

Cowes Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118156
Local Authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	326772
Inspection date	26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Beryl Richmond

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	275
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Carter
Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Sice
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Edinburgh Close Cowes PO31 8HF
Telephone number	01983 293261
Fax number	01983 203537

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how successful the school has been in raising standards in reading and mathematics
- how widely spread is responsibility for school improvement and the impact of this work
- how well the school promotes community cohesion
- whether the pace of learning is good enough, whether all pupils are sufficiently challenged to do their best and whether pupils understand the next steps in their learning
- how well the school cares for its pupils.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Cowes Primary is a large oversubscribed school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British origin. A small number of pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The needs of these pupils relate to dyslexia, moderate, profound and multiple learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social needs, speech, language and communication difficulties and physical disabilities. There is provision for Early Years Foundation Stage children in two Reception classes. The Blackberry Lane Pre-school operates from an adjacent classroom in the same building as the Reception classes. This is run by a private provider. The school provides Cool Club, which is a breakfast club from 07:45 and an after school club until 18.00 each day. A new headteacher has been appointed for September 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cowes Primary provides its pupils with a good education. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. There is an excellent shared ethos encapsulated in the school motto 'Together we grow'. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher ensures that pupils are cared for, guided and supported exceptionally well and this leads to pupils achieving well and developing very well personally. Pupils' behaviour and enjoyment are excellent. Parents are very positive about the school's work and typically say, 'Cowes Primary is a fantastic, safe and enjoyable place that my child enjoys being part of...staff are always approachable...problems are always dealt with promptly and professionally'. Many parents come into school at the beginning of the day to share an activity with their children. The school is at the heart of its community, works very closely with families and has excellent links with a wide range of organisations to support pupils' welfare and learning, for example with the local church. It provides well-managed breakfast and after school clubs, where pupils are provided with healthy food and a wide range of activities, which they enjoy and which cater for their various ages.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent because of outstanding pastoral care and a very strong focus on personal development within the curriculum. Excellent relationships help pupils develop into self-confident, polite individuals who work and play together very well. There are exceptional opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to work cooperatively and collaboratively. For example, they look after the school's chickens and pet rabbits and take part in Young Enterprise schemes. Consequently, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. They know about diversity in British society because the school encourages pupils whose families originated abroad to share their cultures through topics such as 'The Olympic Games'. Pupils make an excellent contribution to their school community by being school councillors, 'buddies' and by looking after the office at lunchtime. They have a very good understanding of how to stay healthy. One of the main reasons for this is because they eat in the school restaurant 'La Cocina', which provides freshly cooked food, which has been locally sourced, including produce from the school allotment in the summer. This means that a much larger proportion of pupils now eat a hot meal at lunchtime. There is a wide range of activities so that pupils can be physically active. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and know who to talk to if they are worried about anything. The headteacher knows each child well. Parents support the school by ensuring that their children attend regularly. Consequently, attendance is above average. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being, including those in the breakfast and after school clubs, are good. For example, pupils have key workers who take responsibility for their care and record their achievements in the clubs.

Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average and by the end of Year 4 many pupils are attaining beyond the expectations for their age. Pupils are doing particularly well in reading by the end of Year 4 and standards are continuing to improve because the school is focusing on ensuring that all pupils are able to read at least at the level expected for their age. Regular one-to-one support by trained staff is having a very good impact and this means that the vast majority of pupils are at least on track or catching up rapidly. One parent said, 'My son has struggled with his reading and writing. The support he has had has been superb and has meant that he has made fantastic progress in the last six months especially'. Writing standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 4 many pupils are attaining beyond the expectations for their age. Mathematics standards are broadly average by the end of Year

2 and pupils are not doing quite as well in mathematics as in English. The school is currently focusing on improving pupils' knowledge of number facts such as times tables, and on the strategies pupils use to calculate accurately. It is also ensuring that teachers provide work that maintains girls' interest in learning mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2. The impact of this work is yet to be seen in improved attainment. School tracking shows that progress is accelerating overall. There is good extra support to ensure that pupils do not underachieve. Pupils with dyslexia, moderate, profound and multiple learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social needs, speech, language and communication difficulties and physical disabilities achieve well and develop very well personally and are fully integrated into school life.

Achievement is good by the end of Year 4 because teaching and learning are good. Pupils' progress is tracked rigorously and there is an exciting and stimulating curriculum. The headteacher has monitored teaching and learning very well and has provided coaching and support to improve the pace of learning and challenge in lessons. However, on some occasions not all pupils are challenged to do their best. The excellent curriculum emphasises life skills such as spelling and learning foreign languages, and critical skills such as problem solving. It links subjects together meaningfully and creatively so that pupils enjoy their education and want to learn. The school ensures that topics appeal to both boys and girls. There is an extensive range of clubs and visits, such as to the Spinnaker Tower and the 'Victory' in Portsmouth dockyard. Visitors provide further enrichment. Pupils enjoy taking part in events where they have an opportunity to perform and are currently rehearsing for the school production of 'Mary Poppins'.

Pupils have a good understanding of how they can improve their work and they appreciate the feedback they receive from teachers to help them improve. They take responsibility for judging how well they are progressing by using various checking systems according to their age.

Leadership, management and teamwork are good. Leaders can demonstrate their good impact in many areas of work. For example, self-evaluation is good and responsibility for school improvement is widely shared. Subject teams and phase leaders have clear priorities for development but do not yet set out their priorities in their own action plans so that clear success criteria for actions can be set. The governing body is an effective 'critical friend' and provides good support. It has not yet fully evaluated the school's provision for community cohesion but provision locally is good. It recognises that it needs to build more effective national and international links. There are variations in the skills and experience of the school's leaders, particularly as some are new. However, their track record in improving the quality of teaching and achievement and their impact on the outstanding aspects of the school indicate a good capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a very good start to school. As one parent said, 'The Reception team are superb and clearly care about each child'. Children's starting points are below those expected for their age, especially in aspects of language development and calculation. They settle happily into school because of good links with the Blackberry Lane Pre-school, which most of them have attended, and a strong nurturing environment. Good parental relationships are maintained on a daily basis, for example when parents share an early morning activity with their children. Teaching and learning are good. Consequently children achieve very well, so that by the time they start Year 1, most have reached the goals expected of them. The Early Years Foundation

Stage is managed well. Regular assessments contribute to each child's record. The environment is bright and colourful and there is an extensive outdoor area with a small cover, and a good range of equipment. Staff care for the children exceptionally well and relationships are very good. Consequently children's personal development is outstanding and they behave very well. Children learn in groups led by staff but also through opportunities when they follow their own curiosity, often working with friends in a team. Children have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills and learn new vocabulary in whole-class sessions. Generally, adults provide good support but, when the session lasts too long, a few children lose focus. The school continues to concentrate on the development of the good links it has with the pre-school. The Reception teachers work very closely with their colleagues in Year 1 to ensure that children are well prepared to start Year 1. All Reception children work and play with a Year 1 'buddy'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Fully evaluate the school's provision for community cohesion and build stronger national and international links.
- Raise standards and achievement in mathematics by ensuring that pupils know useful number facts like times tables, and have more opportunities to calculate.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cowes Primary School, Cowes, PO31 8HF

Thank you very much for helping us during the inspection, particularly by talking to us about your school. We were impressed by your friendliness and politeness. Your school is good. Here are some of the best things about it.

- Your headteacher leads your school extremely well. The staff are working together well as a team to do their best to continue to improve your school.
- You behave very well. This means that your classrooms are pleasant places to learn in and you have excellent relationships with adults in school.
- You are making good progress because teaching is good.
- Your school has some excellent links with other organisations, which provide interesting opportunities for you to learn.
- Children in the Reception classes have a very good start to school.
- Your attendance is good and most of you come to school regularly and on time.
- Your parents are very interested in your learning. A large number of them completed the questionnaires and some wrote comments about your school.
- Adults take very good care of you. You benefit from the opportunity to attend the Cool Club, either before or after school.
- You enjoy a very varied and rich curriculum, which gives you opportunities to learn in a fun way and to develop the skills you will need to have a successful adult life.
- You are developing very well personally and have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and keep safe. You contribute well to your school community, for example as members of the school council.

We have asked your school to make sure that you are always challenged to do your best in each part of a lesson and, together with the school governors, to check up on how well your school links particularly with other national and international communities. We want you to further develop your understanding of the lives of children who live in other parts of Britain and abroad and who have faiths and economic circumstances that are different from your own.

I would like to send you my best wishes for your future success in whatever you choose to do.

Yours faithfully

Beryl Richmond

Lead Inspector