

Countess Gytha Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123659
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	380705
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2012
Lead inspector	Anna Sketchley

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	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Peck
Headteacher	Janet Mills
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Anna Sketchley

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited 13 lessons and observed six teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The 65 questionnaires from parents and carers were analysed and the inspector spoke with a few parents and carers informally. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including pupils' work, systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress, plans for improvement and reports written by the local authority. Questionnaires completed by 69 pupils and 10 staff were also evaluated.

Information about the school

Countess Gytha is smaller than the average sized primary school. Pupils come from the village and the surrounding area. There are five mixed age classes in the school in the morning and four in the afternoon. There are no pupils on the school roll with disabilities. However, the percentage of pupils who have special educational needs (supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs) is above the national average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. There is a privately run pre-school on site. The school meets the current floor standards which are the minimum standards expected by the government for pupils' attainment and progress.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Countess Gytha is a good school. The school is not outstanding because although pupils make good progress and attainment is high in reading and above average in writing, they do not do as well in mathematics. Pupils' progress in mathematics is good but attainment is average, leaving room for further improvement. Successful new initiatives are beginning to have an impact.
- Pupils achieve well because of good and sometimes outstanding teaching, a curriculum that is planned well and rigorous tracking of pupils' progress. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides an excellent start to pupils' education.
- Well planned lessons thoroughly engage pupils. Attendance is high and pupils enjoy learning. They work enthusiastically and attitudes and behaviour are very good. Teachers set challenging targets and ensure that all pupils are very clear about the next steps in their learning. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. They are very well known to all adults and are exceptionally well looked after. Rigorous safeguarding procedures are in place. Pupils show significant respect to all adults and to each other and bullying is rare. The strong emphasis on the Buddy system encourages pupils to learn together and support and care for one another exceptionally well. This underpins the school's excellent provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, creating a very good climate for learning in which all pupils thrive.
- The school is well led and managed by a strong leadership team, knowledgeable subject leaders and a skilled governing body. Systematic performance management and high quality professional development are securing consistently good teaching in all year groups. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Determination and drive in all of its work is ensuring that the school is well placed for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve progress in mathematics by July 2013 so that

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pupils reach attainment that is above average. This should be achieved through:

- embedding the recently successful initiatives to improve pupils' calculation skills and their ability to use their skills to solve problems
- creating more opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills across the curriculum.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the Reception class with skills similar to those expected for their age, although aspects of their literacy and numeracy skills are often less well developed. They make very good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because provision is excellent. Progress in Key Stage 1 is good and attainment is above average by the end of Year 2, including in reading. Good progress is maintained throughout Key Stage 2 for all groups of pupils. Attainment in Year 6 is above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics.

The school is particularly successful at closing the gap for pupils who have special educational needs. Some pupils have very complex needs and make exceptionally good progress from their starting points. Support is very effectively implemented and carefully monitored by teachers and highly skilled teaching assistants. A parent commented, 'My child has made huge progress since support has been put into place for him and his world of learning has really opened up.' Young people whose circumstances could make them vulnerable are very well supported and, as a result, achieve well.

The excellent balance between teacher and child-chosen activities in the Reception class means the correct amount of attention is given to learning letters and sounds and completing simple number work. As a result, children develop reading, writing and number skills quickly. They are keen to show sounds they know, confidently writing words such as 'farmer', 'ladder' and 'letter' on small whiteboards when revising the 'er' sound. During a lesson about Venn diagrams they excitedly demonstrate their excellent ability to sort according to colour and shape, recognising and naming a hexagon.

Consistency throughout the school in the teaching of phonics (the sounds represented by letters) ensures that Year 2 pupils use the strategies they have been taught to build unfamiliar words as they seek to improve their reading. The more-able pupils read fluently and expressively with great enjoyment. The more-able pupils in Year 2 enthusiastically responded to using their knowledge of number when challenged to solve complex written number problems. By the time pupils reach Year 4, they understand myths and legends and can use the story of Arachne as a model for their own story. They write narrative well, planning carefully and showing they can use the correct punctuation and spelling with interesting vocabulary. Good opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills across other subjects enable

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them to make rapid progress in this area of learning. The less-able pupils in Year 5 are adept at giving well explained answers when reading capacity scales because they are sure of essential facts. By Year 6, pupils demonstrate a high level of concentration during mental mathematics lessons. Their secure knowledge of basic measures and use of strategies, such as a number line, enable them to calculate efficiently, answer questions quickly and explain their answers clearly.

Quality of teaching

High quality professional development ensures teachers' subject knowledge is extensive, and is especially good in literacy. Teachers ensure that pupils' literacy skills are practised within a well planned curriculum that fully supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An example of this was observed during the inspection when a teacher used the innovative Buddy initiative between Year 6 and Reception to expand pupils' social understanding and successfully teach them to write a set of instructions for 'what makes an effective buddy'. Pupils with special educational needs, and those whose circumstances could make them potentially vulnerable, were well supported and made similar progress to all other pupils.

Typically, at the beginning of every lesson, teachers share the learning intention with pupils so they know what they are to learn. They engage pupils immediately with excellent use of the interactive whiteboards. All pupils have personal targets and are very clear about how to improve their work. This is an improvement since the last inspection. During lesson introductions teachers often pair pupils for short amounts of talking time to enable them to share their ideas and learn from one another as well as from the teacher. This method ensures a good pace to learning, contributing well to pupils' social development. The use of small whiteboards in both literacy and numeracy, which pupils hold up to show their recorded answers, allows teachers to quickly assess who understands the learning. Teachers are especially good at asking questions to draw out explanations from pupils. Tasks are interesting and challenging. Very good planning, preparation and organisation allow teachers and highly skilled teaching assistants to work with groups of pupils. Pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour in lessons are very good and pupils are able to work independently very successfully. Occasionally the pace of learning slows because teachers use too many examples or take too long recapping previous learning.

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding because of expert knowledge of the teaching of early number and literacy skills and the use of imaginative teaching strategies. This, together with high expectations of behaviour and accurate assessment of what children can do, ensures that children make rapid progress. Parents and carers speak very highly of their children's first year. One commented, 'The effort and care that goes into each day is exceptional.' Another said, 'My child has become so much more confident and really loves school.'

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire and those spoken to informally agreed that their children are well taught, a view supported by

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the findings of the inspection.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

There have been no exclusions at the school since the last inspection and very few recorded incidents of misbehaviour or bullying, indicating good behaviour over time. Pupils are very polite to each other and to adults, and listen attentively to their teachers. This very good attitude helps them make good progress. A very small minority of parents and carers indicated in the questionnaire they were concerned about some disruption in lessons. This was not observed during the inspection. Pupils have a very good understanding of what constitutes safe behaviour and older pupils who act as Play Leaders and Buddies demonstrate good social skills. Playtimes are very well supervised by adults. Pupils' safety and welfare are paramount at all times and pupils say they feel very safe in school and that almost all of the time everyone is very well behaved. They understand about different types of bullying, for example physical, emotional or cyber-bullying, and say that incidents of any type are rare. They say that teachers would deal with such incidents very quickly if the situation arose. Pupils' positive view of behaviour is supported by their high rate of attendance. Almost all parents and carers correctly believe that pupils' behaviour and safety are good.

Leadership and management

Since the last inspection strong leadership and governance have determinedly brought about good improvement in the school's overall effectiveness. Strategies to improve the key issues have been very successful. As a result, the school's performance has improved and this is reflected in improvements in pupils' achievement, especially in literacy. The whole school community is a dedicated and effective team, fully focused upon delivering high quality teaching and learning. The governing body uses its exceptional skills to monitor the school closely, asking searching questions. The governors are very involved in the school's work at both an operational and strategic level.

The school's self-evaluation is particularly strong, resulting in correct priorities and swiftly implemented action plans, especially in writing. This successful model is now being used to improve mathematics. It is assisted by very successful professional development for all staff, precise whole school and individual performance management objectives and regular observations of the quality of teaching. This is ensuring that all staff are fully supported in their drive towards improving and sustaining achievement. Teachers working together in pairs, to review each other's teaching, is a key factor in improvement to the quality of teaching. Teachers use the school's robust tracking system and regular pupil progress meetings to ensure that the needs of all pupils are fully met. Results from the inspection questionnaire demonstrate a strong school/parent and carer partnership. Almost all parents and carers felt that the school met their child's individual needs. All of these features give the school the capacity for sustaining improvement in the future.

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The curriculum is broad and balanced, meeting pupils' needs well and motivating pupils to learn. Information and communication technology is a strength. Links with the local environment and with the local church are especially valuable in this respect. Opportunities throughout the curriculum ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported, for example through art and music and strong links with a school in Zambia.

Promoting the equality of different groups of pupils is good and the school does not tolerate any kind of discrimination. The governing body and school staff ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously, and regular training and monitoring ensure that a high quality is maintained. Almost all parents and carers agree that pupils are safe in school.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



18 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Countess Gytha Primary School, Yeovil BA22 7NH

Thank you for the very warm and friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently and for spending time talking to me. I really enjoyed meeting you. I found Countess Gytha to be a good school. These are some of the best things I found.

- You are achieving well, especially in English.
- You receive good teaching, enjoy lessons and have a very good attitude to your work.
- You enjoy coming to school and are very polite and well behaved. Your attendance is very good.
- You have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and feel very safe in school.
- Your school is well led and managed.

All the adults in your school want you to do your very best. Although they know what needs to be done next, I have asked them to do one thing to make your learning even better.

- I would like them to help you to improve your attainment and progress in mathematics. I would like your school to do this by helping you to improve your calculation skills and your ability to solve number problems. I would also like you to have more opportunities to practise your mathematical skills in other subjects.

Please keep working hard.

Yours sincerely

Anna Sketchley
Lead inspector

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