

Cotsford Infant School

Cotsford Park, Horden, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 4TB

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, aspects of the school's overall effectiveness have declined. Teaching has not adapted swiftly enough to meet the demands of the national curriculum. Although the pace of improvement has accelerated over the past year, this has not been enough to secure consistently good teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- In key stage 1, the quality of teaching and learning is variable between classes and this contributes to unevenness in pupils' progress.
- Although improving, pupils' progress has been variable in recent years. The quality of boys' work, including their handwriting, presentation and comprehension skills, is weaker than that of girls.
- Over time, teaching has not provided pupils with enough opportunities to work at greater depths of understanding, particularly disadvantaged pupils.
- Actions to improve pupils' progress and attainment in writing and mathematics are not as developed as those that have had such a marked effect on pupils' reading.
- Although pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum, their wider understanding of subjects such as science and geography is not consistently developed.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have worked intensively to address areas for improvement over the past year. They have worked with improvement partners to review standards and develop staff expertise. This work is building leadership capacity and momentum for improvement.
- Leaders have revitalised the teaching of reading. They have introduced new approaches to improve the teaching of phonics and to help pupils to read more purposefully. These strategies are improving pupils' reading.
- Leaders have worked with local authority advisers to improve provision in the early years. As a result, children are making good progress.
- Leaders and staff at all levels know pupils extremely well. They are mindful of pupils' welfare and provide valuable support for their emotional well-being.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Intensify actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils' progress and attainment, particularly those of boys, improve by making sure that:
 - new approaches to writing, including handwriting and presentation, are consistently implemented and higher expectations are sustained across classes
 - they enable pupils to confidently develop their understanding of number in mathematics and apply this knowledge more regularly to problem-solving tasks
 - they provide more opportunities for pupils to work at greater depths of understanding.
- Enhance the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so that the capacity for school improvement is strengthened by:
 - closely checking the ongoing effect of improvement strategies
 - continuing to use training and partnership work to develop staff expertise and check the quality of teaching and pupils' work
 - building upon recent actions to enhance the knowledge and skills pupils acquire in the wider curriculum
 - closely evaluating the effect of additional funding and support on the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors did not fully foresee that at the time of the section 8 inspection in April 2018, inspectors would not be able to confirm that the school continued to be good. Since then, they have worked determinedly to raise expectations and standards. While their actions are securing marked improvements in pupils' reading, they have not secured consistently good teaching and outcomes.
- Leaders have reviewed their use of pupil premium funding. Previously, funding was used to address pupils' emotional well-being. Leaders are now focusing this funding on additional interventions with teaching assistants to improve pupils' academic progress. While there are some signs that this is helping disadvantaged pupils to make better progress, differences in their attendance and capacity to work at greater depth persist.
- Leaders are focusing more closely on the effect of improvement strategies and have developed a monitoring schedule to check the progress that the school is making against areas for improvement. Although leaders are developing a more accurate view of the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes, some aspects of their understanding of the school's effectiveness are too generous.
- Leaders are using closer partnerships with the local authority and external consultants to improve the quality of teaching. Leaders have rightly prioritised the teaching of reading and have invested much time and resource into staff training and new reading schemes. This heightened training is having a tangible effect upon the teaching of reading and enhancements to early years provision. These partnerships are having a less demonstrable effect on pupils' writing and mathematics.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. Their wider understanding of the world is enhanced by a range of trips and visits. Pupils are developing an understanding of subjects such as science and geography, although on occasions this understanding is not fully developed.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a Rights Respecting School, pupils learn about equality issues and the importance of respecting one another and the right to be different.
- Leaders are mindful of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They use additional funding to help to diagnose pupils' needs and secure additional support, for areas such as speech and language development.

Governance of the school

- Prior to the school's last inspection in April 2018, governors lacked an incisive view of school performance. They had not anticipated the possible decline in school performance. Since then, governors have worked with increasing purpose to check the quality of teaching and ask more purposeful questions on pupils' progress.
- Governors have worked with local authority partners to develop their expertise. They have reviewed their arrangements for checking the effects of change. They now visit

the school with focused areas to explore and report their findings back to the governing body.

- Governors are developing a better understanding of school performance. They are now more aware of the use of funding to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They have a good understanding of the actions being taken to improve pupils' reading although they are less aware of the effects of strategies to improve pupils' writing and mathematics.
- Governors are committed to the school and the wider area. They have set up a working party to oversee the move to a combined primary school in September 2019. Their work is contributing to an orderly transition for the school community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have developed a culture where all staff are mindful of pupils' welfare. Staff promptly report any concerns over pupils' welfare to senior colleagues.
- Leaders carry out thorough checks to ensure the suitability of adults working on site. They keep staff up to date on safeguarding issues. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of what to do if they have concerns over pupils' safety or welfare.
- Leaders pursue any concerns over pupils' welfare swiftly and follow these through to check that pupils are safe. Leaders document any concerns in a timely manner, although written records do not fully reflect the actions they have taken.
- Leaders are proactive in supporting pupils' welfare. They employ their own counsellor to provide additional support for children and families. This work promotes pupils' social and emotional well-being.
- Leaders have worked with external groups such as the NSPCC to help pupils to develop an understanding of safety from an early age. The school website raises awareness of safeguarding issues with parents, carers and families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies between classes and contributes to varying rates of progress for pupils. While teaching in the early years is good, in key stage 1 it requires improvement.
- Teachers are introducing strategies to help pupils to develop their stories through the use of images, symbols and gestures. In some classes, these approaches are helping pupils to write more extended pieces of writing, although at times they remain too reliant on the teachers' models of writing. In other classes, these initiatives are having less effect. Boys in particular are less capable of extending and expressing their ideas in writing.
- Teachers have introduced new expectations or 'non-negotiables' to improve pupils' handwriting and presentation. Some pupils are responding well to these expectations, but they are not implemented consistently across classes, with boys showing less proficiency in these areas. The higher standards evident in pupils' phonics book are not consistently evident elsewhere.

- Leaders are working with teachers to enhance the teaching of mathematics. Pupils are using physical resources to develop their awareness of number, shape and fractions. Pupils are given more time to reinforce their mathematical understanding or 'mastery'. However, there is still variance in pupils' opportunities to apply their knowledge to problem-solving tasks. Gaps also persist in pupils' mathematical understanding, such as their awareness of place value.
- Leaders and teachers have worked extremely effectively to revitalise approaches to reading. The concerted focus on teaching phonics has enabled pupils to develop a stronger understanding of the links between letters and the sounds they make. New approaches are supported by regular training and ongoing checks by the English leader.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are promoting a love of reading. More care is now taken in matching books to pupils' abilities. Parents are reviewing their children's reading more regularly through the reading tasks set at home. These collective actions are supporting improvements in pupils' reading.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers secure positive attitudes to learning and recognise this through their rewards system. On those occasions where pupils are less secure or engaged in their learning, some pupils can become distracted.
- Teachers do provide verbal and written feedback that encourages pupils to reflect on their work in order to improve the quality. Some of this feedback is very effective, although on occasions it does not fully address misconceptions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff at all levels are mindful of pupils' needs and attentive to their welfare. They have created a nurturing environment where pupils feel valued and well supported.
- School leaders are particularly mindful of pupils' social and emotional welfare. They have provided long-established counselling support for pupils which enables pupils to talk about their thoughts and feelings in considered ways. This work often has a positive effect on the well-being of pupils and their families.
- Teachers promote a positive learning environment where pupils' achievements are celebrated, often in the presence of their parents. Teachers develop pupils' self-esteem in weekly reward assemblies.
- Pupils who made their views known to the inspector said that bullying is rare and are very confident that adults would address any unacceptable behaviour.
- Leaders work with pupils to develop an awareness of personal safety. Pupils have attended assemblies hosted by the NSPCC to make them aware of how to stay safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Teachers encourage positive behaviours from the

early years onwards. Leaders have introduced a positive rewards system that is supporting improvements in behaviour.

- In lessons and around the school site, the vast majority of pupils behave well. They display positive attitudes in their learning and in their play. On occasions, some boys can become less focused when teaching does not engage their attention.
- In 2018, leaders secured improvements in attendance. They have worked more intensively with parents to raise the profile of attendance. They have also increased levels of support and challenge for pupils and their families where attendance problems persist. These actions have secured improvements in attendance for some pupils. Despite this, overall rates of absence have risen slightly this year, with disadvantaged pupils more likely to be absent than their peers.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, the proportions of pupils achieving expected standards by the end of key stage 1 have been broadly in line with those seen nationally. However, the proportions of pupils working at greater depths of understanding have remained below those seen nationally.
- For current pupils, an extensive review of books showed variability in pupils' progress in key stage 1. While new approaches to writing are supporting better standards for some pupils, particularly girls, this is not consistent. On many occasions, boys are not responding as carefully to teachers' 'non-negotiables' in handwriting or guidance for checking the quality of their writing. Boys have less stamina in producing longer, more sustained pieces of writing and do not carry the neat work and spelling from phonics books into other work.
- Leaders are introducing new programmes to improve pupils' progress in mathematics. Pupils are developing a better understanding of fractions, time and money but variance remains in other areas, such as understanding of place value and some operations of number. While there was evidence in some classes of more regular access to problem solving, this was not consistent across classes, limiting the ability of some pupils to work at greater depth.
- Leaders have taken concerted action to improve pupils' reading. This whole-school emphasis upon phonics has improved standards of reading across the school. In class, and when reading to the inspector, pupils used their phonics knowledge well to read and decode unfamiliar words. Their reading diaries showed that pupils are reading more regularly. In Year 1 in 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the required standard in the phonics screening check increased to a standard much closer to that seen nationally.
- The improvements in pupils' reading skills are not consistently matched by improvements in their comprehension. In discussion, many of the girls could talk confidently about what they were reading and the meaning of key vocabulary. While some boys revealed understanding, others were less confident in explaining the meaning of words and sentences.

- Leaders are now targeting interventions to support disadvantaged pupils more closely. They are beginning to address barriers to their understanding of reading, writing and number at an earlier stage. While some aspects of their progress are showing improvement, they remain far less likely to work at greater depths of understanding.
- There is much evidence that support and interventions are helping pupils with SEND to improve their speech and language skills and their motor skills. However, on occasions their progress in writing and mathematics is slower.
- Pupils access experiences that develop their physical and emotional well-being. They have regular access to physical education. Pupils develop their understanding through trips and visits that also enhance their confidence and self-esteem. They acquire knowledge and understanding in their science and topic work, although this understanding is not always fully built upon.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have worked with local authority partners to improve provision in the early years. Developments in planning and teaching are enabling increasing proportions of children to reach good levels of development, representing good progress from their starting points.
- The whole-school focus upon phonics is helping children in Reception class to read more effectively and to understand the relationships between letters and sounds. Teachers were seen using creative strategies to help children to recall information from their reading of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'.
- Teachers work with colleagues in the adjacent Nursery School to develop their understanding of children's needs on entry to school. In addition, they work with parents to explore how children's interests can inform their learning activities.
- Teachers are developing children's emerging writing skills well. Children are encouraged to develop their pencil grip and their letter formation. Examples of children's writing in books showed positive signs of progress, with many children capable of producing extended pieces of writing by the end of the year.
- In their workbooks and in class, children showed that they are developing their understanding of numbers. In discussion, boys counted confidently up to 20 and beyond, while children demonstrated their understanding of addition in their books.
- Leaders have worked with local authority partners to encourage children to achieve more from their learning and play. Prompts have been added to children's play and work areas to encourage them to write or to complete basic number problems. Despite this, teachers do not consistently encourage children to take advantage of these opportunities.
- Leaders use information from colleagues in the Nursery School and their own observations to provide additional support for children. Specific initiatives to support children's speech and language development, and their motor skills, are being successfully introduced.
- Leaders are working with local authority advisers to strengthen their understanding of standards. Such partnerships have also helped teachers to develop the curriculum so

that increasing proportions of children are achieving a good level of development, although too few children exceed early learning goals.

- Safeguarding practices are effective. The safeguarding culture that characterises the school's work is similarly evident in the early years. There are no material breaches of welfare requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	114151
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10055206

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracey Haynes
Headteacher	Rachel Cook
Telephone number	01915 865 372
Website	www.cotsford-inf.durham.sch.uk
Email address	cotsfordinfants@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	17 April 2018

Information about this school

- The school received a section 8 inspection in April 2018. At this time, inspectors identified some priorities for improvement which they advised the school to address and recommended this full section 5 inspection as inspectors could not confirm that the school continues to be good.
- Cotsford Infant School is scheduled to close at the end of August in 2019 ahead of its merger with Cotsford Junior School. The new primary school will open in September 2019. The current headteacher of Cotsford Infant School will become the headteacher of the new primary school at that point.
- The infant school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is well-above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well-above average.
- All pupils are of White British heritage.

- The school holds the UNICEF Gold Rights Respecting Schools Award and the Basic Skills Award.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classes. The headteacher joined the inspector for some of these observations.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders.
- The inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair.
- The inspector met the education development partner from the local authority.
- The inspector met a group of pupils and talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at the school in lessons and at break. He also took into account four responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- The inspector listened to pupils read in different year groups.
- The inspector carried out an extensive review of pupils' books.
- The inspector looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and monitoring documents. He also considered arrangements for safeguarding and records relating to attendance and behaviour.
- The inspector talked to parents as they dropped their children off at school and considered three free-text responses from parents. He also considered eight responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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