

Countess Gytha Primary School

West Camel Road, Queen Camel, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 7LT

Inspection dates

11–12 July 2017

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	Requires 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

- Leaders have not been successful in improving outcomes in mathematics, an area for improvement in the previous inspection.
- Governors do not hold senior leaders robustly to account. They do not check the effectiveness of the expenditure of additional funding such as the pupil premium well enough.
- Middle leaders are not effective in ensuring improvements in their subject areas.
- Teachers do not use what pupils know, can do and understand to plan learning that meets pupils' needs.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, including in the early years, are not consistently high. Work set is often too easy or too hard. This slows down pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to support the most able pupils in making the progress that they are capable of.
- Until recently, leaders have not ensured that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have their specific needs identified and met.
- Some disadvantaged pupils are not making good progress in their learning. Leaders do not make effective use of the pupil premium.
- Outcomes in mathematics remain below the national averages in key stages 1 and 2.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics at Year 1 remains below the national average.
- The curriculum is broad but does not develop pupils' skills in subjects such as geography and science.
- Some teachers do not insist on high enough standards of pupils' presentation. When this happens, pupils do not take pride in their work.
- A few parents express concerns that communication between home and school could be improved.

The school has the following strengths

- Interim leaders have galvanised the staff. Teachers' expectations are rising. Pupils' books reflect a speedy recovery of standards recently.
- Pupils' artwork is of a high quality.
- Pupils are polite. They conduct themselves well in class and at breaktimes. They say that they are safe in school and know how to keep safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - governors hold school leaders to account rigorously for the standard of education and the progress that pupils make in all key stages
 - governors undertake robust checks that the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective
 - middle leaders have the skills to monitor pupils' outcomes effectively and use this information to drive improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - the curriculum develops pupils' subject-specific skills such as in science and geography
 - school leaders and governors improve communications with parents to gain the confidence and full support of parents.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to accelerate pupils' and children's progress, including in the early years, by making sure that teachers:
 - have high expectations to at least meet the standards expected nationally, particularly in mathematics
 - make good use of what pupils understand, know and can do to match work closely to pupils' needs, including for the most able pupils, those that are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - deploy support staff who have the skills necessary to support pupils' development of phonic skills and knowledge
 - ensure that there is a progression of pupils' skills in subjects such as geography and science
 - raise expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring:
 - good progression of pupils' skills in subjects such as geography and science
 - high expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation.

External reviews of the school's use of the pupil premium and of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has experienced much change with the move to a new site and turbulence in leadership and staffing since the previous inspection. As a result, it has been swung off-course. This has contributed to lapses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in a number of year groups.
- Leaders' actions have not led to consistently good-quality teaching, learning and assessment in the school. The management of staff performance has lacked rigour. Teacher recruitment has been poorly managed. Teachers who are keen to improve have not been given the guidance they need.
- Leaders' use of additional funds, such as the pupil premium, has not been effective. Until very recently, there has not been a clear rationale for how the funds are used to support the progress of the few disadvantaged pupils. Funds have been unspent. Senior leaders have taken immediate action to tackle this and thorough plans are in place. However, it is too soon to see the impact of changes.
- Until recently, the additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has not been used effectively. However, in the short time that she has been a leader, the person responsible has worked with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the right support. Senior leaders have now distinguished between those pupils with specific needs and those with gaps in their learning because of weak teaching. Catch-up programmes and support are in place but it is too soon to see the impact of this work.
- In the past, there has been little impact from the additional funding for sport. More recently, leaders have ensured high-quality provision for sport and exercise in school. Sports clubs are wide-ranging. They include team games as well as individual sports such as tennis and running club. Most clubs are open to pupils of all ages and are well attended.
- Parents are not united in their views of the school. A minority of parents are dissatisfied with leaders' communication and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. One third of the parents who completed the online questionnaire said that they would not recommend the school. Poor communication in the school is leading to misunderstanding and distrust for a few parents. However, parents are positive that when they have shared their concerns, leaders have responded immediately. For example, parents are pleased that the quality of homework has improved since sharing their concerns with leaders.
- Leaders have identified that inequalities exist in teaching provision. For example, where a year group is split across two classes and teachers' expectations vary, pupils' outcomes are not equally good. Leaders have plans to tackle this and have changed the organisation of classes to ensure that higher-quality provision is equitable.
- Until recently, middle leaders have not had a clear understanding of their role in school improvement. They have not developed the necessary skills to support improving standards in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, middle leaders say that close work with outstanding partners is energising them. They are developing new skills in keeping close checks on pupils' progress.

- The curriculum is broad. All national curriculum subjects are taught. However, there is too much focus on content and too little focus on developing pupils' subject-specific skills in areas such as science and geography. The progress made by pupils in these subjects is not closely checked. There is a lack of leadership in these subjects to support teachers' understanding. In addition, the information published on the school's website about the curriculum does not meet requirements.
- Interim leadership from Preston Primary Academy Trust has provided a sense of direction and purpose. Close work with the teachers from outstanding schools is raising teachers' awareness of appropriate curriculum expectations. However, the actions introduced to improve the school have not had sufficient time to secure good teaching across the school.
- Pupils say that the curriculum is interesting. They enjoy a wide range of topics which promote excitement and interest, for example through the recent falconry display. The art curriculum provides pupils with wide-ranging opportunities for pupils to develop their mastery of art and design techniques. As well as developing art skills, the art curriculum provides pupils with a strong knowledge and understanding of great artists and designers in history.
- Pupils are gaining the skills and attributes to make a valuable contribution to modern society. The broad religious education curriculum supports pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths. As a result, pupils demonstrate respect for the views of others. Pupils' involvement in the school council and buddy club instils values of democracy and fairness, helping them to prepare for life in modern Britain. Teachers make effective links to support pupils' understanding of democracy. For example, when studying Ancient Greece, pupils made comparisons between democracy then and now.
- The school has a well-attended breakfast club and after-school club, which pupils say they enjoy. As a result, pupils are ready for learning at the start of the school day. Pupils build positive relationships with pupils from other year groups in a secure environment.
- The local authority has provided a comprehensive package of support for the school. Local authority officers quickly recognised that governors' initial interim arrangements for leadership during the absence of the headteacher were not fit for purpose. The local authority has been effective in strengthening leadership. This has provided much-needed stability for the school community in a time of crisis. In addition, procedures such as safer recruitment and safeguarding are now compliant.
- Interim leaders have not shied away from giving difficult messages. There are many encouraging signs that new leaders are swiftly getting the school back on track. Pupils' books show increased rates of progress in the majority of classes, particularly in writing and in pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Governance of the school

- The governing body do not hold leaders to account or monitor the use of extra funding and its impact on outcomes for pupils well enough. As a result, the school's actions have not had the focus needed to reduce the differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and other pupils.

- Governors' checks on safeguarding procedures have not been sufficiently rigorous. Interim leaders quickly identified weaknesses which have since been tackled with the support of the local authority.
- Governors are aware of their shortcomings. They have acted upon local authority advice and are establishing new systems and protocols so that they are less reliant on information provided by leaders.
- Governors recognise the need to increase their skills. Recent appointments are proving effective. Local authority support for governance is beginning to take hold. However, the governing body still lacks the necessary expertise to function effectively independent of support. The governing body have not ensured that the school's website is compliant.
- Members of the governing body are committed to the school and are now making regular visits to check on the school's progress. A new committee structure has increased the focus on the attainment and progress of pupils. Consequently, governors have a clearer understanding of pupils' outcomes compared to national averages and have a plan to accelerate improvement which tackles all weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- On joining the school in April 2017, interim leaders identified a number of weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements. They ensured that staff were appropriately trained and sought the support of the local authority in carrying out health and safety and safeguarding audits. All weaknesses identified have been successfully tackled.
- Child protection records are well maintained. Leaders make good use of local authority advice. Where advice is slow coming, as inspectors found to be the case in a couple of cases, leaders are persistent in chasing up guidance.
- Staff are appropriately trained in first aid. Staff take adequate safety precautions and deal appropriately when accidents occur. A high number of staff are trained in paediatric first aid. The pre-school meets all welfare requirements.
- Leaders work effectively with parents to establish a culture of safeguarding. Leaders share concerns in a timely manner and engage fully with external services to ensure that pupils remain free from harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not good enough across year groups and between different subjects. Teacher's expectations are sometimes too low. In addition, where year groups are split across two classes, not enough is done to ensure that pupils are taught equally well.
- There is not enough good teaching to enable all pupils to learn well. Inconsistencies exist in teachers' expectations. As a result, pupils go unsupported in knowing how to be a successful learner. However, in some classes, for example in Years 4 and 5, pupils have a better understanding of what it is to be a learner. A pupil explained to the inspector, 'Making mistakes helps me to improve.'

- Current assessment information on pupils' attainment and progress is unreliable in some year groups. Leaders' work in implementing a consistent approach to assessment has begun to take hold. As a result, progress is rapid in some year groups.
- Teachers' challenge for the most able pupils is not strong enough and has not led to consistent and sustained improvement. Consequently, the most able pupils do not make good progress. Too few pupils who are disadvantaged achieve the higher standards.
- Teaching in some classes does not deepen and extend pupils' learning so they can achieve as well as they can. The work teachers set is not well matched to what some pupils already know, understand and can do. As a result, pupils' progress is too slow. However, work in books across most classes reflects improved progress in recent weeks.
- In mathematics, some activities are too easy. Work in books shows that some pupils spend too long repeating 'sums' and activities where they have already demonstrated a good understanding. Teachers are not sufficiently competent in developing pupils' reasoning skills so that they can apply their mathematical knowledge to problem-solving.
- There are inconsistencies in the way that teachers are providing guidance for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with lower starting points. Some teachers are providing very little guidance or support. Consequently, learning slows for these pupils.
- Although there have been significant improvement in recently, teachers' expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation are not high enough in some classes. Teachers do not encourage pupils to take pride in their learning. Consequently, some pupils' handwriting is untidy and illegible and does not meet the requirements expected for their age.
- Teachers do not know the content of the national curriculum well enough. There is little evidence to suggest that the teaching of science and geography supports the development of pupils' skills. Pupils' books reflect a strong emphasis on fact-gathering but less so on developing a progression of pupils' skills such as hypothesising, testing and fieldwork skills as a form of enquiry.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Staff implement the school's behaviour policy effectively. Consequently, classrooms are calm and orderly places in which to learn.
- The teaching of writing has led to improvements in pupils' outcomes. In particular, teachers' heightened expectations have led to improvements in the quality and accuracy of pupils' punctuation and grammar. Pupils in most year groups write widely across all areas of the curriculum and apply similarly good standards of grammar and punctuation.
- The teaching of physical education is effective. Links with external coaches help to ensure that teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to support pupils in this support to make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Until recently, leaders have not engaged the support of external agencies to help identify and plan to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils with emotional needs have not received sufficient support.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development equips them to be caring and responsible citizens. Pupils are given a plentiful range of opportunities to be leaders, for example as house leaders and buddies.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school. They spoke knowledgeably about how to keep safe when using the internet to avoid cyber bullying. Pupils say that there used to be poor behaviour and some bullying, but now it rarely happens. Pupils say that they trust all adults to school to sort out any problems that they may have.
- Teaching staff are caring and vigilant in passing on concerns to senior leaders where they notice changes in pupils' physical or emotional well-being. Consequently, leaders take swift action to ensure that pupils are safe and happy.
- The school's breakfast club provides a safe and positive start to the day. Pupils enjoy their breakfast and the activities on offer. Consequently, pupils are ready and eager to learn.
- Pupils are gaining a good understanding of healthy eating in the new allotment project run by a parent, where pupils have opportunities to 'sow, grow, harvest and cook'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The presentation of pupils' work is not good enough in some classes. When teachers' expectations are not sufficiently high, the quality of presentation falters. However, teaching in the Reception class has led to children taking great pride in their learning. Their handwriting is beautifully formed and all work is neatly presented.
- Pupils are compliant in classes but some do not apply themselves fully to the tasks given. This sometimes goes unnoticed by teachers. When this happens, pupils' progress slows. Where teachers' expectations are low, pupils do not respond to advice given and consequently make repeated mistakes.
- The school fosters positive relationships. Pupils are polite to adults and their peers. They behave well in class and around the school. They enjoy each other's company.
- Attendance has now improved to be in line with the national average for all groups of pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes in mathematics are below national averages at both key stages 1 and 2. Too

few pupils achieve the expected standard in mathematics. This does not represent good progress from pupils' different starting points. End of key stage 2 outcomes in 2016 put the school in the lowest 10% schools nationally for progress in mathematics.

- Most pupils have a sound knowledge of times tables and number facts appropriate to their age. This supports them in carrying out efficient calculation methods. However, their skills in using and applying strategies to problem solve are weaker.
- Too few pupils achieve the highest standards by the time they leave the school in reading, writing and mathematics. This does not represent good progress from pupils' starting points. In particular, the most able children do not make the progress that they are capable of.
- Outcomes for the few disadvantaged pupils are better in some year groups than in others. The absence of an effective strategy to tackle these pupils' barriers to learning is slowing down their progress in some classes.
- Although an improving picture, outcomes in writing also saw the school in the bottom 10% of all schools nationally for writing progress in 2016. Writing outcomes in other year groups across the school are improving well, with more pupils meeting age-appropriate standards.
- An increased focus on grammar, punctuation and spelling has led to significant improvements in the accuracy with which pupils write. Work in books shows that pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling are mainly accurate. Pupils' writing is engaging for the reader. Pupils apply their wide vocabulary and accurate knowledge of grammar and punctuation effectively across all aspects of their writing.
- Over the past few years, too few pupils have met the standards expected in the phonics screening checks at the end of Year 1.
- Pupils from low starting points do not catch up quickly enough. In 2016, too few pupils from low starting points and those identified as having special educational needs achieved the expected standard. Current outcomes for these pupils suggest a similar picture, although very recently there are encouraging signs of improvement. Pupils are more settled and their progress is accelerating.
- Outcomes at the end of the early years are improving rapidly. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development, the expected standard for their age, is above last year's national average.
- Pupils' drawing, paintings and sculpture are of a high standard.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Although outcomes at the end of the early years are improving and are set to be above last year's national average this year, adults' use of assessment is not finely tuned enough to support good progress for all pupils. In particular, teaching does not provide sufficient challenge for the most able children, especially in number.
- Adults know the children well. However, records of children's progress and their achievements are not detailed enough to precisely identify activities that will ensure success in their next steps in learning.

- Until recently, the children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities did not have their specific needs identified quickly enough. This has slowed their progress.
- Children benefit most from the sessions led by adults. Good use of interesting resources and effective questioning helps children to make gains in their learning. This is proving particularly helpful in ensuring that children gain a good knowledge in phonics. However, areas of the outdoor environment are less developed and as a result, children have limited opportunity to explore their own interests in this area.
- The early years leader identified that previously, writing in the early years was not good enough. Children are showing clear and sustained progress in their confidence in forming letters and writing sentences. The teacher's high expectations ensure that children's handwriting is well formed and beautifully presented. Children, including the few who are disadvantaged, make good progress from their different starting points.
- The early years leader works effectively with the onsite pre-school to ensure that children have a smooth transition into school. Children engage happily with staff in the early years because staff nurture a positive response to learning.
- Teaching in the pre-school is good. Children are fully absorbed in their learning. The adults develop children's language skills well by talking to them and asking them questions. Improved partnership between the pre-school and Reception class is leading to improved standards. For example, pre-school are now supporting children's early phonic skills and help those who are ready to write their name.
- The early years leader works closely with the Year 1 teacher to ensure that transition into Year 1 is effective. As a result, a higher proportion of children are now well prepared for Year 1 than in recent years. In particular, children's reading, writing and phonic skills are better developed this year than in previous years.
- There are warm relationships within the early years. Children are well behaved and work happily alongside each other. They learn to share and take turns in a harmonious and calm environment.
- Parents say that they are well informed about their child's progress and well-being at school. They value the opportunity to contribute to their child's assessment through the online profile which is now used across the early years setting. Many express their satisfaction with the approachability of staff.

School details

Unique reference number	123659
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10001443

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Chaudoir
Headteacher	Lucy Crowe
Telephone number	01935 850345
Website	www.countessgythaprimary.co.uk
Email address	sch.282@countessgytha.somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 May 2012

Information about this school

- There have been considerable changes since the previous inspection. The school moved to a new site in 2016. Leadership has changed three times.
- The school is currently part of a management partnership with Preston Primary Academy Trust after suffering some difficult circumstances.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the impact of pupil premium, the impact of sport premium funding and the curriculum on its website.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special

educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support by the pupil premium is below the national average. There are too few disadvantaged pupils in the early years to be able to comment on their progress and outcomes as a group.
- The early years provision consists of a pre-school which takes children, including two-year-olds, on a part-time basis and a class of Reception children who attend on a full-time basis.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014 and 2016.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes several times. Visits were mainly accompanied by the interim headteacher.
- The lead inspector held meetings with senior and middle leaders. She also spoke with three representatives of the school’s governing body and held a telephone conversation with a local authority officer.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including the local governing body’s minutes, assessment information, the school development plan and evidence relating to safer recruitment and child protection.
- Inspectors undertook a scrutiny of pupils’ books to evaluate the quality of work and check the accuracy of assessment information held by the school in writing and mathematics. The inspector conducted an additional workbook scrutiny and learning walk as part of an evaluation of the breadth of the curriculum.
- Children spoke to inspectors during various activities throughout the inspection. In addition, the inspector met with pupils at lunchtime and heard a group of pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read.
- The inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in the breakfast club and at break and lunchtimes.
- The 47 responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors considered comments provided alternatively, such as meeting directly or as a result of the 46 free-texts received. There were no responses from either the pupil or staff surveys. An inspector met with parents on the second day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Mark Lees	Ofsted Inspector
Patricia Dodds	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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