

Inspection of a good school: Seaton Sluice Middle School

Alston Grove, Seaton Sluice, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear NE26 4JS

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

Seaton Sluice Middle School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Seaton Sluice Middle School are proud of their school community. They say that everyone is welcome and that teachers will always help them do their best. Inspectors agree. Pupils are polite and confident when speaking to staff, visitors and each another. They are keen to make the most of their time at school. A wide range of enrichment opportunities helps pupils to flourish. These include a Korean club, food champions, an active LGBTQ+ support network and a gymnastics group.

Bullying at the school is rare. If pupils are unkind in their words or actions, staff deal with this immediately. Pupils tell an adult if something is worrying them. The school counsellor provides additional support for vulnerable pupils. This helps pupils to become confident and resilient young adults. The school's approach to promoting and supporting the mental health and well-being of pupils and staff is a strength of the school.

Pupils display excellent behaviour in lessons and at social times. Incidents of poor behaviour do occur occasionally but are addressed immediately. Pupils who struggle to meet the school's high expectations are supported well. External speakers, small-group work and other interventions are used to help pupils get back on track. Leaders are inclusive and determined that every pupil can succeed at the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is adapted to match the needs and interests of pupils well. They have carefully considered the new knowledge that pupils will find most difficult to remember. Additional learning time is given to help pupils master these tricky topics. Staff use assessment effectively to find out what pupils know and can do when they join the school. This information is used to make changes to the curriculum so that pupils do not have gaps in their knowledge and skills.

Staff know pupils well. They make suitable adjustments to lesson activities to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff ask effective

questions to check whether pupils have understood new content. Staff are focused on improving pupils' vocabulary. In some subjects, such as English and computing, pupils talk with confidence about their learning using specialist terminology. In other subjects, such as mathematics, pupils do not encounter challenging concepts as often. This limits their understanding of more complex subject material.

Leaders have developed effective strategies to support pupils with SEND. Leaders regularly review the support that is in place for pupils with additional needs. They have identified where further specialist training is required for both teaching and support staff.

Pupils' understanding of both written and spoken language is a priority for leaders. Regular opportunities for pupils to read individually, in small groups or as a whole class are planned. Pupils with lower literacy levels benefit from a range of additional support. These interventions are helping many pupils to improve their reading. Staff encourage pupils to understand and use high-quality vocabulary. This is promoted throughout the school, including in assemblies, during lessons and through enrichment activities.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. A well-planned and broad personal, social and health education curriculum is in place. Pupils learn about important topics such as staying safe when online, mental health, the risks of drugs and alcohol, and about healthy relationships. However, pupils' knowledge of different faiths and cultures is weak. The school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) curriculum lacks depth in this area. This limits how well prepared pupils are for life in modern Britain.

The school has an ambitious careers curriculum. Pupils attend a careers fair, listen to visiting speakers from universities and learn how to manage money effectively. This helps pupils to make informed choices about their future.

The school is well led and managed. Leaders view academic outcomes and pupils' personal development equally. Governors undertake their role effectively. They have a wide range of skills that allow them to support and challenge school leaders. Staff are unanimously proud to work at the school and serve the local community. The school is inclusive, ambitious and caring for all pupils who attend it.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong focus on keeping pupils safe. Staff know pupils well but are not complacent. They know that 'it could happen here' and report any concerns they might have about a pupil's well-being. Staff receive regular training and updates on a range of relevant topics. Governors also undertake safeguarding training and check on the school's work to keep pupils safe.

Pupils are confident to report a concern they might have about the welfare of others. They know that when they raise a concern, adults will act on it quickly. The curriculum helps pupils understand how to stay safe. The school's internet filters protect pupils from harmful online content.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils' knowledge of other faiths and cultures is weak. This is because this aspect of the SMSC curriculum is underdeveloped. As a result, pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they might be. Leaders should review their approach to teaching world religions and closely monitor the impact of this work on pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	122334
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10255803
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susan Dungworth
Headteacher	Karen McSparron (Head of School) John Barnes (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.svf.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined Seaton Valley Federation of schools in 2015.
- The school makes use of one provider of off-site, alternative education. This provider is not registered with the Department for Education.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and the chair of governors. Inspectors spoke to teaching and non-teaching staff, in addition to a representative from the local authority.
- To evaluate the quality of education, deep dives were carried out in English, mathematics and computing. Inspectors spoke with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at books and spoke to pupils and to staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for careers education at the school.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experience in lessons, enrichment opportunities and what it is like to attend the school.
- One inspector met with leaders responsible for literacy across the school.
- One inspector examined the school's behaviour records.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator. They looked at a range of documentation, including education, health and care plans and individual learning plans. Inspectors also checked how pupils with SEND are supported in lessons.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including checks made on all adults who come on to the school site. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff to check their understanding of safeguarding procedures. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to check on their work to keep pupils safe in school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to its pupil survey and staff survey, including any free-text comments.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Bernard Senier

Ofsted Inspector

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