

Coniston Primary School

Epney Close, Patchway, South Gloucestershire, BS34 5LN

Inspection dates 7–8 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- Although leaders have improved teaching and pupils' achievement, they have not done so quickly enough to make it consistently good. As a result, pupils' progress is not yet good in all subjects and all year groups.
- Too few more-able pupils reach the higher levels by the end of Year 6 because they are not challenged enough, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers do not always make number activities exciting enough and there are not enough chances for pupils to practise their number skills in different subjects and topics.
- Teachers do not use questioning well enough to check how well pupils are learning. Pupils are often not given enough opportunities to find out things for themselves.
- Progress and teaching need improvement in the Reception class because the outside area is not used well enough to maximise learning, especially children's physical skills.
- Behaviour is not good because some pupils are too passive in lessons and do not always show positive attitudes to learning.
- Leaders check pupils' progress carefully, but not frequently enough to ensure that any who fall behind are given extra help to catch up quickly.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, the governing body and staff are determined to make improvements and have high ambitions for pupils and for the school.
- Pupils feel safe in school and most enjoy their lessons.
- Members of the governing body are increasingly effective in holding the school to account for the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, five of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. All classroom teachers present during the inspection were observed teaching.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at examples of pupils' work with senior staff to find out how well pupils learn, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders and teachers who have responsibilities for specific subjects, other staff, the Chair and other representatives of the Governing Body, and with groups of pupils. A discussion was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the ways in which the school assesses its effectiveness, plans for developments and uses evaluations done by others such as the local authority.
- Inspectors took note of the 10 responses to the online Parent View survey and spoke to a group of parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day. Inspectors also analysed six questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Michael Merchant, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Jennifer Cutler

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is small.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is above average. Currently, there are no children in local authority care and no children of service families attending the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- There have been significant changes to staffing since the last inspection. A high number of teachers have left or joined the school over the last two years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better in all year groups by:
 - raising the level of challenge for more-able pupils, especially in mathematics
 - giving pupils more opportunities to be curious and inquisitive in class
 - making sure that teachers use questions more carefully to check pupils' understanding
 - ensuring that pupils spend less time listening to teachers talking and are more active and excited by their learning.
- Raise attainment and improve the rate at which pupils make progress in mathematics by:
 - making sure that number tasks are more exciting and relevant to all pupils so that all have a greater enjoyment of mathematics
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their number skills when working in different subjects
 - making sure that all teachers give pupils help in how to solve number problems expressed in words.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by ensuring that:
 - systems for checking the quality of teaching are used effectively by all leaders to bring about faster improvements to teaching
 - the pupils' progress is checked more frequently so that any pupils in danger of falling behind can be given help quickly to catch up.
- Make sure the outside learning areas for the Early Years Foundation Stage are developed so that they are used effectively for helping develop all areas of children's learning, especially their physical development.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start school with skills and abilities that are below those expected of their age. They make good progress as they move through Reception but progress is prevented from being better in the Reception class because there are not enough high-quality outdoor resources for the children to improve their number, communication and, especially, their physical skills.
- Progress through the rest of the school is too variable, both between year groups and between subjects. Good progress is made in Years 1 and 2 but slows in Years 3 to 6 where too few pupils make more than the progress expected of them, especially in mathematics.
- Attainment by the end of Year 2 is broadly average and has been rising year on year. The gap between the school and the national average, although closing, remains by the end of Year 6 and attainment overall is below average.
- Achievement in mathematics has started to improve but not as quickly as in reading and writing. Most pupils make reasonable gains in calculations but many have difficulty at solving higher-level number problems when they are written as words. Too few pupils show real enthusiasm or enjoyment at working with numbers.
- Younger children make a good start and quickly gain confidence in recognising letters and the sounds they make, and use these skills to recognise and understand words. Challenging and enjoyable reading activities mean more pupils are beginning to enjoy reading throughout the school.
- The school checks the progress of every pupil and of different groups of pupils carefully, reflecting the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. These improved systems to check pupils' progress are helping to spot when individuals are falling behind. However, because these checks are only held three times a year, there is not always enough time to provide the additional help that some pupils need to help them catch up.
- The school plans well-judged extra support for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who attract pupil premium funding. This support has effectively reduced the attainment gap between these pupils and others so that in 2012 they are about a term behind others in the school in their levels in English and mathematics. This was a much smaller difference than in previous years.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar or better progress than their classmates when their starting points are taken into account. Additional support provided by the school enables many to do their best.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is uneven and the good practice in some classes is not always seen elsewhere, so some pupils are not making good enough progress.
- In some lessons, especially in Years 3 to 6, work is not always set at the right level, which means that some pupils are given work which is too easy for them. In some classes, this is a particular issue in mathematics, especially when the more able are given work at too low a level.
- In mathematics, teaching tasks are not always relevant for all pupils. Pupils also lack abilities to practise mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Learning is sometimes held back because teachers spend too long explaining and do not allow enough time for pupils to do their individual work or to work together. These lessons are often undemanding and the pace of learning too slow. Pupils therefore become too dependent on their teachers and are reluctant to take the initiative and to find out for themselves, especially in mathematics.
- In the more effective lessons, teachers measure progress and address any misunderstandings swiftly, through searching questions that help pupils develop their thinking and know how much

they have understood. This is not always the case, however, and teachers either do not pose questions frequently enough to check understanding, or their questions do not probe or challenge pupils enough to encourage them to think deeply.

- Weaker students get extra help in reading and writing, often helped by effective support from teaching assistants, and are making much better progress in developing their literacy skills. Development of mathematical skills has not been given as much additional support and, consequently, progress is slower.
- The marking of pupils' work is usually helpful in telling pupils how to improve. Some students have the opportunities to review their work and that of others, and this helps them to judge their own performance accurately.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary with the quality of teaching they receive. In lessons which require improvement, which predominate, pupils are at best unenthusiastic and passive, and show little enthusiasm for their learning. Here, learning is sometimes interrupted by inattentive and silly behaviour.
- Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how they can contribute to their own and each other's safety. They trust in all the adults to help them if they have difficulties, either in their work, or personally.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and its different forms. They say that it is rare, and pupils, and parents and carers, say that unkind behaviour, such as name-calling and teasing, are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils generally behave courteously, and most are polite and considerate around the school. School records show that very negative behaviour is infrequent and there have been few exclusions in recent years.
- Most pupils enjoy school, and this is reflected in the improved attendance rate, which is now close to the national average.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The headteacher and members of the governing body have strong ambition for the school. Senior leaders are aware that pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching, although improving, are not as strong as they should be. Leaders have correctly identified the most important areas that need to be tackled and have taken the correct actions to do so. However, a big turnover in teachers in the last few years has prevented the full impact of these actions being reflected in rising attainment.
- Senior leaders now check the school's work accurately and use this information to judge what has worked well and what needs further improvement. Good systems are in place to check the quality of lessons and the overall progress of pupils. However, the frequency of monitoring pupils' performance has not been often enough to identify quickly any weaknesses in progress.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching accurately, which is improving practice. Clear feedback, coupled with appropriate advice and training, is offered to teachers whose performance falls short of the mark. This improvement in teaching is not as rapid as it could be, however, because leaders do not always follow up these shortcomings with sufficient urgency.
- Systems for setting targets for teachers to improve their work are now being used rigorously to reward good performance and are based on an accurate review of teaching and progress. Those on the higher pay scale accept additional responsibilities as a consequence.
- The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development adequately. Progression in reading, writing is planned for well and much has been done to help pupils enjoy reading. However, not enough chances are being given to pupils to practise their number skills in different subjects.

- The local authority keeps a close check on the performance of the school and has provided a good balance of challenge and support to help the school improve, through for instance, the use of advanced skills teachers from neighbouring schools.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all current requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

The governing body has recently been revitalised with the addition of a number of new members and these new governors, having benefited from useful training, bring a good range of skills to their roles. Until recently, the governing body had not had enough information to identify patterns in pupils' achievement accurately or to ensure that teaching is improving quickly enough. Governors are now much more effective in holding school leaders to account for any shortcomings in school performance and have a growing and increasingly realistic knowledge of how well the school is performing in relation to other schools across the country. They have a good knowledge of how strong teaching is across the school and are now fully involved in decisions that reward teachers for good performance and about how under-performance is tackled. Governors understand well how pupil premium funding is spent and now have the confidence to be able to check on its impact on the school's most vulnerable pupils.

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

Unique reference number	131698
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	402497
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Lloyd
Headteacher	Nigel Isaac
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 May 2012
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