

Countess Wear Community School

Glasshouse Lane, Countess Wear, Exeter, Devon EX2 7BS

Inspection dates

16 to 17 January 2019

| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement |
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| 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 and those responsible for governance have not taken effective action to prevent a decline in pupils' outcomes. Until recently, those responsible for governance did not have an accurate picture of the school's performance.
- Many pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged, have not reached the standards expected in reading and writing by the end of Year 6. Outcomes have been below the national average for three years.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not good throughout the school. Too often, teachers do not set mathematics work that is well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement because low-level misbehaviour slows their learning. Where tasks are too easy or too difficult, pupils' concentration falters.
- The teaching of writing is hampered by pupils' weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar. This limits pupils' ability to write with accuracy and the level of sophistication expected for their age.
- Middle leadership is underdeveloped. Many leaders are new in post and have, therefore, had limited impact on improving standards in their areas of responsibility.
- The outside environment in the early years foundation stage is in need of improvement in order to ensure that it is an effective place for children to extend their learning.
- Over time, not enough disadvantaged children have met the early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders' strategies to improve attendance have not had sufficient impact on disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- New leaders have brought about some recent improvements to pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils value the many opportunities that the school provides within the curriculum.
- Safeguarding is effective.
- Pupils' personal development is good. The promotion of equality sits at the heart of the school.
- Pupils who attend the school's special resource base make good progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - continuing to develop the role of middle leaders so that they become more effective in their drive to influence improvements in teaching
 - making sure that governors have a precise picture of the school's performance so that they can hold leaders rigorously to account
 - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils attend school more regularly.
- Eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan work with sufficient challenge to help pupils make good progress in key stage 2 mathematics
 - pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling improve so that they do not hamper pupils' ability to write effectively
 - all teachers have high expectations of pupils, including the most able.
- Continue to increase the proportion of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, who make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school.
- Improve outcomes for children in the early years by ensuring that disadvantaged children make good progress and the outside learning area is organised and resourced in a way that fully meets children's needs.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by eradicating instances of low-level disruption in lessons.

An external review 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

- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced considerable staffing instability at all levels. This has contributed to a decline in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Prior to September 2018, leaders and those responsible for governance did not secure good progress for pupils. This was because they were over reliant on inaccurate information.
- Since her appointment at the beginning of this academic year, the executive headteacher, in close partnership with her senior leadership team, has worked with determination to bring about improvement. She has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require improvement. However, many of the changes have been introduced recently. Consequently, they are not yet established enough to bring about consistency in teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Over time, leaders, including governors, have not taken swift action to stem a decline in standards. Additionally, they have not established good-quality teaching, learning and assessment throughout the school. Although the new leadership team has started to improve the quality of teaching, pockets of weaker teaching remain. As a result, current pupils' progress is variable, dependent on the quality of education and level of challenge that they receive.
- Leaders' use of pupil premium funding requires improvement. Leaders recognise that disadvantaged pupils are not making consistently good progress and have recently commissioned an external review. Funding is used in a variety of ways, particularly in supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being. Inspection evidence found that leaders are responding to the review's recommendations. However, it is too early to see any discernible impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The leader for the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has an accurate overview of the provision for pupils with SEND. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and additional support have secured good outcomes for pupils from their starting points. Parents who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, spoke highly of the support that pupils receive. The school's special resource provision is reported by external agencies as being a 'centre of excellence'.
- Middle leadership is in its infancy. Many middle leaders are new to their roles and are only just beginning to make checks on the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. Therefore, they have been unable to contribute sufficiently to improving consistency in teaching. However, as a result of appropriate training and support, their skills are developing. They are keen to develop their roles further and have made a good start in doing so.
- Leaders ensure that they use the primary school physical education and sport funding effectively. Pupils enjoy the range of activities on offer, including volleyball and tri-golf. Participation is good and has resulted in pupils following up their love of sport outside of school.
- The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, or who spoke with inspectors, were positive about the school. A proportion of parents raised

concerns about behaviour and bullying. The school's behaviour and bullying logs indicate a significant reduction in incidents over time. This aligned with inspectors' observations of behaviour in classrooms and social times.

- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a good understanding of equality, tolerance and respect. The school's inclusive approach sits at the heart of its ethos. Pupils' development is enriched further by visits to places of worship from other cultures. Pupils were keen to tell the lead inspector how a recent visit to a Sikh temple had supported their knowledge in religious education studies.
- Leaders are developing the curriculum and pupils speak favourably about the opportunities it provides to develop their artistic and sporting skills. The curriculum is enriched by trips to museums and outdoor residential centres, as well as by having visitors to the school. The curriculum contributes well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Governance of the school

- Over time, the governing body has not exercised sufficient levels of accountability to reverse a decline in pupils' outcomes.
- Governors have not been effective in evaluating the impact of the strategies used to raise pupils' achievement, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils. Information provided to governors was not always a true and accurate reflection of the school, and governors too often readily accepted this information. On reflection, they recognise that they did not exercise sufficient strategic influence in challenging underperformance when information requested was not forthcoming.
- Following an internal review, governors have restructured the governing body and have introduced specific remit committees that make regular visits to the school. Governors are using these visits to gain a deeper understanding of the improvement work of the school and to challenge and hold leaders to account more rigorously.
- Governors are passionate about the school and want the very best outcomes for pupils at Countess Wear. They welcomed an external review of governance in order to see how they can continue to improve their strategic roles.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that keeping pupils safe is threaded through all aspects of the school's work. The strong culture of safeguarding that is evident in the school ensures that pupils feel safe.
- The school's systems and processes for keeping children safe are thorough. There is a clear system in place for raising and responding to any concerns. Staff report concerns promptly, and the designated safeguarding lead acts swiftly. All staff who spoke with inspectors confirmed a clear understanding of the risks to pupils. As a result of training, staff were able to identify the signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism, female genital mutilation and peer-on-peer abuse.
- Leaders work closely with external agencies to get pupils the help and protection they need as quickly as possible. If the help is not swift in coming, leaders act determinedly until they find a solution.

- The majority of parents who gave their views agreed that pupils are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is uneven across the school. This means that some pupils do not learn and progress as well as they should. In some classrooms and subjects, pupils are flourishing, but, in others, progress is weaker.
- The teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 is not as strong as in key stage 1. Too often, teachers do not provide sufficiently demanding work, nor use what pupils already know, can do and understand to match work more closely to pupils' starting points. As a result, pupils often complete work that is too easy for them, and pupils lose their focus.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in writing are too inconsistent, and the quality of teaching varies. Teaching does not routinely tackle pupils' misconceptions in spelling, grammar and punctuation. This hampers pupils' ability to write accurately for purpose and reach the standards appropriate for their age. However, writing in Years 5 and 6 is better focused on developing pupils' writing skills. Evidence in books shows, increasingly, that the quality of teaching in these classes is ensuring that pupils develop the requisite writing skills.
- The teaching of phonics is regular and systematic. It enables pupils to decode unknown words well. Teaching is more closely matched to pupils' needs. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 who read to inspectors were confident and enthusiastic readers. Until recently, pupils did not have access to high-quality reading texts. Pupils in Year 6 report that they enjoy reading the new range of texts on offer and feel suitably challenged with their reading.
- The use of additional adults to support pupils is effective. Pupils from the specially resourced provision are well supported to ensure that they can access learning in the mainstream classrooms. Adults provide specific, targeted intervention for individual pupils to accelerate their progress within lessons. As a result, pupils from the base make good progress from their starting points.
- In Years 5 and 6, where some of the stronger teaching exists, teachers use questioning to good effect to probe pupils' understanding and deepen their knowledge. However, some pupils are impeded by earlier underachievement and still have basic skills which are not yet secure.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils who spoke with the lead inspector described how the curriculum enriched their enjoyment of school. Pupils recalled, with enthusiasm, the range of residential opportunities that leaders provide. They say that activities develop their confidence and independence well. Pupils in Year 6 were particularly keen to share their positive experience of Bristol Science museum, eagerly sharing facts and knowledge with the

lead inspector.

- Pupils report that leaders actively seek and value their views. Pupils are encouraged to make a contribution to school life, for example through the school council. As a result, pupils are developing a greater sense of responsibility.
- Pupils know about the different types of bullying. They say that, in the past, bullying did happen. However, since the appointment of the new leadership team, incidents have reduced considerably. Pupils report that they are confident that if they have any concerns, teachers and leaders will tackle them effectively.
- Pupils and the vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school is safe. Pupils could articulate the many ways in which they are kept safe at school and how the teaching they have received has developed their understanding of how to stay safe outside of school.
- Pupils are encouraged to keep fit and healthy. Leaders have developed their own catering provision and this has had a positive impact on pupils' social time. The quality of the food is very high and pupils, including children in the early years, serve each other portions of food from the table.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In most classrooms pupils behave well, listening to adults and applying themselves to their work. However, in some classrooms where work is too easy or too hard, pupils' concentration is not conducive to learning. Furthermore, expectations of good behaviour from some staff are too low and, as a result, pupils are not always focused on their learning.
- Pupils who spoke with the lead inspector described instances where behaviour is not as positive as it might be. A proportion of parents who responded to Ofsted's survey using free-text, also raised concerns about behaviour in lessons.
- Rates of overall absence have been in line with the national average. However, the latest information provided by the school shows that the absence of disadvantaged pupils continues to be above the national average. The weak attendance of disadvantaged pupils hampers their progress. Leaders recognise that there is more to be done to continue to improve attendance.
- As a result of leaders' actions, fixed-term exclusions have been reduced considerably over the last three years.
- Pupils' conduct as they move around the school is orderly. Throughout the inspection, pupils would greet inspectors in a polite and courteous manner.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Inconsistent teaching over time has meant that pupils' progress has not been strong enough to ensure that pupils catch up from previous underachievement, particularly in lower key stage 2. Gaps in pupils' learning have hindered pupils' progress across a range of subjects. Inspection evidence found that although leaders are tackling weaknesses in teaching, there remain pockets of inconsistency.
- At the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress in reading and mathematics has not been

good enough for the last three years. In 2018, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics was in the bottom 20% of schools nationally.

- The school's latest internal performance information shows that current pupils' progress is not consistently good across all year groups. Progress varies between year groups, subjects and for key groups of pupils. This is confirmed by the work in pupils' books. However, the latest work in pupils' books in Years 5 and 6 shows that standards are rising.
- Over the past three years, too few pupils have achieved the higher standards by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics when compared to national figures. This is because work does not sufficiently challenge pupils to make good progress.
- Since 2017, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with what other pupils achieve nationally.
- In 2018, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check dipped below the national average for the first time. However, in response to the check, leaders introduced a new approach to the teaching of phonics. Inspection evidence found that the new approach is having a positive impact on current pupils' phonics development.
- In some areas of the curriculum, teaching is strong. Particularly impressive is the quality of music, where pupils have achieved very well in their knowledge and skills.
- The leader of provision for pupils with SEND has identified the right targets and support. The provision is well organised. High-quality tracking of pupils' progress enables specific allocation of support. This well-focused support means that pupils with SEND make the progress they need to.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Despite leaders' efforts, the outside area is not conducive to facilitating learning. It is underdeveloped as a place for children to extend their learning or explore a wide range of activities. This impedes the progress children make.
- The proportion of children who leave the Reception class with a good level of development has broadly been in line with the national average. However, over the last three years, children who are disadvantaged do not achieve as well. As a result, disadvantaged children are not as well prepared for key stage 1.
- Leaders have taken effective action to address the weaknesses in boys' achievement. As a result of carefully planned activities to engage, enthuse and motivate boys, achievement in 2018 was much closer to that of boys nationally than in previous years.
- Many children start in the early years with knowledge and skills that are below what is typical for their age and stage of development, particularly in communication and language. The early years leader has responded promptly by ensuring that children are identified early and receive additional, specialist support to help them catch up with their language acquisition.
- Leaders carefully track children's progress and work in close partnership with external agencies to ensure that any early intervention is made available promptly. Leaders are

very aware of the strengths of the provision, as well as the areas to develop further.

- Adults help children settle quickly into school. Many children enter the Reception class through the Nursery setting. This enables adults to build and foster early relationships with children so that they are confident to explore and learn across the setting.
- The curriculum is well designed. It is built around the interests of children and their specific needs. For example, boys developed their communication and language skills by working together to search for dinosaurs, which was related to their current topic learning.
- The teaching of early reading is effective. Children in both the Nursery and Reception classes receive phonics teaching which is accurately pitched to build on their prior knowledge. As a result, children get off to a good start to develop their early reading skills.
- The partnership between staff and parents is effective. A typical parental comment was, 'My son has thrived in the foundation unit, and it is a joy to see how happy he is.' The use of home visits and regular open day visits ensure that children make a smooth transition between home and school.
- Safeguarding is effective and statutory responsibilities are met.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 113079 |
| Local authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 10086889 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 345 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Sue Keat |
| Head of school | Julie Gilbert |
| Telephone number | 01392 203 560 |
| Website | www.countesswear.devon.sch.uk |
| Email address | admin@countesswear.devon.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 29 to 30 April 2015 |

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has a specialist resourced provision for pupils with multi-sensory impairment.
- In September 2018, Countess Wear Primary School entered into a management arrangement with Clyst Heath Primary School. Both schools share an executive headteacher.
- The majority of pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The executive headteacher and head of school took up their roles in September 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in classes across the school. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour around the school and at breaktime and lunchtime. An inspector also visited the after-school club provision.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, senior leaders, middle leaders, the person responsible for safeguarding, and the leader with responsibility for pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with three governors, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with a representative from the local authority and an educational psychologist.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally during their breaktimes and lunchtimes and in class. They also held a more formal discussion and listened to groups of pupils read.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's self-evaluation document, the school's improvement plan, external audit reports and documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors examined a large sample of pupils' books from across the school and, on most occasions, this was completed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school in the morning. They also considered 34 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the 31 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Matt Middlemore, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Adam Matthews | Ofsted Inspector |
| Paul Smith | 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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