

Cove Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116141
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312190
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nick Pearson
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Sampson
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2004
School address	92 Fernhill Road Cove Farnborough GU14 9DP
Telephone number	01252 543737
Fax number	01252 376513

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is about average in size for an infant school. The majority of pupils are White British, with 15% coming from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. Most of the pupils who need extra support have speech and communication problems or moderate learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils achieve well. They behave very well and enjoy learning. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher has secured very good improvements over the last few years. Parents are overwhelmingly happy with all the school provides. A typical comment was, 'A first class school being led by a very professional and caring headteacher'.

Pupils achieve well because the teaching and curriculum are good. There is excellent provision in the Foundation Stage, where teachers provide stimulating and challenging activities and children are given a first class start to their education. Overall, standards by the end of Year 2 are above average. The proportion of pupils exceeding the higher levels is in line with the national picture except in writing, and the school rightly identifies raising the number doing so as an area for improvement. The teaching of writing lacks consistency, particularly in relation to teachers' marking ensuring that pupils know exactly how to improve their work.

The staff take outstanding care of the pupils and support them exceptionally well. This has a significant impact on pupils' outstanding personal development. They enjoy participating in a good range of extra activities after school and during lunchtime. Pupils show caring attitudes to each other, and reflect very thoughtfully in assemblies and 'circle time' on values such as freedom and cooperation. They appreciate the delightful grounds and look after them responsibly. They have an excellent understanding of healthy living and the importance of exercise. Pupils feel safe from harm or harassment because the staff are vigilant to their needs, enabling them to learn and play in a safe and secure learning environment.

The headteacher, all staff and governors know the school's strengths exceptionally well and what needs to improve further. The school's track record of raising standards and effective leadership show that it has an excellent capacity to continue improving. As one parent commented, 'It is going from strength to strength'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage gets children off to a flying start. An excellent partnership with parents and pre-school settings means children settle in smoothly. Teachers and support staff have an infectious enthusiasm. Using a wide range of indoor and outdoor resources, they provide challenging activities that move children's learning on apace. Children make excellent progress in developing early speaking, listening and numeracy skills. Through close observation, adults track progress meticulously and modify their teaching accordingly. A very good balance between teacher-led sessions and activities initiated by the children provides highly effective support across all areas of learning. As a result, children make very good progress in creative and physical development and in the knowledge and understanding of the world. With few exceptions, all children reach or exceed the standards expected by the end of Reception.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of more able pupils, especially in writing.
- Increase teachers' skills in helping pupils to understand the next steps in their learning, particularly how to improve their written work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils build well on the excellent start they are given in the Foundation Stage and make good headway during Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, they reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in science are broadly average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in reading, mathematics and science is in line with the national picture but it is below average in writing. There has been a tendency for boys to do better than girls in recent years but the school has successfully addressed this so there is now little difference in their achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress and reach standards that are above those found nationally for such pupils. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language rapidly acquire the skills they need to fully participate in lessons and school life.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, and this is reflected in their highly positive attitudes in and around school. Attendance is average. Although pupils enjoy school immensely, many pick up early childhood ailments, which reduce the attendance figures. Pupils are friendly, happy, polite and helpful and thoroughly enjoy participating in the wide range of experiences that teachers provide for them. For example, they talk enthusiastically about the butterfly garden, the pond area and the vegetable gardens. They behave well and treat each other and school resources with respect. Pupils understand extremely well the need to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. They feel entirely safe in school and say that bullying is very rare. Pupils respond very well to the many opportunities to take responsibility and develop independence. For example at lunchtimes, older pupils take turns to answer the telephone and others act as monitors to help in classrooms. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy accompanying visitors on guided tours. They acquire good literacy, mathematics and computer skills which prepares them well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching inspires pupils to learn well. Teaching is underpinned by warm relationships, careful attention to the needs of individual pupils, and rigorous planning so that the pupils have a clear understanding of how lessons link together. The interactive white boards in every classroom are used enthusiastically and effectively by teachers to model and demonstrate ideas; consequently pupils enjoy learning and keenly participate in activities. Learning assistants and volunteers support learning well. Teachers outline tasks carefully so pupils are clear about what to do. However, pupils are not always aware of what constitutes 'good work'. Some marking informs pupils about the extent to which they have met the specific criteria for the task in hand and points out how they could improve, but this not consistent through the school. More able pupils in particular lack sufficient guidance about how to improve the quality of their writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The rich variety of activities offered ensures pupils enjoy learning. High quality displays of work in Years 1 and 2 and the good links made between subjects enhance pupils' learning and broaden their understanding. A well-designed programme of personal, health and social education contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. The National Healthy Schools Award recently acknowledged and awarded the school's contribution to this area of work. The outdoor areas are used very well to enhance work in the classroom. Planting and harvesting vegetables, for example, help pupils to understand how plants grow. Pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences, including participating in outside visits and welcoming visiting authors, illustrators and other specialists. Computers are used well to support learning. For example, Year 1 pupils used digital video cameras to film their news reports from the Great Fire of London and then edited their recordings on the computer. Pupils with learning difficulties are catered for very well and are fully included in all activities. However, work for more able pupils does not always challenge them to write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts, selecting appropriate and effective vocabulary.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides an attractive safe and secure environment in which every child can flourish and learn. Teachers and support staff provide excellent pastoral care and they strive to make learning interesting and enjoyable. Effective strategies promote pupils' social and economic well-being. Procedures for safeguarding children are secure, and health and safety are given high priority. Risk assessments are carried out regularly and actions are taken to eliminate any identified hazards. The school works very effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure that all pupils are well supported in their academic progress and personal development. The tracking of pupils' progress is excellent, and teachers generally use assessment information well to provide work which meets the needs of pupils. The school is aware that this process is not sufficiently clear to ensure that all pupils know the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The aim to 'create a community where high standards of teaching and learning enable all our children to develop the skills and knowledge they will need for life long learning' underpins all aspects of the school's work. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Under her guidance, the leadership team, including governors, has created a stimulating learning environment in which every pupil matters. Following a thorough review and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, staff and governors have produced an improvement plan highlighting strategies to meet the school's aims. The subject leader for English is new and aware of the improvements needed in the teaching of writing. Equality of opportunity is promoted very well at all levels. The school makes good use of all available resources, including the outdoor area which has been imaginatively developed to provide many additional learning opportunities for pupils. Governors know the school well, and they strike a good balance of support and challenge.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Cove Infant School, Farnborough, GU14 9DP

Thank you for making us so welcome during our visit to your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing some of your work. I am pleased to say that, for lots of reasons, we decided that Cove Infant School is a good school. Here are some of the most important things we found to be good.

- You make good progress in your lessons.
- You really enjoy school and behave very well.
- Children in the Reception classes soon settle in and they enjoy an excellent range of exciting activities.
- Teachers plan very interesting things for you to do
- Everyone who works at the school makes sure that you are safe and cared for.
- Your headteacher works very hard to make sure this is a good school.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together to improve two things.

- Help you to do better in your writing, particularly those of you who are already doing well.
- Help you to know the next small steps in your learning, for example, how to improve your written work.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection. We hope you carry on enjoying your school.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Crompton

Lead Inspector