

Corbridge Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122326
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340126
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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 of pupils on the school roll	346
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Latham
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Henderson
Date of previous school inspection	0 January 2007
School address	Cow Lane Corbridge Northumberland NE45 5HX
Telephone number	01434 632191
Fax number	01434 633735
Email address	Margaret.Henderson@northumberland.gov.uk

Age group	9–13
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2009
Inspection number	340126

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 22 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and analysed 149 questionnaire responses from parents, 98 questionnaire responses from pupils and 11 questionnaire responses from staff. The team also looked at the data the school had collected about the pupils' progress, and at the school's records of their monitoring of the quality of teaching.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Attainment and progress in 2009, with particular respect to mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- The pupils' understanding and skills to equip them for the world of work.
- How the school uses assessment to involve pupils effectively in their own learning.
- The effectiveness of the school's monitoring and evaluation, particularly of areas that were less strong such as attainment in mathematics.

Information about the school

Corbridge is an average sized, middle school for pupils aged 9 to 13. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is lower than average. This includes a group of pupils who have moderate learning needs. An above average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils entering and leaving the school throughout the year is very low. The school is a specialist performing arts school and has many awards, including Artsmark Gold 2009 and the Eco Schools Silver award 2009 for promotion and development of sustainability throughout the school. The school has gone through a period of instability in staffing, but this is now becoming resolved.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Corbridge Middle school provides a good education for its pupils in the widest sense. Its performing arts status has a positive impact on the pupils' personal development and its strong focus on outdoor and sporting activities results in the pupils having an excellent understanding of what it means to have a healthy lifestyle. Parents and pupils are very enthusiastic about the range of activities on offer. The views of many parents are summed up in the comment, 'We feel that Corbridge Middle school offers a fantastic range of extra-curricular activities and these, whether sport, music or art, have added to the enjoyment my child has at school and have helped her with her overall confidence.' Teaching is good, and the pupils achieve well, particularly in science, design technology, physical education, art and music. Relationships in lessons are positive and pupils are eager to answer questions and to participate. In most lessons they are fully involved in assessing their own learning. Their progress slows in a few lessons when teachers do not plan work that is sufficiently challenging or matches the needs of all groups of learners. The school tracks the progress of pupils. However, the monitoring and evaluation of this is not rigorous or frequent enough at present and this limits the rate at which improvements in progress are made. There is, however, particularly good practice in science which contributes to the excellent progress seen there. There are good examples of effective intervention and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and this enables them to make good progress. The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also good. The curriculum has good links between subjects and is supported very well by many visits and visitors. The school's provision for care, guidance and support is good, and this is reported by many parents who returned questionnaires. Pupils have good spiritual, moral and social development. They enjoy the responsibility of being mentors to younger pupils and sports leaders. The school has forged valuable links with the local community and the pupils particularly enjoy playing and singing in the village square during Christmas shopping evenings. The school has analysed all three strands of community cohesion and has identified that the national and international aspects need strengthening. It has not yet set and evaluated clear targets in this area. Pupils' cultural development is not quite as strong, as the school has yet to fully establish links with schools that reflect different social, economic and ethnic mixes.

The school has made improvements in many areas since the previous inspection. This is illustrated in the quality of teaching, in obtaining specialist status, in ensuring that pupils have a good understanding of the world at work and in the use of assessment to involve pupils in their own learning. The decline in standards and progress at the end of Year 6 has been reversed and attainment is now above average in all subjects, including

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

mathematics. The headteacher and senior leaders have worked hard to overcome instability in staffing and subject leaders have been given increased responsibility for their areas. The school knows its strengths and areas for development well, but it recognises the need to monitor and evaluate its actions more rigorously to bring about and communicate improvements more quickly. Challenging targets in many areas have been met or exceeded, including those in the school's specialist subjects. This, taken together with the other improvements, indicates a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To ensure that improvements occur more quickly, the school should:
 - analyse and evaluate pupils' progress more than once a year in order to identify underachievement and to intervene early
 - monitor the match of work to pupils' needs in all lessons on a regular basis
 - evaluate the strategies it has in place to bring about improvements so as to communicate the results more clearly to staff, parents and governors.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures, reflecting the ethnic diversity that exists nationally and internationally and:
 - evaluate systematically its targets for promoting community cohesion to gauge its success more effectively in this area of work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Most lessons are well organised so that pupils learn and make good and sometimes outstanding progress. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson, clear steps to success and practical activities helped all pupils to consolidate their learning and make excellent progress. However, some lessons are not as sharply focused on learning as others with too little time given to checking what has been learned. Pupils behave well and they contribute enthusiastically in discussions. They concentrate well on the tasks their teachers set them. As a result, current progress and learning are good.

The decline in results of national tests at the end of Year 6 which began in 2007 has been reversed in 2009, so that attainment is now above average in all subjects. This includes mathematics, where the fall had been the sharpest. Attainment at the end of Year 8 has been consistently above average for the past five years, with attainment in science being high. From securely average starting points when they enter the school, pupils are making good progress and show good achievement. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well.

This is helped by good focused support through initiatives such as reading and writing intervention which help small groups and individual pupils who fall behind to make up lost ground. There is no significant variation in the progress and learning of different groups of pupils in lessons.

The school takes appropriate steps to tackle absence such that attendance has improved and is now above average. In discussions, pupils were very clear about how to stay safe

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

and showed an excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy diet. They greatly enjoy the many opportunities they have to take part in sporting activities, including being sports leaders. Both the Year 5 and Year 8 pupils stressed the importance of the pupil mentoring system.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good quality teaching typically maintains high levels of challenge in lessons and caters well for the pupils' differing needs, including those who are more able or particularly gifted or talented. Teachers maintain the interest of the pupils through innovative activities and good pace. In one mathematics lesson, pupils responded enthusiastically to the teacher's comment, 'I want to see steam coming off these pencils'. Good use is made of talking to partners, followed by whole-class discussion to generate ideas as a precursor to independent work. Thorough assessment is evident in nearly all lessons. Teachers' marking is usually clear and helpful; pupils know the targets they are aiming for and how they can improve their work. In lessons where learning is less secure, teachers talk too much from the front of the class, giving pupils less opportunity to be

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

involved in their own learning.

Since the last inspection, staff have been developing creative links between different subjects in the curriculum. This has been a success and events such as the whole day 'Duck Project' are popular with pupils, as are the clubs, visits and other initiatives and events. The pupils' personal qualities are being developed well through a wide range of interesting activities which they appreciate and enjoy, such as gaining self-confidence by taking part and winning a national science competition and attending residential visits to Ford Castle and Derwent Hill outdoor centre. While there is some good use of information and communication technology to support learning, this is not as extensive or developed as it might be.

The school is rightly proud of the way it helps pupils who are vulnerable. Staff organise a wide range of successful extra programmes and activities. They can point to significant successes in helping pupils overcome difficult periods through work within school and through partnership with specialists. Transition arrangements, to ease the move of younger pupils, often from small village schools, are good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Progress and learning are improving because of the drive to raise attainment. Although there have been many changes of staff in the recent past that have interrupted progress, the determination to improve is secure. Monitoring of lessons is accurate and weaker teaching has been tackled in the ambition to make all lessons good or better. This has been largely successful and as a result, all groups of pupils make equally good progress, reflecting good equality of opportunity for all pupils. The appointment of some new subject leaders has strengthened middle leadership, resulting in recent improvement of progress. A system for tracking pupils' progress provides very useful information, but this does not happen frequently enough to identify underachievement as early as it could.

The governing body has a good understanding of its role in supporting the school. Governors are active in links with individual departments and with parents. They are reflective and challenge the school. However, this challenge has not always been as timely as it might have been, as in the case of declining attainment. A high priority is given in the school's policies and actions to ensure that pupils are safe on site and

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

during out-of-school activities. All required procedures are in place, although the school understands the need to check more regularly that these are followed consistently. The school recognises that partnerships with those outside school are strong, but has yet to systematically evaluate their effectiveness.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents are very positive about all aspects of the school. They particularly like the attention to pupils as individuals and the wide range of experiences on offer. A few parents feel that the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns, although the inspectors found evidence that the school responds wherever it can do so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Corbridge Middle school to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 149 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 346 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	93	34	165	61	12	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	106	39	158	59	3	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	65	24	177	66	14	5	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	73	28	158	61	14	5	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	89	34	154	59	8	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	19	179	70	13	5	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	63	24	176	67	12	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	53	21	168	66	14	6	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	68	26	162	63	11	4	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	23	164	63	21	8	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	15	172	68	25	10	7	3
The school is led and managed effectively	73	28	146	56	21	8	9	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	100	38	138	53	12	5	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing how well you learn in class. We worked very closely with your headteacher and also spent time talking to your teachers and governors and looking at your work. Your questionnaires told us that most of you enjoy coming to school, feel safe and feel that your teachers are interested in your views. You also told us that you particularly like all the clubs the school organises for you.

We judged that Corbridge Middle School is a good school. Your teachers know you well and find lots of different ways to help you learn and develop as young people. We saw this in your lessons and in the different programmes and extra activities the school sets up for you. This helps you to do well and you reach standards that are above average. Just as importantly, you develop good personal skills, learn how to get on with others and take responsibility for yourselves and for helping the school. We were very pleased to see how well you all attend. As you probably know, your teachers have been working hard on ways to make sure you make as good progress in your other subjects as you do, for example, in your science.

Your headteacher, senior staff and governors work together well as a team to keep on improving the school. They keep a careful check on the progress you make and they find out what you and your parents think. We have asked them to check how well you are progressing more often so that they can help you learn even better. You can help by telling your teachers if you find the work too easy or difficult. We have also asked the headteacher to find ways of helping you learn about people of different backgrounds and cultures, both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

We hope you continue to enjoy all the activities that the school has to offer and we send you our best wishes for the future.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.