

# Marden Bridge Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108635
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Tyneside
<b>Inspection number</b>	356398
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 April 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gillian Salter-Smith

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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	516
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Keith Smiles
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alan Driver
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	Lovaine Avenue Whitley Bay Tyne and Wear NE25 8RW
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 2008725
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 2008727
<b>Email address</b>	mardenbridge.middle@northtyneside.gov.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Thirty four lessons were observed and 26 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, staff and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work and looked at the self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, policies and records relating to the safeguarding of pupils and community cohesion. Questionnaires were received and scrutinised from pupils and from staff and from 227 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the improved achievement in English, especially for boys, is being sustained.
- How well assessment information is used by teachers to differentiate work and ensure an appropriate level of challenge for pupils.
- How well pupils are involved in assessing their own progress and knowing what to do to improve.
- Whether senior and faculty leaders are successful in sustaining improvement in Key Stage 2 and maintaining good progress in Key Stage 3.
- How effective the community cohesion policy is in developing pupils' tolerance and understanding of people from backgrounds different to their own.

## Information about the school

The school is similar in size to other middle schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. However, the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average. A very few pupils are looked after by adults other than their own parents. The proportion of pupils joining the school at times other than the usual start in Year 5 is well above average. This is because many pupils join the school in Year 7 rather than Year 5 because of the two- and three-tier systems of education operating in North Tyneside.

The school has achieved Healthy School status and holds the Tidy School award, Sportsmark, and the FA Chartermark.

**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

Marden Bridge is a good school. Leaders and managers, the governing body and staff work well as a team and are successful in ensuring that pupils are happy, safe and secure in school and able to achieve well. The care and support provided for pupils, particularly for those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, is outstanding. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because the additional support they receive is very carefully tailored to meet individual needs and circumstances.

Pupils' enthusiasm for sporting activities and their commitment to adopting a healthy lifestyle are outstanding and are well supported by the extensive programme of extra-curricular sport and the excellent facilities for sport. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. They take their responsibilities seriously and many pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school through their roles on the school council, as 'peacemakers', buddies and sports leaders.

Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour, together with good teaching and a well-planned curriculum, support their good achievement. From the average starting points of the majority, pupils make good progress and by Year 8 attainment is above that expected for their age with attainment in mathematics and science being higher than in English. Teachers make good use of assessment information to ensure that lesson activities are challenging and well matched to pupils' differing abilities. Most lessons successfully maximise pupils' enthusiasm by providing stimulating and engaging activities. However, there remains a small minority of lessons where opportunities are missed to make the most of pupils' positive attitudes, independent work and research are not encouraged sufficiently, opportunities for well-structured talk between pupils to help develop ideas are more limited, and activities are not particularly memorable or exciting.

Effective monitoring and evaluation of the school's work carried out by senior and faculty leaders and the governing body inform accurate self-evaluation. The school has identified the need to focus more clearly on pupils' learning when monitoring lessons. The school's good capacity to improve is demonstrated in sustained good achievement overall, rising attainment in English where the gap between girls and boys is closing rapidly, improved use of assessment to guide learning and teaching and to hold staff more closely to account, and increasingly effective faculty leaders.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all lessons maximise pupils' positive attitudes to learning and accelerate their progress further by:

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- - providing more frequent memorable, imaginative and exciting curriculum experiences in lessons
- - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop independent research and enquiry skills, including the effective use of homework
- - encouraging greater use of well-structured talk between pupils to give time for thinking and exploration of ideas and thoughts
- - further improving the focus on pupils' learning in the monitoring of lessons.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy lessons and learning. They are very attentive and well behaved in the vast majority of lessons. They work diligently and, when given the opportunity, they work cooperatively in groups and pairs and discuss their work sensibly; in a Year 6 mathematics lesson they worked effectively in pairs independently of the teacher, grappling with and solving a problem. They often benefit from assessing their own and each others' work sensibly and sensitively, helping to consolidate their learning. Most are proud of their work and take good care in the presentation of their work.

Inspection evidence supports the analysis of school data on attainment and progress and shows that pupils make consistently good progress throughout the school and, by Year 8, attainment is above age-related expectations. Progress in Years 5 and 6 has accelerated and attainment has risen over the past two years, particularly in English. A focus on engaging boys in reading and writing has helped to close the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in English. In a more-able Year 8 English group, boys and girls developed great confidence in identifying the features of persuasive language within challenging texts. In a lower-attaining English group, having enjoyed the mock-up of an air-raid shelter, boys were keen to discuss the most important features of a shelter and what essentials they would need to take into it, helping to stimulate their writing.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Staff identify pupils' needs very quickly and additional support, provided by experienced and well-qualified support staff and teachers, is highly flexible and effective in meeting their needs. The few pupils learning English as an additional language make at least good progress because their needs are recognised and met by well-targeted additional support.

Pupils' outstanding commitment to a healthy lifestyle is evident in their enthusiasm for, and understanding of, healthy eating. Through their leadership of younger pupils in sporting activities, pupils are highly influential ambassadors of healthy living. Pupils say incidents of bullying are very rare and they know who to turn to for help. They are well informed about how to keep themselves safe when using technology. Pupils contribute to community projects such as working with a youth worker to develop activities for young people in the locality. The school is a harmonious community with pupils from a wide range of backgrounds working well together and making the most of the activities the school provides.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching and the use of assessment to support pupils' learning are good. Teachers make good use of accurate assessments to plan carefully sequenced activities that engage and challenge pupils in line with their differing abilities. Teachers' secure subject knowledge is evident in effective questioning that probes and deepens understanding and in their clear explanations. The purpose of lessons is made very clear to pupils and, in most lessons, it is clear what steps they must take to be successful at different levels. A good pace to lessons and good use of technology stimulate and extend learning. Teaching assistants provide very effective support for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly in developing literacy and numeracy skills. Most pupils know their targets and find they help to guide their work. Marking of pupils' work is helpful and pupils know what to do to improve and often correct their work as a result. There are lessons where teachers do not make the most of pupils' eagerness to learn and there are missed opportunities for pupils to benefit from independent research and enquiry, or well-structured talk between pupils. Although homework is planned and is particularly effective in extending learning in mathematics, it is inconsistent in other subjects and not closely monitored by leaders and managers.

The curriculum has been well organised to meet the needs of different groups of pupils through carefully considered setting arrangements and groupings. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is exemplary with very well targeted

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programmes of support. A good focus on improving writing across subjects is effective in raising attainment. A varied range of extra-curricular activity, particularly in sport, is much appreciated by a large majority of pupils and supports their good personal development. The curriculum is enhanced by some exciting events and visitors, such as the project of a more-able group of pupils on the experiences of local evacuees in the Second World War. However, the curriculum does not include enough exciting, imaginative and creative experiences to make the most of pupils' enthusiasm and keenness to learn.

Positive and highly supportive relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff underpin the outstanding care, guidance and support. The very strong, well organised and very well led student-support team know the pupils and their families extremely well. The highly effective partnerships with local services enable them to find the additional support individual pupils need to overcome barriers to learning, including those pupils looked after by adults other than their own parents. Pupils new to the school are looked after very well with pupils contributing to this support in the role of 'buddies'. The pastoral system, well supported by learning mentors, provides very good care, support and guidance for pupils, identifying and tackling potential underachievement quickly.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders set high expectations of themselves and others and challenging targets are set for pupils' achievement and staff performance. Staff morale is good and there is a shared understanding of the school's priorities. Faculty leaders make a strong contribution to school improvement. A cycle of school improvement is well established and is successful in bringing about positive change, for example, in achievement in writing. Rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluation help to ensure that the right priorities are identified. The school has recognised the need to improve the observation of lessons to focus more clearly on the quality of pupils' learning. A well-focused programme of professional development is closely linked to priorities. Recent training on using drama in English lessons to stimulate imagination, talk and writing is beginning to be used to positive effect in lessons.

The governing body includes a good range of experience and expertise. It has a good understanding of the school's strengths and its priorities. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly to support activities and monitor the school's work. Increasingly, visits are focused on the school's priorities. For example, a recent visit followed up the developments made in the use of assessment by staff. The governing body holds school leaders closely to account and has supported senior leaders in bringing a deficit budget

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into balance. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities, including those for the safeguarding of pupils. The systematic updating of policies has been implemented recently.

Checks on the suitability of staff to work with children reflect good practice. The training of all staff in child protection procedures is thorough so that procedures are clear and followed well. The curriculum integrates issues about safety, especially in subjects such as information and communication technology, design and technology, science and physical education, ensuring that pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay safe.

The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. Thorough analysis of the progress of individuals and groups of pupils ensures that swift action tackles possible underachievement and, for example, the gap in attainment between boys and girls in English is closing rapidly.

Pupils are engaged in many activities both within the school and the local and wider communities that are developing their tolerance and understanding of people from backgrounds, religions and cultures different to their own. The work with the local Bangladeshi community is particularly effective. The school has a clear understanding of its own community and what action is needed to develop community cohesion. These plans are interspersed between different areas of work within the school and, although effective, have not been pulled together into one plan. The school is in the early stages of evaluating the impact on its work on community cohesion.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Views of parents and carers

The response from parents and carers was high, with almost half returning the questionnaire. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school's work. They are particularly pleased with the way the school keeps their children safe, helps their children

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to develop a healthy lifestyle and prepare for the next stage of education. They consider that their children enjoy school and that the teaching is good. Inspection findings support these views.

A very few parents and carers expressed concerns about communication with the school and the way bullying is dealt with. Inspectors looked very closely into both these issues and found engagement with parents and carers to be good and that bullying is taken very seriously and dealt with effectively and to the satisfaction of the vast majority.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Marden Bridge 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 227 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 516 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	82	36	126	56	12	5	5	2
The school keeps my child safe	113	50	108	48	4	2	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	81	36	128	56	12	5	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	80	35	124	55	20	9	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	79	35	131	58	8	4	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	26	125	55	33	15	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	84	37	128	56	9	4	1	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)	70	31	134	59	9	4	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	81	36	118	52	17	7	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	73	32	125	55	17	7	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	19	133	59	26	11	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	70	31	133	59	15	7	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	92	41	113	50	16	7	5	2

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



6 April 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Marden Bridge Middle School, Whitley Bay, NE25 8RW**

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, hearing your views and seeing you at work in lessons.

Marden Bridge is a good school. The care, support and guidance that staff provide are excellent and particularly valuable to those of you who need extra help and support to enable you to do your best. The school does a good job in helping you to stay safe and healthy. The high numbers of you taking part in the very wide range of extra sporting activities shows that you have an outstanding commitment to a healthy lifestyle. You are keen learners who are attentive and apply yourselves well in lessons. The teaching in your school is good and helps you to achieve well and by Year 8 many of you reach levels of attainment that are above average for your age, especially in mathematics and science. Those of you with special educational needs and/or disabilities make exceptionally good progress because of the outstanding help and support that you receive from well-qualified and experienced staff.

Leaders, managers and the governing body are strongly committed to improving the school for your benefit. They have agreed that there are a few things that can be done to make the most of your positive attitudes to school and help you achieve even better in your academic work. These are:

- including more memorable, imaginative and exciting experiences in lessons
- giving you more chances to work independently and carry out research
- providing you with more regular and helpful homework
- ensuring that you spend more time discussing your work with each other,

exploring ideas and thoughts in a well-structured way

- improving the way leaders check on lessons to ensure they focus on how you are learning in response to the teaching and the curriculum.

You can help by continuing to attend on a regular basis and being determined to make the most of all the school can offer to you.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead inspector

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