

Bellingham Middle School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122350
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340130
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake 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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carolyn Barber
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited ten lessons, held meetings with three governors and the acting headteacher, and also had informal discussions with teachers in lessons. The inspectors spoke with the pupils in lessons and around the school, in addition to holding one programmed meeting with a group representing all age groups. The inspectors observed many aspects of the school's work, and looked at 50 parents' questionnaires, 10 staff and 33 pupils' questionnaires. A range of school documentation was read, including details relating to the safeguarding procedures in place at the school.

The inspection team looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' attainment on entry and on leaving the school in Year 8, as an indication of their overall progress
- evidence of improved outcomes for pupils
- the impact of the school's subject specialisms on raising standards
- the impact of leadership and management as an indication of the school's capacity to improve.

Information about the school

Bellingham has joint specialist status in science and sport, and is much smaller than the average size secondary school. Pupils start at the school in Year 5, half way through Key Stage 2, and leave at the end of Year 8, going on to complete their final year of Key Stage 3 at high school. The percentage of pupils entitled to take free school meals is well below the national average. While the percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average, the proportion with statements of special educational needs is well below. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Since the previous inspection, the school has had three successive acting headteachers and there has been an extensive period of senior staff absence. Currently, the school does not have a permanent headteacher.

This was a parallel inspection event (PIE), in which the childcare provision on site was inspected at the same time as the school. A separate report is published on the Ofsted website about the quality of this childcare provision.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve.

Significant improvement is required in relation to the leadership and management by the governing body in ensuring a more robust evaluation and monitoring of the quality of the school's provision; taking a greater lead in identifying the direction of the school and identifying what it should do to improve; and by developing its role in challenging and holding the school to account. The role of the governing body is of particular importance because the school has been without a permanent headteacher for a considerable amount of time. The majority of the other aspects of the school's work are either satisfactory or good.

By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 8, the vast majority of pupils attain average standards in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. As this represents an improvement on the standards that are seen on entry at the beginning of Year 5, their progress, overall, is good; this also includes those pupils with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities. Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work confirms this judgement. The good progress is due, in part, to the excellent relationships that exist between pupils and teachers, the good quality care and support provided by staff, and the effective curricular provision. These result in pupils showing high levels of interest in their work, along with good concentration in lessons.

The small size of the school allows the pupils to get to know everyone very well; this makes for a friendly and safe environment, and contributes to the good standard of behaviour seen. Pupils enjoy their lessons and the range of additional activities provided for them, both during and after the school day. A high number of pupils are involved in one or more of the extra-curricular sporting activities. Pupils are aware of the need to eat healthily; some also understand the effects that different types of food have on their body. The school links well with the local community and is also developing international contacts as part of its extended curriculum. Attendance is average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, but strongest in moral and social aspects. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and occasionally good. Teachers' planning is thorough in terms of what is to be taught, but less detailed in identifying what the teacher expects pupils to learn from each task. This, in turn, makes the use of assessment for learning less effective. Also, lesson evaluations do not always take

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sufficient account of the impact of tasks on pupils' learning. Recording of pupils' progress is good in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science and satisfactory across the rest of the curriculum: this lessens the ability of the pupils to know accurately how well they are progressing in these other subjects. Additional adult support in lessons for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is always satisfactory, more often better, because of the focused work provided.

The overall quality of leadership and management is inadequate because serious weaknesses, identified earlier this year, have not been sufficiently addressed. A number of outstanding issues remain, especially in governors' ensuring accurate self-evaluation of the current quality of provision in the school, and the impact that this has on pupils' standards and progress.

The school has suffered from a series of disruptions to its senior management since the previous inspection, but the recent appointment of the deputy headteacher to the role of acting headteacher has brought greater stability and a sense of growing confidence from staff, governors, parents and pupils that the school is moving forward. In some ways, this is an accurate assessment. However, there remains a lack of clear strategic planning by the governing body that includes well targeted evaluation and monitoring of the actions to be taken in response to emerging or identified issues. The leadership and management of staff within the school are developing satisfactorily, and senior staff are keen to address, as matter of urgency, the identified weaknesses and return the school to a more stable position. However, the school's capacity to improve is not secure.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The governing body should develop a clear and coherent strategy for evaluating and monitoring the work of the school, and ensure that the self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's provision on raising standards and improving the pupils' progress in their learning is accurate.
- Improve assessment procedures by:
 - developing more robust evaluation of the impact of teaching in lessons on pupils' learning
 - develop systems to record pupils' performance in all subjects to align with the current provision being made for English, mathematics and science.

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

The majority of pupils begin Year 5 with standards in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science that are marginally below average. A smaller than expected proportion is already working at higher levels. By the time the pupils reach the end of Year 8 and are preparing to transfer to high school, their standards have improved and are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Furthermore, more pupils than seen at the start of Year 5 attain above average levels for their age. The vast majority of pupils are motivated and enthusiastic learners, which helps them to make good overall

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progress during their time at school. Levels of concentration and attention to written and oral tasks are generally good in the majority of lessons. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress.

The school has established good links with external partners, which are being used to help the pupils appreciate life outside of school. Overall, attendance is marginally higher than seen at secondary level, but average for middle schools. Pupils clearly understand school rules, and sensible movement around the school from lesson to lesson, and at breaks and lunch time demonstrate that they also understand and appreciate the need for consideration to others and the use of the school building.

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	3
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	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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and occasionally good. Teachers' planning is thorough. Some learning time is lost due to too much 'teacher talk' in lessons, which reduces the opportunities for pupils to work independently. Excellent relationships between pupils and with teachers account for the high levels of interest and concentration in lessons. The tracking of pupils' progress is good in the three core

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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subjects and satisfactory across the rest of the curriculum: this lessens the ability of the pupils to know accurately how well they are progressing in these other subjects. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is satisfactory overall, occasionally good or better. An outstanding example was seen in English, in which the teacher's comments were insightful and well focused on how well the pupils were doing, and what was needed to do even better. Additional adults provide effective support for those pupils most in need. The school's curriculum reflects both the statutory requirements and the needs of the pupils. The additional curricular focus on the school's two specialist subjects of sport and science is helping to enhance the overall provision, as is the range of additional out-of-lesson activities. The pupils report that they enjoy the styles of learning presented by different teachers.

Throughout the school, evidence of effective staff interaction with the pupils accounts for the good behaviour. Pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. They feel that teachers are approachable and sympathetic towards them as individuals. This makes them feel safe and welcomed in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

The overall quality of leadership and management is inadequate because the governing body has yet to develop a coherent and robust evaluation and monitoring strategy that accurately and regularly assesses the overall quality of all aspects of the school's work. Serious weaknesses, identified close to the beginning of this year, have not been addressed sufficiently, and a number of outstanding issues remain. For example, the school's self-evaluation was identified in March as being out-of-date and inaccurate. Some evaluative work has been undertaken by the acting headteacher to correct this. While this is moving in the right direction, it is far from complete. It is still not clear how the governing body will help to shape and direct the future provision for the school, while also addressing the identified weaknesses. This means, therefore, that the overall capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate.

The recent appointment of the deputy headteacher to the role of acting headteacher has been positive for the school even though she is the third acting headteacher since the school's previous inspection. Those governors who met with the inspectors believe strongly that the school is improving. However, recent school development planning is still not sharp enough. Although there has been a few focused school visits from

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governors over the previous two terms, with follow-up reports presented to the full governing body, there is insufficient evidence to show what actions have been taken by the governors and the school in relation to the report findings.

The leadership and management of staff within the school are developing, although it is clear that due to delays in completing performance management reviews and staff contracts, some roles and responsibilities have yet to be formally approved.

The school has a series of policies that adequately promote equality of opportunity, community cohesion and links to external partners. However, beyond the policies, there is little to indicate that there is a coherent approach to assessing their impact on the quality of provision in school. Some policies appear not to have been formally approved by the full governing body, and almost none make it clear when they will be reviewed. This further illustrates the lack of a coherent monitoring and evaluation strategy at governing body and senior management levels.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory, and all reasonable efforts are made to comply fully with all legal requirements. There are well established management responsibilities and designated staff for child protection, and all adults who work in the school have undergone suitable training. Links with welfare agencies are effective. Overall, the pupils have a good understanding of the potential threats to their personal safety.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
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	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive about the school's educational provision for their children. A number of

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parents took the opportunity to write additional comments on the questionnaire, and although there was no significant pattern to these, most were keen to praise the school, and especially its staff for their hard work and dedication to the education of the children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bellingham 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 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 132 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	47	52	53	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	50	48	49	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	48	46	48	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	48	46	48	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	42	55	57	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	34	56	58	6	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	42	55	57	0	0	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	56	35	37	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	43	50	52	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	39	51	53	6	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	36	57	61	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	41	52	54	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	52	45	47	0	0	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.



Inspection of Bellingham Middle School and Sports College, Northumberland, NE48 2EN
Thank you for making the recent visit of inspectors to your school so interesting and productive. Would you pass on our thanks to your parents, who kindly took the time to return the inspection questionnaire, and in particular to those who wrote some very helpful comments, all of which were read very carefully.

I should like to highlight some of the important good things that we found out about the school.

- The vast majority of you achieve average standards by the time you leave the school in Year 8. However, your overall progress during your time at the school is good.
- You said you feel safe because Bellingham Middle is a friendly school, where everyone knows each other very well.
- Your behaviour is good and your attendance average.
- Almost all of you are involved in some external activities.
- Teaching is mostly satisfactory, occasionally good. Teachers assess and regularly record your performance in English, mathematics and science. However, this happens far less often in the other subjects taught. We are, therefore, asking the school to improve this aspect of its work.
- The curriculum is good, and made better by the focus given to the two specialist subjects of science and sport.
- All the adults who work in the school provide good quality care and support for you. Although there is some recently encouraging work from the school, overall the leadership and management of the school are inadequate because the governing body does not have strong enough systems in place to check how well the school operates. As a result of this, we are issuing the school with a 'notice to improve'. This means that other inspectors will visit the school to assess the improvements being made.

I am sure that you will be disappointed with some of our findings, but I am equally sure that with continued hard work, and good attendance and behaviour, that you will help the staff and governors to make your school successful in all that it does.

We wish you all the very best in the future.

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