

Countess Wear Community School

Glasshouse Lane, Countess Wear, Exeter, EX2 7BS

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Too few pupils are reaching standards at or above the levels expected for their age.
- Information about how well pupils are doing is not always used quickly enough to check whether pupils are making as much progress as possible.
- When marking books, not all teachers consistently tell the pupils what they need to do to improve their work.
- There are occasions when teachers do not use questions well enough to check that all pupils have fully understood all the new learning in the lesson.

The school has the following strengths:

- The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding.
- Children in Nursery and Reception make outstanding progress because they are taught really well.
- The school is very welcoming and gives good help and support to pupils and families who are going through challenging times.
- Children enjoy learning because they are given lots of opportunities to learn in interesting ways which meet their needs.
- Children behave well and are polite to each other and to adults because that is how adults treat them.
- Good leadership and management ensure that teachers work together very well as a team and are keen to make sure that all pupils do as well as they can.
- The Forest School and the variety of enrichment activities that pupils experience contribute strongly to the development of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons and parts of lessons.
- Discussions were held with the acting headteacher, other leaders in school, members of the governing body, representatives of the local authority, parents and carers and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the views of parents and carers from discussions in the playground and one letter from a parent or carer.
- Information about how well school leaders know how good the school is and their plans for school improvement, as well as assessment information, minutes of meetings of the governing body, teachers' planning, pupils' work and safeguarding procedures were examined.
- Inspectors analysed 48 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Jeanne Simpson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kevin Wright	Additional Inspector
Gary Kirkley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Countess Wear is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The deputy headteacher, who has been appointed since the last inspection, is currently in the role of acting headteacher due to the recent absence of the substantive headteacher.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for 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 higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is slightly higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than average.
- The school has a Hearing Support Centre which is currently accessed by four pupils.
- The school meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics in Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by:
 - sharing the outstanding practice that already exists in the school
 - using questioning more thoroughly in all lessons to find out whether pupils have fully understood all the new learning in the lesson
 - making sure when marking books that pupils are always given ideas about how they can improve their work.
- Raise standards in English and mathematics by:
 - using information about how well pupils are doing more regularly to ensure that individual pupils are making as much progress as possible
 - setting challenging targets which will help all pupils to catch up with their peers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In the past, the achievement of too many pupils has not been good enough. This has resulted in much underachievement and standards of attainment that are too low, particularly in mathematics and for more-able pupils.
- Progress is now improving and, as a result, attainment is rising. However, because of this legacy of underachievement there are still not enough pupils reaching standards of attainment at or above those expected for their age in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6.
- Children in Nursery and Reception classes begin school with starting points which are well below those expected for their age. The nurturing environment and the high expectations of the teachers mean that children make excellent progress so that, by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, they reach standards of attainment above those expected for their age.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is consistently good and this is resulting in pupils who read with confidence. They use their skills well to read unfamiliar words, as well as to help them when they are writing.
- At the end of the last academic year, pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 reached standards of attainment well below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to achieve standards which are slightly above national averages because of the good progress they have made over the last two years.
- The achievement of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 has been well below national averages for more than three years and, at the end of last academic year, pupils were two terms behind their peers in English and mathematics. However, improvements in teaching are now leading to pupils making better progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including pupils who attend the Hearing Support Centre, benefit from special programmes of support which have been carefully chosen to meet their needs. As a result, their progress has improved dramatically with more than two thirds of them making better than expected progress. Their attainment at the end of Year 6 is on track to be in line with national averages for this group of pupils.
- The attainment of pupils who are eligible for the additional funding through the pupil premium is more than two terms behind that of their peers in both English and mathematics. Their progress this year is inconsistent between subjects but the extra help they receive is helping them to catch up with their peers, particularly in mathematics.
- Information about how well pupils are doing is regularly collected. This information needs to be used more systematically to check that pupils who are underachieving are catching up rapidly. It also needs to be used to better effect to set challenging targets for pupils based on the expectation of them making better than expected progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good and improving; some is outstanding.
- Examples of outstanding teaching were observed in the Nursery and Reception classes. Teachers displayed a clear understanding about how young children learn in a safe and supportive environment in which they can thrive. Both indoors and outdoors, the resources are designed to stimulate their interests. Activities are brought alive through exciting themes such as the current 'pirate week' which gave meaningful opportunities for pupils to find the specific three-dimensional shapes that Captain Bluebeard had asked for in his treasure chest.
- Currently, approximately one third of the pupils at the school are disabled or have special educational needs. These pupils are supported well in class lessons through careful planning by the teachers and support from skilled teaching assistants. Those pupils who find it difficult to work in large groups have the opportunity to be taught in small groups or in the school's Nurture

Unit, where the support they receive is very effective.

- The majority of teachers use questions very well to help pupils to develop their thinking. When this happens, pupils are able to get on with their work because they understand the new learning. However, there are occasions when questions do not give the chance for pupils to show what they have learned or the teachers move on too quickly without checking that all pupils understand. In these instances pupils often find working independently difficult and the pace of learning slows.
- Pupils know what they are expected to learn because the teachers tell them at the beginning of each lesson. They also know what they need to do to be successful because success criteria, which provide different levels of challenge, are shared.
- Teachers mark work thoroughly and pupils understand how the comments relate to the success criteria for the learning in the lesson. The majority of teachers also tell the pupils through their comments how they can improve their work even further, but this is not consistent.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good. Most teachers have very high expectations of behaviour, but occasionally pupils become too excited or noisy and this can interfere with the learning of others. There are a number of pupils with very challenging behaviour and these pupils are very well supported by adults who help them to make the right decisions about their actions.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils know that their teachers care about them and there is an ethos of care and concern for the happiness and well-being of all members of the school community.
- Pupils feel safe. Parents, carers and teachers agree that the school is a safe place in which to learn. The atmosphere in the school is very welcoming and parents and carers know that they can come and talk to anyone in school and that their feelings and views will be heard.
- Playtimes are an enjoyable experience for the pupils because there is a lot of open space in the school grounds and there are plenty of interesting things for them to do. There are covered areas where they can go if it is drizzly and an awning which can be opened up to provide shade in sunny weather. Pupils enjoy playtimes and mix well socially because there is no rough or wild behaviour.
- Pupils understand that it is wrong to bully and they say that anti-bullying assemblies remind them about what to do if it happens. They say that bullying is rare and that if it does occur it is usually dealt with well. They understand how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including when they are working on the internet.
- Pupils fully understand and comply well with the school's behaviour policy. They appreciate being recognised for their good behaviour through the commendation cards. Exclusion is a last resort because the school does everything it can to help all pupils. The rates and patterns of pupil exclusions are reducing over time and the current year has had the fewest exclusions for four years.
- Attendance overall is broadly in line with national averages. The school works very hard to support pupils who are reluctant to come to school, often involving support for the family as well as the pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- There has been a concerted effort to build a strong leadership team over the recent past. Though some leaders are new to their roles, they show a real drive and determination to improve standards and they are becoming increasingly successful. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and they lead by example.
- The school's present action plans focusing on raising the quality of teaching have successfully

led to recent improvements in pupils' progress. Leaders regularly check on how well teachers are performing in the classroom. Teachers are provided with guidance on how they can improve their performance. The school also uses partnerships with other schools effectively to help teachers accurately identify what outstanding teaching looks like.

- Leaders are now in the initial stages of developing a long-term plan to ensure the sustained improvement of the school over the next few years. They are aware that this needs to include measurable targets to help all members of staff and governors judge the success of such planning.
- The development of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding is a strength. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and the school is a very harmonious place. There are regular special events, such as science week and world book day, and all pupils have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. Pupils who are gifted or talented are helped to develop these traits further through experiences outside school and there are regular trips for all pupils to places of interest.
- The Forest School is a real asset. The learning that happens there is outstanding and pupils really enjoy the experiences they have.
- Countess Wear is a highly inclusive school. Every effort is made to provide effective support for all groups of pupils so that there is equality of opportunity. The recent improvements in pupils' progress demonstrate that the school has capacity for further improvement.
- Parents and carers have very positive views about the school and there are regular opportunities for them to attend special events as well as to attend courses to help them support their children's learning.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are fully secure.
- The local authority has provided well-measured advice and support to the school which has been particularly effective while the headteacher has been absent.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very aware that, in the past, they have not been challenging enough. New appointments have added strength to the governing body and all governors have undertaken training to make sure that they fully understand their roles and responsibilities. They have carried out an audit of their skills and are using those skills well to ensure financial stability and to provide higher levels of challenge to the school through a new committee structure. They have a clear understanding of what the information about achievement is telling them about how effective the school is in comparison to other schools nationally. They are aware of the quality of teaching, including how teachers are rewarded for good performance through progression through the pay scales and how underperformance is tackled. They regularly check on the use and impact of pupil premium funding.

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	113079
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	412032

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Keatt
Headteacher	Val Lineham
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 September 2009
Telephone number	01392 203560
Email address	admin@countesswear.devon.sch.uk

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