

# Courthill Infant School

Courthill Road, Parkstone, Poole, BH14 9HL

**Inspection dates** 5–6 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Teaching and pupils' achievement have improved over the last year. Pupils leave the school with levels of attainment well above average.
- All groups of pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, share in the good achievement.
- Teaching is rarely less than good and is sometimes outstanding. Teachers typically plan effectively, manage classes and deploy teaching assistants well, and use a range of resources and strategies to ensure good learning.
- Children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel very safe and well supported. They attend regularly and enjoy lessons and a wide range of other activities.
- Parents are very positive about the school and the quality of provision.
- The headteacher provides determined leadership, having maintained a strong drive for improvement since she joined the school. She is well supported by other staff and governors.
- The school's leadership checks pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning regularly and systematically.
- The school shows a strong capacity to improve further.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not consistently make pupils respond directly to their marking as a way of improving their written work.
- Teachers occasionally do not ensure that work is hard enough which prevents both low and high attainers from achieving to their full potential.
- Occasionally teachers do not give enough opportunities to pupils and children in Reception to work on their own, away from the teachers' direct control.
- Some staff have too few opportunities to observe the best teaching practice of their colleagues as a means of raising the quality of their own teaching.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons, taught by 11 teachers. Four of the observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff, five governors, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of 83 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 35 questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised a variety of documentation, including the school improvement plan, the school's evaluation of itself, minutes of the governing body, data on pupils' current progress and records relating to safeguarding, as well as scrutinising pupils' work.
- The inspectors listened to pupils from Years 1 and 2 read.

## Inspection team

John Laver, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Stephanie Matthews

Additional inspector

Susan Hunnings

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is rapidly increasing, but is still well below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided by the government for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and from other groups, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action is broadly average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- At the beginning of this term the school completed its transition from being a First School to becoming the current Infant School. There are four classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and four classes in each of Years 1 and 2.
- The headteacher joined the school almost one year ago. Since then there have been several other changes in staffing and membership of the governing body.
- The school holds the International Schools award and the Eco award.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
  - ensuring that when teachers mark pupils' work, they make pupils respond directly to their comments about improvement
  - ensuring that teachers always set work that is hard enough for more able pupils so that they consistently achieve to their full potential in lessons
  - ensuring that lower attaining pupils are supported well to enable them to make good progress
  - giving even more opportunities for children in Reception and other pupils in the school to learn away from the teachers' direct control
  - building on the school's efforts to ensure that teachers have enough opportunities to observe and learn from the best teaching practice already evident in parts of the school

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children typically join the Reception classes with levels of attainment just below the expectations for this age group.
- Children in these Reception classes make good progress in all areas of learning, responding to good teaching. Children quickly learn to socialise as the school puts a strong emphasis on teaching them conventions such as how to take their turn and listen to each other. Children also make good progress in developing language and literacy skills, as they learn to link sounds and letters (phonics) and make an early start to developing the techniques of writing.
- For several years pupils have attained levels in reading, writing and mathematics above the national average by the time they leave school at the age of seven.
- Pupils' progress has improved, particularly during the last eleven months, as the result of the leadership's efforts to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and narrow previously existing gaps between the achievements of different groups. In particular, gaps in achievement between boys and girls have narrowed, partly as the result of attempts to strengthen boys' interest in reading and writing.
- The achievement of other groups who were making less progress than they could has also improved. In particular, the progress of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding, who in this school are almost all pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, has rapidly improved. Until a year ago, many of these pupils were achieving at a rate at least two terms behind other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. This gap has narrowed considerably as the school has provided more targeted support for these pupils.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, who until quite recently made slower progress than similar pupils nationally, has also improved considerably as a result of early intervention and better support, which the school provides both inside and outside the classroom.
- The drive for improved progress is clearly demonstrated by analysis of the school's data, by observing progress in lessons, and by scrutinising pupils' work in books. Together they show that pupils are on track to meet targets which are appropriately challenging.
- The good, and occasionally outstanding, learning was observed frequently during the inspection. For example, in Year 1 phonics sessions, also observed by several parents, pupils responded enthusiastically to the teacher's lively questioning and use of a range of strategies to get pupils to improve their recognition of different sounds and develop early writing skills. All pupils were fully engaged and keen to do well.
- Despite the good results achieved over time, occasionally pupils do not achieve as well in lessons as they might. In a few instances more able pupils are not given tasks which are hard enough to move their learning on early in the lesson. Occasionally in Reception, there are missed opportunities to question children and further develop their thinking skills when they are engaged in both teacher-led activities and those where they are devising their own activities.
- Parents are rightly appreciative of the good progress which their children make in school.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good, and has been for some time, particularly as staff have benefited from good opportunities for professional development and an increased emphasis on accountability. The good teaching ensures that all groups of pupils, of all abilities and from all backgrounds, make good progress.
- School records and observations during the inspection highlighted several of the good qualities in the teaching. Teachers create and build on very good working relationships in the classroom, so that pupils are keen to do well.
- Teaching assistants support pupils who may have some difficulties with their learning effectively.

The assistants are assigned to support particular needs, which are identified much earlier and tackled more systematically than was the case in previous years.

- Teachers typically question pupils skilfully, making sure that they all contribute in class. They use a range of resources to help their explanations and enable pupils to meet the lesson objectives.
- As a result, pupils say that they are taught well and they enjoy their lessons, even though they do not all remember their targets.
- Occasionally the teaching does not ensure that lower or higher attainers achieve as well as they might in lessons. This occurs particularly when the resources are not appropriate, as seen, for example, when lower attainers were given worksheets which contained language too difficult for them to understand. The teacher did not test their comprehension, so that a small group of pupils found it difficult to complete the task. Occasionally some more able pupils did tasks which were not hard enough and did not move their learning on at an appropriate pace.
- Teachers mark work conscientiously in that they are thorough, often write comments and encourage pupils to assess their own work. However, teachers do not make pupils consistently respond directly to the points for improvement, and occasionally pupils' assessment of whether they have met the learning objectives in their work is not accurate.
- Pupils and parents both confirm that teaching is good, and the inspectors agreed.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically good, as pupils themselves, and their parents, acknowledge. The school is a very orderly and happy community, although behaviour is not yet outstanding, because there are occasional incidents which have to be managed. Very occasionally some pupils lose their focus when the teaching is less engaging than is usual.
- Pupils understand that bullying can take various forms, but told inspectors that they did not feel that bullying was a problem. School records confirm this. There have been no racist incidents or exclusions in recent times. Staff confirm that behaviour has improved. Both pupils and parents assert that pupils feel very safe.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident from the high rate of attendance, which is well above average. The school works hard and mostly successfully to ensure that all parents understand the desirability of good punctuality.
- Pupils are very polite and friendly, including towards visitors. They enjoy representing the school on the active school council. They also enjoy the friendly, competitive nature of the house system.
- Even younger children and pupils have some appreciation of the different cultures and ways of life outside their local community. The school holds the International Schools award for its work in establishing a link with a school in Kenya and weaving a thread of global awareness through the topics which form an important part of the curriculum.
- Pupils enjoy the range of out-of-school clubs, and pupils were heard enthusiastically describing their visits to the planetarium in Winchester and local places of educational interest.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is well supported by governors and other staff in her relentless drive for excellence. Progress has been considerable since she joined the school. Leadership is not yet outstanding, partly because measures to develop the skills of other school leaders such as Year Heads and subject leaders are not fully developed. The school has plans to strengthen their role in checking the quality of teaching and learning. All staff with responsibilities are keen to develop their roles and appreciate the increased responsibility and accountability. Some staff have had limited opportunities to observe best practice outside their own classrooms.
- The headteacher herself checks the quality of teaching and learning thoroughly. There is also now systematic checking of the progress of all pupils. The results are regularly discussed and

those pupils in danger of underachieving are quickly identified and given appropriate support.

- The school shows a strong capacity to improve further, because the leadership evaluates the school accurately, has very high expectations, has the right priorities for improvement, and continues to build upon existing successes.
- The leadership manages staff performance rigorously, so that pay is linked to pupil progress and all staff are expected to show commitment to improvement. Staff welcome this, as was evident from staff questionnaires during the inspection.
- The school manages new initiatives well. Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide staff support and other resources so that pupils eligible for the funding have made rapidly improving progress. The new funding for physical education has been used to good effect, for example by bringing in some specialist teaching. There is a good take up of sport.
- The school is working to develop its topic-based approach to the curriculum as a way of reinforcing key skills through all subjects. It also recognises the desirability of improving the outdoor environment, particularly to improve the learning opportunities of children in Reception.
- The school is very inclusive and there is no discrimination. All pupils have the opportunity to do well and this is very evident in the strong achievement of all groups. The school also promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, an assembly was observed in which a wide range of pupils' academic and personal successes was celebrated, and the school is keen to promote good role models.
- The school very successfully promotes strong links with parents, which they appreciate. This is very evident in the way in which many parents attend lessons, and also help around the school.
- The local authority has given valued support to the school, particularly when there were changes in the leadership. Now that the current leadership is well established and the school is demonstrating many strengths, the authority retains a watching brief but does not feel the need to provide in-depth support. The school now acts as a model for other local schools in some aspects of its practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Some members of the governing body are relatively new. They are undergoing training for their role, and are enthusiastic and already demonstrating good levels of knowledge and active involvement in the school. Governors understand the strengths and areas for development in the teaching, and are also knowledgeable about how pupils perform in relation to pupils elsewhere. They question the leadership about initiatives such as pupil premium funding and sports funding, especially their impact, because they understand the importance of accountability and continuing to build on past successes. The understanding of accountability is also evident in the way that the governing body oversees the process of performance management. Governors ensure that the school meets all safeguarding requirements. They have good opportunities for professional training within the authority.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113688
<b>Local authority</b>	Poole
<b>Inspection number</b>	427225

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<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>	330
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chairs</b>	Daniel Stanton and Andy Pasker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ellen Humphries
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2–3 July 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 747381
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