

# Berwick Middle School

Lovaine Terrace, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 1LA

**Inspection dates** 15–16 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Leaders have rapidly improved the school’s effectiveness, particularly the quality of teaching and students’ achievement, since the last inspection.
- Most teaching is of at least good quality and this enables students to make good progress during their time in the school.
- Students who are not on track to meet the school’s challenging targets are quickly identified; short-term additional support is used well to accelerate their progress.
- Students’ attitudes to learning and each other are typically very positive. Above average attendance reflects their enjoyment of school.
- Students say they feel safe in school and the views of almost all parents and carers shared via ‘Parent View’ confirm this.
- Students experience a rich range of learning activities beyond the classroom which, combined with the effective teaching in all subjects, promotes their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well.
- Staff have embraced opportunities to develop their teaching skills and risen to the challenge of higher expectations for students’ progress to successfully deliver improvements in achievement.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the school’s performance and provide a good balance of support and challenge for leaders.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While all groups of students make good progress, the school recognises it still has more to do to fully address the gaps in performance between different groups that exist when students enter the school, so that those lagging behind can catch up rapidly.
- A small minority of teaching is not consistently good and not enough is outstanding.
- In lessons, planning to meet the needs of all students and strategies to check students’ learning do not always match the best practice seen in the school.
- Leaders’ evaluations of the impact of teaching in lessons do not always focus sharply enough on whether all groups of students are making good or better progress relative to their starting points.
- Improvement planning does not set a clear course towards ‘outstanding’.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 part lessons, five jointly with senior leaders, which were taught by 17 different teachers.
- Inspectors met with a group of students from Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 and talked informally to students around school and in the playground.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and other leaders, a group of staff and the newly appointed Chair of the Governing Body, the outgoing Chair of the Governing Body and another governor. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed data relating to students' attainment, progress and attendance. They also reviewed a range of other documents including those related to safeguarding, students' behaviour and records from the school's monitoring of its work.
- An inspector listened to the reading of a small group of Year 5 students.
- Inspectors considered the 80 responses to the on-line questionnaire 'Parent View', other correspondence and 31 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors looked at samples of students' work during lessons in a range of subjects.

## Inspection team

Katrina Gueli, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patrick Feerick	Additional Inspector
Steven Horne	Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- Berwick Middle School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families or those looked after by the local authority) is below average but increasing.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is low but increasing. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In September 2013, Bridges, a specially resourced provision for disabled students, those with special educational needs and those needing short-term alternatives to mainstream education, was established on the school's site.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is consistently good and much is outstanding by:
  - ensuring all teachers consistently take account of students' prior learning when planning each lesson so activities are always closely matched to the needs of different groups and every student is able to learn well and make at least good progress
  - ensuring all students routinely respond to marking and written feedback to improve their learning
  - making sure the school's best practice in approaches to questioning and checking students' learning and progress are evident in all lessons.
- Improve the impact of leaders and managers by:
  - ensuring evaluations of the quality of teaching always take into account the progress of different groups of students in the class
  - taking swift action to eradicate the remaining variation in students' performance
  - focusing actions and targets in improvement planning more sharply on the steps needed to move the quality of teaching and students' achievement from 'good' to 'outstanding'.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly in line with expectations for their age. They make good progress as they move through the school. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is higher than expected given the progress typically made by students between Year 5 and Year 8. In 2013, students' progress in reading, writing and mathematics between the end of Key Stage 2 and when they left the school improved when compared with students in the previous year.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress because their learning in lessons is supported well and extra teaching in small groups or on a one-to-one basis helps boost their attainment.
- Although it varies a little between different subjects in each year group, overall, the progress of students with higher levels of prior attainment is often more rapid than other students in the school. This reflects the positive impact of the school's work to improve the performance of this group since the last inspection.
- The attainment of boys in writing was slightly above that of girls in 2012, but, despite improved progress, fell below that of girls in 2013.
- Minority ethnic students make similar progress to their peers. The small, but increasing number of students who speak English as an additional language receive specialist teaching to ensure they make good progress.
- Additional funding from the government to help Year 7 students 'catch-up' if they have not reached the levels of attainment expected for their age at the end of Year 6 has been used effectively to accelerate their progress.
- Additional teaching and targeted resources for students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium enable them to make similar progress to other students. However, although gaps in attainment are narrowing, the school has rightly identified that those students eligible for support need to make progress that is even more rapid if gaps are to be completely eliminated by the time they leave the school, particularly in writing. At the end of Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of students supported through the pupil premium was about eight months behind that of other students in English and about six months behind that of other students in mathematics. This was an improvement compared with 2012.
- Reading is promoted well with frequent opportunities for students to read in school and clear expectations for daily reading at home. Students interviewed in all year groups talked confidently about authors they particularly enjoy. Students who need extra help to develop their reading skills are effectively supported and those who met with the inspector said it was helping them to improve.
- Additional government funding for primary school physical education and sport has been used to enhance the existing strong provision with the addition of extra specialist coaching. It is too soon to see the impact of this additional expertise. Student participation in sport is carefully monitored and those with high levels of ability are sign-posted towards external clubs or groups to extend their skills.
- Although very recently established, there are some early indications that 'Bridges' is already helping the school to improve the support for students who require specialist provision or to access learning in a different way.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- The large majority of teaching is of good quality and a very small minority is outstanding.
- Where teaching is at its best, planning takes full account of students' starting points and groups of differing ability are engaged in activities that enable them to make rapid progress. Questioning and other strategies are used skilfully to check where students are in their learning, inform where adjustments to teaching are needed or to move students' thinking on. Successful learning is clearly modelled by teachers so students know how to succeed. Lessons provide a good variety of opportunities for students to work independently and teachers expect that learning will move on at a brisk pace.
- Teaching assistants are well briefed about the purpose of each lesson and effectively accelerate the learning of the students they support. Teachers value their knowledge of individual children and how their particular needs are best met.
- Teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics is being used increasingly well to enable students to consolidate and extend their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Sometimes teaching is not of the good quality usually found. Learning in these lessons is not good or better because activities are not as closely matched to the needs of all students and teachers do not check the progress of all groups carefully enough during the lesson. On occasion, activities planned to challenge higher-attaining students are only reached after they have completed tasks similar to other students so they are not pushed to make good gains in their learning throughout the lesson.
- Marking makes clear to students what they have done well and how they could improve their work further. While students are expected to respond to teacher comments and prompts to improve their learning, in a few examples of work seen students had not done so.
- Homework is regular and tasks are varied. Students feel it typically helps to reinforce learning and also provides opportunities for them to develop useful independent learning skills such as how to research a topic.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Students display largely positive attitudes to learning, each other and adults in the school. Visitors and feedback following visits are highly positive about the way students conduct themselves.
- Students are polite, courteous and show respect for one another's views. The supportive atmosphere within all classrooms means students are willing to share their ideas, 'have a go' at answering a question or raise their own questions to check their understanding. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson, students engaged maturely in a discussion about cultural stereotypes and the risks associated with stereotypical views.
- Occasionally, the behaviour of individuals does fall short of the school's high expectations and at other times, particularly when the quality of teaching is not good, a few students drift off-task.
- Almost all parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire 'Parent View' were confident that the school makes sure students behave well and that their children were well looked after and happy.
- Students say bullying is rare and when it occurs it is dealt with well. They say the school takes a very firm stance on prejudice-based bullying and that homophobic language is not tolerated. They develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe on the internet and in other situations.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection. Good attendance has a high profile in school with its importance linked to successful future employment. Work with individual students who have lower attendance levels and their families has been effective in reducing absence.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher has established a clear vision for the school and sets high expectations for students' achievement that are shared by all staff. The combined efforts of the headteacher, governors, other leaders and the rest of the staff have led to a marked improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection and, as a result, students now achieve well. Many teachers spoke positively to inspectors about the 'change for the better' since the headteacher's arrival in September 2011.
- Since the last inspection, senior and middle leaders have rapidly developed their skills and risen to the challenge of responsibility for whole-school improvement in their respective roles. As a result, they are contributing strongly to the school's ongoing development.
- Leaders gather a broad range of evidence to check the school's performance and use the findings effectively to inform their actions. Evaluations of the quality of teaching identify strengths and areas for development correctly but judgements do not always take sufficient account of the impact of teaching on the progress of different groups of students in the lesson.
- Plans to support the school's improvement are focused on the right things but do not set out precisely how teaching and students' achievement will be improved from 'good' to 'outstanding'.
- The school works closely with the first school and the academy to secure an accurate picture of students' attainment on entry to, and exit from, the school. Targets set for students' progress are ambitious and the tracking of their progress towards them is extremely robust. The school's strong commitment to promoting equality is reflected in leaders' determination to address the few remaining gaps in students' performance.
- The management of teachers' performance is robust and professional development opportunities are carefully balanced between addressing whole-school priorities and helping individuals to improve particular aspects of their practice. Staff value the opportunities they have to work together and reflect jointly on their teaching; they say this approach effectively enhances their skills. Outstanding practice within the school is used well to help other staff to improve aspects of their teaching.
- Subject teaching, enrichment activities, 'house' competitions, links with external partners and a broad range of extra-curricular clubs provide students with a rich and varied experience during their time in the school. This contributes well to their academic achievement and to the development of the personal skills and qualities that will support their success in the next stage of their education and future employment.
- The school is positive about the support it has received from the local authority. This has included an effective programme for the headteacher when she was new to the authority, regular visits to review the school's progress since the last inspection and a separate evaluation of the school's performance to validate its self-evaluation. The local authority has provided additional funding, for example, to contribute to the cost of external professional development courses, enabling training to be attended then disseminated to improve teachers' practice more widely across the school. The headteacher and members of the governing body value the information and updates provided by the local authority which highlight key changes in educational policy and procedures. The use of a local authority clerk for meetings of the governing body has improved the effectiveness of meetings and the quality of minutes recorded. The school has also appreciated the advice available in relation to personnel and financial matters. This has helped the school to conduct complex staffing reviews correctly and manage budgets effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school's performance and their skills are utilised well to provide challenge and support. They know how additional government funding has been spent and have held leaders to account about its impact. They take a key role in shaping strategic decisions about the school including reviews of staffing structures and changes to provision. They have taken time to reflect about how effectively they are meeting the school's needs and, as a result, recently re-structured committees to improve the impact of their work. Those new to role are being supported closely by those stepping down from governance to

ensure a smooth transition. Training is accessed regularly to ensure the knowledge of both new and long-standing governors is up to date. They are robust in managing the headteacher's performance and are aware of how the school takes into account teachers' performance to determine pay and progression.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122354
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	425700

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	333
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Ward
<b>Headteacher</b>	Derryth Hope
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 December 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01289 306140
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