

# Cotsford Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114151
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	378803
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 October 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Linda Buller

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	97
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	D Maddison
<b>Headteacher</b>	R Cook
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	07 May 2009
<b>School address</b>	Cotsford Park Horden Peterlee SR8 4TB
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons taught by four teachers. They held discussions with staff, members of the governing body, partners of the school and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books and a range of documentation, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's analysis of the progress pupils make and the standards they reach, evidence of leaders' monitoring and evaluation and plans for improvement, and reports by the local authority following their visits. They analysed staff questionnaires and 27 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The attainment of pupils to determine whether teaching and the curriculum consistently meet the learning needs of different groups in all subjects, especially that of boys.
- To what extent the school is able to demonstrate that pupils make good progress despite attainment remaining significantly below average overall.
- The rigour by which leaders and managers at all levels monitor and evaluate the impact of initiatives on improving outcomes for all groups of pupils.

## Information about the school

Cotsford is smaller than other infant schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high, and particularly so in some year groups where proportions are as high as 58%. For many of these pupils their special need relates to behaviour and emotional difficulties. There have been a number of changes and disruption to staffing since the last inspection including the maternity leave of both the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Among its awards the school has gained Activemark, Healthy School status and Silver Eco status.

**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

This is a satisfactory school. The school has done much in recent years to increase its effectiveness and performance. As a result, improvement is secure and improving strongly in a number of key areas. This has led to important increases in academic outcomes. Children receive a strong start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are firm signs of academic improvement, accelerated progress and rising trends in attainment; however, achievement is not good because of some remaining weaknesses in provision for some groups of pupils in Years 1 and 2. The school's success is most evident in reading and writing, where attainment is now much closer to the national average. In the school's drive to improve pupils' levels of literacy and during the temporary absence of senior staff, the school was slow to recognise potential underachievement in mathematics. As a result, despite secure and effective remedial action leading to some good progress, attainment overall by the end of Key Stage 1 remains low. This represents satisfactory progress from pupils' low attainment on entry to the school. To a large degree, but not entirely, this low attainment reflects the large proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in most year groups. These pupils are supported well and make satisfactory progress. However, the school has fewer pupils than nationally reaching higher levels of attainment.

Good partnerships with external agencies and a caring nurturing environment develop pupils' personal and social skills well. Although satisfactory with several good features, teaching and curriculum provision is not strong enough to ensure that learning and progress are consistently good for all groups of pupils. Although adjustments to the curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs are in the main successful, there is a small but significant group of pupils, mainly boys, who are not motivated or enthused to learn effectively. Consequently, the attainment of boys continues to be lower than that of girls. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make careful assessments of how pupils are doing. They use this information well to plan independent or group tasks that match pupils' varying levels of ability. Too often, however, the introduction of new learning and explanations for pupils at the beginning of lessons are the same for all pupils whatever their ability. At these times the learning needs of all groups of pupils are not fully met and their rate of progress slows. Therefore, although progress in lessons is never less than satisfactory and is improving, progress over time is not yet good for all groups of pupils.

All staff have a shared ambition for the school and are determined that pupils will reach their potential. Analyses of children's attainment as they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage are now used well to set challenging targets for pupils to reach by the end of Year 1. This has in the main eradicated previous underachievement in this year group and is a key reason why outcomes for pupils are strongly improving. Targets for pupils to achieve at the end of Year 2, however, are not sufficiently challenging because the school has not adjusted them to recognise the improvements in the earlier part of the school. Systems to track how well pupils are doing are leading to broadly accurate self-evaluation and clear actions for improvement. However, this information is not always used rigorously to pinpoint why some groups of pupils are not making the same good progress as their peers. The governing body fulfils its legal requirements and offers satisfactory support but does not yet systematically monitor the work of the school. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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?**

- Accelerate progress, particularly that of boys, and thereby raise attainment by the end of Year 2 by:
  - adjusting curriculum provision to further enthuse and engage boys in their learning
  - ensuring teachers consistently take into account pupils' different levels of ability when providing explanations and introducing new learning.
- Further improve the effectiveness of the actions taken by leaders and managers at all levels by:
  - increasing the level of challenge in the targets set for pupils to reach by the end of Year 2
  - strengthening systems of monitoring to rigorously evaluate the impact of initiatives on the attainment of all groups of pupils.
- Develop the skills of governors in monitoring the work of the school so that they are better informed and play a fuller role in holding the school to account for its actions and outcomes.

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

<b>3</b>
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Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They enjoy school and most have positive attitudes to learning because they respond well to teachers' enthusiasm in lessons and the good relationships they develop. In the main, pupils are interested in what they are doing, get on with the tasks set for them and behave well. Although there are signs of accelerated progress in lessons, it remains satisfactory overall as it is uneven in some parts of lessons when the needs of all pupils are not fully met. In lessons pupils use their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make, to make increasingly good progress towards developing basic skills in reading and writing.

Some weaknesses remain in presentation and letter formation. This has a negative impact on pupils’ ability to reach higher levels in their writing, despite a good knowledge of how to structure their writing and make it interesting for the reader. Overall pupils, particularly girls, respond well to lessons where staff work with small groups to guide the development of reading skills. This is a key factor in the rapidly improving attainment. However, boys are not well enough engaged in these sessions because the choice of resources and the lack of practical activity do not engage their interest. As a result, although attainment is improving overall, the gap in the attainment of boys and girls in literacy remains. The majority of pupils demonstrate a good grasp of number and shape. When guided by staff in structured sessions, they use their knowledge to carry out accurate calculation, particularly when using addition. Pupils’ ability to independently use their knowledge for example, to solve problems, is less secure and this is a priority for the school.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and a well-rounded attitude to making healthy choices based on good knowledge of the impact of a balanced diet and regular exercise. Through the school’s work in becoming a rights respecting school, pupils are developing a good understanding that with rights comes responsibilities. They increasingly put this knowledge into practice in the good contribution they make to their school being a cohesive community. They understand that there are others less fortunate than themselves and regularly raise money for a range of good causes. All these strengths in pupils’ personal qualities, their enthusiasm and ready contribution to life at school, rising academic trends and improvements to attendance give them a sound basis for the future.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Teachers’ subject knowledge is strong with new technology often used successfully to support whole-class teaching and to engage pupils’ interest. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils were very keen to use their skills of decoding in order to accurately identify real words so that they could make the dragon roar with approval.

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

The teacher provided strong encouragement for those who found the task more difficult and an additional challenge of explaining the meaning of the word for those who were confident. This good use of assessment to adjust provision for differing levels of ability is not a regular feature of all whole-class teaching. Teachers’ planning is detailed and identifies a clear learning intention which all teachers consistently share with pupils. While this provides pupils with a broad indication of what they are expected to learn and has a good impact on pupils’ ability to settle quickly to their task, explanations of learning intentions are not sufficiently detailed or adjusted to reflect the teachers’ expectations of different groups of pupils. As a result, higher-attaining pupils, in particular, are not always challenged to do as well as they can.

While giving due prominence to the basic core subjects, the school has successfully created a curriculum that includes enrichment activities which widen pupils’ horizons and provide them with a focus for much of their work. Monitoring and analysis of pupils’ attainment in different subjects have for the most part been used well to make adjustments to the curriculum, which have begun to result in higher levels of attainment especially in literacy. Pupils are now provided with more opportunities to investigate and solve problems and to practise their literacy skills in other subjects. However, curriculum provision does not consistently meet the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly boys.

Support for pupils’ personal development is extensive. Attention to their health and well-being is reflected, not just in opportunities for physical activity, but also in the provision of high-quality support for pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This work is a strength of the school and is one of the reasons why pupils’ attainment and attendance are improving. Staff usually provide pupils with good-quality guidance on how to improve their work, however, the positive impact of this can be lost when praise is used too liberally and can mislead pupils as to what is high-quality work. A high proportion of pupils in school encounter particular challenges which can be barriers to their learning. The school effectively matches additional support and care to their needs. This creates an effective climate for learning which enables these pupils to grow in confidence, make the same satisfactory progress as their peers and ensures that the learning of others is not disrupted by the poor behaviour of some.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher and staff are ambitious for improvement and teamwork is strong. Checks on lessons and of pupils’ views and work give school leaders valuable information about the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. However, this is not always rigorously considered in terms of the impact of provision on the outcomes for different groups of pupils. As a result, some weaknesses in provision

remain. Therefore, although effective in tackling any form of discrimination, the school’s effectiveness in promoting equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. Despite the sometimes over enthusiastic view of the school’s effectiveness, the actions taken by leaders and managers have been successful in closing the gap between the attainment of pupils in this school and those attained nationally.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. The headteacher provides the governing body with detailed reports of the work of the school which governors question and challenge. However, they have not developed the skills or systems needed to monitor the work of the school for themselves. As a result, they were not in a position to contribute to the swift identification of potential underachievement in the absence of senior staff. Safeguarding procedures reflect good practice. There are clear procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils, backed up by regular training for staff and effective working in partnership with other agencies. Links with other schools nearby and outside agencies are extensive and show a keen understanding of how to work in partnership with others to successfully meet local needs and overcome significant challenges. This also includes the successful engagement of parents and carers. Many examples of high-quality guidance are evident in the school which have played a part in driving improvement in pupils’ literacy skills. This is now being extended to the development of numeracy skills with the provision of number sacks, for example. Overall, the school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding which are overall lower than typical for their age. They make good progress relative to their starting points, with an increasing proportion year-on-year attaining the levels expected for their age by the time they transfer to Year 1. The quality of the provision is good. Children work and play together well and behaviour is good because routines have been quickly established and children feel safe and secure. Children are given many opportunities to develop the skills of working independently to investigate, find out things for themselves and to direct their own learning. This is successful because staff provide them with good-quality explanations of what is



available for them to do and what they can learn from each activity. Observations of children’s learning are regular and detailed making excellent use of new technology in order to make the task manageable and effective. This provides staff with the information needed to reflect children’s interests in planning and to ensure that all children are motivated to learn. Teachers maintain a good pace during adult-led sessions providing children with activities and resources which are fun and capture their interest. For example, children eagerly joined in an activity to recognise the initial sounds of familiar words and tried hard to form letters because it was fun to use their finger to write in glitter. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The team leader has a good understanding of the needs of children of this age. There is good teamwork and a strong sense of purpose among all staff and children are cared for well.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

A lower than average proportion of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. Most parents and carers who did so are pleased or very pleased with all aspects of the school and all the questionnaires expressed confidence in the care and support their children receive. Inspection evidence indicates that this aspect of the school’s work is a strength and supports parents’ and carers’ positive views. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concern with regard to the negative impact of the school’s reward and sanctions systems. Inspection evidence indicates that the school system has been successful in reducing the number of incidents of poor behaviour and that this in turn has contributed positively to the quality of pupils’ learning.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cotsford Infant 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 inspector received 27 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 97 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	81	5	19	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	78	6	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	63	9	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	59	11	41	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	63	9	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	59	11	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	70	8	30	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)	16	59	10	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	52	13	48	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	48	12	44	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	44	13	48	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	63	10	37	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	70	8	30	0	0	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



13 October 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Cotsford Infant School, Peterlee, SR8 4TB**

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming to us during our recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed observing you in class and listening to your views about the school. The inspectors judge that your school is satisfactory. That means some things are fine and others could be better. You told us that you enjoy school and you feel safe there. Your school is very caring and supports you well by working in partnership with other people who come to school to help with any problems you may have. The children in the Reception class get off to a good start because they are provided with activities which they are all interested in and enjoy. The school has worked hard to help those of you in Years 1 and 2 to improve your work by setting higher challenges for you to reach by the end of Year 1. This has been successful for most of you, especially when you are learning to read and write. We have asked the people who are responsible for leading your school to make sure that when you move into Year 2 you also have challenging targets.

Even though we can see how well the school is improving and that as a result some of you are now making good progress, this is not the same for all of you. Your headteacher and all of the adults who work in your school keep a careful check on how you are doing but do not always find out why some of you do better than others. We have asked them to take a careful look at this and have asked the governing body to improve how well it checks the work of the school. We have also asked the school to make sure that you all make better progress and reach higher standards of attainment by the time you leave the school. This is particularly important for some of the boys who at the moment are not always enjoying the work they are given and do not learn as well as they could. Your teachers carefully find out how well you are doing by marking your work and asking you questions. We have asked that they use this information as carefully as they can to make sure when teaching you altogether as a class they provide enough challenge for those of you who are able to reach higher levels in your work.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and enjoy school as much as you say you do now.

Yours sincerely  
Linda Buller  
Lead inspector

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