

# Corbridge Middle School

Cow Lane, Corbridge, Northumberland, NE45 5HX

**Inspection dates** 2–3 May 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average in English, and in Year 8 is above expectations for pupils' age in both English and mathematics. However, pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and some with special educational needs do not make as much progress as other groups of pupils. This is also the case for a significant proportion of the most-able pupils who do not reach the highest levels in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Some staff do not recognise when the most able are ready for higher challenges or when lower-attaining pupils need extra support.
- Leadership and management in mathematics require improvement. Changes in the English department resulted in slower progress last year. In mathematics, checks on the performance of pupils and teachers are not regular or rigorous enough to identify which pupils are at risk of underachieving.
- Roles and responsibilities are not made clear enough for all subject leaders to understand their accountability for the performance of their departments.

### The school has the following strengths

- The vast majority of pupils make expected progress and some exceed this. Pupils enjoy learning, are keen to do well and work hard in lessons.
- Behaviour is good. In many lessons it is outstanding when pupils are highly motivated and work together to achieve their goals. Pupils feel safe in school.
- New leadership in English has set a clear direction for improvement.
- The school has developed a good system for collecting data about pupils' progress; this is helping senior leaders to identify where pupils need more support. Interventions are increasingly effective in improving achievement in English for lower-attaining pupils.
- Extra-curricular activities and the arts curriculum fire pupils' enthusiasm for learning and allow them to make a good contribution to the local community.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons or parts of lessons, one of which was a shared observation with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, staff, governors, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school’s self-evaluation of its work, the school’s information about pupils’ progress, and documentation relating to teachers’ performance and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 44 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as 31 responses from staff.

## Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graeme Clarke

Additional Inspector

Peter Harrison

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is about the average size for a middle school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children whose parents are in the armed service, is well below average.
- Nearly all pupils are from White British heritage, and no pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well below average.
- The school meets government floor standards, which set out minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has undergone some staff turnover since the previous inspection. A new head of English joined at the beginning of the current term.

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

- Improve the proportion of teaching that is good or better especially to increase the achievement of the most-able pupils, lower-attaining pupils and those eligible for the pupil premium by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do by setting more ambitious targets for pupils' progress
  - sharing the practice of the most successful teachers more widely and regularly so that all staff and pupils benefit from knowing about the most effective methods
  - ensuring teachers mark pupils' work more regularly and provide guidance on how to improve so they can plan the next steps in learning more accurately and challenge or support pupils more effectively
  - providing more opportunities in English lessons for pupils who are weaker writers to develop their skills in writing for different purposes and at length.
- Improve aspects of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that all subject leaders understand fully their accountability for monitoring and improving departmental performance
  - holding leadership in mathematics more closely to account for the performance and achievement of pupils in the subject, especially the most able, pupils eligible for the pupil premium and some with special educational needs
  - ensuring the school's agreed targets, policies and practices are adhered to in mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils join Year 5 with attainment that is broadly average, and in the main make expected progress to the end of Year 6 and Year 8. In 2012, the performance of pupils at the end of Year 6 was above the national average overall in English, but below the national average for the performance of the most able, those pupils eligible for free school meals and some pupils with special educational needs, particularly in mathematics. The proportion of pupils exceeding expected levels of progress was below the national average in both mathematics and English.
- School data and work in pupils' books indicate that Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve similarly high results this year, while a majority of Year 8 pupils are on course to exceed the expected level for their age.
- The development of reading skills is well promoted for most pupils. School records on pupils who are receiving additional support for reading indicate that they are making better progress than formerly because of more rigorous and frequent checks on their progress. The vast majority of pupils read fluently and with good understanding, sometimes tackling complex texts with evident enjoyment. Progress in writing is less secure, especially for lower-attaining groups of pupils, because they do not have enough opportunity to develop and practise these skills in English lessons.
- Progress in mathematical knowledge and skills varies from group to group. This is because teachers' expectations can vary and the curriculum is not always planned to ensure secure, well-paced progression. Checks on pupils' progress are not regular or rigorous enough to provide early intervention to increase the challenge or support for individual pupils.
- Progress in the wider curriculum is often good. For example in art, music, design technology and science; pupils learn at a good rate because they are highly motivated and learn through practical activities.
- Improvements to the school's system for collecting and analysing information on pupils' progress are helping senior leaders to identify more quickly where pupils are at risk of falling behind. The provision for pupils at risk, including those with special educational needs and those for whom the pupil premium is provided, is improving, and in reading the gap between these pupils and others in the school is beginning to narrow. However, in 2012, Year 6 pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, were three terms behind their peers in their attainment in English and mathematics.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is too uneven in quality between and within subjects. In many subjects there is some good teaching, and in a few, teaching is sometimes outstanding. However, too much requires improvement because developments in teaching have not been effective enough in ensuring that good practice is shared with all teachers to help them improve.
- There are several common features in lessons that require improvement. For example, in many such lessons teachers spend too much time giving lengthy explanations, so that pupils' initial enthusiasm wanes, some become bored and 'switch off'. This slows progress noticeably because they have less time to work by themselves. In some lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. This is often the case in mathematics lessons where pupils' books are testimony to the lack of challenge in their work. Too many calculations are judged as 'all correct' yet pupils are not moved on to more challenging tasks, so their progress is not as brisk as it might be.
- In some English lessons, particularly for lower-attaining pupils, there is insufficient emphasis on writing for different purposes, and at length. This limits the progress that pupils make in this aspect of their English, though there is evidence in other books, in the humanities for example, that these pupils do have the potential to be effective writers.

- The school's marking policies are inconsistently applied. In some subjects, including mathematics and English, marking is infrequent so teachers do not spot quickly when pupils are experiencing difficulties or are ready for more demanding work. Too few teachers regularly give pupils advice on how to improve their work or link their marking to pupils' learning targets.
- Where teaching is good or better, teachers use their accurate knowledge of pupils' needs to plan tasks that engage and motivate pupils to do their best. They ensure that work is pitched at just the right level for pupils to be fully stretched. For example, Year 8 pupils made excellent progress in their analysis of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, because the teacher probed their understanding well, by targeting questions to make each pupil think hard, and then encouraged them to add to each other's ideas.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Behaviour is good, and in lessons where pupils are expected to work together and learn from each other, it is excellent. Pupils are extremely kind and considerate towards each other, staff and visitors. This creates a warm and positive atmosphere for learning.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are keen to do well and keep going in lessons even when the work is sometimes mundane or lacking in challenge.
- Pupils have absolute confidence in staff to look after them well. They know about different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and are adamant that it rarely occurs in their school. They know that staff take bullying very seriously and, 'get to the bottom of things' quickly.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet. They have been taught to assess risks both in and out of school; they say they feel safe, both in school and on the many trips and visits they make out of school, because they know the rules.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibility for themselves and others. They relish opportunities to help the school run smoothly in their roles as monitors and prefects and through the work of the school council. Pupils are rightly proud of their involvement with the community through their frequent art exhibitions and musical performances. A cake stall to raise funds for children with a hearing impairment, was an excellent example of how the mature young people in this school can organise themselves to help others.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Senior leaders have managed staff turnover well since the previous inspection to maintain the school's performance in national tests. Improvements to the frequency of assessments which track pupils' progress have pinpointed where some, but not all, pupils are not making as much progress as expected.
- The quality of subject leadership is inconsistent because staff accountability for pupils' performance is not always discharged fully. While leadership in humanities is strong, this is not the case for all subjects. For example, uneven expectations and practice between English and mathematics, has led to variations in rates of progress for pupils. New leadership in English has quickly identified weaknesses and a plan for swift improvement, for example to the quality and frequency of marking, is already in place.
- In mathematics, there is insufficiently robust checking on teachers' performance so that weaknesses are not identified, for example, wide variations in the quality of teaching and adherence to agreed school policies, practices and targets. Some infrequent marking of pupils' work prevents teachers from identifying quickly where pupils are hampered by a lack of understanding or too little challenge.
- The performance management of staff is linked to their performance in the classroom, the progress that pupils make and salary progression. This is largely supporting improvements in teaching.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and largely promotes equal opportunities for all pupils,

though some groups are not doing as well as they should. The vibrant arts curriculum gives pupils exciting opportunities which develop a wide range of skills and talents that prepare them very well for the next stage of education. Pupils value the extensive extra-curricular activities, including the outdoor pursuits and residential visits that abound for all ages. All of these enriching opportunities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

■ Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and records are well maintained.

■ The local authority has supported the school recently by reviewing the school's provision in English and mathematics.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governors have detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and are well aware, through their good understanding of the school's data on pupils' achievement, of where improvement is most urgently needed. They bring a wide range of expertise and are able to challenge as well as support the school. Governors have approved the use of pupil-premium funding to provide extra activities to support progress in English and mathematics, including additional teaching support, which is beginning to improve basic skills. They have evaluated the school's appraisal system, understand the arrangements to link pay to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, and have challenged the headteacher to ensure that performance targets are met.

## 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>	122326
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	413054

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>	340
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Katie Oliver
<b>Headteacher</b>	Margaret Henderson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 September 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01434 632191
<b>Fax number</b>	01434 633735
<b>Email address</b>	admin@corbridge.northumberland.sch.uk

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