

Berwick Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122354
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314275
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Hancock 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	379
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Watson
Headteacher	Mr David Mulholland
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lovaine Terrace Berwick-upon-Tweed Northumberland TD15 1LA
Telephone number	01289 306140
Fax number	01289 306140

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Berwick Middle School is situated in a market town on the border with Scotland. The school is subject to reorganisation proposals. Nearly all pupils have English as their first language and there are very few students from minority ethnic groups. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There are more pupils with a statement of special educational need than normally found partly because the school has a designated unit which includes pupils with a hearing impairment.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Berwick Middle is a good school with outstanding features. It is continuing to improve under the strong leadership of the new headteacher, supported by a good senior management team and governing body. Capacity to improve is good. For example, attendance has significantly improved since the last inspection in 2004.

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress and achieve well, often from a low starting point. Standards are above average although results at Key Stage 2 in English are lower than they are in mathematics and science. The school is taking effective action to improve achievement in English and the inspection found standards are rising, particularly in writing.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and a proportion is excellent. The quality of assessment has improved since the last inspection. The school recognises there is more to be done, for example, by providing more consistent feedback to pupils on how they can improve their work. The tracking of individual pupil performance is rigorous and information is used well to help pupils learn more quickly and effectively.

Personal development is an outstanding feature. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning, feel safe and well cared for. A typical parent comment was, 'My child is safe and happy at the school and any problems are dealt with sensitively and promptly.' Another outstanding feature is the curriculum, particularly the wide range of well attended activities outside lesson time. Staff know individual pupils very well and work closely as a team. Care, guidance and support are good and contribute positively to pupils' progress. Resources are effectively deployed to achieve good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in English.
- Provide more consistent feedback to pupils on how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. A high proportion of pupils start with attainment and skills that are below average. All groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 8. Overall performance has met and exceeded targets, despite a dip in the 2007 results due to a cohort with more pupils with below average attainment.

Progress in mathematics and science is better than in English. The school is taking effective action to raise achievement in English.

Standards at Key Stage 2 steadily increased over the 4 years to 2006 to above average, and fell close to average in 2007. In 2007, the attainment of girls was higher than boys in the national tests. Inspection evidence shows boys are now doing as well as girls. At Key Stage 3, standards have improved over the last 4 years. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Evidence from school data indicates that current Year 8 pupils are on course to achieve their targets. A comment by one parent echoes the views of many others, 'It is a very good school and my child has progressed very well from year 5 to year 8.'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Many parents say how much their children mature during their time at the school. A typical comment from a parent is, 'The school provides a very positive environment in which to grow and every child is treated as an individual.'

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and attitudes to learning are excellent. The positive ethos and highly effective behaviour management by staff are reflected in the very good behaviour in lessons and across the school. Pupils feel safe and are very proud of their school. Attendance rates are well above average and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

Students are supported in developing healthy lifestyles through physical activities both in lessons and after school. Many choose to eat a healthy lunch provided either by home or school. Personal and workplace skills are well developed through a wide range of activities.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well in all activities. Pupils have many opportunities in lessons to explore important issues and they demonstrate the confidence to express strong opinions. A wide variety of visits and projects quickly develop an excellent understanding of community and diversity of culture. For example, pupils produce their own play at the local theatre every year which develops their self-esteem and confidence very well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and a proportion is outstanding. Teachers consistently set clear learning objectives and pupils have a very good understanding of what they need to do to achieve them. As a result, students work with a clear focus and at a good pace.

Pupils are enthusiastic, confident learners, making good progress because well structured lessons are effectively matched to their individual talents and learning needs. Learning assistants are highly effective in supporting pupils with additional learning needs which allows all pupils to fully access the curriculum.

The learning environment both supports and celebrates pupils' achievements. Information and communication technology is effectively used as a vehicle to enhance learning. In some subjects, learning is guided by teachers' helpful feedback on how to improve. In other subjects, feedback is less helpful. The school knows that this sharing of good practice across all subjects is an area for improvement.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and supportive. Pupils are keen to contribute to lessons, clearly enjoying the wide range of learning opportunities that are provided. Pupils work very well in groups, demonstrating mature, caring and responsible attitudes to the learning needs of others. Learning skills are well developed as they confidently manage tasks requiring them to carry out research, lead groups and work on their own.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent and meets statutory requirements. It is broad, balanced, and accessed by all pupils. Very extensive provision of field trips and visits help to provide a live context to pupils' learning.

The curriculum is significantly enhanced by the large number and range of extra-curricular opportunities enjoyed by many pupils. High levels of participation in sport have been recognised by the achievement of Sportsmark in 2008, and contribute to the achievement of the Healthy Schools award. Leadership skills are nurtured by the school through participation in outdoor pursuits courses. The impact is seen in lessons where pupils are very ready to take on responsibilities for leading groups.

Pupils experience citizenship through activities such as visits by local councillors to help pupils conduct election campaigns for the student council. Strong links with business have been forged and pupils regularly experience the world of work through placements and visits. Staff go to great lengths to ensure the learning environment is adapted where needed so that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can enjoy the full range of learning experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Staff know the pupils very well and are sensitive to their needs, especially those who are vulnerable. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place and meet requirements. There are good partnerships with external agencies that provide specialist support. Extensive links with partner schools ensure good transfer arrangements into Year 5 and then into Year 9.

Arrangements for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress have recently been strengthened. The school knows providing more consistent feedback to pupils on how they can improve their work is an area for improvement.

Pupils who are at risk of not achieving as well as they should are clearly identified through the tracking system and intervention plans are put in place.

Pupils feel confident about going to staff with their worries. They say that although bullying is rare, when it occurs it is always dealt with quickly and effectively. A typical parent reflected the views of many when saying, 'My child is extremely happy at the school.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management, including governance, is good. As a result, pupils enjoy a caring, settled, well resourced environment with good quality teaching and learning. Equality of opportunity is promoted exceptionally well.

The recently appointed headteacher is building on the improvements evident since the last inspection. The quality of monitoring systems has recently improved, self-evaluation is more robust, and targets are met.

Governors steer the work of the school very well. They monitor and evaluate the performance of the school and act as a critical friend. Capacity to improve is good and performance has significantly improved since the last inspection. Resources are effectively deployed to achieve good value for money.

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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	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

13 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Berwick Middle School, Northumberland TD15 1LA

Thank you for all your help when I inspected the school with my colleagues. Please would you pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires and say we took their views into account. I thought you might like to know what we found about your school.

- Berwick Middle is a good school with outstanding features.
- It is moving in the right direction under the strong leadership of the new headteacher supported by a good senior management team and governing body.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- You make good progress and standards are above average.
- Your personal development and the curriculum are outstanding features, particularly the wide range of activities outside lesson time.

Your teachers and the staff work very hard and want to make the school even better. To help them do this, I have asked if they could:

- help you to make better progress in English
- provide you with more consistent feedback on how to improve your work.

I wish you every success in all you do in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector