

# Gosforth East Middle School

Harewood Road, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE3 5JT

**Inspection dates** 29–30 April 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Progress and levels of achievement are not consistently good for all groups of pupils, including the most able. As a result, not enough pupils exceed expected levels and attainment levels are not high enough.
- Expectations of what each pupil can achieve are not high enough for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good or better. The level of challenge and the demands made of pupils are not matched well enough to individual abilities. This is because insufficient use is made of the available information on pupils' progress.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make is not consistently fast enough to eliminate the wide attainment gaps in English and mathematics.
- The teachers' written feedback in pupils' book does not make it clear how they can improve their work and requests for corrections are not always followed up.
- The accuracy of pupils' layout and presentation of their work in books requires improvement.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed to foster pupils' critical and analytical thinking. Pupils do not always use reasoning, decision-making, perseverance and resilience when working things out for themselves.

### The school has the following strengths

- The passion and commitment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are evident in strong and secure improvements in achievement. Underperformance in teaching and middle leadership has been addressed rigorously.
- Behaviour in lessons and at social times is good, and sometimes exemplary.
- A friendly, happy and supportive school atmosphere, which reflects the caring school ethos, ensures that pupils feel safe and secure. This is evident in their high levels of attendance.
- The school's very good promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in interesting ways makes a positive contribution to pupils' respectful and courteous attitudes.
- The recently strengthened leadership team has a sharp and effective focus on the school's priority of improving the quality of teaching.
- A diligent governing body is committed and highly supportive. Shrewd in their judgement of school performance, governors are providing robust challenge in holding leaders to account for improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons, including six paired observations carried out with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Work scrutiny was also undertaken with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and around the school in order to check on the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils and had discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders, staff, governors and the school improvement partner.
- The inspectors also examined a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, the school's view of how well it is doing, the monitoring of staff performance, the school's improvement plan and records relating to pupils' progress and behaviour.
- The inspector took account of the 131 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 20 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Irene Lavelle

Additional Inspector

Bernard Clark

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This middle-deemed secondary school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is a foundation school. It is part of the Gosforth Schools' Trust which comprises nine first schools and two middle schools working with local partners in business and higher education.
- Most pupils are of White British backgrounds. A few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- A well below average proportion of the pupils is disadvantaged and therefore eligible for support from pupil premium funding. This funding is for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school has experienced a substantial turnover of staff since the previous inspection, including three recent appointments to the senior leadership team. This includes a deputy headteacher.

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

- Improve teaching to ensure a consistent and sustained pattern of rapid progress and high achievement for all pupils, by:
  - raising expectations much higher of what pupils of all abilities and starting points can tackle and achieve
  - shaping tasks and activities more closely to make sure that demands are set at the correct level, including for the most-able pupils
  - offering more opportunities for pupils to think critically and analytically in determined and resilient ways to enable them to work things out for themselves
  - using questioning relentlessly to check on and test pupils' knowledge and understanding to make sure that any misconceptions are rectified before moving on
  - making certain that marking demands corrections and teachers ensure that these are completed, pupils are provided with well-defined steps for improvement and that work is always presented in accurate and refined ways.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Following the previous inspection, the school's performance declined. However, the much strengthened senior leadership team, very well supported and robustly challenged by the governing body, has successfully reversed this decline, effectively improving the quality of teaching. The sharp and rigorous systems that are now in place to check on pupils' performance are enabling senior leaders to identify weaknesses and any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding accurately and promptly. As a result, inconsistencies in performance, including shortfalls in middle leadership, are being tackled successfully.
- The school's highly positive ethos is underpinned well by effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, the respect and tolerance for difference pupils develop helps to prepare them successfully for life in modern Britain. Staff are working increasingly successfully to make certain that all pupils have an equal chance of success and to eradicate any form of discrimination.
- Leaders and managers are acutely aware of precisely what action is required to secure further improvements in the quality of teaching and sustain the gains made that are accelerating pupils' progress and raising their achievement and attainment securely.
- Effective leadership of teaching is matching training successfully to school, subject and individual staff priorities ever more precisely. Newly qualified staff are well supported. Increased rigour in performance management makes certain that there is no automatic pay progression. Staff know that their success is judged on the achievement of their pupils.
- The curriculum offers a broad and varied range of interesting experiences. For example, a rich variety of visits and visitors, including residential experiences, is used extremely well to add to pupils' knowledge and foster pupils' personal development. This includes extending their understanding of key British values, such as fair play and tolerance. The firm emphasis on nurturing a love of reading is improving skills quickly. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to practise literacy and apply numeracy skills in all subjects.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used effectively to enhance staff coaching skills, promote healthy lifestyles and encourage more advanced skills in a variety of sports, such as golf, rock climbing and squash. Participation rates in clubs and teams are high and this includes sport camps held both at school and at local clubs during school holidays.
- Pupil premium funding is used increasingly effectively to close the wide attainment gaps apparent in recent national tests. This is evident in the school's most recent pupil progress data, with gaps closing quickly, especially in reading, writing and spelling. A good range of enrichment activities helps broaden pupils' experiences, add to their enjoyment and inspire new skills.
- Safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet requirements. Procedures are well established and much good practice is adopted in the day-to-day management, care, support and protection of pupils.
- Positive links are maintained with parents and the wider community. Despite the large measure of positive support in their responses to the online questionnaire, a few parents felt that teaching could be even more effective and that they could be better informed of their children's progress.
- The school achievement partner has an accurate view of the school's performance, because he challenges and holds the senior leaders to account. In addition, the support and expertise available in the Trust adds to the effectiveness of senior leadership, such as in financial control and management.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The effectively-led governing body brings much vision, experience and expertise to its drive to strengthen the quality of education provided by the school. Members of the governing body demonstrate an accurate grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, including in the quality of teaching, leadership and management. This is evident in their determination to strengthen senior and middle leadership still further.
  - Governors check on information about pupils' progress systematically, challenge and hold leaders to account robustly and ensure that performance management is rigorous. This includes ensuring that extra funding for the disadvantaged is having the intended impact on raising standards and skills.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. At times, the conduct of pupils is exemplary. This is the result of a highly positive school ethos which promotes respect, tolerance and consideration for others very effectively. In classrooms and at social times, relationships between pupils and with adults are often excellent in the happy, calm school atmosphere.
- Pupils report that disruption in any form is infrequent. This is because pupils follow school routines well and are fully aware of the boundaries that are set for their conduct. Now and then, when their concentration and level of commitment slips in lessons, the pace of learning can slow.
- Pupils are well informed about bullying in all of its different forms. This includes cyber-bullying. Pupils confirm that mean or unkind behaviour is rare and that staff are always on hand to listen, help and resolve any worries or concerns that they may have. They are interested in the activities provided for them and are prepared to work hard, especially when 'switched-on' by tasks that are thought-provoking, inspiring and engaging.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. High quality support is provided to ensure that pupils learn how to identify risk and danger. Typically, pupils are sensible, trustworthy and safety conscious, such as when in a science laboratory using Bunsen burners and candles or making certain that food hygiene standards are followed.
- At times, first-class care and bespoke support is provided for individual pupils who are potentially vulnerable, those who are anxious and those with complex needs. Absence rates are consistently low, which reflects the high level of enjoyment of school life. This is the result of the happy, friendly and busy school atmosphere and the robust systems for monitoring absence.

## The quality of teaching requires improvement

- In spite of the appreciable evidence of improvement, the impact of teaching over time is still too uneven. Although the pace of progress is accelerating in English and mathematics, leading to clear gains in achievement for pupils of all starting points, attainment in most subjects is not high enough.
- The positive role models that staff provide help to create an encouraging climate for learning in classrooms and around the school. For example, in the library, staff work tirelessly and creatively to nurture pupils' love of reading. Staff rapport with pupils is good and sometimes excellent. Despite their detailed insight into the personal needs of pupils, staff do not make enough use of the good quality progress information which is available to tailor tasks to meet individual abilities. As a result, opportunities are missed to inspire and stretch pupils' thinking, extend their knowledge and deepen their understanding systematically.
- At times, when the rate of pupils' progress is variable and achievement requires improvement:
  - expectations of what each pupil is capable of achieving, including in the accuracy of layout of their work in books, are not high enough
  - activities are not matched or adapted well enough to pupils' needs to encourage learning at a fast pace
  - questioning does not check on, test and extend pupils' thinking relentlessly enough
  - opportunities are missed for pupils to practise their essential skills in all subjects, including their literacy skills.
- When progress exceeds expected rates and achievement is rising progressively:
  - staff adopt approaches closely matched to pupils' abilities and interests, and incorporate that essential spark to inspire their thinking
  - staff are clear about what each pupil can achieve and make certain that learning demands are always challenging
  - searching questioning tests out pupils' thinking and understanding continuously to ensure that any gaps or misunderstandings are pinpointed and promptly addressed
  - helpful, frequent marking identifies what has been completed well and precisely how work can be improved.

- When staff expectations are high and pupils' progress rates faster, imaginative use is made of motivating tasks to inspire pupils' thinking and imagination. For example, a group of older pupils were observed totally absorbed composing their own adaptation of *Oh Sinner Man*. Pupils were confident in taking responsibility for their own learning, thinking critically, reasoning, making decisions and justifying their ideas or solutions. However, this inspiring teaching is not shared widely enough.
- The marking of pupils' work is increasingly consistent in its quality and helpfulness because of the positive action taken by leaders. Good use is made of praise to ensure that pupils grasp what they have completed well. Nevertheless, pupils are not always required to complete corrections; guidance for improvement is too variable in its quality and insufficiently challenging, for example, encouraging pupils to apply their skills more widely.

## The achievement of pupils

## requires improvement

- Pupils enter the school with skills and experience which are broadly typical for their age. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds settle really well in the warm, welcoming and happy atmosphere. Despite this positive start, there is too much variation in the rate of pupils' progress as they move through the school and, as a result, pupils' achievement requires improvement. This includes in English and mathematics for pupils of all abilities. Consequently, attainment is not as high as it could be.
- In national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2014, attainment was average in mathematics, reading, writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Overall, too few pupils exceeded what is expected of them, despite an above average proportion of pupils reaching the highest levels in mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, concerted action has been taken by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching and raise expectations of what each pupil can achieve. The impact of this action can be seen in the clear trend of faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics, including for those pupils for whom English is an additional language. As a result, attainment is rising steadily after a dip as the challenge to pupils' thinking and the demands that are made of them become consistently higher for all pupils.
- Similarly, progress in Years 7 and 8 is quickening in all subjects, including English and mathematics, as the expectations of what pupils can achieve rise. This is helping to ensure that pupils are better prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Disabled pupils or who have special educational needs make progress similar to that of their classmates, although in individual cases, progress is good as a result of the effective classroom support that they receive. Increasingly sharply focused intervention programmes, such as in reading and spelling, are adding to the whole-school drive to quicken progress and boost achievement in challenging and consistent ways.
- The most-able pupils are responding positively to the improving teaching which is demanding more of them. Their achievement is rising, quickly in the case of mathematics, where stimulating and thought-provoking tasks are leading to higher than average proportions attaining the highest levels. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to extend pupils' knowledge and deepen their understanding in all subjects even more.
- Staff are working conscientiously to narrow and eliminate the wide gaps in attainment between disadvantaged and other pupils. At the end of Year 6 in the 2014 national tests, disadvantaged pupils were between three and four terms behind other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Compared to their classmates, the gaps were similar. In spelling, punctuation and grammar, gaps were wider both within school and with others nationally. In the current Year 6, gaps in comparison with others nationally are narrowing quickly in reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is because pupils' progress is quicker and the pattern more consistent. In mathematics, gaps are not closing as quickly. Similarly, attainment gaps in Year 7 and Year 8 are closing because of well-targeted catch-up programmes, including some resulting from the use of Year 7 catch-up funding. This is confirmed by the school's pupil progress information, observation evidence and work in pupils' books.
- Pupils read widely and often because of the extensive variety of interesting opportunities provided for pupils to enjoy reading, such as in the library. A love and enjoyment of reading is evident when pupils discuss their favourite authors and themes. Sharply focused intervention is tackling weakness, such as in their spelling, successfully. Consequently, pupils' fluency and accuracy when reading and comprehension are steadily improving.

## 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>	108521
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle Upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	456111

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>	479
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	George Snaith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tim Stout
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 285 5445
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