

Morpeth Newminster Middle School

Mitford Road, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1RH

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching. Staff expectations of what pupils can, and should, achieve are not consistently high across the school.
- Staff, as a matter of course, do not use the detailed information that the school gathers on pupils' progress to focus their teaching.
- As a result of variability in the quality of teaching and teachers' expectations, pupils do not make consistently good and better progress across the school.
- The most able pupils do not make the progress that they should because they are not sufficiently challenged by teachers in both key stages, and by the humanities curriculum in key stage 3.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors are dedicated to improving the school. They have robust systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff receive appropriate, up-to-date training that ensures that they have the knowledge and skills to keep pupils safe.
- The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is strong. Staff provide pupils with many opportunities to explore these aspects of their lives through many extra-curricular and other activities.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities receive effective support. They achieve well from their starting points.
- The majority of teaching is effective. Pupils enjoy learning in interesting and attractive classrooms where skilled staff care for them well.
- Pupils are well behaved and show strong and positive attitudes to learning. Relationships among pupils and between adults and pupils are open, kindly and respectful.
- Disadvantaged pupils' welfare is very well supported. The school works very effectively to remove barriers to the learning and well-being of these pupils.
- Reading is a growing strength of the school. Staff encourage a love of books. Effective links are developing between reading and pupils' writing. Pupils enjoy reading.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate the remaining inconsistencies in teaching so that pupils make consistently good progress by ensuring that:
 - all staff have the highest expectations of what pupils can, and should, achieve
 - all staff use the detailed information the school gathers on pupils to focus their teaching so that all pupils consistently make the progress that they should
 - the good practice that is evident in much of the teaching at the school is systematically shared across all years.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - providing even greater challenge for the most able pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils, so that they make stronger progress across all subjects
 - making sure that the curriculum, especially in the humanities subjects in key stage 3, is sufficiently challenging.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher, head of school and assistant headteacher are skilled leaders. They know the school and its community well. They use the strength that being part of a trust provides effectively. They have established and maintain a culture of collaboration. Staff feel well regarded and supported.
- Leaders have put in place detailed systems and checks to monitor the performance of staff. They monitor the effectiveness of teaching through regular observation and other focused activities. Leaders provide prompt and generally effective support for staff in order to improve their skills. However, there is inconsistency in the quality and effectiveness of teaching at the school. Leaders are aware of this and are continuing to address it through these careful and humane checking approaches.
- Staff morale is high. Leaders encourage staff to develop their skills through a range of training and development opportunities. These opportunities are clearly focused on the needs of the school and its pupils. Staff feel valued and engaged. However, the good and better teaching practice, high expectations and understanding of learning that clearly exist in the school are not shared systematically enough to raise the overall standard to good and better.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged children is used effectively to provide targeted work and guidance. The senior leader who is responsible for this key aspect of the school's work is very skilled and imaginative in her focus on removing barriers to these pupils' well-being and progress. She meets regularly with parents and carers and trains and monitors the effectiveness of the mentors that each disadvantaged pupil has as part of the school's work to support these pupils. These mentors, who are members of staff, act as champions and regular points of contact, support and encouragement for disadvantaged pupils. As a result of this and similar work, these pupils make good progress across the school, and differences in progress and levels of attendance compared with all pupils nationally are diminishing.
- The additional funding the school receives to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well. The relatively recently appointed leader for this aspect of the school's work has been effective in ensuring that carefully focused actions are put in place to meet these pupils' needs. There are weekly meetings to discuss their progress and parents are fully involved. The leader has ensured that staff expertise is developed, through regular training and updates, so that they can better identify and meet the needs of these pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well through a curriculum which, generally, engages them. The curriculum is supported by a range of other activities that give pupils additional opportunities to explore and develop new skills and existing enthusiasms, such as those in the arts and music. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their enjoyment of the additional opportunities the school offers. They are well prepared for their next steps in learning and for life in modern Britain.
- A very large majority of the parents who responded to the surveys conducted before, and during the inspection wrote very positively about the school and the service it offers their children. A significant number are very confident in the school's leadership,

its accessibility and its readiness to engage with, and respond to, parents' concerns and suggestions.

- Leaders have deployed the additional physical education and sport premium funding very well. The school has engaged with a range of partners to develop the skills of staff at the school and across the trust. Sports and physical education opportunities for pupils are extensive. The school fields teams in a wide range of sports for competition, nationally and with other schools locally. Leaders also use the funding to underline, for pupils, the importance of a healthy life style and the benefits of regular exercise and eating healthily. Pupils say they like this. However, inspectors observed that the concepts that lie behind a healthy diet were not always applied when it came to lunchtime menu choices. The Year 7 catch-up funding is also deployed effectively to ensure that pupils with low prior attainment catch up with their peers.
- Middle leadership is a developing aspect of the school. Senior leaders see middle leaders as key to improving the school further. Middle leaders meet with governors to discuss the progress of their areas of responsibility. Self-evaluation at a subject lead level is developing a focus on pupils' progress so senior leaders can hold middle leaders to account for this key aspect of the school's work.

Governance of the school

- Governors, like leaders, are ambitious for the school and its pupils. They know the community well. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school through the information provided by leaders, by their regular targeted visits to the school and by their, increasingly effective, links with middle leaders. However, inspection evidence shows that the information and judgements that governors have received about the progress of the school and of its pupils, from their advisers, were not focused sharply enough on identifying where progress needs to be more rapid and actions more prompt.
- Governors use effective performance management procedures to help them secure improvements to teaching and learning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The policies and procedures for checking the suitability of visitors and staff recruitment are fit for purpose and secure. Leaders check staff's suitability to work with children appropriately.
- Leaders maintain a culture in the school where staff show a clear understanding of their responsibilities and of the processes that keep pupils safe. As a result, staff promptly identify, and appropriately support, potentially vulnerable pupils. They also tenaciously engage with outside agencies to ensure that pupils get the support they need.
- Pupils have many opportunities to learn how to stay safe, for example in class time, through assemblies and regular visits from outside speakers. Pupils told the inspectors that they regularly learn about how to stay safe online. The vast majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, agree that their children are

safe at school.

- Pupils told the inspectors that they have staff they can go to if they have any concerns. They are confident that adults would listen to their concerns and take prompt and appropriate action. Pupils are appreciative of the way adults at the school take care of them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because, although the majority of teaching is effective, there is too much that is not good enough. As a result, too many pupils are not making the sustained progress that they should.
- Where there is effective teaching at the school, pupils make good progress. This is because pupils are clear about what they have to do next to improve. Staff set out their high expectations clearly and pupils respond enthusiastically. Where the teaching is less effective, pupils make slower progress because they are not sufficiently clear about what they are doing. They do not go into enough depth to make strong, sustained progress in their learning.
- Where teaching is not effective, staff do not use the detailed information that the school gathers about individual and groups of pupils' progress and attitudes consistently enough in their planning. As a result, the work is not focused sufficiently on what pupils need to do to make good and rapid progress.
- Teachers set regular homework in line with the school's policy. Pupils say that they welcome this and the opportunities to work away from school that homework gives them to explore, deepen and extend their learning. This is particularly the case for key stage 3 pupils.
- In some classes, pupils' progress is hampered by work that is not stretching them enough. Some worksheets used in lessons can limit, by the spaces they provide for writing, the amount of detail and depth that pupils can go into. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils. However, inspectors also saw examples of less-able pupils whose progress was being hampered by work that was over-planned by the teacher and that did not give pupils sufficient scope to try out and explore their growing confidence and skills. Expectations for these pupils were not high enough.
- Expectations of what pupils can, and should, be achieving are not, overall, high enough in some classes. In writing, for example, misconceptions and errors of spelling and poorer presentation and handwriting are not being consistently challenged by staff. Staff do not see every task as an opportunity to identify gaps in learning and inform next steps. Pupils, especially the most able, are not being given sufficient opportunities to write at length to develop their skills, ideas and stamina as writers.
- Teachers display generally good subject knowledge and they share their enthusiasm for learning with their pupils. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They are keen to learn and explore. They work well together and want to learn. Where staff subject knowledge is strongest, expectations are very high and questioning develops pupils' understanding. These members of staff also have an awareness of possible misconceptions and can anticipate them in their teaching and questioning.

- Overall, staff use of questioning is effective in helping pupils deepen their understanding. For example, in a Year 5 French class, the teacher very deftly used questioning, both in English and in French, to get pupils thinking about how to question their peers about their pets. She was persistent, precise and targeted in what she asked. Pupils responded with energy and real interest. They then applied the French they had learned and practised in a lively whole-class question and answer session.
- In a lower-ability Year 7 French class, by contrast, although the pupils were enthusiastic, expectations were not high enough, questioning was limited and pupils made little progress. This was borne out by a review of their writing books and folders.
- Overall, teaching assistants are well deployed across the school. They are effectively involved in planning and assessment with their teacher colleagues. However, where the purpose of learning is less certain, the positive impact of teaching assistants' work is less certain.
- The recent introduction of a school-wide adoption of a cursive handwriting script is already having a positive effect on the presentation of pupils' work. Pupils report that they enjoy this and the way it makes their work look good. It is too early to judge whether this improvement will be sustained.
- Pupils work well in collaboration with each other. They demonstrate strong social skills and regular opportunities are taken by staff to develop teamwork. Where pupils are fired by their learning, they are generous spirited, enthusiastic and relish challenge.
- As a result of the leaders' actions, the awareness of the needs and possible barriers to learning of disadvantaged pupils are well known to staff across the school. Staff respond strongly to this with carefully targeted work and support. As a result, these pupils are making similar progress to their peers, both in school and nationally.
- The emphasis the school puts on reading is having a positive effect both on pupils' skills in, and love of, reading. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading and the regular and increased opportunities they have to read during the school day and at home. Links between reading and how it can have a positive effect on improving pupils' skills as writers are also developing. Inspectors saw a number of examples of staff using focused questioning to help pupils make connections between what they were reading and their own writing. The positive effect of this was borne out in a review of pupils' books.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are typically self-confident and articulate. They are willing to share ideas and work collaboratively. They contribute positively to all aspects of the school because they know that their views are valued.
- Pupils have regular access to a range of sports and activities to support their physical well-being. The breadth of the range of activities on offer means that all pupils are able to find an activity which they enjoy and benefit from.
- The school has a counsellor who works with pupils to address any concerns about

behaviour, attitudes or emotional well-being. There is clear inspection evidence that this is having a positive effect on pupils' welfare.

- Pupils wear their uniform with pride. They take very good care of the school and of each other. There is very little litter on the site.
- As a result of the carefully planned actions of the school, pupils are very clear about what bullying is and the various forms it can take. Pupils said that bullying is very rare and that, when it does occur, it is dealt with promptly and well by staff.
- Pupils have a good understanding and knowledge of how to stay safe, including when on the roads and online. Pupils were very complimentary about the opportunities the school gives them to explore and discuss risk.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils interact with each other, and with staff, positively. They enjoy their learning.
- Low-level disruption is rare but does occur when tasks do not sufficiently engage or stretch pupils.
- Rates of exclusion from school are well below those seen nationally.
- As a result of leaders' efforts and high expectations, attendance has been consistently above the national average for the past three years. Records show that the school is quick to identify and respond to any downward trends in pupils' attendance. It works effectively with families to remove, as far as possible, barriers to good attendance. Pupils are very clear about why it is important to attend school regularly.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved over the last 12 months and is, increasingly, close to that of their peers, both in school and nationally.
- Pupils are tolerant and respectful. They demonstrate good learning attitudes and enjoy finding out. However, pupils are not consistently aware of the steps that they can take to use their initiative and, as a result, work at greater depths of understanding.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils enter the school in Year 5 from a range of first schools. The school uses a combination of first school teacher assessments, the key stage 1 test results and its own Year 5 on-entry assessments to establish a point from which to measure progress. Pupils enter Newminster from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of abilities and skills.
- Outcomes require improvement because pupils do not make consistently good and better progress across the school. This is because teaching is not consistently good and staff expectations of what pupils can, and should, be achieving are not always high enough.
- The review and scrutiny of a wide range and number of pupils' books and folders during the inspection showed variability in the progress that pupils made across a range of subjects. This variability was linked to the quality of teaching and the

expectations of staff. Where the expectations and skill of staff are high, pupils made good and better progress. For example, inspectors saw a middle science set where, because of the teacher's high expectations and skill, pupils thoroughly enjoyed their learning and made good progress. This was evident from their books which were well presented with evidence of carefully drawn diagrams and charts for presenting data.

- In geography and history, particularly in key stage 3, the curriculum does not consistently cover sufficient ground for pupils to make good progress. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils. In English, in key stage 3, there are regular opportunities to write at length in a range of genres for a range of purposes and audiences.
- Writing, although improving, is too variable in its quality, depth and presentation. From the evidence seen in the wide sample of books and folders scrutinised, there is variability not only in what staff expect their pupils to achieve, but also in the ways pupils present their work. In many books and folders, there is clear evidence that pupils take pride in their work. They correct spellings and set out their work neatly. In too many books, however, these high expectations are not insisted on by staff.
- In mathematics, there is some variability in the range and diet of the mathematics being studied. In some classes, because of the variability of staff expectations, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use reasoning to deepen their understanding and skill.
- Reading is a developing strength across the school and it is starting to have a positive effect on the quality of writing. Most staff are helping pupils to make positive connections between what they are reading and the development of their own skills as writers. Reading books are readily available for pupils. There are opportunities at school and at home to read each day. There is an attractive library at the heart of the school. This is used more systematically by pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Across the school, disadvantaged pupils make progress from their starting points that is similar to that of their peers, both at school and nationally. However, although improving, not enough of these pupils are yet achieving at greater depth.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the staff's detailed knowledge of their needs and teaching which breaks down tasks into manageable steps. The leader for this area of the school's work has also identified key areas for next steps in further improving the provision for these pupils.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in learning. There are careful and detailed links with the high school. For example, English staff from Newminster and King Edward VI High School work closely together to prepare work on a shared text.
- Careers education is a strength of the school. Pupils, especially as they move into key stage 3, have many opportunities to reflect on their skills and explore their options as they begin to think about careers. There are strong links with local business. Pupils in Year 8 attend a careers fair at a commercial off-site venue where representatives from a wide range of local and regional employers are present to discuss and explore next steps.

School details

Unique reference number	137748
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10037744

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 sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	531
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Paul Carvin
Executive headteacher	Simon Taylor
Telephone number	01670 513621
Website	www.the3rivers.net
Email address	simon.taylor@the3rivers.net
Date of previous inspection	26–27 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Three Rivers Learning Trust with three local schools, King Edward VI High School, Chantry Middle School and Abbeyfields First School. There is a board of directors who are the accountable body. Each school in the trust has a local governing body, called its academy council, and a head of school. There is an executive headteacher who leads the four schools in the trust.
- This is smaller than the average-sized middle, deemed secondary, school providing education for pupils aged nine to 13.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below average.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in all classes in the school. In a number of lessons, they were accompanied by the head of school or assistant headteacher.
- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, other senior leaders, middle leaders and members of the academy council, including the chair. The lead inspector spoke with the school's improvement partner on the telephone. Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including that related to safeguarding, achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and conduct at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors scrutinised a wide sample of pupils' work from all year groups and in a range of subjects.
- Throughout the two days of the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their learning, safety and well-being. They also listened to pupils read and talked with them about their reading experiences. The lead inspector visited the school library.
- Inspectors took account of the 133 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The lead inspector also reviewed responses from 113 parents via the free-text facility. In addition, he took into account 76 responses from pupils and 37 responses from staff to the online questionnaires conducted during the inspection.

Inspection team

Mark Evans, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kirsty Godfrey	Her Majesty's Inspector
Malcolm Kirtley	Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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