

Bellingham Middle School and Sports College

Redesmouth Road, Bellingham, Hexham, Northumberland NE48 2EN

Inspection dates

11–12 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
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

- Pupils do not make good rates of progress and have insufficient opportunities to work at greater depth.
- The quality of teaching is variable as work is not consistently matched to pupils' needs, particularly those of the most able.
- Although improving, progress in mathematics is weak as pupils do not have regular opportunities to apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- The quality and accuracy of pupils' writing in subjects other than English is too variable.
- Leaders are not implementing new expectations on teaching and assessment consistently enough.
- Although improving, disadvantaged pupils have made slower progress over time than their peers.
- The quality of teaching and rates of pupils' progress vary between subjects. Strengths in subjects such as food technology and physical education are offset by much lower standards in history and geography.
- Teachers do not consistently develop pupils' learning skills, and this limits their rates of progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has brought in more rigorous systems to check and improve the quality of teaching. These systems are contributing to improving rates of pupils' progress.
- As a result of stronger teaching and higher expectations, pupils are making much better progress in English.
- Governors are now checking the impact of actions to improve pupils' progress much more thoroughly.
- Effective partnerships with other schools are contributing towards improvement in the quality of teaching and the rates of pupils' progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - pitching work at a level that enables pupils to make good progress and work at greater depth, particularly the most able
 - providing increasing opportunities for pupils to apply problem-solving skills and reasoning in mathematics
 - addressing any gaps in attainment more swiftly in Years 5 and 6 so that pupils can make much better progress by the end of key stage 2
 - providing stronger curriculum materials in foundation subjects such as geography and history so that pupils are better prepared for secondary school.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - continuing to improve the accuracy of checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes
 - intensifying work with improvement partners to speed up the sharing of good practice and to build consistent improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - ensuring that middle leaders' checks on the quality of work lead to higher standards in the areas they lead
 - setting high standards for the quality of literacy and numeracy across all curriculum subjects
 - defining governors' roles and responsibilities more precisely to ensure that they can hold leaders to account for pupils' progress.
- Diminish any differences in the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils by:
 - matching teaching, additional interventions and resources more closely to their needs
 - providing greater opportunities to work at greater depth.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The new headteacher identified variable teaching and monitoring systems that have contributed to weak rates of progress over time. She has introduced systems to improve the quality of teaching and regularly track pupils' progress that are contributing to improving outcomes. However, these actions have not been sufficient to counteract lower rates of pupils' progress at key stage 2.
- The headteacher has taken action to address weaker teaching, resulting in changes to staffing. Clear improvements are evident in subjects such as English, physical education and aspects of mathematics. More rigorous systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on progress, although too much variance remains.
- New appointments are helping to raise expectations and bring added challenge to the curriculum. This is particularly evident in English, where more challenging texts and opportunities to write in a range of styles are contributing to stronger progress. Although the curriculum is being fortified in mathematics, the pace of improvement is slower.
- Leaders are embracing links with external partners to improve teaching, moderate standards and measure the impact of improvement strategies. All teachers have visited an outstanding middle school, Ponteland Middle School, to develop a heightened awareness of good practice. The school improvement partner is bringing much-needed scrutiny to measure the impact of improvement strategies. A steering group of senior leaders from local schools and the local authority is scrutinising progress on a regular basis. As a result, leaders are measuring progress more accurately and leaders are held more closely to account. However, these links are not securing improvements in teaching rapidly enough.
- The headteacher is developing the roles of subject leaders to share good practice and check standards. This is leading to clear improvements in the quality of pupils' work in reading and writing in English and to improving study habits. While new systems are contributing to improving curriculum coverage in mathematics and science, middle leaders are not as effective in ensuring that their teams consistently follow new expectations and provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth.
- New assessment tracking systems are being developed to provide teachers, leaders and governors with termly reviews of pupils' progress. These systems are being moderated with local middle schools to ensure that pupils' progress is accurately tracked. The headteacher has significantly improved performance-management procedures so that judgements on teachers' performance are clearly linked to the progress their pupils make.
- Leaders have introduced new initiatives that are building pupils' confidence and self-esteem. School productions and debating activities have heightened pupils' communication skills while stronger outdoor pursuits have developed fitness and well-being. New enrichment afternoons are enabling pupils to explore projects more openly and develop team skills. Leaders have used the sport premium funding wisely to compensate for the lack of access to activities in this extremely remote community with

new sports provision in football and basketball and new cinema, karaoke and language clubs.

- Leaders and governors commissioned a review of the use of pupil-premium funding in April 2016. As a result, support is more effectively targeted and measured and there are signs that current pupils are making improving progress. However, progress and attainment differences remain with non-disadvantaged pupils and they are not diminishing rapidly enough.
- The new special educational needs coordinator is developing much more robust systems to diagnose pupils' needs and monitor the impact of support. She has developed positive links with external partners and developed effective systems to help teaching assistants monitor the progress of the pupils they support. Additional funding, including catch-up funding for Year 7 pupils, is being targeted more effectively to support progress.

Governance of the school

- The chair of governors has fortified governance over the past year. She recognises that previous systems to hold leaders to account were inadequate and contributed to weak progress. She has worked with the new school improvement partner to heighten scrutiny and ensure that her team of governors have accurate assessment information with which to hold leaders to account.
- Governors have supported the headteacher in addressing weaker teaching, resulting in some staff movement. They have made new appointments to strengthen leadership and the quality of teaching. Governors now work with a steering group comprising educational experts to ensure that they have the additional specialist knowledge to measure progress accurately.
- Governors are now more forward-looking in embracing partnership and commissioning reviews to strengthen governance. They are working with a national leader for governance to audit their skills and further define their roles and the systems they use to hold leaders to account. Governor folders show that they are becoming more assiduous in their work to check the impact of school improvement strategies, although weaknesses remain.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders take their responsibilities for pupils' welfare seriously. Leaders carry out appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of adults working on site. Safeguarding training is up to date. Leaders address concerns over pupils' welfare seriously and ensure that records are accurate and up to date.
- Pupils feel safe in school, and their parents agree. Pupils believe that staff act decisively to address rare instances of bullying, although their parents are not as confident. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of the actions they can take to stay safe online and in the community.
- Through regular items in the school newsletter, leaders make parents and carers aware of key safeguarding issues, such as the actions they can take to help their children stay

safe online and the dangers posed to families and children by issues such as domestic abuse.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies between key stage 2 and key stage 3 and contributes to varying rates of progress across subjects and year groups. Work is not consistently pitched at a level that enables pupils to make good progress, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Although partnership work is developing expertise in mathematics, standards across the school still require improvement. Pupils are given regular opportunities to practise calculation skills but fewer opportunities to apply mathematical reasoning or problem solving, such as word and number problems. As a result, progress remains slower than in English, particularly for the most able pupils at key stage 2.
- Teaching in English has improved significantly. Teachers are encouraging pupils to read with a renewed enthusiasm and rigour and, as a result, their comprehension skills are stronger. Pupils are developing a better understanding of grammar and using this to improve their own writing and to help them explore other texts.
- The improving quality of writing in English is not consistently reflected in other subjects, as teachers do not insist on high standards of spelling and grammatical accuracy.
- In science, pupils have opportunities to work scientifically and explore topics appropriate to their age group that are supporting progress. They do not have consistent opportunities to apply that knowledge to tasks and questions to enable them to work at greater depth.
- Variance in the quality of teaching is evident between subjects. Teachers effectively model tasks in physical education, and food technology books show evidence of thoughtful planning, implementation and evaluation. Conversely, in geography and history, teachers do not bring sufficient expertise to the study of these subjects to enable pupils to make strong progress.
- The majority of teachers provide feedback in line with the school's policy. Where this is used well, it supports good progress, although variance remains in how misconceptions are addressed in order for pupils to improve their work.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving, as leaders are diagnosing needs more precisely and monitoring the ongoing impact of support more effectively. As a result, they are gauging progress more carefully.
- Teachers set homework in line with the school's policy and pupils feel this supports their learning, but tasks do not support them in working at greater depth.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. While new initiatives are developing pupils' study skills, they are not yet equipped with the capacity to work at greater depth on a regular basis. The skills taught in study-skills sessions are not consistently reinforced in all subjects.
- Teachers are attentive to pupils' welfare and their social and emotional needs. They address concerns over welfare swiftly and engage with external partners and agencies to promote pupils' welfare.
- New opportunities in school performance and outdoor pursuits are developing pupils' self-confidence and increasing their levels of participation. This confidence is not consistently reflected in learning in lessons.
- Pupils' physical welfare is promoted through access to a range of sports, including football and basketball, and outdoor learning. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils celebrated the end of their national assessments with a walk to a local waterfall.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are largely attentive and engaged in their learning in core subjects and conduct themselves positively around the school site. Pupils feel that a minority of pupils display low-level disruption in some foundation subjects.
- The majority of pupils are polite and courteous in their attitudes to one another and their teachers. In discussion, pupils described the school as 'friendly' where they are 'one big family'.
- Rates of absence and persistent absence are typically in line with those seen nationally, although figures slightly increased in 2016. Leaders track attendance carefully and have put support in place to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils whose attendance fell below national figures.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement because pupils have made insufficient progress over time, particularly at key stage 2. While there are signs of improving progress for current pupils at key stage 3, not enough has been done to accelerate pupils' progress rapidly at key stage 2.
- In 2016, pupils' progress at key stage 2 was significantly below average in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with national averages.
- Current pupils are making much better progress in reading and writing. Work in books shows that pupils are analysing texts with greater perception and using their

knowledge of grammar to improve the quality of their writing. The higher standards of writing evident in English books are not replicated in other subjects.

- Although signs of improvement are emerging in mathematics, progress has remained well below that seen nationally over time. Baseline assessment in Year 5 shows that pupils enter the school with lower levels of attainment in mathematics, but teachers do not do enough to compensate for these deficiencies. While pupils are becoming more competent in their use of arithmetical methods, they are still given insufficient opportunities to solve problems and this limits their capacity to work at greater depth.
- Pupils make better progress at key stage 3 than at key stage 2, as the cumulative impact of teaching over time addresses some of the gaps in knowledge and understanding identified on entry to the school in Year 5.
- While some differences in the progress of disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils are diminishing, these pupils continue to make slower progress than other pupils nationally. New initiatives are leading to more focused support, which is beginning to improve progress.
- Many aspects of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are improving and individual case studies illustrate good signs of progress against their appropriate targets. However, the wider progress of these pupils remains mixed.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not making sufficient progress, as work in general is not consistently pitched at a level that enables them to make strong progress. While some show accomplished attainment in their writing, their proficiency in mathematics is less evident.
- Pupils make improving rates of progress in English and in some aspects of mathematics at key stage 3 that begin to prepare them more thoroughly for secondary school. However, gaps in their knowledge and skills in subjects such as geography and history leave them less equipped for the choices and opportunities ahead of them.

School details

Unique reference number	122350
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10023929

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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Trish Taylor
Headteacher	Rebecca Simpson
Telephone number	01434 220235
Website	www.bellinghammiddle.northumberland.sch.uk
Email address	bernie.thompson@northumberland.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 November 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school serves a remote rural community and is much smaller than the average-sized school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- Separate childcare provision shares the school site. This is not managed by the governing body and was not included in this inspection.
- The school federated with the adjoining first school in September 2012 and shares the same governing body.

- In 2016, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school was classed as a coasting school by the Department for Education in December 2016 for not enabling pupils to fulfil their potential over time.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons, covering all classes in the school. The headteacher accompanied inspectors on a number of these observations.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior teachers and the subject leaders for English and mathematics. The lead inspector met members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector met the local authority secondary school commissioner, and a telephone conversation was held with the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors talked to a group of pupils formally at lunchtime and less formally to pupils in lessons and during breaks.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, lunchtimes and playtimes.
- Inspectors extensively examined the quality of pupils' work in a wide range of books. They discussed pupils' work and their learning with them in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, curriculum plans and information relating to pupil achievement and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 15 free-text responses from parents and eight responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Iain Veitch

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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