

Marden Bridge Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108635
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	309751
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	490
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tim Flood
Headteacher	Mr Alan Driver
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	Lovaine Avenue Whitley Bay Tyne and Wear NE25 8RW
Telephone number	0191 2008725
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average middle-deemed secondary school. The majority of pupils are from White British families. The proportion of pupils who do not have English as their first language is below average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is just below average. The school is situated in an urban area with an average level of social advantage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including a statement of special educational need, is average. Pupil mobility is higher than average. Pupils often join the school in Year 7, rather than Year 5, because of the two and three-tier systems which operate in Tyneside.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which pupils are proud to attend, and which offers them a good quality of education. The school is very much at the heart of the community and is justly proud of its sports facilities used extensively by the local community. The ethos of the school is positive. Most pupils enjoy school and their attendance is above average. The great majority of parents praise the school for many aspects of its work, including good teaching, leadership and the care taken by the school to look after their children. A minority expressed the view that they would like better and more frequent communication between parents and school.

Pupils' personal development is good with some aspects which are outstanding. Pupils are friendly, well mannered and act responsibly. They concentrate well in classes, enjoy lessons, and are keen to learn. They have an excellent understanding of how to look after their safety, health and well-being. The outstanding extra-curricular sporting programme and school trips to places of local interest, and abroad, enable the pupils to appreciate the wider world outside of the school and the area in which they live. These enrichment activities, recognised with the prestigious 'Sportsmark' accreditation, also mean that large numbers of pupils regularly engage in physical exercise, as part of the school's approach to healthier living. Older pupils are very keen to contribute to the day-to-day running of the school, help the younger ones settle in and add their voice to decisions about the school's active place in the local community. The school has very successfully developed a range of traditions that encourage and challenge pupils, for example, playground peacemakers and junior sports leaders. Behaviour continues to improve and is good across the school.

Pupils reach standards that are above those expected for their age by the end of Year 8. They achieve well during their four years in school. Currently pupils achieve better in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6 (Key Stage 2). Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 were average in 2007 and results have fluctuated between average and above average during the last five years. Teaching is consistently good. Pupils make good progress in lessons but homework is not used with sufficient consistency to extend and develop pupils' independent learning. Because of their good academic standards and personal development pupils are well prepared for adult life.

The headteacher and senior leaders ensure that arrangements for safeguarding and protecting pupils are in place. The school provides a nurturing community where every child is treated as an individual. There are excellent links with a wide range of outside agencies and providers. Raising and maintaining good academic standards has a high priority. Challenging targets are established through the newly established system for tracking of academic progress. Staff are gradually developing their expertise in using this information to measure pupils' rate of progress accurately and to plan lessons more precisely. This new tracking system needs to be further embedded. Governance and financial management are good. All the matters raised at the last inspection have been resolved and the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of national tests results in English, mathematics and science for Year 6 pupils so that they are at least good from year to year.
- Strengthen the use of homework across the curriculum.
- Ensure that information on tracking pupils' academic progress is accurate so that it can better inform and improve the monitoring of pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and by Year 8 pupils reach standards that higher than those expected for their age. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is average. In 2007 pupils made satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 and reached average standards by the end of Year 6. In the past five years standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have fluctuated between average and above average. Mathematics is consistently the strongest of the core subjects and English is the weakest. In 2007, all pupils in Year 6 were entered for a nationally accredited language test in French. Their results were well above national expectations and showed good achievement.

In Years 7 and 8 the rate of progress across the curriculum accelerates and their achievement is good. Inspection evidence, including the school's new academic tracking system, shows that standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, as well as in a range of other foundation subjects, by the end of Year 8. In 2007, 46 pupils in Year 8 took Key Stage 3 national tests in mathematics a year earlier than usual, having followed a condensed two-year course. They reached above average standards and achieved very well. By 2009 the school plans to enter the entire year group for these tests. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, relative to their starting points, because they receive effective classroom support and encouragement and work which is well matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. They enjoy school life and attend well. Pupils behave well in lessons and feel that the mentoring system and support area help those who sometimes misbehave. This support has been successful in that no pupils have been excluded from school this year. One such pupil said that 'the school helped turn me around and got me back on track'. Pupils are proud of their school and they say that it takes account of their views. The school council has been instrumental in many recent developments such as the designing of the new uniform and introduction of a tuck shop selling healthy foods at break. One pupil said that 'There is not much I would alter because the school council has already helped to change things'. Older pupils called 'peacemakers' support the younger ones through a buddy system and as sports leaders at lunchtimes. They enjoy these responsibilities and feel that they help them to develop as people as well as supporting others. One pupil said that 'I love it at this school because we are given lots of responsibilities'. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. Incidents of bullying are low and pupils report that these are dealt with sympathetically and effectively. Pupils make outstanding contributions to the community through charity fundraising events, links with a local special needs school, and participation in the Whitley Bay World Café. This enables them to have a say in the development of their town. The school prepares pupils well for adult life through good careers guidance, links with local industry and participation in events such as 'Safety Works' as well as the promotion of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and pupils are learning quickly. An atmosphere of calm and industry pervades the school. Relationships are good so all groups of pupils feel relaxed in class and ready to be fully engaged. They say that they enjoy their lessons, especially when the teacher provides them with a variety of tasks and the opportunity to conduct experiments or practical work. They know that they are getting on well because teachers mark their work carefully and point the way towards improving it. The planning of lessons, teachers' clear explanations and the use of ICT to present tasks, diagrams and other visual information are key features. Consequently, learning through a sequence of logical steps, is secure and consolidated. Frequently, teachers' enthusiasm and a strong pace rub off on the pupils who respond by giving their full attention and working quickly. However, teachers do not set enough homework to enable pupils to fully benefit from opportunities to work independently. Classroom assistants are very effective in assisting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve well. Occasionally in weaker, but nevertheless satisfactory lessons, the pace is too slow because teachers talk for too long and pupils find it difficult to maintain full concentration.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides all groups of pupils with a good quality curriculum with secure pathways for making strong progress in their academic studies and personal development. It meets all statutory requirements for National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The school class timetables are carefully constructed to ensure that pupils almost always receive teaching from specialists in the subjects that they study. An effective emphasis on literacy and numerical skills provides pupils with smaller classes, and extra help when they need it. The success of this programme is reflected in the above average standards that pupils reach by the end of Year 8. However, the potential of homework to further speed the progress that pupils make is still to be explored. Healthy eating and the importance of physical activity are key features and positively improve the choices that pupils make. Pupils are keen to take part in an extremely wide range of sporting and community activities which strongly support their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and contributes significantly to the personal development of the pupils. A caring ethos extends throughout the school and pupils feel that teachers are generally very supportive of their needs. Comprehensive arrangements are in place for risk assessment, child protection and safety. Strong partnerships with outside agencies help to provide sensitive and effective care and extra support for pupils. A key feature of the school's commitment to the pastoral care and welfare of the pupils is the mentoring system and the behaviour support programme, which successfully underpin their personal development and achievement. Extensive links with partner primary and secondary schools ensure good transfer arrangements into Year 5 and then into Year 9. Arrangements for tracking pupils' progress towards their learning targets have been strengthened. However, systems are not yet consistently accurate in all subjects. Most pupils know which level of attainment they have reached in each

subject and what they are aiming for in their learning. Sometimes pupils are not always clear of what they need to do next in order to reach their challenging targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an effective leader supported well by the deputy headteacher and other key staff. Together they ensure that pupils are well cared for and set high expectations for achievement. Clear direction is set at all levels. School improvement planning identifies priorities but is not as secure in developing measures for evaluation. Subject leaders are fully involved in monitoring the quality of work in their areas of responsibility and teachers are becoming more skilful in using the wealth of data that is collected to improve their teaching and measure progress. A new system for tracking the academic progress of pupils has been in place since September and it is already giving the school a much more accurate and detailed picture of the rate of pupils' progress. This system needs to be sharpened and more firmly embedded. Governors carry out their responsibilities well and strike a good balance between supporting the school and challenging it to do even better. The budget is managed well and secures good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marden Bridge Middle School, North Tyneside, NE25 8RW

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited you in school this week. We really enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views about school. We have used some of the things you told us about to write this report. We were impressed by your courtesy and good manners. We agree with you that yours is a good school and we can see why you are proud of it.

These are some of the things about your school that we particularly liked:

- the happy atmosphere in the school and the way you support each other
- the good teaching and the strong teamwork of all the adults in school
- the good progress that you make, particularly in years 7 and 8
- your good behaviour and your positive attitudes to school
- the way that you all contribute to a safe and caring ethos in the school
- the outstanding and interesting range of activities that enrich your curriculum
- your understanding of how to keep fit and healthy
- the really positive contribution you make to the school and wider community by being peacekeepers, sports leaders, helping pupils at Glebe School and being members of the school council
- the good leadership and management in your school.

To help make the school even better we would like to see pupils in Years 5 and 6 making as much good progress as those in Years 7 and 8 do. We think you should have more regular homework in Years 7 and 8 and we know the school is working hard to develop a good system for checking exactly how much progress you are all making. You can help by following the advice and guidance from your teachers.

Good luck for the future and continue to look after each other.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw, John Paddick and David Bridgewater

Inspectors