

# Consett Infant School and Nursery Unit

Teasdale Street, Consett, County Durham DH8 6AF

## Inspection dates

23–24 February 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable. It has not been consistently strong over time to enable pupils, especially the most able and those who are disadvantaged, to make good progress.
- The standard of pupils' work by the end of Year 2 has declined over the last three years so that it is now broadly average.
- Pupils do not get enough opportunities to write independently, using their own ideas, or to think for themselves in mathematics.
- Teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations of what all pupils can achieve; consequently, pupils can sometimes be left unchallenged by their learning.
- When pupils find their work too easy or too hard, they switch off from their learning and find other, less productive activities to occupy their time.
- Leaders do not check quickly on how well new initiatives are being implemented. They are unclear about the precise difference actions are making to teaching and pupils' progress.
- Adults in the early years do not maximise the opportunities available throughout the day to enhance children's reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching do not focus on how effectively pupils are learning.
- Leaders, including governors, do not ensure that targets set for teachers and those in the school development plan are precise enough to ensure good outcomes for all pupils.
- Middle leaders do not have frequent opportunities to make a full and telling contribution to school improvement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has made some important strides forward in addressing the school's immediate priorities. Her early years expertise has led to rapid changes in the Reception classes.
- Pupils are happy and enjoy school. Parents are equally positive in their views. They are confident that their children are well cared for and safe.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They play alongside each other harmoniously and show care and consideration for one another's feelings.
- Leaders know children and their families well. The family support adviser, in particular, goes the extra mile to ensure that all pupils, including those who may be vulnerable, are well supported.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make consistently strong progress in their learning and are stretched to reach their full potential by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what all pupils can achieve, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able, so that they set sufficiently challenging work
  - supporting teachers to understand the expectations of the English and mathematics curriculum so that they make more accurate assessments of what pupils know, understand and can do
  - deploying teaching assistants more effectively during lessons to support pupils' learning
  - giving pupils, especially the most-able pupils, greater opportunities to write independently, using their own ideas, and to use their mathematics to solve problems and think for themselves
  - strengthening the quality of adult interactions with children in the early years so that opportunities to develop children's reading, writing and mathematics skills are maximised.
  
- Strengthen the impact of leaders, including governors, on the rate of school improvement by:
  - setting precise targets for improvement which enable governors to challenge leaders and hold staff to account for the difference they are making to pupils' learning and progress
  - ensuring new initiatives are checked quickly so that any issues can be addressed promptly
  - ensuring staff consistently apply the school's agreed policy for marking and feedback
  - focusing evaluations of teaching on the difference chosen strategies are making to the learning and progress of different groups of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged and the most-able pupils
  - developing the skills of middle leaders so that they make a full and telling contribution to improving their areas of responsibility.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### requires improvement

- Leaders have not taken sufficiently swift or effective action to ensure that teaching secures good progress for pupils, especially for the most able and those who are disadvantaged. They have not checked up quickly on the implementation of new initiatives to know if they are making as big a difference to pupils' progress as they anticipated or to intervene, where necessary, to address any teething troubles.
- Senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' work, while frequent, have not led to more rapid improvements to teaching and pupils' progress. Typically, leaders focus too much on what the teacher is doing rather than the impact they are having on the learning of different groups of pupils. This has limited leaders' ability to improve the quality of teaching.
- Leaders' self-evaluation gives too rosy a view of how well the school is performing. Senior leaders have not correlated their analysis of pupils' progress against the standard of work in pupils' books over time or the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. They have been too accepting of some teachers' assessments of pupils' work and not checked for themselves to confirm that they are accurate.
- School improvement planning is clear and focused on key priorities. Systems are in place to manage the performance of teachers. However, targets are not precise enough in defining the expected improvements in outcomes for different groups of pupils, at whole-school or individual teacher level. As a result, the quality of teaching has not improved as quickly as needed.
- Middle leaders are passionate about their subjects and have begun to implement a range of initiatives to improve outcomes for pupils. For example, the mathematics leader has introduced a short, sharp session after lunch each day to focus on pupils' mental mathematics. This is beginning to improve pupils' rapid recall of number facts. However, middle leaders have not had enough opportunity to evaluate the quality of teaching. Leaders recognise that given the federation of the two schools, a wider group of leaders now need training so they can step up to the plate and make a telling contribution to school improvement.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences across the curriculum. They benefit from a range of visitors, such as famous authors, and from educational visits to places outside of school. Pupils also have access to after-school clubs, such as karate and cheerleading, which are well attended. However, the academic curriculum is not enabling all pupils to make the progress they should in reading, writing and mathematics. Some staff do not understand the expectations of the National Curriculum and how pupils' skills should develop from year to year. This prevents pupils from making faster progress.
- Leaders have not evaluated their spending of pupil premium funding rigorously. The support and resources they have secured are not having maximum impact on narrowing the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils within the school. The wide gaps evident in the early years and by the end of Year 2 between these groups of pupils show that equality of opportunity requires improvement. Progress in narrowing these gaps has been too variable over time.
- The school makes effective use of the primary physical education and sport premium. There is a clear focus on developing staff confidence and competence and enhancing pupils' physical skills. Specialist coaches work alongside staff to develop their skills and pupils take part in regular tournaments and festivals to learn about the value of teamwork, sportsmanship and competition.
- Leaders' work to develop a 'Rights Respecting School' has effectively promoted values of respect, responsibility and empathy for others' feelings. Staff have begun to raise pupils' awareness of the diversity in modern Britain through a planned programme of assemblies to ensure that pupils develop a healthy respect for each other's differences. These elements contribute to the school's effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher has identified the correct areas for improvement and begun to address weaknesses in the early years, the teaching of reading and pupils' attendance. Her expertise in the early years has been invaluable in supporting the recent and rapid improvements to teaching and provision in the Reception classes. She understands the school community and through the employment of a family support adviser is beginning to break down the barriers between school and a number of vulnerable families.
- Local authority officers have correctly identified the issues facing the school but their evaluation of its overall effectiveness is too generous. The link officer has not observed teaching or looked at the work in pupils' books to understand the extent of the issues being faced by leaders. The local authority has supported the overly optimistic view of children's progress in the early years. This has clouded the headteacher's perception of just how far the school still needs to travel to be judged good overall.

### ■ The governance of the school

- Governance requires improvement. While most members of the governing body are long-serving and have the best interests of pupils and the school community at heart, they are too accepting of the information provided to them by the headteacher.
  - Governors visit school regularly but are not always clear about the quality of teaching or how to tackle underachievement. They have not made the link between weaker pupil outcomes and the overall quality of provision within the school. This has prevented them from asking searching questions of leaders and driving a more rapid pace of improvement.
  - Governors have not evaluated the impact of pupil premium spending rigorously. They have not challenged leaders to provide an explanation for the wide gaps in attainment between eligible pupils and others in the school.
  - Governors are clear that there is no automatic reward for staff if their performance is less than good. However, the lack of precision in performance targets and the rosy view of teaching presented by the headteacher means these systems are not driving improvement at a fast enough rate.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a culture of safeguarding (protecting children and making sure they are safe) where staff are clear about their responsibilities and take pride in knowing every child and every family well. This enables them to work well with children and families to overcome barriers to learning, for example where a child is experiencing difficulties at home.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Over time, teaching has not enabled pupils to make consistently strong progress in their learning. As a result, pupils do not attain as highly as they should. Leaders have not given teachers specific enough feedback about their performance for the quality of teaching to improve at a quicker rate.
- Some teachers struggle to assess the standard of pupils' work accurately, particularly for those pupils who are working at a standard above the expectations for their age. They do not understand how pupils' skills and understanding should progress from year to year. In these instances, teachers plan work that pupils have already mastered and, as a result, pupils make slower progress.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes too low; consequently, they plan tasks that lack challenge and do not build securely on what pupils already know, understand and can do. At these times, pupils can switch off from their learning. This prevents pupils from making faster progress.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to develop their writing skills independently or at length, or to make their own decisions about how their work should be structured and organised, in order to help them attain the higher levels. This particularly hinders the progress of the most-able pupils.
- Where teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning, they work alongside small groups of pupils during teachers' explanations to support their understanding, prompting them to think for themselves and encouraging them to answer the teacher's questions. This quality of interaction is not evident in every class. In some instances, teaching assistants play no role in supporting pupils' learning during whole-class teaching. This prevents pupils making as much progress as they could.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers plan activities which build on pupils' interests and abilities. For example, pupils in a Year 2 class were enthused by their work on money linked to a forthcoming visit to Durham Castle. Pupils confidently found different ways to make the same entrance fee using different numbers of coins. This encouraged their problem-solving abilities and challenged them to continually think about alternative solutions. However, this quality of practice is the exception rather than the norm.
- Mathematics teaching is improving. The introduction of daily mental calculation practice and staff training about problem solving has boosted teachers' confidence to challenge pupils to think for themselves. Not all teachers consistently provide pupils with the opportunity to develop their mathematical skills in this way. Best practice in the teaching of mathematics has not been shared widely across the school.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' written work are detailed. They focus on the precise skills that will make a greater difference to pupils' compositions. In contrast, teachers' marking of pupils' day-to-day class work is scant and unhelpful. Leaders agree that there is still work to be done to ensure that the recently agreed marking policy is consistently applied by all staff.
- The teaching of reading is improving. Training for staff has enabled both teachers and teaching assistants to take their own, smaller groups of pupils for daily phonics sessions (phonics means letters and the sounds that they make). This is allowing a better match of tasks to pupils' abilities. Effective use of the correct terminology by staff is giving pupils the confidence to talk more knowledgeably about their own learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders have not instilled a culture of high aspiration and ambition in all pupils. Older pupils, especially, do not show a strong work ethic or take enough pride in the work they produce. Some pupils do not see the value of their learning and are happy to sit unoccupied when they have finished their work. Teachers do not challenge pupils from the very beginning of each lesson to prevent this kind of disengagement.
- A minority of pupils and parents perceive that bullying goes unaddressed by leaders. Inspectors found instances of bullying to be rare. Most pupils who spoke to inspectors were clear that when issues do occur, they are addressed swiftly. Leaders agree that teaching and the curriculum could be strengthened to help pupils to better understand the different forms bullying may take, including those related to prejudice.
- Appropriate opportunities across the curriculum enable pupils to develop into active citizens of the future. For example, pupils are involved in school decision-making processes, such as when designing and then voting for a new school logo, and have opportunities to explore and develop their feelings through sharing their worries and thoughts with 'Onions', a school puppet. These actions make a positive contribution to pupils' emotional well-being as well as their spiritual and social development.
- Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of the importance of being safe. They can articulate the potential risks when they are online and can make informed decisions about how to protect themselves, in school and at home, for example in relation to 'stranger danger' or crossing the road.
- Parents who shared their views, either with an inspector or through the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, all indicated that their children were happy, safe and well looked after in school.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- When lessons are not sufficiently engaging or the work provided is too easy so that it is finished quickly, pupils lose concentration and switch off from their learning. At these times, pupils find other, less purposeful activities to occupy their time, such as playing with building blocks. This slows their progress.
- While improving, overall attendance remains below the national average. There has not been enough concerted action by leaders to raise the importance of regular attendance and good time-keeping. The governing body has only recently approved a policy to refuse term time holidays.
- The absence rates for disadvantaged pupils, while no longer in the lowest 10% nationally, remain a priority for improvement. Irregular attendance contributes to the lower attainment of this group.
- Pupils' social behaviours are strong. They are polite and courteous to adults and friends alike. During play and lunchtimes, pupils show themselves to be caring, considerate individuals who listen carefully to instructions and can play harmoniously together. Communal times of the day are calm and pleasant occasions because pupils are kept active and engaged through access to a range of outdoor equipment.
- Pupils understand right from wrong. They are clear in their understanding of the school and classroom rules and show a keen sense of justice. For example, one pupil commented, 'you always have to face the consequences for what you have done', demonstrating the strong moral compass engendered in pupils.

## Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils do not make good progress as they move through the school because, over time, the quality of teaching has been variable. Outcomes are inconsistent between different classes and across subjects.
- The standard of pupils' work by the end of Year 2 has declined over time so that it is now broadly average. Attainment in reading and writing has declined most notably and particularly at the higher levels. Taking into account pupils' starting points, this represents expected rather than good progress.
- The most-able pupils do not receive the challenge they need to reach their full potential. This is particularly evident in pupils' written and mathematics work. Typically, the most-able pupils are asked to tick a box or underline a correct answer and this prevents them from showing their true abilities. Tasks do not allow pupils to show their independence of thought and the decisions they have made about solving a calculation or composing a text.
- Year 1 pupils make steady progress in their reading. Over the last three years, a similar proportion of pupils to that found nationally have met the expected standard in the phonics screening check. A

programme of group reading has been implemented to develop pupils' comprehension skills as well as their ability to sound out unfamiliar words. It is too early to tell whether this intervention is making a discernible impact on moving pupils' reading ability beyond what is expected nationally.

- Pupils' mathematical understanding is improving. Less-able pupils, in particular, are being well supported to develop a stronger grasp of the basic rules of number through the use of practical resources and visual images. Some teachers do not capitalise on these firmer foundations to enable pupils to make faster progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 1 make expected progress in their reading, writing and mathematics. Teaching does not secure the good progress needed for these pupils to catch up and keep up with their peers. At the end of Year 2 in 2015, disadvantaged pupils were approximately three terms behind other pupils in the school across all subjects. Leaders have had variable success in narrowing these gaps.
- Pupils with disability and those with special educational needs make the same variable progress as other pupils. Additional support, leaders' close working with external agencies and the increasingly strong relationship between the family support worker and parents enables most of these pupils to make expected but improving progress in their reading, writing and mathematics.

## Early years provision

## requires improvement

- In the past, the majority of children have arrived in Nursery with skills and abilities that are below what is typical for their age. Weaknesses in children's speech and language have been particularly prevalent. The current cohort of children, who started in Reception due to the closure of the Nursery Unit, are more typical for their age; a greater proportion having attended good and outstanding pre-school provision.
- Children make typical progress from their starting points. The proportion reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception, while improving, remains below the national average. Too few children are fully prepared for the demands of Year 1. They particularly struggle with their reading, writing and mathematics because opportunities to maximise these skills are not exploited across the day.
- Teaching does not challenge children to make better than typical progress. At times, adults do not interact with children as effectively as they could to support a better rate of learning. Staff ask too many questions that require only a one-word answer. They too readily accept nonverbal responses from children, such as nodding or pointing, without any expectation of a better quality of communication. The progress of disadvantaged children is particularly affected by this weakness in practice.
- While staff communicate frequently with parents about what their children are learning, they do not encourage them to contribute to the emerging picture of what children know, understand and can do. Learning journeys (the records kept of children's achievements over time) do not include enough examples of children's learning and experiences from home. Leaders are missing a vital component of the jigsaw when deciding where children are at in their learning and how much progress they have made.
- The early years leader does not have sufficient opportunity to monitor the quality of provision. As such, she has not taken sufficient action to ensure that teaching is consistently good and that all children, particularly the most able and those who are disadvantaged, make faster progress.
- The overall quality of teaching is improving due to recent external support. The use of an exciting 'hook' to engage children's interests, such as receiving a letter from the Big Bad Wolf, is working well to entice children, including boys, to read, write and use their number skills. More needs to be done to ensure that these areas of learning are fully integrated into the activities children can choose for themselves.
- Children cooperate well with each other and with adults. Teachers and teaching assistants set high expectations for behaviour and have established clear routines which children understand. Most children demonstrate the personal and physical skills typical for their age. For example, they can put on their own coat, wash their hands when leaving the toilet and make decisions about when to have a drink or snack.
- Adults support children well to make safe choices. A discussion about the arrival of 'Jack Frost' one morning, for example, led some children to comment that they would need to be extra careful outside in case it was slippy. Adults ensure that children are well protected, safe and secure.
- The headteacher's expertise in the early years has led to rapid improvements in the Reception classes since the start of the academic year. While the quality of provision is not good overall, it is moving in the right direction. Everyone is eager to improve; adults are accepting of external advice and willing to adapt the best practice they have seen on visits to other settings for the benefit of their own children.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114052
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10003489

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	157
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Judith Davison
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julia Graham
<b>Telephone number</b>	01207 504464
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.consett-inf.durham.sch.uk">www.consett-inf.durham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:consettinfant@durhamlearning.net">consettinfant@durhamlearning.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15–16 November 2010

## Information about this school

- Consett Infant School and Nursery Unit is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disability is below the national average.
- The school runs its own breakfast club and offers a range of after-school activities.
- Consett Infant School federated with Beechdale Nursery School in January 2016. There is now one executive headteacher for both schools and a joint governing board.
- The headteacher of Beechdale Nursery School has been leading both schools since March 2014 when the previous headteacher retired. The executive headship was made permanent when both schools officially federated at the beginning of the calendar year.
- In July 2015, the Nursery Unit at Consett Infant School closed and the Reception class increased in size to allow up to 60 children to attend. Nursery-aged children now access Beechdale Nursery School or other pre-school providers in the community. Children attend the Reception classes at Consett Infant School full-time.
- Beechdale Nursery School did not form part of this inspection. Its most recent inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the quality of learning across all classes. They also visited shorter sessions where pupils were being taught phonics or were receiving additional support to catch up with their peers.
- The headteacher undertook five joint observations alongside inspectors. Her Majesty's Inspector observed the headteacher giving feedback to two members of staff.
- Inspectors looked at the standard of current pupils' work and that of Year 2 pupils who left the school at the end of 2015. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and leader with responsibility for English conducted these activities alongside inspectors.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read. They also talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at school during lessons and when playing with their friends at break and lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair and other members of the governing body, three groups of pupils and the family support adviser. Her Majesty's Inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team evaluated a wide range of school documents, including the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation, information on pupils' progress, records of the checks made on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and information on safeguarding.
- The views expressed in 13 questionnaire returns from staff and 14 returns from pupils were also taken into account. Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the second day of inspection and reviewed the 14 responses submitted through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

## Inspection team

Lee Owston, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Oliver Flitcroft	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Nelson-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector



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