

Covingham Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135206
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	381837
Inspection dates	15–16 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Howells
Headteacher	Caroline Polley
Date of previous school inspection	25 March 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons taught by 14 teachers. The inspectors also attended assemblies, observed break times and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. In addition, questionnaires completed by 72 parents and carers, 103 pupils and 14 staff were analysed.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work. They looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which teaching and learning is consistent in promoting pupils' achievement, especially by boys and more-able pupils through Years 1 to 6.
- How well teachers use assessment, including setting the right level of challenge and to accelerate progress.
- How effectively leaders and managers, at all levels, ensure continued improvements, including developing consistency of good practice in teaching and learning.

Information about the school

This primary school is above average in size. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils attending the school are White British and there is a below-average percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two parallel Reception classes. The relatively new headteacher commenced her duties in September 2010 and a new deputy headteacher commenced her duties at the beginning of this autumn term. Privately run before- and after-school clubs and an independent pre-school operate on the school site and share some of the school's facilities; as they are managed independently, they were not a part of this inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Covingham Park is a satisfactory, improving school. The relatively new headteacher, who has made some strategic and beneficial staff appointments, provides determined and clear direction. With increasing support from the developing senior leadership team and a strengthened governing body, the school is moving forward from an extended period of instability in staffing which constrained its effectiveness. This is evident in the broadly average levels of attainment in English and mathematics seen across the school and at the end of Year 6. These outcomes represent satisfactory achievement by pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

These are the other main findings.

- Covingham Park is a welcoming community where pupils are kept extremely safe. As a result, they enjoy school, attend well and feel very secure. When questioned, pupils say: 'Adults care about us. They let us have a good time at playtime and keep us safe.'
- The headteacher and senior colleagues have examined data about pupils' past achievements and have developed a more accurate way of tracking pupils' progress by examining the breadth of their achievements and responses in lessons. This has clarified where improvements need to be made and underpins the school's sound self-evaluation.
- Several new initiatives, such as the move this term to single year group class structures, are accelerating the pace of improvement. Teaching and learning is now satisfactory overall, but includes an increasing amount of good teaching. This has already lifted pupils' writing in Year 6 to an above-average level and continues to bridge gaps in pupils' previous learning. Although several initiatives are still quite new, advances so far, particularly in re-establishing pupils' at least average attainment, demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to school life in response to well-planned learning activities and very caring adult support. While teaching and learning are also good in Years 2, 4 and 5, some inconsistencies occur in other years. These include fluctuations in the way pupils are challenged and stimulated to make sure they remain fully engaged in learning, and in the way they are encouraged to evaluate their own work and take responsibility for their learning. This leads to some pupils, especially boys, making slower progress in English and mathematics in these year groups.

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- A good range of clubs and topics supports the pupils' good behaviour, enjoyment of school and adoption of healthy living. However, the curriculum is not yet implemented with similar effectiveness in all classes to widen and make use of pupils' literacy, numeracy and independent learning skills, including by using computers to extend learning across all aspects of the curriculum.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

By the end of this academic year:

- Raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that the progress pupils make in lessons, especially that of boys, is more consistently good or better
 - making sure that teaching and learning strategies are always matched well to pupils' abilities
 - involving pupils fully in self-evaluation so that they can play their part in accelerating progress.
- Improve the curriculum so that it more consistently:
 - provides opportunities for pupils to use and enhance their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across all aspects of the curriculum
 - systematically develops pupils' independent learning skills by enabling them to follow their own lines of enquiry.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average for their age with recent improvement particularly evident in pupils' writing and in the achievement of more-able pupils. This outcome shows that from normally expected skills on entry teachers are now securing pupils' satisfactory achievement. Scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of their responses in lessons, while still showing some variations in the quality of learning, show an increasing momentum of improvement and a subsequent acceleration in pupils' progress. Children make a positive start to their learning in Reception classes with good progress at this stage. However, as they move through Years 1 to 6, learning fluctuates and their progress becomes more variable. Observations of lessons show that an increasing number of pupils are making good progress and really enjoy their learning, especially when they are consistently challenged at the right level. For example, when investigating the links

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between addition and subtraction in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils were clearly enthused by the teacher’s skilled questioning, challenged themselves and demonstrated independent thinking in the quality of their perceptive responses. In contrast, for example in a lesson for Year 1, work was not matched closely enough to pupils’ differing abilities, and some pupils, especially boys, lost interest and became disengaged from their learning, slowing its pace. Although attainment is rising, too many pupils, particularly boys and some more-able pupils, lack the independence needed to develop their skills, for example problem solving, to the full. Though all groups make broadly satisfactory progress, these pupils’ progress is not as rapid as others.

Pupils behave and attend well. They play very well together and enjoy opportunities to share the wide range of activities at playtimes. School routines are well established and understood by all. This leads to a calm and orderly atmosphere in which pupils take care in undertaking their responsibilities, for example on the school council, and feel extremely safe at school. This is further evident in their good spiritual, moral and social development. For example, pupils take part enthusiastically in assemblies, which help them to celebrate their work and reflect well on moral, spiritual and cultural issues. At lunchtimes, they show a good understanding of the need to eat healthily and why exercise is good for them. They also enjoy the available healthy snacks and participate energetically in a range of ‘active’ after-school clubs. By the time they leave the school, the pupils’ average standards represent sound preparation for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

More effective assessment and tracking of pupils' progress is helping teachers to identify pupils' learning needs and to bridge gaps in basic skills at an earlier stage, particularly for more-able pupils. As a result, with positive inputs from several new teachers and some single year group classes, the quality of teaching and learning is improving. In the very large majority of lessons, adults establish warm relationships and promote pupils' good behaviour. Where teaching is good, pupils are stimulated to take a more active role in their learning. In the more successful lessons observed, teachers focused on interesting topics and used questioning effectively to encourage pupils to think about their learning and explain their ideas. In a Year 6 English lesson, for example, the teacher's questioning focused the pupils' efforts on using 'powerful and appropriate' vocabulary to write persuasive texts about the school.

Teaching and learning were seen at their very best in an excellent mathematics lesson in Year 2, specifically because the teacher used precisely targeted questioning, in the form of 'child-friendly' language, to engage with and enthuse pupils in their learning. Other positive improvements, as seen in a mathematics lesson in Year 4, included the teacher encouraging pupils to talk about their learning, to focus their thinking on clear learning objectives and to devise their own strategies to divide larger decimals. However, such close inclusion of pupils in evaluating their own efforts is not yet a consistent feature across all classes. Even though there is a quickening pace of improvement, aided by the appointment of new staff, there is also inconsistency in the way teachers challenge pupils at the right level to keep them gainfully engaged in learning, and this slows progress. This is why some pupils, especially boys, still have difficulty in orally expressing their ideas and in devising their own ways to learn, for example to solve mathematical problems.

Pastoral support and safeguarding pupils' welfare are strengths of the school. Arrangements to support pupils with special educational needs are sufficient to ensure progress that is at least satisfactory. Adults are diligent in ensuring that pupils attend regularly and are given good guidance and support to promote their emotional well-being.

Curricular activities promote the pupils' enjoyment of school effectively. The very recent visit to the Wanborough/Foxhill Outdoor Pursuit Centre by Year 6 pupils, for example, has enabled them to make a positive and confident start to the new school year. However, there is too much variation in the way pupils' independent learning skills are developed. In addition, although improving as a clear focus in the school improvement plan, opportunities to extend and use the pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across other subjects are not provided with equal consistency across the school.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

During her first year, the headteacher, with good support from senior staff, including several new teachers and members of the governing body, has promoted a shared vision and drive for improvement. Staff morale is high and teamwork is now enabling the school to secure satisfactory value for money and move forward at a more rapid pace. The collaborative work of the headteacher and senior staff underpins sound self-evaluation, which accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses, targets the right priorities and forms the basis of well-structured plans, which are now being implemented to improve achievement and provision. Advances in pupils’ writing, especially by more-able pupils, and in pupils’ spiritual and cultural development, also reflect the steady improvement in teaching and learning.

The school promotes community cohesion well, with previous gaps in the national dimension being covered, for example, by links with another school and through topics examined during ‘Modern Britain Week’. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily and works diligently to overcome discrimination, but several initiatives are new and have not been in place long enough to ensure that all pupils, especially boys, make equally good progress. Governance is satisfactory. While the much-changed governing body gives sound support and is improving the way formal visits are used to monitor the school, governance nevertheless plays a strong role in supporting the school’s exemplary provision for pupils’ safety. These include, for example, excellent procedures for vetting new staff and other adults working with pupils. All the other required safeguarding checks are fully in place and, for example, the pupils’ confidence that any difficulties will be quickly resolved reflects the school’s rapid response to concerns about safety and welfare. Good relationships with parents and carers and the current sound partnerships with other agencies ensure good attendance and further support the pupils’ satisfactory, but improving, progress.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the	3

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school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The children’s great enjoyment and secure feeling of well-being, especially during this period of carefully planned part-time commencement of school life, reflects the high quality of the guidance and support provided from very caring staff. In addition, the children’s confidence and interest in learning also reflects the staff’s excellent relationships and partnerships with parents and carers and with pre-school providers. Children achieve well as a result of consistently good teaching supported by effective early assessment and targeting of their needs. They make especially good progress in their personal and social development, which helps them to learn well both individually and with others. Children enjoy nourishing fresh fruit and vegetables and social interaction during snack time and already show a good awareness of the need to keep healthy by washing hands before handling food. Good leadership and management ensure that the accommodation, both indoors and outside, is organised well to provide stimulating practical learning opportunities. Currently, there is a good balance between adult-led learning and activities chosen by the children themselves, and staff are planning to build on this by offering more robust role play for boys. Very occasionally, though, children’s learning choices, for example during role play when pretending to be pirates and policemen, are not supported to develop new learning as effectively as the sharply focused questioning evident during adult-led group work.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

There was a below-average response rate to the questionnaire. Most parents and carers expressed positive agreement with all the statements. The very small number of written comments contained a balanced number of positive and critical observations. Parents' and carers' agreements and appreciative views about caring staff, and about pupils enjoying school, and feeling and being safe, are fully endorsed by inspectors' findings. The few parental concerns, mainly about children's progress, are also evident in inspection evidence, which although identifying improvement, revealed variations in pupils' progress through the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Covingham Park Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 331 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	71	19	26	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	64	26	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	27	38	43	60	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	42	35	49	4	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	33	46	35	49	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	33	46	34	47	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	38	44	61	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	39	43	60	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	31	43	38	53	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	33	42	58	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	36	43	60	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	40	40	56	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	38	53	33	46	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Covingham Park Primary School, Swindon, SN3 5BD

Thank you so much for your welcome, and particular thanks to those of you who took the time to talk to us. We were especially impressed by the efforts made to keep everyone safe and by your improved writing skills. We think that you attend a satisfactory school and agree with you that, after a period of change, the school is getting better.

These are the other main things we found.

- By the end of Year 6, most of you reach the levels that we expect in your subjects, and these show that you have made satisfactory progress.
- You said you really enjoy school and we saw that you attend and behave well.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and there is an increasing amount of good teaching, but although improving, there is still some variation.
- Your headteacher and staff, including several new teachers, alongside governors, are increasingly working well together to help you to make better progress.

To help you to improve your skills and to achieve better, we have asked your headteacher, governors and teachers to do these things.

- Improve your progress, by challenging you and involving you more in evaluating your own work so that you can play your part in bringing improvement.
- Give you more opportunities to develop and use your literacy and numeracy skills, and to learn for yourself, including by using computers, to set up and follow your enquiries. This will also help you to be more ready for secondary school.

You can all help by making sure that your work improves step by step and by trying hard to reach your targets.

Yours sincerely
Alex Baxter
Lead Inspector

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