

Morpeth Chantry Middle School

Mitford Road, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 1RQ

Inspection dates

17–18 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils, particularly in writing and in mathematics, has declined in recent years. At the end of Year 6, far fewer pupils than nationally make or exceed expected progress. This is particularly the case for pupils supported by pupil premium funding.
- Pupils' writing skills are not sufficiently developed and the presentation of their work is not always of a high enough standard. There are too few opportunities in the curriculum for them to practise extended writing.
- Teaching has not been good enough over time to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they could.
- The school's systems for evaluating the quality of teaching are not effective and so leaders and directors have an overly positive view of the quality of teaching in the school. Performance management arrangements have too little impact.
- Middle leaders do not yet play a strong enough role in improving the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough, particularly for the most-able pupils. Work set can at times lack challenge.
- Marking is not always effective in helping pupils to improve their work, particularly for spelling and punctuation errors. Pupils do not always complete corrections or respond to advice given in marking.
- While senior leaders have an understanding of how to improve the school, they do not check carefully enough that their actions are making improvements to pupils' learning.
- Directors have not challenged school leaders effectively and have been too reliant on senior leaders for information on how well the school is doing.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher and directors hold high aspirations for pupils and have begun to take steps to make the required improvements.
- The school's work in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effective.
- Pupils are proud of their school and participate enthusiastically in a range of clubs and activities. They behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe at school, in the wider community and online. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that staff will address any problems that arise.
- A very large majority of parents, staff and pupils are highly supportive of the work of the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that progress is at least good in all subjects for all pupils by:
 - developing and implementing a school-wide strategy for improving teaching, monitoring its impact and holding staff closely to account
 - ensuring that all teachers comply fully with agreed policies, for example in marking
 - ensuring that teachers have high expectations of all pupils and adapt learning activities so that the most-able pupils are challenged to master more complex ideas and concepts
 - increasing opportunities for developing pupils' writing skills, especially spelling, across all subjects
 - insisting that pupils' work is always completed and presented to a high standard.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - middle leaders are fully involved in evaluating the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility so that they are held accountable for tackling any identified weaknesses
 - inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are tackled through rigorous performance management and stronger accountability of staff
 - funding provided through the pupil premium is used more effectively in raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the actions leaders have taken to strengthen the quality of teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement have been too slow or ineffective. Senior and middle leaders have not shown sufficient capacity to address the decline in pupils' progress in writing and in mathematics and the poor achievement of disadvantaged pupils over the last three years.
- Self-evaluation is over-generous and is based on an inflated view of pupils' performance. The executive headteacher has recently identified many of the areas that require improvement but the school development plan fails to focus specifically enough on actions that will overcome these and leaders have been over-optimistic about what has been achieved.
- Checks by leaders on the quality of teaching have not been challenging or rigorous enough to bring about rapid improvement. Senior and middle leaders rely too heavily on observations of teaching in lessons and not enough on understanding the impact that teaching over time is having on pupils' learning to make their judgements. They do not check well enough on the quality of pupils' work, including making sure that work set is challenging and that it is marked to a consistently high standard. Middle leaders have not been adequately held to account for the impact of their actions by senior leaders or the board of directors.
- The school has developed an effective system for collecting and analysing pupils' assessment information but the accuracy of data collected by teachers remains variable. As a result, it is difficult for the school to target additional support rapidly where it is most required.
- Leaders have used pupil premium money to provide additional support for disadvantaged pupils but they have not checked closely enough on the impact this funding is making and so are not aware of which strategies are making the most or least difference.
- The school has recently reviewed the curriculum across the three schools of the trust. The new curriculum, together with an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, are skilfully designed to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are well informed about diversity in British society and are taught to respect and value different cultures and beliefs. They recognise the importance of democracy.
- The school currently receives additional funding as part of the government's physical education and school sport initiative. The provision for sport in the school is good and effective use of the additional sport funding has further raised the profile of physical education across the school.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The board of directors has not been effective in challenging the performance of the school. Directors have taken too much on trust from senior leaders and as a result have only recently fully appreciated the decline in achievement.
 - Until recently, there has been little evidence of directors holding the school's leaders to account, particularly in terms of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, including the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
 - Systems to ensure pay is linked to the improvements in pupils' progress and to make certain that underperformance is tackled rigorously are weak.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching has not enabled pupils to make the progress they should in writing, mathematics and several other subjects. Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching lack rigour, and senior and middle leaders have an over-generous view of teaching in the school.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length. As a result, they are not able to develop and refine their writing skills through exploring and manipulating language accurately and with increasing sophistication.
- The whole-school approach to the marking of spelling is not being consistently applied. Where errors are identified, it is not clear how this marking is helping pupils learn to spell better next time.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They report that they enjoy the challenge inherent in the recently introduced whole-school approach to reading. They talk fluently and well about books and the impact they have on their lives.
- In some lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. As a result, these lessons

are based on all pupils completing the same task rather than making sure that pupils are sufficiently challenged with the work they are given. The most-able pupils are held back because teaching does not move them on quickly enough to more challenging work.

- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, although there is a whole-school approach to marking and assessment, not all staff follow it. As a result, there are inconsistencies of expectation between subjects and across year groups. Pupils are not always clear about how they should respond to teachers' marking and teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils have done what is asked of them.
- Teachers do not use questioning effectively enough to ensure that all pupils make good and better progress. Too often, questions from teachers and other adults focus on 'what' rather than 'why' and 'how'. As a result, opportunities are lost to explore and enjoy complex ideas and resolve difficult problems.
- Pupils do not always take sufficient pride in their work. Too much of the work seen in books is untidy. The school policy on presentation is not consistently implemented and staff do not always follow up these shortcomings.
- There is too much reliance on the use of worksheets in teaching, which limits developing pupils' writing skills and reduces their opportunities to write at length. Too often, pupils are filling in short answers to problems rather than exploring and deepening their knowledge and skills with more open-ended and challenging activities.
- The impact of teaching assistants on learning is variable. There are no clear systems for recording the impact of their work and using this information to inform next steps in pupils' learning.
- The provision for pupils who need additional support with literacy is not effective enough. The school places too much reliance on teaching that takes place outside mainstream lessons. Communications between pupils' teachers and support staff are undeveloped.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They have an accurate understanding of what makes an unsafe situation and are able to talk knowledgeably about online safety and the potential dangers of using social media. They are taught about different forms of bullying, including homophobic and racist bullying, and know that if they witness or experience it, staff would deal with it promptly.
- Bullying is rare. The school keeps detailed and effective records of bullying and racist incidents and uses the information collected effectively to target resources and help measure the impact of their actions on individuals and groups of pupils.
- The school promotes tolerance and understanding through the curriculum, including in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons, tutor periods and assemblies. Each of these makes a good contribution to pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, their self-confidence and their understanding of how to be a successful learner.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Punctuality to school and to lessons is good and this reflects well on pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning. Attendance for all groups of pupils is slightly above the national average. The school is effective in monitoring attendance and leaders act promptly to address poorer attendance through a range of effective strategies.
- Pupils are polite, welcoming to visitors, and aware of the needs of others. They move around the school with care and consideration. They talk fluently and with enthusiasm about their learning and want to do well.
- Observations of lessons confirm that there is very little inappropriate behaviour. Classrooms are orderly and pupils show a keen awareness of the need to take turns and respect the views of others.
- A large proportion of the parents, pupils and staff who responded to the online questionnaires were very positive about the high standards of behaviour in the school.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The achievement of pupils, and in particular disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils, requires improvement because teaching is not good enough. Achievement across all year groups and for most groups of pupils in writing and in mathematics has declined since the previous inspection.
- Pupils join the school in Year 5 with levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics that are at least those expected for their age. In the national Key Stage 2 tests in 2014, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected level in reading was significantly above the national average. Attainment in writing and mathematics was slightly above the national average.
- Unvalidated results from the 2015 national tests, confirmed by lesson observations and a detailed scrutiny of pupils' books, indicate that the proportion of Year 6 pupils making expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics has decreased this year. Attainment in writing and mathematics is now well below the national average.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 achieved levels in reading, writing and mathematics that were around two terms behind other pupils in the school. This gap has now widened and in comparison with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, the attainment of disadvantaged Year 6 pupils was well over a year behind in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The most-able pupils make slow progress because teachers do not always plan work that challenges them. Pupils regularly spend too much time working on tasks and activities that they can already do or that they finish quickly because the work is too easy.
- The achievement of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs is variable and there remain gaps between the achievement of many of these pupils and others. The teacher in charge of supporting these pupils is not yet fully involved in monitoring this aspect of provision and not all teaching assistants are deployed to good effect by classroom teachers.
- Observations of teaching, evidence from pupils' books and discussions with pupils confirm that their progress in subjects across the wider curriculum, including in science and the humanities, also requires improvement. There are few opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length in a variety of contexts in different subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	137747
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10002808

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	511
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Carvin
Headteacher	Simon Taylor (Executive Headteacher)
Telephone number	01670 512874
Website	www.chantry.the3rivers.net
Email address	chantry@the3rivers.net
Date of previous inspection	21 June 2012

Information about this school

- This school caters for pupils aged from nine to 13 years old and is similar in size to the average-sized middle school but much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding 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 majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- No pupils attend any off-site alternative provision.
- Few pupils leave or join the school other than at the beginning and end of the school year.
- The school is part of the Three Rivers Learning Trust. This incorporates Chantry Middle School, Newminster Middle School and The King Edward VI High School. The three schools have the same executive headteacher and one board of directors.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set out the government's minimum standards for pupils' progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 30 lessons and part-lessons, seven of which were observed jointly with the executive headteacher. Lessons were observed in a range of subjects and across the age range of the school.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher and head of school, other members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders and with four members of the board of directors.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's view of its own performance, monitoring records, information about pupils' progress, improvement planning, minutes of meetings of the board of directors, records of behaviour and attendance, and records relating to safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors looked at the work pupils were doing in lessons and over time in their books.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils about the quality of their educational experience and the standard of behaviour in the school. Inspectors also spoke with pupils in lessons and at various times during both days of the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 121 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View, 57 responses to the online pupil questionnaire and 37 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

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