

Coniston CofE Primary School

Shepherd's Bridge, Coniston, Cumbria, LA21 8AL

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- It is rapidly improving. Pupils are getting better and better results. This year they will leave school with above average scores.
- It has an exceptional headteacher who has the dedication, drive and energy to motivate staff and make sure the school keeps improving.
- Through good leadership and management, the school is becoming ever more central to the interests of the local community.
- Leaders and managers are making sure that teaching and learning continue to keep on improving faster and faster.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. Little bits of mischief are dealt with well by staff and pupils feel well looked after.
- Teaching is good. It is becoming more consistently so. Pupils are increasingly well taught from the time they join the school to the point at which they leave.
- Pupils enjoy reading because it is well taught and as a result they achieve well.
- Pupils joining the school enter an engaging and well-taught Early Years Foundation Stage. They are well prepared for joining Year 1.
- Parents are increasingly supportive; with good reason they strongly recommend other parents to consider sending their children here.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Sometimes teachers do not make it clear enough to pupils what they need to do to improve their work.
- Teachers tend to pay less attention to promoting pupils' numeracy skills as they do their computer or literacy skills in all of the subjects they teach.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of eight lessons, all teachers were seen. The inspector listened to pupils reading and looked at samples of their work.
- Many informal discussions with pupils took place at lunch and playtimes; in these discussions, pupils talked about the school, their work and their feelings about behaviour and safety.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The inspector also talked with nearly all members of staff and scrutinised their responses to a voluntary questionnaire circulated during the inspection.
- Four parents responded to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Additional parental views from an in-school questionnaire were taken into account.
- Many school documents were analysed, including plans for improvement and records of the quality of teaching. Information about pupils' progress and about how leaders and managers make sure that pupils are kept safe was also carefully scrutinised.
- On the first day of the inspection, all Key Stage 2 pupils were out of school during the morning because they were swimming. Year 6 pupils were not in school in the afternoon because they were visiting the school they were transferring to after leaving. On the second day, all pupils were engaged in a 'French Picnic' celebration for a large part of the morning.

Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority; in this school it is nearly always for those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- All pupils are White British.
- Boys outnumber girls.
- A lower than usual proportion of pupils is supported through school action. A higher than average proportion is supported through school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In April 2010, the school was judged to require special measures because it was failing to provide pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. The headteacher subsequently left to be replaced by an acting headteacher. In May 2011, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors reported that special measures were no longer needed, that the school was satisfactory and that it had a good capacity for further improvement. The acting headteacher subsequently left to be replaced by the current headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by consistently :
 - making it clear to pupils what they have achieved in all subject areas and what they need to do to improve their work
 - making clear links between targets and learning objectives when they mark pupils' work
 - making sure that pupils read the comments that teachers make about their work and act upon them.
- Improve the teaching of mathematics so that pupils achieve as well in the subject as they do in English by:
 - making sure that all teachers identify every way in which they can enhance the ways in which pupils use and apply mathematical principles across all subjects
 - extending the opportunities pupils are given to increase their mathematical vocabulary and to use their mathematical knowledge and understanding to solve problems.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve increasingly well. They make good progress from their starting points and attainment by the time they leave is above average. There have been peaks and dips in recent years because published results can often be distorted by the performance of a single pupil. Single individuals can also distort the potential of different year groups. Nevertheless, there is a growing trend of pupils exceeding expectations now that a legacy of underachievement has been overcome.
- Year 6 pupils in 2012 underachieved from their individual starting points when entering Year 3. They bore the brunt of the school's problems when they were in their first two years of their Key Stage 2 education. After this, they made good progress but not enough to compensate for the past.
- This year's leavers are about to achieve the best results in recent years. Data shows that all are expected to attain at least the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and that many will exceed that level. Most will attain higher than average results in reading, many will achieve higher than average results in writing but only an average number will exceed expectations in mathematics. In all of the lessons observed, all pupils were seen to be making good progress.
- The most important change over the past two years is that achievement is becoming more consistent. Historically, Key Stage 1 has been a consistent strength surrounded by a variable quality of education on either side. Now, children entering the Reception class can expect a good quality of education that will continue through to Year 6.
- Children tend to join the school below age-related expectations. Some are well below in their ability to communicate and their ability to count but others display talent beyond their age. Often by the time they leave, nearly all have either met or exceeded expectations and their attainment is higher than the national average.
- Achievement in reading is good. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to link letters to sounds and for the last two years, all pupils at the end of Year 1 have exceeded national expectations for their ability to do so. Teachers are very perceptive in identifying that, occasionally, pupils struggle with this approach to promoting better reading and introduce other methods, such as helping pupils to recognise frequently used words.
- Achievement in mathematics is good but it could be better. Holding it back is that pupils' problem solving abilities are not as good as they could be and that pupils are not given enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills across the timetable. There is a wonderful precedent on record when Key Stage 1 pupils visited the local chip shop as part of a mathematics lesson, but such opportunities are not sufficiently embedded.
- Most pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding and those with disabilities or special educational needs make the same good progress as all others. As a result, in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2012 there was very little difference in the attainment of those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and that of their classmates. Teachers are quick to identify any individual they see to be struggling and equally quick to secure effective extra attention and support for that pupil. This contributes well to the school's commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good. It is rarely less than this but equally, not enough is outstanding. It is very obvious that day-in, day-out, pupils are well taught. This is confirmed, not only by the evidence of inspection but by regular monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers and by the local authority, and by the progress pupils can be seen to be making. Parents feel that

their children are well taught and pupils agree.

- Relationships between adults and pupils in classrooms are particularly good. Teachers take great pride in making their classrooms as attractive, informative and inviting as possible. These may be little things but pupils appreciate them and say that it adds to their enjoyment of school. Teachers are good at promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. They arrange trips and invite visitors into lessons in order to enrich pupils' lives. They instil in pupils the importance of behaving well and getting on well with each other
- The teaching for reception age children is good and is improving rapidly. There is a passion about it that involves these young children and encourages them to learn. What prevents it from being outstanding is that having inspired them, children are not given more opportunities to explore, discover and develop things for themselves rather than being subjected to adult led activities.
- In an exceptionally good lesson, Key Stage 2 pupils were set tasks that challenged their mathematical understanding. Different year groups were set different challenges and within year groups pupils of different abilities were equally challenged. Whilst some pupils set off to make fudge, with the additional challenge of doubling or halving the recipe according to the quantity provided, others set about exploring the relationships between proportions and ratios. Other than this, with the exception of the previously mentioned visit to the local chip shop, not enough is done to make pupils aware of the importance of the use mathematics in everyday life.
- Teachers mark pupils' work well but they do not always make it clear to pupils what they have achieved or what they need to do to in order to get even better marks in all subjects. Although many comments made by teachers in pupils' books refer to the effort that has been made and to their presentation of work they do not always consistently make reference to what has been learned and whether they have achieved what was expected of them. In addition, teachers are not checking that pupils are actually reading their annotations, which is clear when pupils make the same mistakes repeatedly.
- Sometimes teachers assert themselves too much and do not give pupils enough opportunities to exercise choice and to develop their own ideas. In an art lesson, for example, pupils were given a strict size of paper and the same grade of pencil, which restricted the pupils' ability to interpret the objective of the lesson for themselves.
- Helpers in classrooms are well deployed. Some are parents, others volunteers and a few are teaching assistants. Teachers manage these valuable resources well, often to help pupils who for one reason or another need extra help.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are kept as safe as possible without making them fearful. They are taught about how to assume responsibility for their own safety rather than how to rely on others to keep them safe.
- From an early age, pupils are encouraged to understand that not everyone is the same and that differences are there to be embraced rather than be discriminated against. There is no evidence whatsoever of discrimination or bullying.
- Pupils like school and behave well in class. There are a few 'robust' boys in the Early Years but it is clear by the conduct of older boys that the school is effective in reining them in and instilling good moral and social values before they leave. Any minor infringements of the code of conduct that each class devises for themselves are well dealt with by staff.
- Most pupils are friendly and open to visitors. They are polite and inquisitive. Attendance is well above average. Pupils and parents generally have a very good attitude to punctuality and attendance. Absence is nearly always for medical reasons or for the demands of a farming and tourism economy.
- Pupils enjoy taking on simple responsibilities within the school.
- This is a school that totally embraces the benefits of technology and its pitfalls. Pupils are very well educated about both. They are made especially aware of unwise use of social media.
- There is a good sense of harmony at playtimes. Pupils often form up into single interest groups.

Some choose to seek peace and quiet in a memorial garden others to play well together in activities such as cricket and tennis. Staff often engage with pupils in a wonderful range of traditional games and activities that promote local values.

- The school strongly promotes the ideal of family and community involvement. This helps pupils to feel safe in their environment and to behave well to promote family and community values positively.

The leadership and management are good

- The dedicated and highly effective leadership of the headteacher has helped to transform this school and put it on the path to being very special. Barriers still remain, especially in trying to balance the budget but pupils are getting an increasingly good deal and are all given an equal opportunity to achieve success.
- There has been a concerted drive to improve teaching. Training for improvement is strongly encouraged and as a result, teaching is improving across the whole school. In the past, nearly all improvement in achievement happened in Years 1 and 2. Now, it is happening in every classroom and this is opening up a clear pathway for the rapidly improved achievement of pupils. There is a minor weakness in that the targets teachers are set to improve their work tend to focus upon how to be good, rather than outstanding.
- The headteacher has mentored a newly qualified, newly appointed teacher particularly well. As a result, teaching and learning in the Reception class has considerably improved.
- All teachers now have challenging yet realistic targets for improvement and know exactly what they have to do to achieve them. Good teachers are being rewarded for their performance rather than their longevity.
- Leaders and managers have a very clear idea about what the school needs to do to improve. They accurately inspect themselves on a regular basis and make sure that people from other schools and the local authority check and agree with their evaluations.
- The local authority keeps on reducing its involvement with the school as it increasingly recognises that it can stand on its own two feet. Support has been welcomed, especially in the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage and in helping the new headteacher to establish her position. The reduction in support is welcomed by the headteacher.
- A strength of the school's view of its own performance is the way in which it actively seeks opinions from peers and outside sources. This is a remote school in a remote community so this is very important.
- There is a good, particularly well enriched curriculum. There is a passion for promoting the use of computers to help learning and broaden horizons. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted. Outside of the school day pupils are encouraged to join in with activities which encourage their parents to share in their children's interests and education.
- Many different community groups are encouraged to use the school's facilities. Pupils are taught about their community and their role within it.
- Parents are recommending this school to other parents in the locality because they feel increasingly well informed about how their children are getting on and how well staff keep in touch with them.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors understand the school has a very tight budget. Hard decisions have been sensibly made regarding staffing and resourcing. Governors regularly involve themselves in the life of the school. They are kept well aware of issues through perceptive reports from the headteacher. They know about the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils are making through a clear understanding of school data. Members of the governing body, with support from the local authority, keep a check on the performance of the headteacher and monitor how well effective teaching is recognised. The governing body as a whole makes sure that the school is a safe place for pupils and staff and that all safeguarding and statutory procedures are met. Governors are aware of how much funding the school receives through the pupil

premium but are not sure about how it is used or to what effect.

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	112279
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	400080
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Iredale
Headteacher	Rachel Hindle
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2011
Telephone number	01539 441302
Fax number	01539 441302
Email address	head@coniston.cumbria.sch.uk

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