

Seahouses Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122315
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314266
Inspection dates	29–30 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Gina White HMI

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	133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Brooks
Headteacher	Miss Julie Harris
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2005
School address	James Street Seahouses Northumberland NE68 7YF
Telephone number	01665 720473
Fax number	01665 721756

Age group	9–13
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. As part of Ofsted's induction programme another HMI was present observing the inspection.

Description of the school

The school is small and serves a rural community on the north east coast. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Pupils are mostly White British with less than 1% from other Black and minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is 27% and this is above the average nationally. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school gained Investors in People in 2005, and Sportsmark and a Healthy School award in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Seahouses Middle School provides a good education for pupils and is well led and managed. Its strengths are in the wide ranging curriculum enrichment and the good contribution it makes to pupils' personal development. Parents are very supportive of the school; one parent commented, 'I cannot speak too highly of the support the school has given to my children.'

Most pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve above average results by the time they leave at the end of Year 8. Progress for small numbers of pupils is uneven across the school. Better systems for checking pupils' progress are developing. However subject leaders' and managers' use of data lacks sharpness in alerting them quickly enough to where progress slows for groups of pupils.

Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good and attendance is above average. Pupils readily recognise the benefits they get from attending this happy and welcoming school. Pupils say they are becoming confident and independent as a result of organising charity activities, participating in drama productions and in providing support to each other. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles.

Teaching and learning are good and pupils are acquiring new skills in mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT). Target setting, guidance and feedback to pupils are well modelled in some lessons and subjects, but not all are as effective as they might be. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning have not alerted leaders quickly enough to tackle these inconsistencies.

Leaders and managers are honest in identifying what needs to be done to improve further and together with the many strengths in provision there is satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement robust systems to regularly check the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Sharpen leaders' and managers' use of data to evaluate the progress pupils make.
- Ensure every pupil receives regular feedback and guidance on how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

School data show pupils' attainment in mathematics and English dips on entry to the school at the start of Year 5. Results from recent testing show a significant number of pupils have difficulty in reading age-appropriate texts, in spelling and in constructing sentences. Assessments at the end of Year 5 and at the end of Year 6 show that the vast majority of pupils overcome this blip and make good progress.

Since the last inspection, pupil performance overall has met most of the governors' targets and results have been above the local authority average for middle schools. However, a trend of above average attainment in national tests dipped in 2007. Year 6 pupils achieved results broadly in line with the average nationally and results in mathematics were below average. In response, the school has targeted support to the pupils and introduced a range of strategies to tackle shortcomings. Many of the strategies are at an early stage of development.

Most pupils improve rapidly in the last two years as they move through the school and they achieve above average results by the end of Year 8. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in relation to their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and this is well demonstrated in their good attendance, behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. Their moral, social and cultural development is good and their spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils' social skills are strong. They make a good contribution to the wider community and to their school as a result of undertaking useful jobs around school and acting as council representatives, mentors and class monitors. Pupils recognise and value the good team work skills they are developing and demonstrate safe practice adequately in lessons. With these attributes and good ICT skills, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Key strengths throughout the school are the good relationships between teachers and pupils, well established routines, pupils' willingness to learn and a strong emphasis on team work. Teachers make effective use of ICT to enliven learning and this is well demonstrated in geography and history projects. Pupils are appreciative of the efforts staff make in teaching them strategies to help them learn more effectively in English and mathematics. In the best lessons teachers have a good awareness of individual pupils, plan learning effectively and tailor work to match individual needs.

Good examples were seen of engaging pupils in assessment and target-setting in Year 8 in ICT, English and mathematics; however the practice is inconsistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall and is outstanding in meeting the specific needs and interests of a small number of pupils with complex learning needs. A particular strength is the range of enrichment, extra-curricular and residential activities. Visits and visitors are used well to support pupils' development of personal, social, health education and citizenship. All pupils have a good allocation of time for physical education and access to a wide range of sports activities. Specialist provision in English, music, physical education and ICT contribute well to pupils' progress. Links between subjects are developing and opportunities for extended writing, investigation and research skills are more firmly in place in Year 8 than Year 5.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care and support are good. Staff know pupils well; pupils feel safe and parents are happy with the support they receive from the school. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and partnerships with specialist services and parents are good. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place and meet requirements. Pupil mentors play a key role in

helping younger pupils settle into the school. Training has enabled mentors to provide a good service in listening to pupils concerns and mediating disputes. Consequently, bullying is rare and the school has maintained a record of no exclusions.

Procedures for providing academic advice and guidance to pupils are inconsistently applied and pupils do not receive sufficient feedback about the progress they are making or how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and day-to-day management is effective. Staff are hardworking and there is a strong sense of teamwork within the school to raise standards. This is demonstrated in the willingness to tackle new projects and to adopt new strategies in teaching and learning. Governors are supportive of the school and are well informed about the latest developments. They work closely with school staff and have brought about improvements since the last inspection by using resources effectively and in strengthening the use of ICT.

Leaders at all levels know the school's strengths and weaknesses. School improvement plans identify the key priorities to take the school forward. However, the rigour with which policies are implemented and monitored is uneven. For example, equality of opportunity is well demonstrated in the regular monitoring of racial incidents and in action to meet the curriculum needs of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Systems for checking how well the school is performing are in place but they are not implemented with sufficient rigour to maintain high quality across all aspects of teaching and learning. Inconsistencies remain between subjects and year groups in implementing the school's marking policy and in the setting of learning targets in all subjects. The school acknowledges that these aspects are not working as effectively as they should. Its capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	2
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?	3

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Seahouses Middle School, Northumberland, NE68 7YF

Thank you for your warm welcome and your help in contributing to the recent inspection of your school. You were courteous and polite, and I was pleased to hear about the things that you enjoyed doing and were proud of at your school. This is what I found out:

Seahouses is a good school and has many strengths. It provides you with a good education and most of you are making good progress and achieve above average standards in your work. You told me that you enjoy coming to school because it is a friendly and happy place to be. Many of you say that there are lots to do and the clubs, activities and visits are helping you to develop new skills and confidence. We found that you are well taught and most teachers carefully plan their lessons to include tips to help you learn better. You get on well with each other and your teachers, and feel safe when you are at school. Many of you said pupil mentors are the first people you would talk to if you had a problem or were unhappy. Your school is well led and the headteacher, governors and staff have a clear idea of what needs to be done to make your school even better. In order to help them do this more quickly I have asked them to:

- regularly check the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school; you can play your part by giving your views about what is working really well, and where it can be better
- make better use of data to check how well all of you make progress in your work
- make sure everyone's work is regularly marked and that each of you knows what you need to do to improve your work in each subject.

Thank you again for your help and good luck with your studies.

Yours sincerely

Gina White HMI