

Seaton Sluice Middle School

Alston Grove, Seaton Sluice, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE26 4JS

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is improving rapidly. All groups of pupils achieve well from their starting points in Year 5 and their attainment is on a rising trend. By the end of Year 8 a good proportion exceed the level expected for their age in English and in mathematics.
- Behaviour is good in and out of the classroom. In lessons where the work set is challenging, pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are friendly, caring and supportive of each other. They have no concerns about bullying; they have complete trust in teachers to look after them and say they feel very safe at school.
- Good teaching and well-planned lessons mean pupils are motivated to learn and progress at a good rate. Teaching assistants give well-planned support to pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs. This ensures that these pupils make the same good progress as others in their learning.
- The headteacher has an unrelenting focus on raising pupils' attainment and achievement. He inspires staff and pupils to strive to be the best they can be. All leaders demonstrate the ambition and skill to drive improvement and raise pupils' achievement further.
- Governors, too, are ambitious for pupils to succeed. They know the school well and give good support to improve it further. The management of teachers' performance is well used to increase the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching and pupils' achievement are not outstanding overall. Not all pupils have regular opportunities for problem solving, especially in mathematics lessons.
- The most effective teaching and learning methods are not yet fully shared across the staff.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons and part lessons, three of which were shared observations with senior staff. Inspectors listened to pupils from several classes read.
- Discussions were held with senior staff, groups of pupils from all year groups, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school’s self-evaluation of its work, the school’s improvement plan, the school’s data for tracking the progress of pupils, and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 20 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also took account of 18 responses from staff.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Greame Clarke	Additional Inspector
Clive Petts	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This middle-deemed secondary school is much 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 and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is average.
- Almost all pupils are from White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is below average, but the proportion who are supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision involving off-site education for pupils.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set out minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is federated with Whytrig Community Middle School and Astley Community High School. All three schools share the same governing body. Whytrig Community Middle School was inspected at the same time as this one. Each school will receive a separate report, published on the Ofsted website. Astley Community High School was inspected in February 2012, and that inspection report is published on the Ofsted website. The federation achieved specialist status in mathematics and information and communication technology in July 2009.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching thereby improving pupils' progress and their achievement to outstanding by:
 - sharing the most effective teaching methods with all staff so that all pupils benefit from the most absorbing and efficient ways of learning
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to engage in problem-solving activities so that they apply their good basic skills to real life situations, especially in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- School data and work in books at the start of the year indicate that overall, pupils' attainment is below what is expected for their age when they join in Year 5.
- Results in national tests in 2012 showed that the progress of all groups of pupils had increased significantly on the previous year in reading, writing and mathematics. Results in English were significantly above the latest reported national figures for all groups of Year 6.
- Pupils make good progress when they move through the school. In some instances, where they are taught by subject specialists, pupils' progress is exceptional, for example in French, physical education and for some groups in English and mathematics. By the end of Year 8, a significant proportion of pupils exceed the expected levels for their age in these subjects. However, learning does not progress at this rate in all classes, so achievement is sometimes inconsistent between subjects.
- Reading is well taught and pupils have plenty of opportunities to read during the school day. Their reading is fluent and they show a good understanding of what they read. Literacy and numeracy skills are well used in other subjects. For example, work in geography books shows pupils writing independently about topics and using mathematical knowledge to calculate from graphs. There are not always regular problem-solving opportunities for pupils to apply new mathematical skills in some mathematics lessons.
- Pupils seize opportunities to show their best and keep going, sometimes even when faced with very challenging work. Work in books shows that they sustain this good effort over time.
- Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs are well supported by skilled teaching assistants who have a good understanding of their needs and how they learn best. Good teamwork between teaching assistants and teachers provides tasks that are accessible to these pupils so they do not become reliant on adult support to succeed. School data and work in books show that these pupils progress at the same good rate as others.
- Pupil premium funds are well used to provide intensive teaching for small groups, one-to-one support and additional resources for learning. Consequently, pupils for whom this funding is allocated make the same progress as others. In the 2012 tests at the end of Year 6, these pupils had the same point score for English as others and their mathematics score was very close to others. Overall, they scored above the national average for their group.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and there is an increasing proportion of outstanding teaching. The sustained focus on improving teaching since the previous inspection has created a strong, supportive professional culture.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort and behaviour in lessons. Relationships are very good, because teachers know their pupils well, and pupils work hard to please their teachers. Mutual respect and trust are high.
- Teachers make good use of questions to check on pupils' understanding and to develop their thinking. In the best examples, teachers give pupils time to think, explain and share their ideas with the class. They follow up with further questions to see if any other pupil can add something new to the learning, as seen in an outstanding Year 8 mathematics lesson on the use of mathematical language.
- Good lesson planning is based on teachers' accurate and up-to-date knowledge of pupils' learning. Teachers use effective methods to assess how well pupils are learning during lessons, and act quickly if they spot any misunderstanding. They mark books regularly, offering praise for work done and advice on how to improve. In the most successful examples, teachers give pupils time at the start of a lesson to act upon their advice to ensure it is always followed.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted through lessons. Pupils

seize opportunities to work together and share their learning. In a challenging lesson about decision making, Year 5 pupils worked extremely hard to decide how to choose who could not stay in a hot air balloon. Good listening and seeing each other's point of view gave pupils clear insights into the complex world around them.

- In lessons that are less effective there are not enough problem-solving activities to allow pupils to apply recently learned skills and knowledge in 'real life' situations. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn independently, from each other through group activities and peer support, such as was the case in an outstanding Year 6 PE lesson. Occasionally, some teachers talk for too long and do not give pupils 'talk time' to explore ideas and ask questions about their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy learning and work hard to succeed. Behaviour is always good in and out of the classroom and it is sometimes exemplary. Just occasionally, pupils are not as engrossed in their learning as at other times because the pace of lessons is slower. Pupils know the rules and follow them sensibly at all times. School records show that good behaviour is typical over time. Pupils' behaviour outdoors in the recent snowy weather was excellent in its regard for the safety of others.
- Caring, vigilant staff ensure that pupils feel safe in school. Pupils and their parents unanimously agree that they are safe. Pupils are taught to assess risks for themselves, for instance in science and technology lessons. For example, they have a good understanding of the risks attached to internet use.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and how to respond. They say that it rarely happens and are absolutely confident that no teacher would ignore it. Any incidents are swiftly dealt with and 'not repeated'.
- Pupils have a real role in improving their school and in helping it to run smoothly. The school council acts upon suggestions for improvement from pupils, for example, in developing the wildlife area. Older pupils play a significant part at break and lunchtime in looking after younger pupils and ensuring that no one is left out of play.
- The house system works very well in providing an element of competition which helps pupils to encourage each other to attend regularly and work hard in lessons. Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' high enjoyment of school life.

The leadership and management are good

- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher has taken the school from strength to strength. He has been well supported in this by a skilled and dedicated senior team. Together, they gather a comprehensive and accurate picture of where the school needs to improve. Pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, the curriculum and behaviour have all improved significantly, demonstrating the school's capacity for further improvement.
- Highly effective tracking systems keep a close check on pupils' progress and allow teachers to spot any risk of underachievement quickly. The effectiveness of these systems is seen clearly in the closing gaps between different groups so they make consistent progress.
- Teachers' performance is well organised through straightforward, measurable targets linked to pupils' progress, other school priorities and salary progression. The provision of good quality training opportunities has increased the proportion of good or better teaching. Teaching is not yet consistently good or better in all subjects, however, and the school continues to work on sharing the most effective practices. As staff questionnaires confirm, morale is very high.
- All pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. Those who are supported by pupil premium do well because funding is used effectively to help them succeed as well as others. The school

responds quickly to specific needs. For example, a 'signing' club began last term, so that pupils could learn sign language and communicate with a new pupil with hearing impairment. This example typifies the care and support that pervade the school.

- The well-planned curriculum gives pupils many opportunities to discover their talents and interests. Extra-curricular activities abound and the uptake of lunchtime and after-school clubs is high. The local authority's support for teaching and stronger links with feeder schools have made a good contribution to the school's improvement.
- Safeguarding meets requirements; record keeping is exemplary.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and all who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend it to other parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors give good support to the school through regular monitoring of its work and challenge it over its performance. They recognise its strengths, for example the comprehensive and efficient system for checking pupils' progress. Finances are well managed and governors hold the school to account for teachers' standards and the effective use of pupil premium funds.

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	122334
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	402090

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 of pupils on the school roll	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Dungworth
Headteacher	David Street
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2009
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