

Cowes Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118156
Local Authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	379551
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2011
Reporting inspector	John Cavill

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	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynda Purkis
Headteacher	Stephanie Praetig
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons and observed 15 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, analysed recent evidence on pupils' progress and performance, examined a range of documents, looked at pupils' work, and examined the school's priorities for development. They also analysed 90 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively the school is improving pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- How effectively the provision at the school, especially teaching and curriculum, is meeting the needs of all pupils, in particular pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How effectively all leaders are contributing to the improvement of the school.

Information about the school

Cowes Primary School is a larger-than-average-sized school and has expanded over the last two years due to the reorganisation of education within the local authority. The current Year 6 pupils will be the first to reach the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012. All members of the senior leadership team have taken up their positions following the appointment of the headteacher in 2009. The school manages and provides the base for 'Club Cool', a before- and after-school club. A privately managed pre-school, subject to a separate inspection, is located on the site and the majority of children from this setting move into the Early Years Foundation Stage at the school. Most of the children are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Most of these additional needs are concerned with speech and language development. The school has the Healthy School Award and the Food for Life Silver Award. It is a flagship school for the Food for Life Partnership.

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

Cowes Primary School is a good school. It values each one of its pupils and understands them as individuals and equals. This is reflected in the school's statement of intent, 'Right to Learn, Right to be Safe, Right to be Respected'. Its key strength lies in the pastoral work that the school undertakes supporting pupils and their families, which is highly valued. This good and effective care, guidance and support are contributing to good outcomes for the pupils both academically and personally, and are exceptionally good where the support is targeted at the needs of the more vulnerable pupils. One parent summed this up by saying, 'An amazing school with amazing staff who always go the extra mile.'

Pupils say that they enjoy being at school; as one pupil commented, 'I feel at home here – it's like one big family.' Pupils are very proud of their school and make an outstanding contribution to the school and community through activities such as the school council, Food for Life initiatives and the 'Walk the Wight' fundraiser, which is highly inclusive and involves most pupils. In classes they have a good attitude and are keen to learn. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils exhibit a strong moral code clearly understanding right from wrong. They are respectful towards each other and are confident that the school deals with any incidents of unacceptable behaviour effectively.

When children start at the school in the Reception Year they have skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. Good progress continues through the school for all learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, with some individuals making outstanding progress. As a result, the attainment of pupils by the end of Year 5 is above average overall. However, attainment in writing, especially in Key Stage 1, is below that of reading and mathematics. The school has already implemented some strategies to rectify this and the impact of these interventions is already resulting in improvement.

Teaching and learning are good and most pupils achieve well. However, a small proportion of lessons are not always planned well enough to ensure that all pupils attain as well as they might. Where the quality of teaching is satisfactory rather than good, assessment information is not used consistently to inform teaching. As a result, a small minority of pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils' attendance is above average. This, with their above average levels of attainment, means they are well equipped for the future.

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Leadership and management at the school have successfully undergone a complete transformation recently and are providing clear direction to the school. The engagement that the school has fostered with parents and carers is outstanding. They are involved in a variety of situations from helping to deliver the innovative 'Quest' curriculum, arranging social events for other parents and carers or helping out in the classrooms. The school has an excellent website and provides clear, easily accessible information on a regular basis through drop-in sessions or appointments to meet the needs of working parents and carers.

The school's capacity to sustain improvement is good. The headteacher has a clear view of what is needed for the continued improvement and development of the school and the leadership team is united in sharing her vision. The school's ability to self-evaluate is good and has identified the priorities for development. Action planning is strong and involves thorough monitoring at all stages to ensure the school continues to improve. Governors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and fulfil their roles well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the work already started to improve achievement in writing, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning across the school by making sure that all teachers use assessment information effectively to plan learning activities that are always well matched to pupils' needs and abilities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In lessons most pupils make good progress, enjoy their learning and achieve well. Their good behaviour and ability to work together ensure they benefit well from their education. Pupils work better and achieve more when the lesson is challenging and full of pace. However, in the few lessons where the personal challenge is less for pupils, there are opportunities for them to disengage from their learning and this occasionally leads to some low-level disruption. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress overall and some are making exceptional progress. This is because the support they receive is tailored to their needs and delivered well by the teachers and teaching assistants.

Attainment has improved in mathematics and, along with reading, is now above average across the school. Attainment in writing remains lower. This discrepancy is improving with the gap closing, especially in Key Stage 2, following the implementation of several successful improvement strategies. However, the consistency of improved attainment across the school is variable and a gap still exists within Key Stage 1, especially for pupils at the early stages of writing.

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Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and are keen to take part in activities that promote this, such as the healthy foods tuck shop, popular sports activities such as golf lessons in the Quest curriculum and extra-curricular sports clubs. The school’s strong commitment to healthy lifestyles is reflected in the Healthy School and Food for Life awards that have been secured. Pupils are able to apply their basic skills securely in lessons, and are keen to develop their computer skills.

Pupils say that the school is safe, a view confirmed by the parents and carers and by observations around the school. They are given opportunities to have personal reflection time in lessons and they have a good understanding of other people and cultures, which has been extended within the curriculum.

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are keen to motivate and engage pupils, and when teaching is at its best their enthusiastic and challenging approach ensures good levels of progress at a good pace. Teachers’ subject knowledge is good. Expectations are generally high and some good examples were seen of challenging activities to stretch the most able, such as the investigative work on ‘pentominoes’ in a Year 6 mathematics lesson; however, this level of challenge was not a consistent feature in all lessons. The school’s robust new tracking system provides teachers

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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with an overview of pupils’ individual progress to assist effective planning. In the lessons where learning is most effective, teachers use this information along with their own, more recent assessments, to match the work closely to the needs of individual pupils. This is not always the case and in some lessons prior achievement is not always used as effectively to plan for the next steps. Marking is done regularly and is constructive, focusing on the next steps that the pupils need to take in relation to their personal targets.

The school curriculum is well organised with a range of interesting learning experiences for the pupils. It is extended through initiatives such as theme days and a wide range of visits, such as the forthcoming theatre visit, that enrich the pupils’ experience. The ‘Quest’ curriculum provides pupils with experiences that stimulate and excite them. Largely designed around their requests it is flexible, responsive and provides pupils with experiences that develop work-place skills in areas such as accounting and budget management. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The nurturing ethos that exists at the school ensures that the pupils receive a good quality of care. In the questionnaire, a very large majority of pupils said they felt adults in the school cared about them, a view shared by the parents and carers. Support is well targeted and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive very well-coordinated and supportive provision, enabling them to achieve well. The support work undertaken by the key stage assistants is highly valued and is providing pupils with support structures designed to help them in the future. The ‘Club Cool’ extended school provision provides a very caring, stimulating and safe environment for pupils at both ends of the school day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong strategic direction and vision to the school. The relatively new school leadership team has already established high expectations and is clear about the challenging objectives it has set to develop the school to improve outcomes for all pupils. Systems and procedures to monitor these improvements are already embedded and are effective, highly organised, and linked directly to the school improvement plan. Staff are united in their understanding of the vision and are committed to working together in order to make further improvements.

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Teaching is monitored effectively using expertise across the school to implement and support improvement. Individual teachers are fully supported in an approach that uses a variety of methods to formally and informally monitor the learning at the school, ensuring that the teacher is involved at all stages. Challenging target setting for pupils’ achievement is tracked and information is used at all levels to ensure that pupils are making enough progress and, if necessary, given extra support. Inclusive practice lies at the heart of the school’s planning and ensures that all have an equal opportunity to succeed.

The governing body has recently been restructured and its members have undertaken a skills audit, which shows that collectively they have the capacity to fulfil their roles. Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and play a major role in the self-evaluation process, determining the strategic direction of the school and providing challenge and support.

The school has established strong partnerships with a variety of organisations that support both the learning and well-being of pupils. The school has taken care to identify those aspects of its provision that would benefit most from such partnership working. Health care professionals are used to support pupils’ well-being and the innovative ‘Dragons Den’ uses parents and carers who are in business to provide support for improvements to the school and, more importantly, to develop the pupils’ understanding of business and commerce.

The school promotes community cohesion well and is establishing links with schools both nationally and internationally. Staff recognise the need to further improve the pupils’ awareness of their place in a global community. The school has a clear action plan in place to promote a wider understanding of communities and cultures across the world, following a comprehensive evaluation. The school’s safeguarding procedures are robust and good practice is wholly embedded.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
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

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

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Reception classes with skills that are generally in line with typical expectations and go on to make good progress. Transition arrangements and good joint working arrangements with the on-site pre-school are leading to improvements in what children know and can do when they join the school. This is evident in the attainment of those children who joined in September, many of whom entered with skills that were above the typically expected level.

The recently appointed leader has a good knowledge of Early Years Foundation Stage practice and an ambitious vision for the setting. The impact of the changes already implemented here can be seen in the good balance that is being developed of direct teaching of basic skills, such as phonics (the sounds made by letters) and writing, and the broad range of opportunities for children to develop physically and creatively from their self-chosen play. The teaching is good and is responsive to the children’s interests; for example, the arrival of rabbits led to the writing of instructions to the rabbits on how to avoid being eaten by the fox.

The outdoor area is well used for all aspects of learning and ‘free-flow’ sessions, where children move between indoors and outdoors, are monitored well. However, the current environment limits the potential to extend the focus on activities chosen by the children themselves. Monitoring is undertaken well by the staff and especially the leader, helped by the open-plan nature of the facilities. This enables staff to ensure that all pupils are treated equally. The new vision for the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the assessment procedures, is well on the way to becoming fully embedded and this is beginning to have an impact on improving outcomes for children.

The involvement of parents and carers is well developed and systems of communication are good. One working parent who valued this said, ‘Not a day goes by when we don’t get to share in a discussion with staff about something she has found out in school.’

Safeguarding is given a very high priority and children are kept very safe.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

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The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Views of parents and carers

A lower-than-average response to the questionnaire was received from parents and carers. A very large majority were satisfied with their children’s experience of school. Inspectors endorsed this view and found that all areas of the school’s work to be at least good. A very small minority of parents and carers had concerns about the school taking their views into account. Inspectors found that the school had an excellent system in place to engage with parents and carers and this was best exemplified by the range of opportunities that exist to become involved in the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cowes 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 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 390 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	62	27	30	1	1	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	54	60	27	30	0	0	3	3
The school informs me about my child’s progress	27	30	52	58	7	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	43	43	48	5	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	42	47	44	49	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	33	37	45	50	3	3	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	56	35	39	4	4	0	0
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)	34	38	46	51	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	37	41	39	43	8	9	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	39	42	47	4	4	5	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	28	46	51	11	12	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	34	38	40	44	8	9	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	43	48	36	40	4	4	3	3

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



10 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cowes Primary School, Cowes, PO31 8HF

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently, and for talking to us about your work, telling us what you think of the school and what you enjoy about it. We enjoyed talking to you and would especially like to thank those of you that met with an inspector.

You told us that you thought your school is good and this matches our findings. We found your school to be very caring, with adults who look after you very well and keep you safe, and those of you who we spoke to think that you are looked after very well too. A few of you thought that the behaviour was sometimes not good at the school so we made sure that we looked carefully at you working in lessons and playing around the school. We think that your behaviour is good, especially around the school. We were also very impressed by the number of your parents and carers who were involved with the school.

We were especially pleased to talk to you about your contribution to school and in your local community and were very impressed with the number of you that took part in the 'Walk the Wight' event – you need to be congratulated for the huge amount of money that you raised for the hospice.

We have noticed that some of you are not doing as well in writing as you are in reading and mathematics so we have asked the school to make sure that you are encouraged to enjoy your writing and get better results in English in the future. We have also asked that you are given work that always provides you with a challenge, as we have noticed in a few lessons you were doing work that you knew how to do already.

We really enjoyed coming to your school and hope that you all continue to work hard.

Yours sincerely
John Cavill
Lead inspector

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