

Seahouses Middle School

James Street, Seahouses, Northumberland NE68 7YF

Inspection dates

29–30 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not secured consistently good progress for pupils at key stage 2 in reading and mathematics. Consequently, too few pupils meet the academic standards expected for their age.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching is not sufficiently focused on the pupils' progress. As a result, leaders have not been able to bring about sustained improvements since the last inspection.
- While teachers plan carefully, they do not always plan work which is sufficiently challenging nor expect enough from their pupils.
- There is substantial variability in the quality of teaching across different subjects and across key stages, especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work in relation to the new national curriculum has been inaccurate which has prevented the school from acting more quickly to support learning.
- Leaders have had limited success in raising the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have too few opportunities to tackle more challenging tasks.
- Girls' attainment is lower than that of boys in reading and writing at the end of key stage 2.
- A culture of reading is not well established and it is not given a high enough priority. Pupils have few opportunities to help them to improve their reading skills.
- The pace of learning in mathematics over time is too slow and lacks depth. Teachers offer too few opportunities to develop reasoning and justification skills.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils enjoy school and behave well. They are polite and considerate.
- Pupils feel safe, and the school takes great care to ensure that they know how to keep themselves safe, especially when using internet sites.
- Provision for pupils' personal development and welfare is good. A supportive and caring atmosphere pervades the school, and pupils value the care and support they receive.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good across the school by ensuring that teachers:
 - have much higher expectations of what pupils can and should achieve, securing rapid progress as a result, especially in relation to the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and girls
 - expect pupils to work productively and complete enough work in lessons
 - provide more lessons that capture pupils' interests and develop a real love of learning
 - create good opportunities for pupils to read widely and often
 - ask probing questions that effectively check and deepen pupils' understanding, challenge pupils to explain their reasoning and extend their thinking
 - all work to the same high standard, thereby improving pupils' learning experiences in every subject.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that leaders:
 - monitor the quality of teaching, with a sharp focus on its impact on pupils' progress
 - carefully monitor the quality of the secondary curriculum at key stage 3 and seek external support, if needed, in order to secure good progress
 - ensure that the curriculum for mathematics strengthens pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills
 - refine and embed the school's new assessment system so that leaders can intervene quickly, with accuracy and confidence, where pupils fail to make progress
 - raise the importance of reading across the school and quickly establish a stronger reading culture.

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 management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have brought about some improvements since the last inspection and have been proactive in seeking solutions to the challenges faced by the school. However, sustaining these improvements has proven difficult because of some turbulence in staffing.
- While the quality of teaching has improved, there remains some variation. Consequently, pupils' achievement in English and mathematics over time has been inconsistent. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils lags behind that made by other pupils nationally and shows small signs of diminishing.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and also girls, continue to underachieve, especially at key stage 2. The small number of pupils who fall behind struggle to catch up with their peers at key stage 3, despite additional catch-up funding.
- Teachers' performance development targets are well matched to their experience and responsibilities, but the targets lack precise criteria for success. Consequently, while teachers value their training, improvements in the quality of teaching are not sufficiently rapid to secure consistently good teaching.
- Several subjects in the secondary curriculum are taught by part-time teachers, some of whom have not accessed training. This has not been effectively tackled and inconsistencies have been allowed to continue.
- In monitoring the quality of teaching, leaders have provided helpful feedback on teaching techniques but have not always focused on the quality of pupils' learning. As a result, leaders perceive teaching to be stronger than is the case.
- Leaders continued to assess using an old system of levels, while at the same time working with a significantly different, new curriculum. Their new assessment strategy, based on age-related expectations, is not yet secure. Inaccurate assessment information has led leaders to believe that pupils' progress is stronger than is the case.
- Leaders and governors have an overly positive view of the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. However, their plans for improvement for this year are appropriate, and they are determined to see that pupils receive the best education they can provide for the remainder of the academic year.
- The school provides effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and a caring environment in which pupils thrive. Occasionally, documentation relating to the identification of needs together with reviews lacks detail.
- Leaders and governors have faced significant challenges as a result of school reorganisation within the local authority. This has compounded difficulties in delivering specialist areas of the curriculum at key stage 3 in a remote area.
- The school is striving to provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. However, due to imminent closure, existing staff are teaching humanities without sufficient support or expertise. The quality of provision in French and German is variable.
- The curriculum is enriched through a variety of extra-curricular clubs ranging from drama to gymnastics. Most pupils take part in sports. Key stage 2 pupils benefit from the sports funding, which enables the school to provide specialist coaches. The funding

also enables pupils to travel to competitions and meet with other pupils, which is especially important given the school's remote location.

- The wider curriculum is strong and pupils have developed an understanding of fundamental British values appropriate to their age. They have a particularly good understanding of both the rights and the responsibilities of the individual. They can talk about voting and have an understanding of democratic principles.
- Pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is tangible and seen through their strong sense of community. Within this context, they are growing as kind, caring and compassionate young people.
- Harmonious and supportive relationships characterise the school. There is no discriminatory or prejudiced behaviour of any kind.

Governance of the school

- Governors have implemented recommendations made as a result of an external review of governance and have received good support from the local authority. They are now able to provide more effective challenge and support for the headteacher.
- They have fulfilled their statutory duties, including performance management arrangements for the headteacher, and have ensured that the school is financially sound.
- Governors know how the government's funding to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium has been spent. However, they have not established why its impact is weak and this indicates a lack of precise evaluation.
- Governors have steered the school through a period of significant turbulence at the same time as reforming their own practices. In some areas, they are still too dependent on what other professionals have told them. This has hindered them in securing improvements at a faster pace.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School staff are keenly aware of the heightened dangers that internet chat rooms pose to their pupils given their remote location. They are particularly vigilant in ensuring that pupils know how to keep themselves very safe.
- The school is tenacious and successful in seeking support for pupils where this is needed from outside agencies.
- All staff have undertaken the most recent training to help them keep pupils safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- There is an open culture where pupils feel cared for and safe. Parents wholeheartedly agree that pupils are cared for and feel safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Class teachers plan thoroughly, but sometimes they lose sight of how much learning will actually take place and, as a result, not enough is expected of pupils.
- The need for the most able pupils to be stretched and challenged is too frequently overlooked. They are not moved on quickly enough to more demanding work.
- Some teachers use questioning well. They probe pupils' understanding and deepen their thinking. Often, however, superficial or single-word answers are accepted from

pupils. No explanation of thinking is pursued; consequently, rich opportunities to challenge thinking and extend learning are not fully exploited.

- Teachers do not routinely ensure that girls are equally involved in lessons as boys. Too often, girls were observed during the inspection withdrawing from activities or discussions and simply keeping quiet.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge in their own specialist areas but, due to the reduction in staff and pupil numbers, they are teaching new secondary subjects with little help or support. These difficulties are increasing variability in the quality of teaching across the whole curriculum.
- The school has experienced a number of difficulties in securing high-quality teaching in mathematics, especially at key stage 2. Pupils are not sufficiently fluent in their use of number and other basic mathematical skills. This limits their ability to meet the demands of problems requiring a high degree of reasoning.
- Some pupils read widely and with enthusiasm, but others do not. Analysis of key stage 2 test papers showed that for too many pupils their range of vocabulary was limited, and they struggled when reading descriptive text to form a picture of scenes they then needed to use. The school's literacy leader is developing strategies to improve these key skills.
- Teaching assistants keep a very close eye on pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and ensure that work is accessible for them. Occasionally, the teaching assistants do too much for the pupils, out of kindness, which limits their development as independent learners.
- Work is currently under way to develop more opportunities for writing using the full breadth of the curriculum. Pupils in Year 6 worked hard, writing detailed accounts of how to mummify a body in their work on Egyptian culture. They showed good concentration and positive attitudes to their learning.
- Most teachers mark pupils work regularly in line with school policy and provide helpful feedback. They also give time to pupils to respond and improve their work.
- There is no evidence of any discriminatory behaviour by any member of the school community. All relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils take pride in their school. They are caring, friendly, polite and well mannered. Older pupils readily look out for younger ones at playtime and will organise games for them. There is a very open, harmonious atmosphere in the school.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are fully equipped and ready to learn. They respond quickly to instructions in class and are careful when moving around classrooms.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They are very confident that adults will help them with any concerns. Pupils are well informed about a whole range of issues, such as racism, exploitation and radicalisation, and they have a good working knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, especially when using online sites via the internet.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare in school. If it does occur, they have complete confidence it will be swiftly dealt with.

- Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying especially cyber bullying. They are able to explain confidently how to communicate online in an appropriate manner and what to do in the event of trouble.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well developed. They have a strong sense of right and wrong in relation to both current affairs and historical events. Pupils spoke poignantly to inspectors about the 20,000 buttons and luggage tickets which line the corridors and doors. They created this special memorial for children who died during the Holocaust in the Second World War.
- Pupils delight in the wide range of extra-curricular activities available to them. Most pupils actively participate in a range of sports from gymnastics to football. They value the opportunities they have to take part in visits to local heritage sites and are eagerly looking forwards to trips to Manchester and London.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils value their education. Both attendance and punctuality are good.
- Few pupils are regularly absent from school.
- In most lessons, behaviour is good and carefully monitored. In lessons where tasks are limited and learning is slow, pupils do not distract others or misbehave.
- The very small number of incidents of poor behaviour that are reported to the headteacher are dealt with effectively and are rarely repeated.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- There is variation in the rate of pupils' progress between subjects and year groups because of the inconsistency in the quality of teaching over time.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in the most recent key stage 2 tests was well below provisional national averages in reading and mathematics. The school inaccurately assessed a number of pupils as having met these required standards. In grammar, punctuation and spelling, results were well below average. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing (teacher assessment) was above average.
- A small proportion of pupils reached the higher standards. The school has been proactive in the analysis of pupils' 2016 tests in reading and mathematics to pinpoint areas where pupils struggled in order to better support their last Year 6 cohort in 2017.
- The progress pupils are making in lessons varies from subject to subject. For example, progress in English is generally strong, while pupils' progress in French and Spanish tends to be weaker. This is because teachers do not match the activities they set to the ability of the pupils. This was demonstrated when pupils were observed selecting their own route through a website with little direction, so that their learning lacked challenge.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not always make enough progress. Some teachers do not demand enough of them and underestimate how quickly they can learn. There are times when tasks lack complexity and difficulty. There are occasions when pupils have to think hard and justify their reasoning, but this is inconsistent. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge and deepen their understanding.

- Pupil premium funding has been used to fund a range of initiatives to help diminish differences in attainment between pupils who are disadvantaged and others nationally during their time in the school. The impact of these strategies has been highly variable, and large differences remain in some subjects and year groups.
- Girls are reaching lower standards than boys from the same starting points, most notably in mathematics and in some cases reading. Leaders are at a loss as to why this is the case; however, inspection evidence suggests that teachers do not always encourage girls' active participation in lessons.
- Some pupils do enjoy reading but others read only when they have to. Efforts have been made to engage boys in reading through their interest in football, but there is still some way to go in developing a culture of reading.
- A few pupils struggle with spelling, which hinders their ability to produce high-quality writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and benefit from substantial, high-quality, personalised support. Other pupils who have fallen behind, however, struggle to catch up with their peers because additional support in mathematics and reading has not been successful.
- The progress made by Year 8 pupils last year was strong. Inspection evidence confirmed that they reached high standards in reading, writing and mathematics and were well prepared for the next stage of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	122315
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10012001

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 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Fawcus
Headteacher	Julie Harris
Telephone number	01665 720473
Website	www.seahousesmiddleschool.com
Email address	admin@seahousesmiddle.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school is subject to a local authority reorganisation and will close at the end of this academic year. A consequence of this is that there are now no Year 5 pupils and the school roll has fallen significantly. The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all children are of White British heritage and most speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- No pupils in the school are currently being educated by any other provider.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the implementation of the governing body's policy for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across a wide range of lessons and conducted joint work scrutiny with the headteacher.
- She observed pupils at play during break and lunchtimes, spoke with them both formally and informally, and listened to four pupils reading.
- She considered the 14 parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and the middle leader. She also met with the chair and other members of the governing body.
- A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, plans for development, performance management documents, minutes of governing body meetings, records of the monitoring of teaching and progress information. Safeguarding and child protection documentation, attendance data and records relating to behaviour were examined.

Inspection team

Janice Gorch, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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