

Gosforth East Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108521
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	324789
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Johnson 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 (total)	464
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr George Snaith
Headteacher	Mr Geoff Oliver
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
School address	Harewood Road Gosforth Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE3 5JT
Telephone number	0191 285 5445
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Age group	9–13
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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

Gosforth East is situated to the north of Newcastle city centre. It is larger than most middle schools. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic origin has grown in recent years but remains around the national average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is above the national average. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds although the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than in most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school gained the national Healthy Schools award and Sportsmark in 2007. The school occupies new, purpose-built accommodation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school. It has several outstanding features including pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils thoroughly enjoy all the school has to offer. This is reflected in their very high levels of attendance and the pride they show in being pupils of Gosforth East.

The curriculum and other activities are outstanding because they have been carefully devised and provide exciting learning opportunities. The school works very effectively with partner schools to ensure continuity of learning and support. Many elements of work across the curriculum are used very effectively to develop excellent writing, communication, information and communication technology (ICT) and numeracy skills. French is taught to all pupils and many pupils take the opportunity to learn other languages, in extra-curricular clubs. Pupils develop excellent enterprise skills and organise their own events, such as the very successful 'Strictly Come Dancing' competition.

Teaching and learning is good because a strong team of teachers and support staff provide stimulating enjoyable lessons. Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive and based upon mutual respect. Good teaching ensures that pupils reach above average standards. However, in a few lessons, assessment information is not used to plan tasks for more able pupils to ensure they are fully challenged by their work. Homework in spelling and reading enhances progress and in other subjects, such as science, it is used effectively to encourage independent learning and research.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Pupils start the school in Year 5 and are understandably a little hesitant about joining a new school. They quickly develop self-reliance and confidence. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 8, almost all of them develop a strong work ethic and a determination to try hard and succeed. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of the need to follow safe practices in subjects such as science and are well aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Behaviour is good and pupils are particularly attentive to their teachers, although a small minority can be a little boisterous outside lessons. The school is a very harmonious community because it makes good efforts to promote community cohesion. Diversity is valued and there are very few examples of bullying or name-calling. Pupils know who to go to if they feel anxious and are confident that teachers and support staff will quickly resolve any problems they have. In Year 8, an effective system has been developed to help pupils who are at risk of falling behind to take more responsibility for their progress. Other systems exist across the school. However, some groups of pupils are not always clear about what levels they have reached or what they need to do to improve.

The school has improved in many ways since the last inspection, due to good leadership and management. In particular, standards in English, mathematics and science have increased significantly because of the emphasis the headteacher and his deputy have placed upon improving this area of the school's work. The school has an accurate understanding of how well it is doing and sets appropriate priorities for improvement. Governance is good because governors know the school well and are closely involved in evaluating its performance and ensuring that policies and procedures are effective. The well-focused school development plan emphasises the key areas for improvement and sets appropriate targets. The system used to measure the quality of lessons provides a good basis for self-evaluation. However, in a minority of cases there is an over-emphasis on what teachers do in lessons rather than how much pupils

learn. Effective staff development and careful recruitment has resulted in the creation of a very good team of staff. The purpose-built facilities provide an environment that is very conducive to learning. A good range of high quality resources including ICT are used to support pupils' learning. The school represents good value for money and has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the way in which assessment information is used, to ensure work in lessons is more closely matched to more able pupils' abilities and targets.
- Ensure that all pupils know what level of progress they are making and what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards pupils have attained when they enter the school in Year 5 are above average. In Year 6, they reach standards in national tests in English, mathematics and science that are significantly above average. The school recognises that a significant minority of pupils did not reach their predicted level in mathematics in 2008. Over the last three years, the results of school tests at the end of Year 7 and 8 have improved and show that pupils attain standards in the core subjects that are well above those expected for their age. In other subjects such as music, geography, and ICT, pupils' produce high standards of work.

All groups of learners make good progress including those from minority ethnic groups. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, particularly in English. Inspectors observed a small number of lessons in which more able pupils were not always challenged by their work and hence were not making the progress of which they were capable. Exercise books and other evidence provided by the school show that pupils make good progress in most subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are very well prepared for the future through an excellent range of experiences which help them develop into confident and well-rounded young people. They develop good skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance levels are very high. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop the ability to value and enjoy the diversity of the school community. Pupils' commitment to the local community is excellent as can be seen through their willingness to take part in a wide range of activities outside school time. Behaviour in lessons and around the school during the inspection was exemplary. Despite this, a small number of parents and pupils expressed concerns that, although there is much good behaviour around school, it can at times become a little boisterous. There are very few instances of bullying or serious misbehaviour, but when they do happen they are dealt with quickly and effectively. The rate of exclusions from lessons and from the school is low. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay fit and well. They make healthy choices at lunchtimes and know how this can affect their learning later in the day.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that teaching and learning are good. As a result, pupils make good progress. Pupils are keen and eager to learn. Relationships with staff are positive and pupils enjoy lessons. Teachers' good subject knowledge means that they give clear explanations of ideas and concepts and use questioning well to develop pupils' understanding. They plan a variety of tasks that fully engage pupils' interest in most lessons. Pupils particularly enjoy practical activities, working in pairs and sharing ideas. Additional tasks for more able pupils are included in lesson plans, but too often these are tackled following the lengthy completion of work designed for the whole class. In a few cases, the tasks designed for more able pupils are not challenging enough. Most marking is carried out frequently and is effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It supports pupils' outstanding personal development and good achievement. A wide range of opportunities are provided for pupils identified with gifts and talents, including challenging activities in mathematics, English and science, some of which are provided at the local high school. The excellent extra-curricular activities benefit a high proportion of the pupils. Pupils especially enjoy sporting and musical activities which help to promote healthy lifestyles and enjoyment. A well-planned programme of personal, social, health and citizenship contributes significantly to pupils' outstanding personal development and helps them become independent, confident young adults who are well prepared for their future education and career. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to take part in a wide range of activities both in the classroom and when working with specialist support workers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The school's systems and procedures for safeguarding pupils meet national guidelines. The extensive links with partner schools ensure effective induction into Year 5 and transfer to Year 9 in other schools. The school has an increasingly diverse population and has enhanced its care to provide a good quality of pastoral and emotional support to all pupils. Excellent partnerships with other agencies help the staff to develop the knowledge and skills needed to ensure that pupils who have difficulties with learning, or are at the early stages of learning English, make good progress. While there is some good practice in relation to the academic guidance given to pupils, the quality varies. As a result, pupils are not always confident that they have a clear picture of how well they are doing or the next steps they need to take in order to meet their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that leadership and management are good. The headteacher and his deputy set a clear direction and have provided an excellent impetus for improvement in most areas. For example, since the last inspection there has been a significant enhancement in the opportunities pupils have to link with the community, especially with business and other organisations. As a result, they have developed enterprise skills very well. Partnership working with other schools and specialist agencies is excellent and ensures continuity in pupils' progress. Parents have very high expectations of the school and their aspirations are usually met. The school has a good self-evaluation process but is constantly working on ways of improving it and plans to improve the criteria it uses to make judgements about the quality of its work. Effective pilot initiatives have taken place to improve pupils' ability to evaluate their own progress and develop an understanding of what they have to do to improve. These systems are currently being extended across all subjects and groups. Subject and key stage leaders provide good management of the curriculum and support. Equality of opportunity is promoted successfully. The school is an inclusive community where diversity is valued and celebrated.

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Annex A

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?	1
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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

29 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gosforth East Middle School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 5JT

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we visited you recently. We enjoyed the visit a lot. We particularly enjoyed talking with you and visiting your lessons and assembly. Please pass on our thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires. The vast majority of them said that they are very happy with the education you receive and we can understand why.

We have written a full report about the school and here are some of the main points.

- Gosforth East Middle is a good school that continues to improve because of good leadership and management.
- Your personal development and well-being are outstanding because of the good care, guidance and support you receive.
- You make good progress and reach high standards because the strong team of teachers and other staff work hard and provide an outstanding curriculum.
- You enjoy school and, as a result, attendance is high.
- You behave well and there is very little bullying.
- There is a real sense of community in the school and many pupils are rightly proud to be part of it.

Mr Oliver, the governors and staff are constantly looking for ways to improve the school and we made some suggestions to help them.

- A few activities could be made more challenging for those of you who find learning easy.
- Some of you need more guidance on what progress you are making and what you need to do to improve.

We wish you every success for the future.

Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector