

Culmstock Primary School

Culmstock, Cullompton, Devon, EX15 3JP

Inspection dates

22–23 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Considerable staff changes over the last two years have resulted in pupils not making consistently good progress through the school.
- In the past, teachers have not sufficiently challenged the most-able pupils. Consequently, too few pupils reached the higher standards expected at the end of Year 6.
- Although rapidly improving, the quality of teaching has not been consistently good over time to ensure all pupils make good progress.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is not consistently good, and although improving each year, not enough pupils in Year 1 are reaching the expected standards.
- Some teachers do not explain or demonstrate learning activities well enough so that pupils are not always clear how to complete their tasks.
- The headteacher has not had enough time, or until recently a stable staff, to demonstrate the full impact of her actions. This is largely the reason that some of the key findings require improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- In a relatively short space of time and despite considerable staff changes the headteacher has addressed a legacy of underachievement and raised the expectations of the whole school community. The headteacher, staff and governors share a determined and relentless focus on improving teaching and learning.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' achievement is rapidly improving. At the end of Year 6, more pupils are reaching the higher Levels 5 and 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment for the current Year 6 is predicted to be above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils supported through additional funding achieve as well as other pupils nationally.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is above the national average.
- Teaching is good and often outstanding in the Years 5/6 class and current Year 6 pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy school and say they feel safe. Their attitudes to learning are consistently positive across the whole school. Social and moral skills are developed well through an engaging curriculum. Pupils create their own 'Golden Values,' which are totally adhered to. Consequently, pupils are very friendly, polite and well behaved.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection seven lessons were observed with the headteacher. The inspector listened to Year 1 pupils reading and discussed reading with Year 6 pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the special educational needs leader, members of the governing body, a school improvement officer and groups of pupils.
- The inspector looked at planning and self-evaluation, improvement plans, assessment information, examples of pupils' work and a range of policy documents.
- The inspector took account of 30 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as consulting informally with several parents at the end of the school day. The views of 13 staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire were also analysed.

Inspection team

Joyce Cox, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school with four mixed-age classes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attend part time for the first few weeks and then attend full time. They are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils.
- All pupils are of White British heritage.
- Fifteen per cent of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported at school action. Eleven per cent of pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. Both these proportions are above the national averages.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. This is additional funding provided by the government to give extra support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's floor targets which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Culmstock is a member of the Culm Valley Federation, which consists of three rural primary schools. The federation has an executive headteacher and a single governing body.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been extensive staffing changes. A new headteacher took up her post in September 2012. Seventy five per cent of the staff have changed due to maternity leave and promotion. Currently, half of the staff are newly qualified teachers, one of whom joined the school in September 2014. Two experienced teachers are due to return to the school later this year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - assessing pupils' phonics (the sounds that letters make) knowledge and raising expectations in lessons so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard at the end of Year 1
 - ensuring all pupils are given work which is neither too easy nor too difficult
 - ensuring that pupils are very clear about what they have to do when given a task
 - ensuring all teachers have a clear focus on improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has high expectations which are shared by staff, governors, pupils and parents. She has created an ethos of a hard-working community striving for academic excellence. Meticulous planning and a drive for school improvement are evident across all levels of leadership.
- The headteacher and subject leaders have an accurate and secure picture of the school's strengths and areas to develop. The school development plan and the plan to support newly qualified teachers are well focused and provide clear actions to secure improvement. Aspirational targets are shared with staff and there is evidence of accelerated progress for many pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher has created clear guidance to improve the quality of teaching and learning and she challenges inconsistent practice. This guidance is proving effective at supporting pupils' achievement and in ensuring that only the best teaching is acceptable. This demonstrates that the school has the capacity for further improvement.
- Good systems are in place to check on the progress of all pupils including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The well-qualified special educational needs leader uses detailed information to match support to pupils' needs and consequently pupils with additional needs make good progress. The school uses additional funding effectively to ensure the most disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their classmates.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' rapidly improving achievement and prepares them well for life in modern Britain. The headteacher has introduced the new National Curriculum in a systematic manner involving all staff. Pupils enjoy memorable learning experiences such as 'George's Marvellous Medicine' workshop and through joint activities and visits with other pupils in the federation.
- Sport funding is used well to promote pupils' health and well-being. Staff training is improving teachers' confidence and many pupils attend a good range of sports clubs and events. Extra indoor and outdoor equipment has been purchased although Year 6 pupils say they would like some more apparatus for gymnastics.
- Leaders have developed good links with parents and the vast majority of parents, staff and pupils agree that the school is well led and managed.
- The local authority provides good support to the school with regular, well-written reports and plans to provide ongoing support with improving teaching and further raising pupils' achievement.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body has tackled with determination a number of different issues within the federation. Together with the local authority governors have worked closely with another school in the federation to strengthen teaching and learning following a dip in assessment results in 2013. Recent training in interpreting data has strengthened their understanding and ability to ask challenging questions to check on pupils' progress. They recognise that there is still more to do to raise attainment. They know about how additional pupil premium funding is used because they have information on the extra support given to pupils and follow this up through school visits.
- Performance arrangements for the headteacher and other staff are secure. Governors are suitably involved in making decisions about rewarding good performance and tackling weaknesses. They are also rightly confident that tolerance and respect are promoted through information gained by talking with staff and pupils. They have undertaken training in safeguarding and have checked that all statutory requirements in relation to protecting children are met.
- The governing body has a secure grip on the budget and is working to bring the budgets of the three separate schools together in the near future. They are clear about how the money from the primary sports funding has been allocated and say that more pupils are engaging in sports activities after school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Typically they are very polite, friendly and considerate towards each other. They are very cooperative, settle quickly to activities and most pupils take pride in their work. Behaviour is not outstanding because although breaks and lunchtimes are usually harmonious, a small number of Key Stage 2 pupils can be over boisterous at times in the playground.
- Pupils really enjoy school, as can be seen by their well above average rates of attendance. They are courteous and have good manners. Pupils in the Years 5 and 6 class have excellent attitudes to their learning. School logs confirm that poor behaviour is extremely rare and is tackled very quickly.
- Relationships throughout the school are effective and based on mutual trust and respect. Older pupils are kind to younger ones and are good playground leaders, organising games and resolving any conflicts.
- The school's strong commitment to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that they are keen to learn about different people's beliefs and have a good understanding and appreciation of British values. Year 6 pupils have a very mature understanding of the importance of tolerance and respect for people who are different to themselves. One pupil said, 'We should treat everyone as we would like to be treated ourselves.'

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say there is no bullying and if it were to occur it would be dealt with fairly and quickly. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying including that related to social media and text messaging.
- Virtually all parents and all staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire consider that pupils behave well and are kept safe in school.
- Pupils behave very sensibly and safely when walking to and from the village hall for lunch, physical education and before- and after-school clubs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good over time to ensure that all pupils make good progress, particularly in writing and phonics. Although recent changes have improved teaching, more time is needed to evidence that it is consistently raising pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is improving in both literacy and mathematics. Expectations are high and the headteacher is relentless in her quest to secure good and outstanding teaching.
- In the Years 5/6 class activities are skilfully and successfully matched to all pupils' needs but this is not yet consistent practice in all classes. In addition, some teachers do not always explain to pupils what they have to do to complete a task and pupils are not sure what is expected of them.
- The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Staff work well as a team and have high expectations of children's achievement, independence and social skills. Early reading and writing skills are taught well.
- Not all Year 1 pupils attain the expected standard which means that the teaching of phonics is not yet consistently good across the school.
- Teachers' marking, particularly in the Years 5/6 class, helps pupils to improve their work; this was evident in a detailed scrutiny of pupils' work. Comments provide pupils with a clear indication of how they have achieved and what they need to do next.
- Teaching of more able pupils is good. They are identified for both academic and sporting achievement. The work they are given is challenging and this is why more pupils than previously are attaining the higher Level 5 and Level 6 in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Staff and pupils have good relationships and pupils are keen to persevere and work hard. Teaching assistants are skilled at challenging and supporting groups of pupils.
- Teaching of disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium is good, with additional support provided when needed. Tasks are accurately adapted to ensure pupils can fully access their learning and make good progress.
- During the inspection, some of the most effective teaching was observed in the Years 5/6 class. For example, during a literacy lesson, pupils were very motivated because the activities were challenging and interesting. Consequently, all pupils succeeded in writing high quality Greek myths.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Pupils' progress data for 2013 to 2014 indicates that progress was stronger in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Not enough pupils made good progress in Key Stage 1. This was due to instability within staffing as these pupils had several different teachers which impaired their progress.
- Overall, progress across Key Stage 2 was above average and often good, although there were variations in the progress of individual pupils.
- Historically, not enough of the most-able pupils reached the higher levels of attainment especially in writing. The current Year 6 pupils are predicted to attain above the national average at both Level 4 and the higher Level 5.
- Standards in the Year 1 phonics check show that pupils did not achieve as well as others nationally. As a result the school has changed its approach to the teaching of early reading. The headteacher and staff have also raised the profile of reading in the school to encourage all pupils to enjoy reading. A very attractive library has been created and older pupils confidently discuss the different styles of authors such as Michael Morpugo, David Walliams and Jacqueline Wilson.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because their needs are carefully identified and plans are put in place so staff know how to help them develop their skills and understanding.
- Additional government funding is used well to support individual pupils. For example, extra adult help enables eligible pupils to catch up any lost ground and achieve as well as their peers. Inspection evidence indicates that this group of pupils achieve as well as other pupils in most year groups of the school. Where any gaps exist they are closing rapidly.
- The most-able pupils are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2. These pupils are skilled at checking their work and understanding what they need to do to reach their targets. Year 6 pupils say their learning tasks are 'challenging and interesting,' and this is evident in the increasing proportion of pupils reaching the highest available levels in national tests.

The early years provision**is good**

- Children join the school with the skills that are typical for their age, although the early reading and writing skills of some children are less well developed. However, they make good progress and start Year 1 as confident learners, with the skills and knowledge expected for their age.
- Teaching is of a good quality. Work is planned carefully to ensure that children enjoy their learning and achieve well. For example, children love role playing 'schools and teachers' in their exciting, well-resourced outdoor-shed classroom.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs are nurtured well and make progress generally in line with others. It was not clear during the inspection if the small number of more-able children are challenged in their learning.
- There is a good balance of activities arising out of the children's interests and those directed by the teacher and teaching assistant. Staff are skilled at knowing precisely when to interact with the children to move on their learning, language and play.
- Children's physical well-being, health and emotional development are very well provided for through careful and detailed assessment of each child's abilities and needs. Children's achievements are recorded in attractive 'Learning Journeys' which present a very detailed picture of children's attainment in all their areas of learning. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning through contributions to the initial assessments when the children start at the school and through regular reports.
- Children are very enthusiastic learners who show curiosity and delight in their learning and play. They take turns and share resources well and behave well both indoors and outdoors.
- Leadership and management are good. Staff are well trained and children make good progress in their early reading and writing skills.

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	113071
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	448176

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	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Nicolls
Headteacher	Mel Johns
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 May 2010
Telephone number	01884 840598
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