

Morpeth Newminster Middle School

Mitford Road, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 1RH

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' performance at the end of Year 6 is significantly above the national average. This was the case in 2013, despite a slight dip in performance in reading and mathematics.
- By the end of Year 8, pupils' standards in English and mathematics are well above that expected for their age, and pupils of all abilities have made good progress from their individual starting points.
- The quality of teaching is good. Pupils are supported to maintain a good rate of progress in their learning. Results for pupils and work in their books confirm that this is the case over time.
- Pupils develop a strong love of learning because their work in school is both interesting and fun. This creates in pupils a real ambition to succeed, and they work hard to do so.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The calm, purposeful atmosphere that exists in the school is rooted in pupils' high level of self-discipline and willingness to take on responsibility.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Excellent pastoral care from all staff convinces pupils that their well-being is important.
- An outstanding curriculum creates many opportunities for pupils to succeed. Enterprise activities, such as organising the 'summer fayre', give pupils of all ages the opportunity to develop life skills such as team work, creativity, reflection and responsibility.
- Good leadership has seen the school sustain good quality teaching and above average standards. Recently appointed middle leaders are developing their roles well. Governance is highly supportive and robust in its challenge to the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching does not yet bring about outstanding achievement for pupils.
- Systems to check and gauge teaching and learning are not yet fully developed or consistently used by all departments.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 26 lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the executive headteacher and the head of school.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, senior and middle leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at documentation, including that relating to the school’s safeguarding procedures, assessment information and the school’s development plan.
- Inspectors undertook an examination of pupils’ work in all classes, and one inspector listened to pupils in Year 5 read.
- Inspectors took account of 118 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View; they also took account of questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anne Smedley

Additional Inspector

Catherine Laing

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is average-sized for its type.
- There is a below average proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families, and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Morpeth Newminster Middle School converted to become an academy in December 2011. When its predecessor school, Morpeth Newminster Middle School, was last inspected by Ofsted, its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The school is part of the Three Rivers Learning Trust. This incorporates Newminster Middle School, Chantry Middle School and The King Edward VI High School.
- In September 2013, there were changes to the management structure of schools in the Trust, when the headteacher of The King Edward VI became executive headteacher of the three schools. The existing head of school remains in post at Morpeth Newminster Middle School. The school has gone through an unusually high level of staffing change in the last 18 months, mainly as a result of unavoidable absence through maternity leave. This situation has now stabilised.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further, thereby improving the achievement of pupils even further by sharing the most effective teaching in school with all staff checking on improvements, so that staff recognise where they have improved and what more needs to be done to raise pupils' achievement to outstanding.
- Improve leadership and management further through the implementation and development of systems for checking how well all groups of pupils are achieving by:
 - identifying the most effective department's practices to lead improvement and formulate a programme of sharing these in the most efficient way with other departments
 - extending the existing known good practice in some departments, for example in marking and feedback to pupils, so that pupils' benefit in all of the subjects they study
 - devising regular opportunities for senior leaders to capture the most effective practices in the school and set targets for their wider implementation
 - ensure that all staff adopt the agreed policies and systems by checking how well they are improving pupils' learning across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' skills are broadly at the expected level for their age on entry. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work in Year 5 when they joined the school at the start of the year supports this view.
- Pupils' overall performance in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2013 was significantly above national averages, mainly as a result of their high standards in writing. The proportion of pupils making progress at the expected rate was broadly average, but fewer made more progress than expected, except in writing. The school attributes this to staffing changes due to the unavoidable absence in the last school year of some well-established Year 5 and Year 6 teachers.
- The rate of pupils' progress accelerates rapidly in Years 7 and 8, especially in mathematics and science. By the end of Year 8, the proportion of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age is above average and all groups are extremely well prepared for the challenges of the next stage in their education.
- Pupils read confidently and with good understanding because they have frequent opportunities to read during each day which develops their skills well.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics. Their skills are further developed by applying them to real-life problems in other subjects such as science and design technology.
- Pupils who are supported at school action or school action plus, and those pupils who speak English as an additional language, make good progress from their starting points because of the well-planned support they receive from the specific programmes of work and additional in-class support.
- The most able pupils are challenged well because teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve and expect them to work hard. By Year 8, many pupils are working well above expectations for their age. For example, a good proportion is working at national curriculum level 6, while a smaller group is working at level 7 in mathematics.
- The school continues to successfully narrow the gap in standards reached between pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups of pupils. However, these pupils are still about one term behind their peers at the end of Year 6. The progress of these pupils is not yet fast enough to help them to make up for their lower starting points.
- Pupils who enter Year 7 with literacy and numeracy skills that are below the expected levels for their age are effectively supported to reach the expected level through booster mathematics classes, lunchtime homework clubs, and additional literacy programmes.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils' good progress usually begins with learning that excites and engages them. One Year 6 class made rapid progress in evaluation skills when sampling a range of 'tasty' cakes. Pupils made good progress and thoroughly enjoyed working together to compare and select the 'right' word to describe different aspects of the delicacies, and they were very particular about choosing the most appropriate descriptions.
- Teachers are ambitious for all pupils to do well. In the majority of lessons teachers' good knowledge of pupils' needs and their prior learning ensure that the pitch of new learning is well planned. A group of Year 5 pupils with special educational needs were very successful in their learning about word choices for their writing. The teacher knew exactly which questions to ask individual pupils so that all were able to contribute, achieve success and develop their confidence.
- In some Year 5 lessons, the assessment of pupils' prior learning is not as sharp as it could be. As a result, work is sometimes too hard for pupils and this slows their progress.
- The hallmark of pupils' success in learning, especially in mathematics and science, is that much is expected of pupils and so their progress is rapid. Most able Year 7 pupils made excellent

progress in their reasoning about probability because they were kept them under pressure of time. They were challenged to explain and justify their answers. Work in their books showed that this rate of learning is usual, and that pupils take great pride in their work.

- There is much high-quality marking and feedback to pupils on how to improve their work. Where this is regular, and pupils' follow-up teachers' advice, there is clear evidence in pupils' work of accelerated progress. However, there are inconsistencies in the regularity and quality of marking which slow progress for pupils in some subjects.
- In many lessons, pupils develop independence and resilience through tasks which are designed to allow pupils to learn through investigation and practical activity. In science, Year 7 pupils made rapid progress in their work to create models of animal and plant cells because they were fascinated by the task. Excellent collaboration contributed much to their rate of learning as they built upon each other's suggestions. Their explanations of their work at the end demonstrated the excellent gains they had made in their knowledge of cell structure.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In and out of class, and when moving between rooms, pupils conduct themselves extremely well, often with a minimum of supervision. Pupils are courteous and welcoming to visitors and show good levels of respect for all adults and each other.
- Attitudes to learning are excellent because pupils have a real thirst for knowledge and are ready to seize every opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills. They are determined to succeed and maintain good attention, even when work is sometimes pitched too high for their understanding.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils learn to assess accurately any risks to their well-being in and out of school. They are well aware of the risks of using the internet and are required to sign the school's 'agreement', displayed in the computer suite, which makes clear the potential risks and gives advice on 'what to do if ...'
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the different types of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying and cyber bullying. The school's anti-bullying stance is well promoted by displays which remind pupils what bullying is and how to take action to stop it. Pupils say that bullying is not an issue. They are confident that staff will deal with any incidents quickly so they are not repeated.
- Pupils in all age groups take responsibility for keeping the school tidy, safe and running smoothly. Older pupils willingly take on duties such as looking after younger pupils, and acting as prefects and mentors for younger pupils.
- Attendance has improved to above average as a result of effective strategies to support families where children's absence has been high.
- Parents overwhelmingly agree that behaviour is good and that their children are safe and happy in school.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders and governors are united in their drive to raise standards and improve achievement for pupils even further. A new line management structure ensures that senior and middle leaders are clear about the school's priorities and are held to account for their contribution to improving the school.
- Systems to monitor the work of the school are increasingly effective as the school implements new practices. However, the quality and effectiveness of these systems are uneven across the school and so the rates of progress for pupils in every year group are not the same. Nevertheless, there is much good practice in the mathematics and science departments.
- Systems to check pupils' progress and take action where this is not good, though regular, do not

have the same impact in all subjects. For example, the variations in the quality of teachers' marking show some variability in the quality of pupils' work and their rates of progress. The school's policies and practices are not always followed by all staff and, currently, not enough is done to hold staff to account for this.

- Good teaching and leadership have been sustained through effective management of performance. Staffing has now stabilised but collaboration between departments to ensure that the best practice is shared is yet to be achieved.
- The outstanding curriculum is regularly reviewed and adjusted to provide equal opportunities for every pupil to do well. There is a good emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills and pupils' social and personal skills, so that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of learning. The school's involvement in the 'National Science and Engineering week' is thoroughly enjoyed by all pupils, as are the many extra-curricular activities which extend their horizons and develop their talents.
- The school has used primary sports funding well to extend its many sporting activities beyond the Trust family of schools. This has led to an increase in competitive sport between schools. After-school sporting activities have increased, which has improved the participation in physical activities of pupils in Year 5 and Year 6.
- The school uses external consultants to provide support and challenge for its future development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have active links with departments and regularly focus visits on a particular aspect of performance. This gives them a clear insight into the school's work. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements so that pupils are safe. It manages the budget across all schools in the Trust very well so that funding is used well to support the school's priorities, for example the provision of a new music room. Governors are aware of the school's performance through analysis of data and know the reasons for the dip in pupils' attainment in 2013. They challenge the school's leaders over the performance of pupils in receipt of support through pupil premium funding. They hold leaders to account over how this funding is used to improve how well these pupils do. Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching and how the appraisal system links to pupils' achievement. They only reward those staff who fully meet their targets each year.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137748
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	432072

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	506
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Vaughan
Headteacher	Simon Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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