

Culmstock Primary School

Culmstock, Cullompton, Devon EX15 3JP

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, well supported by the executive headteacher, governors, leaders and staff, has successfully improved the school.
- Governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors are diligent in providing the appropriate level of support and challenge.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers use their subject knowledge and skills to develop pupils' learning in a wide range of subjects. However, pupils at all levels are not given sufficient opportunity to build their confidence by trying new ways of working. Sometimes, too, pupils are not pushed to work in greater depth.
- The teaching of phonics is good and successfully underpins the development of early reading and writing.
- The many staff changes, including newly qualified teachers, have meant that some teachers have not had opportunities to observe outstanding practice and the middle leaders have not yet had time to fully develop their roles or to have a significant impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The school's curriculum makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This has a positive impact on their preparedness for modern British society.
- The early years provision is good. As a result of good teaching and support, children make good progress and are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Standards reached by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6, and the proportions making and exceeding the expected progress, have improved over time.
- Leaders responded swiftly to the dip in attainment in mathematics of Year 6 pupils in 2016, making changes that are already having a positive impact on progress in mathematics for pupils currently at the school.
- Arrangements for keeping children safe are well managed. Pupils told inspectors that they felt safe in school and well cared for by the adults who work there.
- Pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour are good. The school's values underpin all that the school does. In lessons and around the school, pupils behave well. They show great respect for each other, for all staff and their environment. This results in an exciting and pleasant place to be where pupils' say that 'teachers make school and learning fun'.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils reach higher standards of attainment, by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are given more opportunities to deepen their learning and work at a greater depth
 - giving pupils the opportunity to seek out different ways of learning and new challenges, so that they gain in enthusiasm for learning and confidence in themselves.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - strengthening the work of middle leaders (those responsible for particular age groups or subjects) to further develop their skills in data analysis, monitoring and curriculum development
 - ensuring that teachers new to the profession are given opportunities to observe outstanding teaching so that they are able to reflect upon their skills and broaden the strategies they use to help all pupils make good progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has created a positive culture where respect and tolerance for others are well established both in principle and in practice. She is well supported by the executive headteacher of the federation, governors and all the staff.
- School leaders ensure that expectations of staff and pupils are high and that staff work effectively as a team.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school to be even better. They have worked in a sustained and focused way to secure key improvements in the quality of education. The positive impact of their work is evident in the school and in pupils' improving outcomes.
- The work of the school, including the quality of teaching, is checked regularly and effectively. Information from this checking, alongside more formal staff appraisals, is used well to tailor training and professional development to staff and to school needs.
- Leaders have created an ambitious vision for the school that is shared by staff, parents and governors. All staff, including newly qualified teachers, say that they are proud to work at the school, and show great confidence in the school's leadership and management. They value the training and coaching they receive and feel that performance management makes a good contribution to their development. The school shows a good capacity to improve.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development is thoughtful and accurate, and plans for improvement plot a clear course ahead. Effective systems to check on pupils' progress and attainment have been established and these are used well to identify areas to focus on, including teachers' professional development.
- Subject and other middle leaders are determined to provide good support to their colleagues. Leaders have developed their roles since the previous inspection so they make a better contribution to the school's improvement priorities. However, many middle leaders are new to their roles and are not yet able to evaluate the impact of their work and where improvement is needed, especially since the changes in assessment have been introduced.
- The learning environment is enriched by interesting and stimulating displays around the school and in classrooms. These both reflect the good learning taking place and inspire pupils to achieve even more.
- Pupils' ongoing progress and attainment are checked well so that the school can identify quickly where any pupils might be falling behind or are at risk of underachieving. The information gathered is collated well so that the school is able to check patterns in achievement, particularly for different groups of pupils and especially for those that need to catch up.
- The leadership and organisation of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Identification of need is appropriate and resources are of a good standard, ensuring that these pupils succeed in their learning and their personal and social development. Teachers and leaders are well informed of pupils'

progress. This enables them to identify when there is a risk of individuals falling behind. They are also supported by a highly effective pastoral support team, including specialists such as the federation's special educational needs coordinator and school counsellor, who work with pupils, staff and parents.

- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional help and support for disadvantaged pupils. Additional staff are deployed to give extra support to pupils who need it so that they can catch up with their classmates. The most able disadvantaged pupils are challenged to aim high, and there is evidence in pupils' work that many are meeting this challenge. Excellent pastoral care and support has been put in place, which in turn has had a very positive impact on the learning and personal development of pupils who are supported. This is typical of the school's effective commitment to providing all pupils with equal opportunities to succeed.
- A wide range of subjects is taught in the curriculum through themes on a four-year rolling basis. As a result, pupils develop an effective range of skills, knowledge and understanding across subjects. Extra-curricular activities provide good enrichment to the main curriculum. Pupils enjoy the lunchtime clubs enormously and attendance at after-school clubs is good.
- The primary physical education and sport premium funding has been used well to extend the range of after-school clubs and to enable pupils to engage in inter-school sporting competitions with other schools locally.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong because leaders ensure that the school's values of 'inspire, believe, achieve', underpins the work of the school. The curriculum encourages pupils to think about other people, develop an understanding of British values and to appreciate the role that many different people play in modern society. Equality of opportunity is also effectively promoted, and individual pupils are helped to achieve their best, for example through the 'nurture group' support, where appropriate.
- The curriculum is supported by a wide range of visits and activities which, in particular, value the creative arts. For example, during the inspection a wall hanging was put up in the school, which pupils had completed recently with a local artist; the hanging depicted a variety of animals supported by the World Wildlife Fund and included a painting from every child. Pupils visit the theatre regularly and stay overnight in a city as well as at an activity centre. This goes a long way towards developing respect and tolerance for different cultural and religious traditions.
- The school engages well with parents, especially through its 'ethos committee', which involves parents more in their children's learning. Parents who spoke to inspectors or who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were positive about all areas of the school's work. The vast majority would recommend this school to others.
- Partnership working with a group of local schools is beginning to help teachers to check their accuracy when assessing the performance of pupils' work. Leaders also draw useful expertise and support from the local authority, making use of the mathematics, early years and phase advisers. However, teachers new to the profession do not receive opportunities to observe outstanding teaching and develop their own practice.

Governance of the school

- Governors display strong commitment to the school and its community and share the same high ambitions that school leaders have to make Culmstock the best school that it can be and a strong part of the Culmstock Valley Federation.
- Governors know their school well and are confident and skilled in asking challenging questions. As a result, they very effectively ensure that leaders are held to account for school standards and ongoing improvements.
- The governing body has a good understanding of performance management procedures and ensures that teachers' pay progression is dealt with fairly.
- Governors fully recognise the importance of safeguarding. They take their responsibilities seriously and are diligent in undergoing training. For example, they ensure that appropriate filters are in place to keep pupils safe while using the internet.
- Governors know how additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the primary physical education and sport funding, is being spent and they ensure that they receive detailed information so that they can check on the difference that this is making.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is a high priority and a culture of safeguarding pervades the school, making it everyone's responsibility. Pupils feel safe and know how to respond to situations so that they keep themselves safe. All safety policies are reviewed on an annual basis and all staff training is up to date. The executive headteacher checks that staff fully understand all elements of the safeguarding training that has taken place.
- In addition, a well-informed governor oversees the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Safeguarding is embedded in all school activities, particularly the care and welfare of vulnerable pupils. Leaders are persistent in cases where the school is concerned for a pupil's welfare. Highly effective relationships with other agencies and with parents ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school. As a result, teaching is now good. This has led to pupils making good progress.
- Teachers have warm and positive relationships with pupils and generally have high expectations of work standards and behaviour. The vast majority of pupils rise to these by working hard and behaving well. Pupils enjoy their learning and say that they particularly like 'reading and writing stories'. They also say that 'teachers make learning fun'.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Many adults ask just the right questions to aid pupils' thinking, draw out learning and help them move on to more difficult work. Mistakes are seen by staff and pupils as another opportunity for pupils to learn.

However, in mathematics, and particularly with the most able pupils, some teachers do not ask appropriate questions, so pupils are not offered a chance to deepen their thinking, reasoning and understanding of what is being taught.

- Teachers and leaders check on pupils' learning regularly. Newly qualified teachers find that this checking helps them plan their lessons to the needs of the pupils. Overall, systems for assessment are clear, simple and effectively used by teachers. This makes an important contribution to the progress pupils make, particularly in reading and writing. For example, assessments are discussed each half term, providing the opportunity to identify and plan precisely for each pupil's needs. This results in teaching that offers the right level of challenge for most pupils, most of the time; though in some lessons, teachers do not plan demanding enough activities for all, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Where pupils have struggled with their learning and need to catch up, an effective range of learning opportunities is put in place to help them. This is particularly effective in reading. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively. They are knowledgeable and skilled and make a good contribution to the learning of the pupils with whom they work.
- For those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the support they are offered is specific, clearly targeted and of good quality. Additional support is planned well, resulting in these pupils making good progress in most lessons.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, in line with the school's policy. They make clear to pupils what they have done well and offer clear guidance to help them improve their work further. Pupils are keen to get their teacher's feedback and have time to respond to the comments made. Pupils say that this helps them know what they need to do next.
- Classroom environments are welcoming and supportive of pupils' learning. They contain displays that celebrate pupils' work, thus increasing their self-esteem and their personal development. Resources and displays such as the 'tool kits' to support grammar and multiplication tables are used well by the pupils during lessons.
- The development of reading and writing is a high priority in the school and their importance is evident in classrooms, corridors and shared areas. Leaders' insistence on a consistent approach to reading and writing throughout the school has had a positive effect on pupils' progress in these subjects.
- Reading texts are used effectively in each class to create a range of interesting and stimulating activities that help pupils to learn and practise their skills. This approach has been a very effective way of capturing pupils' interest in reading and writing. Pupils said that they were highly motivated and this showed through in their work. For example, pupils have really enjoyed finding out about Ernest Shackleton and researching about his 'epic' adventure as well as the voyage of the Titanic. This type of subject has been used to encourage pupils to write imaginatively, using vivid, descriptive language.
- The development of mathematical skills is also a priority in school. The school has made good progress in this area. At times, teaching does not challenge pupils to deepen their understanding and develop their learning sufficiently over time. School leaders have recognised this and are targeting support to ensure that any gaps in

pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are addressed swiftly.

- On occasions when the task they have been set does not keep them interested or engaged enough, some pupils can lose concentration and begin to misbehave, although they respond positively when their teacher instructs them to correct their behaviour.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View or spoke to inspectors in the playground felt that their children were taught well and most felt that their child made good progress in school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good and pupils say that they feel safe in school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school and in different situations, such as when on trips and visits, and when online using computers or mobile phones. They know that they should not give out personal information.
- Pupils are taught to be kind to one another and to those who are from different backgrounds. Pupils talked about how they feel when they have a new pupil at the school and one pupil felt that it was 'like getting a present', as you looked forward to it and did not know what it was going to be. Pupils also take responsibilities as members of the school councils, including the 'eco-council', as well as a range of different jobs in school such as play leaders at lunchtime or Year 5 and 6 'buddies' to the Reception class children.
- Pupils are adamant that bullying rarely happens, but if it does they are confident that it is dealt with quickly. They know that bullying can take different forms, including physical bullying, name-calling and cyber bullying. They have very positive relationships with adults in school and are confident that they can share any concerns with them. They say that there is no name-calling or unpleasantness in the school and everyone is friendly.
- Pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well catered for. The school makes a prompt early identification of need or concern and resources are put in place quickly to support pupils. This helps pupils make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities participate fully in all that the school has to offer.
- School staff are dedicated in the support that they provide to help the pupils to develop the personal behaviours and qualities needed to achieve well.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and those spoken to when they were bringing their children to school agree that the school keeps their children safe and that pupils are well looked after. They are very appreciative of the work that the early years staff do to support their children.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school. They all wear their uniform with pride, present their work well and try their best to please their teachers.
- Pupils are friendly, keen to talk about their learning and confident when speaking to visitors. They are courteous and sensitive to one another's needs. Pupils play a significant part in the school through the 'pupil voice' which is very strong. They participate in the school council as digital leaders, golden mile monitors, power rangers (energy efficiency), recycling monitors and playground leaders. The play leaders carry out their role with great maturity and the younger children enjoy playing with them.
- On most occasions, pupils are keen to learn. They enjoy the wide range of subjects offered by the school and overall, concentrate well in lessons. Sometimes, when they want help to understand something more clearly or have finished their work, pupils lack confidence to let teachers know. On occasions, this results in pupils not being focused on the task and this slows their progress.
- Pupils are aware of the school rules, how to behave and the consequences of poor behaviour. They say that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are rare, dealt with quickly by teachers and responded to by pupils sensibly. The small number of pupils who have behavioural needs are well supported to ensure that their behaviour does not get in the way of their learning and does not distract others.
- Pupils say that they really enjoy coming to school and their parents agree. The systems for checking absence are rigorous and effective. Good attendance is rewarded and has a high profile in school. When absence occurs it is identified quickly and appropriate support offered to ensure that pupils do not miss schooling.
- The breakfast club is popular and this ensures that pupils get to school on time. They benefit from socialising with their friends and joining in activities before school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 had risen steadily since the previous inspection up to 2015, when pupils made strong progress to attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics that were broadly in line with the national average. The school's analysis of pupils' work shows that too few pupils were not working at greater depth and in many cases they were lacking confidence to try new things.
- Results in 2016, for which tests were based on the new national curriculum, were lower than expected in all subjects, and most noticeably in mathematics. School leaders' analysis of these results showed that, although most pupils' skills in arithmetic and calculation were strong, too many pupils struggled when asked to solve more complex mathematical problems. Evidence in mathematics books across the school shows that pupils' skills and confidence in problem-solving are rapidly improving.
- The school's internal tracking data, which carefully monitors pupils' progress and attainment, indicates that the results in 2016 are not typical and that the progress of pupils currently in the school is good and that there is very little difference between progress of boys and girls.

- A similarly positive picture of improvement over time can also be seen at the end of key stage 1. Historically, the majority of pupils have entered key stage 1 with average skills and knowledge, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. They typically reach standards in line with the national average by the time they leave Year 2. The current school information shows that the pupils in key stage 1 are at present on track to achieve above the levels reached in 2016.
- The work in pupils' books, across different classes and subjects, confirms that pupils are making good progress.
- The standards that pupils attain in phonics have risen since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check in 2016, though lower than in 2015, was an accurate, moderated result. The current data shows that the pupils are on track to achieve above the 2015 results. This reflects a concerted and highly focused effort in the early years and across the school to improve pupils' phonics knowledge.
- Improvements in phonics are having a positive impact on pupils' reading. By the time they reach Year 2, pupils read with confidence and understanding, showing positive attitudes towards reading. In their final years in key stage 2, pupils are happy to read a range of texts and are able to talk animatedly about favourite authors, such as J K Rowling, and Frank Cottrell-Boyce, and books such as 'The astounding broccoli boy'.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress towards their individual targets. Assessment data is used well to identify the areas in which pupils would benefit from additional support, and the support offered by teachers and teaching assistants is highly effective and ensures that pupils succeed in their learning.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support the small number of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, they make good progress in key stages 1 and 2. The small numbers of most-able disadvantaged pupils across the school achieve well and make at least good progress from their starting points, and in some cases better than their peers.
- Outcomes for the most able pupils are typically stronger now than at the time of the previous inspection. In mathematics, a productive link with the other schools in the federation has allowed the most able pupils to receive support. High expectations are reflected in pupils' current mathematics work and in pupils' written work.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with a broad range of learning opportunities and for using their writing and mathematics skills in other subjects. Pupils' attainment and progress in a number of subjects other than English and mathematics are good. This is particularly the case for science, reflecting the school's work on the use of assessment to raise standards. For example, work in science showed where pupils record their findings systematically in tables and investigate habitats and conditions for growth, using a variety of skills. Investigations into forces has produced work on how vehicles move and involved pupils in designing and creating their own inventions.

Early years provision

Good

- Many children started school in 2015 with skills and knowledge that were broadly

typical for their age, though lower in personal, social and emotional development, understanding of the world, mathematics and in speech and language. However, they make good progress. Children benefit from a stimulating environment in which to learn. This, coupled with high expectations by adults, makes sure that children thrive and enjoy a very positive start to school life.

- There have been steady improvements in children's achievement since the last inspection. Children are well prepared and confident to start in Year 1.
- The leadership of the early years is good. There is a clear view about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Where actions have been taken to tackle issues, these have been successful. A focus on the importance of good-quality training and development of staff has ensured that the leader, who is newly qualified, is well supported and mentored by one of the federation's early years leaders. This has extended itself to the other adults who are highly skilled and confident to get the best learning from the children.
- Provision is well organised to create a rich and varied learning environment for all children, both inside the classroom and outdoors. Activities are fun, capture the children's imagination and allow them to practise their skills. Children have plenty of opportunities to explore with a range of equipment that encourages them to build, create and try out their ideas. For example, children were keen to share with an adult a 'run' they were creating for Arnold the pet hamster. The adult took this cue to explore with the children about how the hamster needed to be safe and not be able to escape into the playground.
- Additional funding is used well to provide resources and support for disadvantaged children. Leaders have a good understanding of the impact this has on children's learning. Children make similarly good progress to that made by other children and achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Routines are well established, as is a high level of expectation of what children will achieve. Adults demonstrate good subject knowledge and a thorough knowledge of child development. The importance placed on reading, writing and mathematical skills is very evident, with regular chances for children to write, practise their letters and sounds, and use number. The development of language and speaking is a high priority. Adults engage with children very well and are skilled at asking questions to draw out children's understanding and encourage them to talk.
- Teachers' assessment and the tracking of children's learning are of a high quality. Baseline assessments are completed within the first two weeks of a child starting school so that this information can be used very effectively to plan a curriculum for children that is both interesting and relevant. Learning and activities are often led by children. For example, during the inspection, the class teacher capitalised on children's ideas stemming from a birthday. Children delighted in discussing 'things we are thankful for'. Children contributed many ideas and were thoroughly engrossed in the activities that followed.
- Safeguarding is effective. Risk assessments are thorough and the classroom and outdoor area are safe environments for children. Children's behaviour is good and adults are quick to provide support to children to help them understand the importance of being polite and treating one another with respect. Children play and learn together

well and are very motivated to learn.

- The strong emphasis on creating a caring and nurturing environment is evident from the very positive relationships adults have with children, and children have with each other. There are also very positive relationships between early years staff and parents, who describe the early years as 'warm and welcoming'. Parents are full of praise for how well their children have settled into school and the progress they have made.

School details

Unique reference number	113071
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10019948

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Booth
Headteacher	Tracey Hailey (Head of Federation) Mrs Emma Francis (Head of School)
Telephone number	01884 840598
Website	http://www.culmstock-primary.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@culmstock-primary.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receiving school support is well above the average.
- The proportion of pupils supported with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well below average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- The early years provision is full time in the early years foundation stage.
- The school has had a turnover of over half its teaching staff since January 2016 and a new headteacher since the previous inspection.
- Culmstock Primary School is part of a federation of three schools in the Culm Valley Federation: Culmstock Primary, Kentisbeare Primary, and Plymtree Primary. It is overseen by a single governing body and an executive headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out all observations of lessons with the headteacher.
- The inspector also made a number of short visits to lessons to check the quality of provision and its impact.
- The inspector heard individual pupils read and discussed their individual reading preferences with them.
- The inspector carried out a detailed scrutiny of the work in pupils' books across a range of subjects and both classes.
- Pupils' behaviour both inside and outside the classroom was observed.
- The inspector held meetings with the chair of the governing body and three other members of the governing body; school leaders; staff, including newly qualified teachers; and groups of pupils.
- The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector also talked with a number of parents and carers as they brought children into school.
- The inspector viewed a range of documents, including information on pupils' achievement, the school's data on current and recent progress and attainment, and the school's self-evaluation report. He also looked at the school's improvement plan, documents relating to safeguarding, and records of behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector took account of the 28 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, 10 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff and 26 responses to the pupil questionnaire. The school's website was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Terry Mortimer, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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