

Marden Bridge Middle School

Lovaine Avenue, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE25 8RW

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because there is too much inconsistency in rates of progress between subjects and classes. For example, progress in mathematics is slower than progress in English.
- The school is not working closely enough with its feeder schools to ensure pupils' progress can be measured against an agreed starting point when they enter Year 5.
- Teaching requires improvement because pupils, particularly the most able, are not always challenged by the work they are given. There is variability between the quality of teaching in different subjects and best practice is not always shared.
- Teachers do not always mark books regularly and do not give pupils consistently good quality feedback on how to improve their work or check that their advice is followed.
- Some pupils who are supported by the pupil premium are behind their classmates and leaders have not checked to see if the way the pupil premium is spent is making a real difference to outcomes for this group of pupils.
- Leadership, management and governance require improvement. Leaders have not been successful in bringing about improvements in teaching and in pupils' achievement since the last inspection. Monitoring of teaching and marking, aspects of safeguarding and governors' knowledge of school performance data all require improvement.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement because systems to check on patterns of pupils' behaviour are not sharp enough. Records of staff safeguarding training are not well organised.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They enjoy school and their attendance is above average.
- A group of motivated teachers are bringing about improvements in teaching and learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well.
- Pupils are making increasingly good progress over time in some subjects, such as English.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons and part-lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior staff. They also observed smaller groups of pupils being taught literacy and numeracy and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- Fifty-two responses to the online questionnaire, 'Parent View', were considered as well as those from the school's own parental surveys and from school staff.

Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Bridgewater	Additional Inspector
Gordon Potter	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This middle-deemed-secondary school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is average.
- An average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, whilst an above-average proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is well-below average, while the proportion supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2014.
- A very small number of pupils temporarily attend off-site provision at the Whitley Bay student support service.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better and enables pupils to make faster progress by;
 - providing challenging work in all lessons, particularly for the most able pupils
 - marking pupils' books regularly, giving them high quality feedback on how to improve their work and checking that they are acting on the advice given
 - sharing best practice between teachers and across subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - working much more closely with feeder schools in assessing pupils' attainment so that their progress can be accurately monitored as they move through the school
 - checking that extra help given to pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is fully effective in narrowing the gap between their attainment and progress and that of other pupils
 - robustly monitoring the quality of teaching and marking and ensuring feedback given to staff helps them to improve their skills
 - improving school systems for recording , sharing and analysing information about pupils' behaviour
 - improving the way records of staff training are kept, particularly those relating to safeguarding
 - ensuring that governors have more detailed knowledge and understanding of the school's performance data so they are able to ask leaders and managers challenging questions about outcomes for pupils.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because there is too much variability between rates of progress in different subjects. Their achievement in reading, and particularly writing, is better than that in mathematics.
- Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with standards which are broadly typical for their age and reach average standards overall in tests at the end of Year 6. By the end of Year 8 in 2013 students reached broadly average standards overall. Attainment was strongest in English but fewer pupils than average reached the higher levels
- Work in pupils' books and that seen in lessons confirms that pupils' progress from their individual starting points is not yet good. In mathematics, pupils' work is not always presented well. Pupils are sometimes asked to repeat many examples of calculations they have already mastered, so work lacks challenge.
- In 2013 there was a gap, of over a year, in both English and mathematics, between the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals and supported by the pupil premium and their classmates. There was also a large gap in the rate of these pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics. The school's own tracking data shows that this gap is now beginning to narrow. Pupil premium funding is being spent on more resources, staff training and small group tuition, but monitoring the impact of this spending remains a priority for school improvement.
- Catch-up funding for Year 7 students is used effectively to provide new resources and staff training, particularly in teaching literacy, for students who need extra help in developing their reading skills. As a result most students become competent readers.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates as do pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language. In some lessons disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make faster progress when given timely and sensitive individual support from teachers and teaching assistants.
- The achievement of the most able pupils requires improvement because they are not sufficiently challenged to reach the higher levels of which they are capable in all subjects. However, recent improvements in teaching and high expectations in English are beginning to allow the more able pupils to reach higher standards.
- The achievement of the very small number of pupils who have very recently begun attending off-site provision is being carefully monitored. This ensures that they are attending, behave well and are kept safe. It is too early to make a judgement on their progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it does not promote pupils' good progress over time.
- Work in books is sometimes not marked regularly enough and there are too few pointers for improvement. Only occasionally is there evidence of pupils responding to the advice they have been given and improving their work. In English, some examples of high-quality marking were seen that explained precisely what pupils needed to do to improve and challenged them to complete work at a higher level.
- Tasks set by teachers are sometimes too easy and repetitive for pupils, particularly the most able. In mathematics, pupils are sometimes not moved on quickly enough to new and more challenging tasks when they have mastered their current work.
- Some teaching is good. Pupils enjoy learning because fast-paced, exciting activities and challenging tasks engage their interest and they become absorbed in their work. In an interesting and challenging task in an English lesson pupils made good progress as they used sophisticated language to put forward balanced and mature points of view about whether or not

an old oak tree should be cut down to make way for a children's playground.

- In a similarly interesting task Year 5 pupils experienced both success and enjoyment of learning as they successfully read music and played the correct notes on electronic organs in a music lesson.
- New initiatives to improve the teaching of literacy across the curriculum are beginning to have an impact on improving pupils' skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in lessons and assemblies. In a particularly meaningful assembly the headteacher used very varied examples of well known people, such as Myley Cyrus and Nelson Mandela, to encourage pupils to explore reasons why certain people are popular.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour and safety of pupils is judged to require improvement overall because the school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. However, the behaviour of pupils is good in lessons and around school.
- Pupils are keen to succeed and work hard in lessons. Most answer questions readily and cooperate well together in pairs and groups. They wear the correct school uniform and bring the equipment they need to lessons.
- In the school playgrounds the dining hall and in corridors pupils behave sensibly. They are polite and friendly and show respect for each other, staff and visitors. When they attended assembly in the adjacent sports hall their behaviour was impeccable.
- Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual to school. Exclusions are rare.
- A range of evidence shows that pupils typically behave well. There are few incidents of bullying and these are dealt with effectively. A well-organised 'remove' room and a clearly understood system of detentions provide fair and consistent sanctions for those few pupils whose behaviour is challenging.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility. They were enthusiastic about their work as members of the school council and felt they made a difference through, for example, fundraising, discussing the use of 'Kindles' in school and setting up tuck and stationery shops.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Pupils say they feel safe in school and parents support this view. Pupils feel safe because individual staff in their separate roles provide good care and support for pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. However, systems for recording information about pupils' behaviour, sharing this information between all staff and analysing it to give a concise and detailed overview of safeguarding matters and behaviour across the school, are not yet good enough.
- Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe especially when using the internet. They are knowledgeable about different types of bullying, including homophobic bullying, but say that should it occur in school they trust teachers to deal with this quickly and effectively.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management, including governance, require improvement because it has not yet been effective in promoting good achievement for pupils and good teaching. Staff express confidence in the leadership of the new headteacher but his work has not had time to make an impact on pupils' achievement.
- The school knows most of its strengths and weaknesses but is a little over generous in its own evaluation of the quality of its work. A development plan is in place and appropriate priorities have been identified for improvement. Staff performance is managed well and they have targets for improvement closely linked to priorities identified in the school development plan.
- The quality of teaching and teachers' marking is monitored by senior and middle leaders, but advice given to help teachers is not bringing about sufficient improvement. Recent training for

teachers, for example, in teaching literacy across the curriculum, has raised teachers' awareness of what needs to be done but it is not being put into practice consistently in all subjects.

- A group of motivated teachers are now meeting regularly and sharing ideas about improving teaching. However, the full impact of this work has yet to be felt and teachers' best skills are not fully shared across departments, hence rates of pupils' progress vary between subjects.
- The school's links with feeder first schools are not strong enough. There is no common agreement between the schools on the standards pupils have reached when they transfer between schools. Therefore, there is no common starting point against which their progress can be measured.
- Safeguarding meets requirements and many staff work hard to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. Nevertheless, record keeping is not always good enough. For example, records of staff safeguarding training are not well organised and up-to-date policies are not always put on the school website.
- Extra funding for primary sport is used well to employ coaches, train staff and allow pupils increased opportunities to take part in a range of sports, including ice hockey and American football. Pupils' physical well-being and healthy lifestyles are promoted effectively and participation in sport is high so pupils reach the performance levels they are capable of, as well as being encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- The school does not tolerate discrimination and it attempts to give all pupils equal opportunities to succeed. However, pupils supported by the pupil premium and the most able pupils do not always achieve as well as other groups of pupils. Senior leaders are not fully effective, including checking that extra help given to pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is narrowing the gap between their attainment and progress and that of other pupils.
- From January the local authority has provided good support for the school. The local authority representative has given advice on data analysis and arranged support for the newly appointed headteacher from an experienced headteacher in a local school.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A wide range of visits to places of interest and a wealth of opportunities to take part in musical showcases, dramatic productions and a range of exciting sports all add to pupils' enjoyment of school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive of the school and aware of its strengths. They have a limited understanding of the school's performance data compared to that of other schools and consequently are not always able to ask challenging questions about pupils' progress. Finances are managed very effectively and governors use their expertise to make sure capital funds are well spent. They are aware of how pupil premium funding is spent but are not as clear about its impact on raising pupils' attainment. Governors have a slightly over-generous view of the quality of teaching. They are aware of how teachers' performance is managed and how good teachers are rewarded and weaknesses tackled.

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	108635
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	440795

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	446
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Smiles
Headteacher	John Newport
Date of previous school inspection	4 April 2011
Telephone number	0191 2008725
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