

Countess Wear Community School

Glasshouse Lane, Countess Wear, Exeter, EX2 7BS

Inspection dates 29–30 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher's drive and determination have galvanised the staff into becoming an ambitious team. Together with other leaders, they have greatly improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the last inspection.
- Pupils' achievement throughout the school is good. By the time they leave Year 6, they reach standards which are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding, because senior leaders have high expectations and set high standards. Teachers' detailed marking and constructive feedback help the pupils improve their work.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those pupils who access the Hearing Support Centre, make outstanding progress as their individual needs are meticulously planned and their progress is frequently checked.
- Strong leadership ensures that children get the best start to their schooling in the welcoming Nursery. By the end of Reception children are confident learners and make good progress from their starting points.
- Effective use is made of staff expertise to enhance pupils' experiences, particularly in music and 'Forest School'. This contributes positively to their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They behave well because of respectful relationships with staff and other pupils.
- Excellent pastoral care underpins pupils' sense of feeling safe and supported. The school is particularly effective at supporting pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- Governors share the headteacher's commitment and ambition to continue bringing about improvements. They have a good understanding of how the school is performing.
- Parents are supportive of the school. A large majority who spoke to inspectors and responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) would recommend the school to others.
- As part of the Exeter Consortium and Teaching School Alliance, the school works well to improve its practice.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Plans for improvement do not show well enough how governors will check and report on the difference the school's actions are making to pupils' achievement.
- Mathematics teaching does not yet consistently provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, including two whole-school assemblies. They observed 22 lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- An inspector conducted a focused tour of the school with the headteacher, looking at social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other leaders in school, teachers, support staff, parents, pupils and four members of the governing body. A meeting took place with a representative from the local authority.
- The views of 30 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were analysed. The inspectors took into consideration discussions with parents, including a letter from a parent. Questionnaire responses from 31 members of staff were also analysed.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress, school improvement plans, work in pupils' books, safeguarding documents and information relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during their lessons and at break times.

Inspection team

Dale Burr, Lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

Wendy Marriott

Additional Inspector

Ann Sydney

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- A new headteacher was appointed in April 2014.
- Most pupils are White British. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average. This additional funding is for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above the national average.
- The school has a Hearing Support Centre which is currently accessed by five pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum standards set for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- There is a Nursery setting on the site, which is managed by the school's governing body and which children attend on a part-time basis. Once they join the Reception class, they attend full time.
- A breakfast and after-school club is provided by the school.
- The school has a range of links to other primary schools as part of their membership of the Exeter Consortium and Teaching School Alliance.
- The headteacher is supported by a national leader of education, from Exwick Heights Primary School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in mathematics by giving pupils more opportunities to use and apply their problem-solving skills.
- Strengthen the school development plan so that it shows how governors check and report on the difference the school's actions are making.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, the school's overall effectiveness has improved. This is primarily because senior leaders have quickly established a strong sense of teamwork and an unfaltering commitment that all pupils 'be everything they can be'. The school is well placed to improve further.
- Expertly led by the headteacher, middle leaders are highly ambitious for the school and provide strong leadership. They willingly take on responsibilities and make excellent contributions to school priorities. For example, they regularly share and model best practice to bring about improvements to teaching.
- Senior leaders make good use of the information they collect about pupils' performance. They share this effectively with all other leaders to ensure that teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their class. This has been the catalyst for raising achievement.
- An exciting curriculum captures pupils' interests and makes them eager to learn. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their weekly 'Forest School' activities and how they are involved in making decisions about what to learn. They told an inspector that 'teachers work with us to make learning fun.' High quality artwork, such as a collage in the style of Matisse, and an appreciation of music, are strong features of the rich and inclusive curriculum. However, the new mathematics curriculum has not been implemented fully in all classes; there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop problem-solving skills.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is promoted effectively through well-planned assemblies. The impact of this is seen in the children's understanding of different faiths and respect for other cultures. Pupils are tolerant of others and, through a 'pupil parliament', understand democracy. The work of the school equips pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Leadership of the Hearing Support Centre is outstanding. Every effort is made to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are met. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and pupils are equally valued and cared for well.
- Additional money to improve pupils' participation in high-quality sport has been used well. Specialist coaches offer professional development for school staff as well as introducing pupils to new sports, such as hockey and gymnastics. The physical education leader has forged good links with a number of local sports clubs; this provides more opportunities for pupils to participate in competitive sports, for example cross-country and tag rugby. Pupils told an inspector that 'the school helps keep us healthy by teaching us new sports.'
- The local authority has a strong working relationship with the school. It has provided good support to enhance the role of governors and the school's involvement in the Exeter Consortium and Teaching School Alliance. Leadership has been strengthened recently by sharing skills and expertise with a headteacher who is a national leader of education.
- School leaders communicate regularly with parents. Parents spoken to during the inspection were positive about the 'extra help' the school provides to help pupils who struggle and 'the approachability of staff'. A parent expressed the view of many when she said, 'The school has a unique and special feel and we are impressed with the children's behaviour, safety and the friendly feel.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The quality of governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors bring expertise to their roles and have a secure grasp of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved. They use detailed information provided by leaders to ask challenging questions and hold leaders to account, especially about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
 - Governors work closely with leaders, including middle leaders, so they receive information about actions taken to improve the school. However, they do not systematically check for themselves whether these actions have had sufficient impact on school improvement priorities.
 - Governors monitor the school's budget carefully. They allocate funds wisely and use information to measure the impact of their decisions, such as the contribution teaching assistants make to pupils' achievement. Governors check on how the pupil premium is spent and receive regular progress reports from school leaders. Performance management arrangements make sure that teachers' salary progression is linked to pupils' achievement. Any underperformance is tackled robustly to ensure that all pupils receive good quality teaching.
 - Safeguarding procedures are effective and pupils' safety is given a high priority. A designated governor works closely with the headteacher to ensure that policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong because there is an ethos of mutual respect which permeates the work of the school. The school's learning behaviours of 'confidence', 'consideration' and 'resilience' feature prominently in all of its work.
- The school has highly effective procedures in place to manage pupils' behaviour. Teachers and teaching assistants model respectful behaviour and skilfully manage those pupils with specific learning or behavioural needs. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school.
- Pupils' behaviour in the Hearing Support Centre is exemplary. Staff are highly skilled at supporting pupils' individual needs.
- Pupils play an active role in improving their school. For example, lunchtime behaviour has improved because of new eating arrangements and the availability of sports equipment. Pupils are adamant that 'we get to put our ideas across and we are listened to.'
- Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that, should it happen, adults 'will stop it immediately' because 'we treat others as we want to be treated ourselves'. School records of behavioural incidents confirm that bullying is uncommon.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because there are occasions when some pupils do not settle quickly or listen carefully, especially at the end of break times and during whole-school gatherings.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders give high priority to ensuring that the school's policies, procedures and arrangements keep pupils safe. The premises are well managed and staff undergo rigorous recruitment checks.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They are knowledgeable and well informed about how to stay safe and the risks associated with the internet and social media. They know to report any threats or concerns to teachers or parents.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average. Exclusions are at their lowest rate for many years as pupils' attitudes to learning improve, often significantly for pupils who receive additional support. A welcoming breakfast club provides pupils with a good start to their day.
- In their inspection questionnaires, all staff and most parents agree that pupils are well behaved and safe at school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Staff create a positive atmosphere for learning, evidenced by warm and nurturing relationships with pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together and form effective teams. Pupils in need of extra help receive good support so that they achieve well over time.
- The new curriculum requirements have been introduced throughout the school. Leaders have acted swiftly to ensure themes and topics are relevant and capture pupils' interests. Pupils say that 'teachers make learning fun and we are always learning something new'. A scrutiny of pupils' books highlighted regular opportunities for pupils to practise their reading and writing skills in a range of subjects; however, there are too few opportunities for problem-solving in mathematics.
- In lessons where teachers' expectations are high, pupils achieve exceptionally well. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, pupils confidently assessed the effectiveness of others' writing by proposing the use of adverbial phrases. All pupils made rapid progress because the teacher's excellent subject knowledge skilfully guided them to improve at every opportunity.
- In the weekly 'Forest School' sessions, pupils develop a wide range of skills through cooking, exploring and teamwork. For example, after a pond-dipping activity in the school grounds, pupils in Years 3 and 4 created their own classification key based on their findings.
- The quality of marking has improved since the last inspection; it is now consistently good. Pupils understand how to tackle next steps and improve their work as a result of effective feedback.
- School leaders expertly use data and pupil progress meetings to identify pupils at risk of underachievement. Support programmes are carefully designed to meet individual pupils' needs and this helps them catch up quickly and make as much progress as their peers. For example, in a small group session, adults seized on every opportunity to develop pupils' technical vocabulary and make links with prior learning. This supportive environment encourages pupils with specific needs to work hard and make good progress.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the last inspection, leaders have focused successfully on improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years classes and make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their starting points. Children are keen to learn and develop good listening and independent working skills.
- Achievement in reading is good. Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is strongly promoted and more pupils do well in the Year 1 phonics check than is typical nationally.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 has continued to rise and is now above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 6, pupils reach levels that are broadly in line with the national average, which represents at least good progress from their low starting points. Current work shows that the trend of improvement is set to continue.
- Music is taught exceptionally well so that pupils achieve high standards. All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn to play the ukulele and trumpet, taught by a music specialist. During the inspection, a Year 6 class confidently used trumpet scales to play 'Hard Rock Blues'. Pupils are particularly proud of their achievements: 'We love this, we have fun, most schools don't have instruments like this.'
- In Year 6 in 2014, the attainment of the large proportion of disadvantaged pupils in writing was about three terms behind other pupils in the school and other pupils nationally. In reading, it was four terms behind other pupils in the school and three terms behind other pupils nationally. In mathematics, it was approximately two terms behind other pupils in the school and three terms behind other pupils nationally. Rightly, the school has raised the expectations to close the attainment gap for this group of pupils, by well-targeted support and precise checking on their progress. As a result, the gaps in progress between different groups of pupils are closing.
- Provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including pupils in the Hearing Support Centre, is well planned to meet the range of pupils' needs. They make outstanding progress as a result of highly effective teaching and thorough tracking of pupils' progress.
- The most able pupils achieve well and make good progress. Lessons typically provide challenge, particularly in upper Key Stage 2, where, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were investigating rules of divisibility and explaining their reasoning, using an extensive range of vocabulary. This year, more pupils are on track to reach the higher levels of attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- The small numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well and make good progress.

The early years provision is good

- Children start Nursery with skills that are below, and sometimes well below, those typical for their age, particularly in reading and writing. They make exceptional progress and display the highest standards of behaviour, confidence and independence when carrying out tasks. By the end of Nursery, children acquire impressive reading and writing skills; they are well prepared to start school.
- Children make good progress in the Reception class and a high proportion achieve a good level of development. Achievement is not yet outstanding, as not all groups of children make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Strong leadership ensures that adults provide children with a range of learning experiences which interest and motivate them. Teachers and support staff check the progress of all children and set ambitious targets to improve.
- High quality teaching from skilled practitioners ensures that children's individual needs are given utmost importance. For example, in Nursery, a 'dough gym' intervention is having a positive impact on children's early writing development.
- Children behave well because relationships between adults and children are strong. Children feel safe in school because adults pay good attention to their welfare and safety.
- Parents are encouraged to play an active role in their child's learning, through frequent classroom visits, such as 'foundation fun'. Learning journals (information from ongoing assessments) give parents a good overview of their child's work and progress. Excellent use is made of the outside environment, including the 'Forest School', which inspires children to learn well. A parent told an inspector that 'my child has thrived since starting school because we are kept informed and fully involved in their learning.'
- Children are well prepared to continue this good start in Year 1.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113079
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	462492

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Keatt
Headteacher	Catherine Rees
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 July 2013
Telephone number	01392203560
Fax number	01392203542
Email address	admin@countesswear.devon.sch.uk

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