

Morpeth Newminster Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122346
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327706
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2009
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 (total)	547
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Juliet Oakley
Headteacher	Mr Paul Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
School address	Mitford Road Morpeth Northumberland NE61 1RH
Telephone number	01670 513621
Fax number	01670 513548

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

Newminster Middle School is located in a rural market town. Nearly all pupils have English as their first language and there are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and there are fewer pupils with a statement of special educational need than usually found.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Newminster is a good and improving school with outstanding features. Pupils' personal development and the curriculum were judged to be good at the time of the last inspection three years ago and are now outstanding. Capacity to improve is good and the school's evaluation of its overall effectiveness is accurate.

Achievement is good and standards are above and often well above average. Challenging targets are frequently met by the time pupils leave the school. All pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress overall. The school is aware progress in Year 5 when pupils start at the school is not as rapid. Test results at Key Stage 2 in 2008 were above average in mathematics and science and close to average in English. School predictions for 2009 indicate the results show a significant improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It has improved and the proportion of outstanding teaching is steadily rising. Inspection evidence confirms the school's own view that further improvement in the quality and consistency of marking and feedback on how pupils can improve their work is central to raising achievement even more. Care, guidance and support are good and contribute well to pupils' enjoyment, safety, and well-being.

Parents and carers are complimentary about the outstanding personal development and behaviour of the pupils. Attendance is good and extra activities meet the needs and interests of pupils exceptionally well. Pupils' make an outstanding contribution to community cohesion, for example helping many local residents following severe flooding in 2008.

Leadership, management, and governance are good. Strong and effective leadership by the headteacher and senior leaders ensures the school is moving forward in the right direction. Resources and staff are effectively deployed to achieve good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of progress in Year 5 to match that found in the higher years.
- Ensure the quality of marking and feedback on how pupils can improve their work is consistently high.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils start at the school with above average levels of attainment. The school sets itself challenging targets which are frequently met by the end of Year 8. Pupils make good progress and attainment is above and often well above average by the time they leave. There is no difference in the progress made by boys and girls. Results in national tests at Key Stage 2 in 2008 are not as good as the previous year but remain above average overall. Pupils make good progress from the age of 9 to 13 although progress is slower in the first year. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is outstanding because the school has an excellent approach to ensuring pupils are respected and valued. The programme for developing the social and emotional aspects

of pupils' learning has a profound effect. As a result, pupils show a sensitive awareness of others and their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are very well supported by the school's positive ethos.

Assemblies are reflective and respectful occasions. Pupils' infectious enthusiasm for school is shown in the animated way they talk about lessons, trips and activities. They also value the opportunity to make contributions, for example a Year 6 pupil said 'Student Voice gives pupils a chance to say what they think about the school'. Pupils offer valuable perspectives on the school's teaching and curriculum.

In lessons, pupils are keen to please and attitudes to work are excellent. Pupils are well aware of safety in the school. They report that bullying is very rare, and action to deal with it is quick. Their understanding of healthy lifestyles is excellent and the importance of fitness and exercise is fully recognised. Participation in sports activities is high, as shown by the sports day and swimming galas. Pupils are proud of the contribution they make both to the school and to the wider community. Highly effective teamwork and responsible attitudes mean that pupils are very well prepared for their future beyond school. Attendance in the last year is good and would be even better except for high absence caused by a virus and local floods.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress due to good and a significant proportion of outstanding teaching. Subject knowledge is secure and attitudes to learning are excellent. There is a strong sense of mutual trust between pupils and their teachers. The needs of pupils of different abilities within a class are almost always referred to in planning documents, and activities in lessons are generally well matched to their needs. Occasionally work for the most able pupils is not always sufficiently well matched and this impacts on the extent and pace of progress.

Teaching is most effective when assessment data is used to plan carefully for all abilities. Less successful teaching results in lessons where the pace is slower and pupils do not make the progress they should. Verbal feedback to pupils is generally well judged and sensitively communicated. Marking and written feedback does not always provide sufficient high quality guidance for pupils on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum promotes outstanding personal development. Opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility and support other pupils are excellent. Pupils enjoy and achieve in their work as a result of the outstanding curriculum. All statutory requirements are met and many pupils benefit from an excellent range of enrichment activities which include visits, visitors and an extensive range of after-school clubs which are very well attended.

The school goes to exceptional lengths to involve all pupils in the curriculum. Pupils with learning difficulties are very well supported and master classes are provided for the gifted and talented. There are excellent links with local first and high schools. Skills in independent learning, enterprise and information and communication technology (ICT) are very well developed through activities such as the 'deep learning experience' which prepare pupils very effectively for their future working lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for all of its pupils. Nearly all parents say the school provides a caring and supportive environment in which the many extra-curricular activities enhance learning and self-confidence. Pupils who find learning difficult receive good support, for example in extra classes which help them to match the good progress of other pupils. Transition arrangements from local first schools and the high school are managed very well and help pupils to settle in quickly to their new surroundings.

Systems to ensure pupils are safe and secure are effective and child protection procedures are in place. Pupils are confident that they have an adult to turn to should they have problems. The school is taking the right action to improve monitoring, the tracking of pupils' progress and intervention to help pupils who are falling behind.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management by the headteacher and the senior team are strong and effective. Senior leaders provide a clear vision for the school and capacity to improve is good. Evaluation procedures are effectively focused on raising standards, for example a very thorough analysis of the dip in the 2008 test results was carried out and the school predicts the 2009 results will show a significant improvement.

Challenging targets are being used well to raise achievement, although middle leaders need to have a more secure knowledge of data and take a stronger lead in using it to raise attainment and respond to individual needs. The extent to which all subjects analyse pupils' progress and achievement is insufficiently consistent to be highly effective. Equality of opportunity for different groups of pupils is an outstanding feature and promoted exceptionally well. The contribution of the school to community cohesion is another outstanding feature and pupils' knowledge of other national and international communities is excellent.

Governors provide good support and challenge. They are very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Links with other providers and services are exceptionally good and the vast majority of parents are highly supportive of the school. Resources are well used and the school provides good value for money.

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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 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newminster Middle School, Northumberland, NE61 1RH

Thank you for all your help when I inspected the school with my colleagues. 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.

- Newminster is a good and improving school with outstanding features.
- You achieve well, make good progress and standards are above and often well above average by the time you leave.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and the proportion of outstanding teaching is steadily rising.
- Your personal development and the curriculum are outstanding features.