

Highfield Middle School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 122340 |
| Local Authority | Northumberland |
| Inspection number | 340129 |
| Inspection dates | 26–27 January 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Andrew Johnson 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 of pupils on the school roll | 456 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Yvonne Davies |
| Headteacher | Mrs Pamela Kidd |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Highfield Lane Prudhoe Northumberland NE42 6EY |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time looking at what students were learning, visiting 36 lessons and observing the majority of teachers at least once. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, governors, school partners and groups of students. They looked at the school development plan, minutes of the governors' meetings, policies and procedures. Inspectors examined a sample of students' work selected by the school and examined work in lessons. One inspector focused upon arrangements to safeguard students. Parents and carers returned 108 questionnaires and these were analysed together with 100 questionnaires returned from students, 18 from staff and the school's own recent parental questionnaire.

- any differences in the achievement of groups of students
- the impact of action the school has taken to maintain the high levels of achievement identified at the previous inspection and to make improvements where necessary
- the impact that the school's observation and evaluation processes have on the quality of teaching, learning, curriculum and support

Information about the school

Highfield School is a large middle school serving an area of semi-rural village communities. The large majority of students are of White British heritage and very few are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. There are fewer students with special educational needs and/or disabilities than in most schools, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is lower than average. The school holds a number of awards including the Healthy Schools Award, the Anti-bullying Award, the Extended Services Award and Sports Mark.

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

3

Main findings

This is a good school. High proportions of students make good progress and attain above average standards in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Students enjoy school and this is reflected in their above average attendance and their good behaviour both in lessons and around the school. Lessons are well planned and teachers use assessment effectively to ensure that students make good progress and do not fall behind.

Staff are passionate about the well-being of students. Partnerships with local first schools and the high school ensure that the movement between schools is smooth and does not interrupt progress. Students are highly considerate, courteous and respectful young people and work hard in lessons. Exclusions from lessons or from the school are very rare. Students have a good understanding of how to live healthy lives. Many participate in the wide range of sporting activities available both at lunchtime and after school. The majority said they felt very safe and that any rare cases of bullying are dealt with very well. A very large majority of parents and carers are happy with all aspects of the education their children receive.

The new headteacher has won the confidence of staff, parents and governors. There is no doubting the ambition and determination of the new senior leadership team to take the school from strength to strength. Improvements have been made to the extended provision of the school and partnerships have been developed that have enhanced the support for students who are at risk of becoming disaffected. Middle leadership is strong and actions to address areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been successful. This demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Nevertheless, the school recognise there has been a slight trend of decline in progress in a few areas and that more sustained action is necessary to halt this. Despite providing a broad and accurate overview, some aspects of the school's self-evaluation process are not rigorous enough to ensure that such trends are identified early and tackled quickly. Targets are ambitious and focus on key areas for improvement but some are too general and it is not always clear how success will be measured. The strategic plan identifies what needs to be done but does not always specify how this will be achieved. Although the evaluations of individual lessons are accurate they are not brought together and analysed in sufficient depth to link with staff development needs. Departmental plans are better and clearly demonstrate how evaluation has led to improvement.

The school's evaluation and analysis of its contribution to community cohesion is inadequate; there is no whole school plan in place to promote this aspect of the school's

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work. Nevertheless, students are actively involved in many local and international charities. They have a keen interest in learning about the cultures of other nations although their understanding of our multicultural society is more limited.

Governors are very supportive of the school. Financial management is effective and appropriate arrangements to ensure that regulations regarding the safeguarding of students meet government requirements are in place. The governors have a good understanding of the main strengths of the school and receive regular reports from the headteacher but their ability to evaluate the impact of some actions is hindered by a lack of sufficiently sharp targets and timescales.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rigour with which senior leaders and the governing body evaluate the school's effectiveness and plan for the future by:
 - - linking plans and evaluations more closely
 - - setting more specific and measurable targets with clear deadlines.
- Improve the school's response to its duty to promote community cohesion by:
 - - carrying out an effective analysis of the needs of its community
 - - devising a plan to promote engagement with a wider range of community groups.

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

Students enter the school with attainment in English, mathematics and science that is broadly average. Attainment in national tests in Year 6 is above average and the schools tracking shows that attainment by the end of Year 8 is well above average. Progress observed in lessons and examination of students' work in several subjects showed that boys and girls of all ages make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Students show their good social and moral development in the way they behave and respect each other and the staff. They behave well and expect everyone to be mature and sensible. Levels of attendance are above average and the development of good basic skills prepares them well for their life at school and beyond. They are keen to understand the traditions and cultures of other groups but engagement with students from a wider cultural and economic background is limited.

Students are very knowledgeable about the importance of a healthy diet and generally try to make healthy choices. They commented that they feel very safe in school although a few were concerned about the busy traffic at the end of the school day. The school is aware of this and plans are in place to improve these arrangements.

There is an active school council in place and a 'buddy' scheme for older students to support the younger ones. Students are proud of their efforts to raise money for local and international charities and are keen to be involved in the school's efforts to become eco-friendly'.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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| | |
|---|----------|
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 3 |
| 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?

Students say that lessons are enjoyable and most look forward to coming to school. Teachers provide challenging and interesting tasks. For example, a group of Year 7 students had to analyse how writing could be used to create an atmosphere; they analysed text from Frankenstein in a candle lit room! Students are given clear targets and good guidance on how to achieve them. Marking is done frequently and gives students useful feedback on how to improve. There is good use of information and communication technology to allow students to develop their research skills, for example, after one practical cookery lesson students did research on the internet to analyse healthy eating. Teachers use good questioning techniques to test understanding and track individual progress meticulously. Inspectors did not observe any inadequate teaching. However, in a few lessons, particularly in Key Stage 2 there were too few opportunities for students to work together and teachers' explanations went on too long. The curriculum is broad and students' participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips enhances their enjoyment of school. There is a strong focus on current events to stimulate learning, for example, the recent earthquake in Haiti. Visits by Christian, Hindu and Muslim speakers enhance students' spiritual understanding. However, the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom is not fully exploited when planning activities for learning. The school has identified that more links need to be developed between subjects and plans are in place to develop more cross-curricular

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

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work.

The school has good procedures in place to look after the personal well-being of students. Each one is treated as an individual. Parents of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly complimentary about the support their children receive and the progress they make. Learning support assistants make a good contribution to lessons and there are effective individual plans in place to make sure students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Partnerships with specialist organisations to promote good attendance and behaviour are very effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders at all levels have the clear ambition that they want this school to be outstanding in all aspects of its work. They have high expectations of students and, as a result, students produce high quality work. The new leadership team is working hard and has gained the support of parents and carers. Effective communication between home and school has a positive impact on students' achievement. Partnership activities also have a positive impact on behaviour and attendance. For example, the school works very successfully with the Education Welfare Service. After extensive consultation the headteacher has set suitable key priorities in the strategic plan. However, the actions needed to achieve these targets, milestones and lines of accountability are not always specific enough.

The quality of individual lessons is monitored rigorously and accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement. However, there is no overview of the quality of teaching and too few links are made so that a concerted programme of staff development can be put in place. Appropriate policies and procedures exist, including those to ensure safeguarding, and these are reviewed regularly. Accurate assessment information is used well by managers and teachers to track the progress of groups of students.

The performance of groups of students is good. The school has recently identified a discrepancy between the achievement of boys and girls in English and has put in place appropriate actions to address this. There are already signs of improvement.

Leaders do not plan or evaluate the school's contribution to community cohesion either within or beyond the school. Resources and buildings are well managed although some

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aspects of the information and communication technology available to managers and teachers are unreliable.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 4 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's experience in the school. They feel strongly that their children enjoy school, feel safe and make good progress. Parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities were particularly pleased with the support their children receive. Inspectors agree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highfield 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 108 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 456 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 32 | 33 | 63 | 64 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 30 | 31 | 66 | 67 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 23 | 23 | 67 | 68 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 26 | 27 | 68 | 69 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 31 | 32 | 63 | 64 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 22 | 22 | 65 | 66 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 28 | 29 | 67 | 68 | 3 | 3 | 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) | 16 | 16 | 69 | 70 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 23 | 23 | 68 | 69 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 22 | 22 | 63 | 64 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 15 | 15 | 65 | 66 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 24 | 24 | 64 | 65 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 33 | 34 | 62 | 63 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

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.



28 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Highfield Middle School, Prudhoe, NE42 6EYT

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. Your views helped us form a picture of your school. Please pass on our thanks to your parents or carers. Many of them returned the questionnaire and the vast majority said how happy they were with the school. We agree, we think that Highfield is a good school. In particular:

- you work hard in lessons and make good progress
- your behaviour is good
- attendance is above average
- you are well taught and your lessons are fun and interesting
- you are well cared for and supported by all the adults in the school.

Your new headteacher, the staff and governors are determined to make the school even better. We have tried to help them by identifying the following key areas for improvement:

- link together the many plans and evaluations and produce sharper and more measurable targets
- analyse the needs of the community and produce a plan to develop the role of the school.

I know that you will be keen to help. You can, by keeping up your good attendance and continuing to work well with your teachers

Yours sincerely

Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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