

Inspection of Cove Infant School

92 Fernhill Road, Cove, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 9DP

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 September 2021

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected six years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Cove Infant School enjoy the curriculum because they learn interesting and important knowledge. They learn to work both in small groups and independently and enjoy discussing their learning. Pupils acquire useful knowledge which helps them to take on new and unfamiliar challenges. For example, pupils told inspectors about their learning in history. Having studied the key events of the Great Fire of London, pupils used their learning about artefacts and sources to research the sinking of the Titanic. These links between projects enrich pupils' understanding and ignite their interests.

However, pupils' progress is stifled because there are weaknesses in the reading curriculum. Too many pupils cannot read as well as they should.

Pupils feel happy and safe. Pupils are kind, friendly and really value their relationships with both adults and each other. Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils know when to ask for help, meaning that little problems do not get out of hand. They love their 'outcome days' where they get to share their work with friends and family. These events include performances, shows and exhibitions. Pupils speak with pride about their accomplishments.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have devised a curriculum which, with the exception of reading, makes it clear what knowledge is useful for future learning and when to teach it. This helps staff to teach pupils key facts and concepts in a logical order.

Staff present this knowledge clearly because they, themselves, have a strong grasp of the content. Staff know what knowledge they are building on and what pupils need to be prepared for in the future. They present information in a way that pupils will understand. For example, staff use agreed words and phrases when teaching pupils about relationships and feelings. This helps pupils to understand the key messages without becoming confused by complex language and phrases.

Pupils are keen to read and to become fluent readers. However, the school does not have an appropriate phonics curriculum or suitable books to help pupils achieve this. This raises staff workload as staff teach from a range of phonics schemes which do not build pupils' knowledge effectively. Too often, pupils are asked to read from books they cannot understand. Pupils find this difficult and demoralising. Some pupils do learn to read with a degree of fluency. However, too many fall behind and are unable to catch up.

In most subjects, staff use assessment effectively to identify how well pupils have learned the curriculum. For example, in the early years, staff check how well children use language to communicate. Teachers use this to identify the key words children need to know to speak more confidently. Staff use this information well. They build in extra time to talk to children and model key vocabulary. Staff routinely

create opportunities for children to recap or revisit anything they did not understand first time round.

Pupils learn the school rules early on and follow these diligently. Disruption or misbehaviour are extremely rare because staff and leaders notice and deal with issues before they escalate. Occasionally, pupils get a little noisy in class. This stems from their enthusiasm and is quickly sorted out by teachers. Absence rates are low because the school notices, challenges and supports families when pupils' attendance dips.

Pupils' personal development is woven through the curriculum. Pupils learn about key themes such as relationships, safety and health and build their knowledge gradually. These building blocks prepare pupils well to be healthy, happy citizens. Opportunities to broaden pupils' moral understanding are well planned. For example, pupils are taught about integrity and how they can earn the trust of others through their actions.

Staff identify the early signs that pupils may need extra support. They build a picture of pupils' needs by gathering evidence regularly and efficiently. This helps staff to identify both pupils who have fallen behind and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Close liaison with families and external agencies ensures that pupils with SEND quickly receive the right help in a timely way.

Governors are keen to improve the school for pupils and staff. However, they are also very new to their roles and lack the training and experience to challenge leaders to improve the school. Governors do not have a clear, agreed understanding of what needs to be achieved and how to check this. As a result, they rely too heavily on leaders to set strategic plans and to evaluate how well the school is performing. This raises leaders' workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are carefully vetted before they start their roles and receive comprehensive safeguarding training. They use this well, noticing and recording the small changes that might indicate a pupil needs help. Leaders use this information effectively, collating all of their evidence to identify when families may need extra support from external agencies.

Pupils learn to keep themselves safe online and in the wider world. They have learned about the risks associated with speaking to strangers online and how to report concerns. Pupils understand that their bodies are their own and who to tell if they feel worried.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not use a systematic approach to teach phonics. Pupils are taught to read in a range of ways that are inefficient and confusing. Too many pupils do not read as well as they should. Leaders must ensure that:
 - a single phonics programme, with appropriate planning and resources, is used to teach early reading in the school
 - all relevant teaching and support staff are provided with appropriate training and support to deliver the phonics programme as intended
 - they check that staff follow the agreed sequence and methodology for the teaching of phonics and that pupils are making strong progress.
- Governors possess a weak understanding of their statutory duties and the systems and processes that support these. As a result, they are unable to provide leaders with the challenge and support that they require to improve the school. Governors should review their structure and systems and undertake training to ensure that they are appropriately knowledgeable and have the capacity to carry out their full duties.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	116141
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10199482
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	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sally Doughty
Headteacher	Natasha Vass
Website	www.coveinfantschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 December 2015, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has had two new headteachers. The majority of governors, including the chair, have been appointed recently.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors met with senior leaders and four governors, including the chair. An inspector met with an officer from the local authority.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, geography and personal, social and health education. Inspectors talked to subject leaders,

staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors then considered a wider range of evidence.

- The inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records, interviewing staff and through discussions with pupils.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents shared through the Ofsted surveys. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Daniel Lambert, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Chris Ellison

Her Majesty's Inspector

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