

Countess Wear Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113079
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338088
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2009
Reporting inspector	David Edwards HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Keatt
Headteacher	Val Lineham
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons, and held meetings with the headteacher, the vice chair of governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including: the school improvement plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, individual education plans (IEPs) from a number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, minutes of governors' meetings, and responses from a sample of 102 pupil questionnaires, 17 staff questionnaires and 103 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- what the school is doing to accelerate pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 and thereby raise standards further throughout the school
- how successfully the school is providing for the learning needs of individual pupils and groups identified as requiring specialised support
- how securely the school's leadership and management is demonstrating its effectiveness and the impact of its monitoring and self-evaluation on raising standards further
- to what extent teaching is sufficiently challenging for more able pupils in both key stages.

Information about the school

Countess Wear community primary is a larger-than-average school serving an urban area in the suburbs of Exeter. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Pupils' mobility is relatively high. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is above average, as is the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. As well as providing a special unit to support the small number of pupils with hearing impairment, the school also provides two nurture units, one in each key stage, to support the few pupils who require additional behavioural support in order to access the curriculum.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Countess Wear is a well led and effective school. Pupils achieve well in lessons and across different subjects. Through her transparent and aspirational leadership the headteacher has gained the full confidence of governors and the learning community. She has identified ways to further improve the provision for all pupils but especially those children in danger of underachieving. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Key Stage 2 their attainment in English, mathematics and science is in line with the national average. Systems to monitor pupils' rates of progress are well established and as a result, all pupils, including more able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, now make good progress in their learning, relative to their starting points. This represents good overall achievement.

At the heart of this successful school is a headteacher dedicated to promoting the highest levels of care, welfare and education for all pupils. She has worked assiduously with her staff and governors to create a transparent and distributive leadership culture within the school. There are strong systems in place for monitoring core standards. Consequently, there is now a clear vision for continuing the school's success by focusing on strategies that will sustain school improvement. The governing body provides satisfactory support. It is fully supportive of the headteacher and is establishing effective systems to support and hold the school to account. Appropriate training has allowed governors to become increasingly influential in determining the strategic direction of the school. They have ensured the school has made good progress in addressing areas for improvement since the last inspection and effectively monitor the work and progress of the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders have successfully identified areas for improvement and as a result the school has successfully met its challenging targets to raise standards in the core subjects. Attendance has also improved significantly in the last year. Overall this demonstrates the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly into routines because of the good care provided by the school. They enjoy their learning in a safe and stimulating environment. Assessment information gathered from observing children's learning is used satisfactorily to plan further learning experiences. Consequently, children make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning by the time they enter Key Stage 1.

The curriculum is well planned and makes the most of the superb school grounds. It ensures an appropriate focus on the development of basic skills and successfully meets the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Particular strengths are the nurture groups that provide an effective alternative for those pupils who cannot always cope with the challenges presented through the main curriculum without specialist help.

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Teaching is good in Key Stages 1 and 2 because teachers understand the needs of their pupils well and provide stimulating lessons that engage and maintain their interest. However, pupils' lack sufficient opportunity to develop their extended writing skills. Assessment information is used intelligently by teachers in planning lessons so they can provide effectively for the learning needs of individual pupils.

Pupils' benefit from an outstanding forest school provision which also promotes good attitudes to pupils' learning and their personal development and well-being. This enthusiasm was effectively demonstrated by a class of Key Stage 2 pupils who, during a forest school session, drank soup made from home-grown potatoes whilst sitting around an open fire responding with confidence to questions asked by the teacher about what they had learnt that day. Teaching assistants are deployed appropriately to support individuals and groups of pupils. Occasionally, they lack the expertise to provide for the learning needs of some pupils. The regular assessment of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science, ensures pupils' skills development in these subjects and their progress is carefully monitored. The marking of pupils' work is supportive and regularly informs them of how to improve their work. However, outcomes from this good assessment practice are not currently shared between classes or when pupils change key stages.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make better use of assessment information to plan for the next steps in pupils' learning especially when transferring between classes.
- Ensure teachers take every opportunity to maximise pupils' writing opportunities throughout the curriculum.
- Further develop the skills of teaching assistants so that accurate and focused support can be provided for individuals and groups of pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Although the majority of pupils start school with skills and attributes that are well below those expected for their age they make good progress in all areas of learning and achieve standards that are in line with the national average by the time they complete Key Stage 2. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is evident in all that they do. This love of learning is summed up by a Key Stage 2 pupil who said, 'Our school is a great learning environment and all the staff are kind and helpful.' The most recent 2009 Key Stage 2 results for 2009, although yet to be validated, confirm the upward trend in standards seen in the previous two years.

Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 remain below average in reading, writing and mathematics, mainly because of pupils' low starting points on entry to school. However, the majority make good progress in their learning throughout their time in school and achieve their challenging targets by the end of Key Stage 2, although standards in writing are still weak. The effective analysis of pupils' work in these subjects and the strong teaching that is characteristic, particularly in Key Stage 2, ensure that all pupils,

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including the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. At times a small number of pupils display challenging behaviour in school. However, because of strong leadership and the high expectations of teachers, the vast majority of pupils behave well in and out of lessons and have a clear understanding of school rules and rewards. This was particularly well evidenced in the Key Stage 2 nurture group where positive relationships between staff and pupils ensured pupils behaved well, took pride in their work and as a result, made good progress in their learning.

The vast majority of pupils say they feel safe and agree that when incidents of bullying occasionally do occur they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle. School meals are nutritious and well balanced. Although the school recently achieved national healthy school status the current numbers of pupils participating in after-school sports is low. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to school life and their views are heard and acted upon by the school. In the wider community, they have regular opportunities to raise money for charitable causes. Pupils' experience frequent opportunities to develop their spiritual and moral understanding. For example, through forest school activities and whole-school assemblies where all pupils are encouraged to join in signing, along with those pupils who have a hearing impairment. Pupils' social and cultural development is also good.

Pupils' sense of their own faith and culture is good, but their understanding of what it means to be British in an increasingly diverse society is less well developed. The standards reached by pupils in the core subjects of mathematics, science and information and communication technology means that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their transition to the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is typically good. It is thoughtfully planned to provide a wide range of activities and tasks which are well geared to the various needs of pupils with differing abilities so pupils enjoy their learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge which informs their clear instruction to pupils. Effective questioning strategies keep pupils alert and learning. Most teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support learning when pupils are working in groups or individually. However, sometimes teaching assistants lack the full range of skills or learning strategies necessary to support pupils' learning. Occasionally they miss opportunities to support and focus pupils during whole-class teaching. In Key Stage 1, the range of strategies used by teachers to keep pupils engaged and enjoying their learning is narrower than elsewhere in the school and, at times, pupils' attention drifts because of inexact or overlong instruction.

Well-organised arrangements for the care and guidance of pupils support their learning and contribute to their good personal development in school. In all classes, pupils' work in reading, writing and mathematics is assessed by teachers each term. The school uses this information satisfactorily to check that pupils are not falling behind in lessons, and to put in place effective intervention strategies if necessary. Pupils say that they are made aware of their targets and that teachers' marking of work and their written comments help them to improve further.

The curriculum provides a good balance of subjects within a wide range of experiences that are well tailored to the school population. However, too few opportunities are provided to ensure pupils have regular writing experiences each day and in every subject. The forest school curriculum, which is offered to all pupils, is outstanding and has a very positive effect upon the standards reached by the school and on pupils' enjoyment of learning. As one pupil commented, 'My school is fun because we do forest school and we get to cook food and eat it around the fire.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders, along with governors, have set a clear improvement plan for the school. An intensive monitoring system introduced to track the progress of pupils has been used effectively to help leaders and managers identify and target support for pupils in danger of underperforming. Middle leaders are developing a growing responsibility for whole-school improvement. As a result, leaders have shown initiative in, for example, in attempting to address the current trend of girls' underperformance. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in tackling areas for development, such as the outdoor environment which is now a vibrant, stimulating and well used addition to the curriculum. The school has also been successful in using its assessment and monitoring systems to set and achieve challenging targets for pupils. However, the school does not make the best use of this assessment information when pupils transfer between classes or key stages. The school improvement plan has correctly identified the need to focus on developing pupils' writing throughout the school. The school's effective work to promote equalities is illustrated by the way it has tackled the challenges posed by some disaffected pupils and it successfully meets the needs of pupils with hearing impairments.

The governing body works closely with senior leaders and is having an impact on the development and improvement of the school. Systems to ensure challenge as well as support for the school are being embedded. The school promotes community cohesion through working closely in partnership with other local support agencies and has established an international link with a school in Africa. However, national community awareness is underdeveloped and governors have yet to audit its impact. Overall governance is satisfactory.

The school's relationship with parents and carers is good. The school makes communication with parents a priority and all staff are committed to maintaining these good links. For example, family learning opportunities are coordinated from within the school and there are regular newsletters to support home-school communication. The school works most effectively with other agencies and services in supporting the needs of pupils. For example, the attendance of persistent absentees has improved significantly due to the close working relationship established with parents and the local authority.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. The school adopts effective procedures and practices across all areas of its work and so cares very well for all pupils but especially for groups of vulnerable pupils. All adults are vigilant and record keeping is excellent. Training for all staff is of a good quality and the school works effectively with other partners, including parents, to help all pupils to succeed. The school's effective management and deployment of resources along with good pupil outcomes is evidence that the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision is good. Children are happy because their welfare is a priority and they enjoy the learning activities planned for them. Most children start school with skills and knowledge that are well below those expected for their age. They settle well due to the school's good provision and care and make at least satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. Overall pupils begin Key Stage 1 with skills and aptitudes that are lower than those expected nationally. Practitioners provide a well planned range of activities, effectively tailored to meet the varying needs of children across the six areas of learning. Free-flow access to the equally stimulating outdoor learning area further enhances children's learning experiences. Good relationships with adults ensure children know what is expected of them so behaviour is good.

Progress is consistently better in aspects of personal, social and emotional development and in mathematics. However, progress for boys especially in developing writing, reading and speaking skills, is often inconsistent. Many children need a lot of encouragement to develop their independence in learning. Overall children's personal development and well-being are good. Most listen carefully and carry out instructions as directed. Leaders agree that data gathered on individual pupils is not used well enough to plan the next step in each child's learning. Neither are assessment data used to promote children's learning and progress to best effect. As a result, there is a lack of urgency particularly in developing writing skills, for boys.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Practitioners are well trained and work efficiently as a team. They possess a satisfactory understanding of what is needed to ensure children's good progress, especially in developing phonics and early writing skills. However, leaders acknowledge the need to

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develop the use of assessment to plan activities which will boost children's language development, early writing and reading skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Of the 103 parents who returned the Ofsted questionnaire, the vast majority were supportive of the school. This represents approximately 50% of families that make up the school community. The majority of respondents were happy or very happy with the progress their children are making at school. 'The whole team are approachable and friendly. They go out of their way to accommodate all needs,' wrote one parent in response to the questionnaire. The strong leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of all staff to meet individual pupils' learning needs is also appreciated by parents. Very few negative comments were received and where HMI agree that these concerns are indeed issues, they appear as judgements in the body of the report. Parents may wish to know that there were no particular trends in the small number of criticisms received by HMI.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Countess Wear Community Primary school to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 272 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	64	28	29	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	65	63	31	32	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	51	53	43	44	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	51	42	43	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	55	57	41	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	47	44	45	3	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	52	36	38	40	4	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	42	42	44	8	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	46	47	49	2	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	43	39	40	13	13	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	42	50	52	5	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	43	51	53	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	62	36	37	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 September 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Countess Wear Community Primary School, Exeter EX2 7BS

Thank you so much for the warm welcome that you gave me and the other inspectors when we visited your school recently. I especially enjoyed visiting your fantastic forest school and eating your home-grown potato soup! I want to tell you what we thought of your school. We have decided yours is a good school. This is because the support and guidance you enjoy are good because your governors, headteacher and her staff care very much, not just about raising the standards of your work, but also about ensuring you grow up with good personal skills that will help you in the future to enjoy life and contribute well to your community.

I am glad more of you are coming to school regularly now and those who spoke with us told us how much you enjoy coming to school. You also told us you feel safe in school and know about how to stay healthy through regular exercise and a healthy diet. You make good progress in your learning and reach standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 that are now in line with the national average. This means your achievement in school is good. Many of you have good attitudes to your work and look for ways to help others in school as well as through fundraising activities. I was particularly impressed with how you all have opportunities to sign when singing in assembly. This is a good example of how you care for one another.

We have asked the leaders of your school to use the information they gather on how well you are progressing to plan more carefully the next steps in your learning. In particular we would like you to become really good at writing and so we have asked that your teachers plan more opportunities for you to write each day. You are also fortunate in having many teaching assistants who work closely with you at times to help you make good progress. We would like them to receive more training opportunities so they will be able to help you even more in lessons. I am sure that if you keep your positive attitudes to learning that we saw on our visit you will do well.

I wish you every success for your futures.

Yours faithfully,

David Edwards

Her Majesty's Inspector

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