skills prepare pupils well for their future economic well-being.

Each subject area was linked through the theme of Africa. Pupils experienced such diverse activities as African gum boot dancing, story-telling, drumming, singing and cooking African style meals. The school is extending its use of computer-based learning programmes and pupils took part in a very successful video conference with a Masai tribesman. The school recognises that they need to further develop cross curricular links more frequently to give pupils and teachers better opportunities to be creative and share ideas.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. Staff are very committed to the welfare of every pupil. Pastoral support is very strong and underpinned by the inclusive ethos of the school. Staff have a detailed understanding of the needs of many individual pupils

especially the most vulnerable. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well supported and almost all parents comment positively on this. Support workers are very effective in the sensitive support they give to pupils in classes to ensure they are included and make good progress. Pupils have caring attitudes and support each other.

The pupil to pupil mentoring scheme is appreciated and well used. Behaviour is generally excellent and exclusions are rare. The school maintains excellent links with outside agencies to support pupils with more complex needs. Strategies and systems for monitoring and improving pupils' attendance and behaviour are effective and support pupils' outstanding personal development. The school works very effectively with first schools and high schools to ease transition to and from the middle school. Gifted and talented pupils are well supported to achieve high levels of attainment. Government requirements to safeguard students and all necessary child protection and health and safety procedures are in place.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. An effective and cohesive team has been forged that shares the school's values of putting children first. Several areas of work have improved including the care, guidance and support given to children which results in their outstanding personal development and well-being.

The system to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development is accurate and inspectors agreed with many of the judgements made by senior managers on the quality of the school's work. However, self evaluation does not always lead to sufficiently well-developed plans for improvement. The system to observe teaching and learning provides accurate information about the quality of lessons and areas of strength and weakness. The school recognises that it needs to expand sharing of good practice amongst teachers and the recent use of team teaching has had a significant positive impact on this.

The school's response to the promotion of community cohesion is good and the promotion of equality of opportunity is excellent, although more could be done to monitor the impact of policies on these aspects of the school's work. The new building provides excellent and well-designed accommodation and initial problems have been successfully ironed out. Resources for learning are very good, including those for information and communication technology and the well thought out library. The school runs smoothly and its administration and financial management are strong.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	3
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gosforth Central Middle School, Newcastle upon Tyne,

NE3 1UN

Thank you for making the inspection team feel so welcome this week when we visited your school. Particular thanks go to the pupils who took time to talk to us and tell us about the good progress you are making and how much you enjoy coming to school. Please also pass on our thanks to your parents who returned the questionnaires in such large numbers.

These are the main findings included in our report.

- Gosforth Central Middle school is a good school with some outstanding features.
- The progress you make in your personal development is outstanding because of the excellent care, guidance and support you receive.
- You reach high standards and make good progress because of the good teaching you receive.
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and her senior team.
- You have a broad and well balanced curriculum that meets your needs and interests well.

We have asked the school to work on the following things.

- Improve the way it looks back on planned changes and then links them more effectively to future developments.
- Help governors develop an even better understanding of the effectiveness of the school.
- Increase the additional teaching and support given to pupils who occasionally fall behind in their work.

We are sure that the school will quickly get on with these tasks and is going in the right direction.

Wishing you all the best for your future

Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector