

Conifers Primary School

Radipole Lane, Weymouth, DT4 0QF

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leadership and management are good. A determined and successful effort by the headteacher and senior leaders to improve teaching and pupils' achievement has resulted in a steady rise in attainment.
- Governors effectively support and challenge leaders in their bid to continue to raise standards of teaching and achievement. Governors' links with middle leaders are particularly strong.
- Children join the school with knowledge and skills well below those typical for their age. Good provision in the early years enables them to make good progress. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- By the time they leave, Year 6 pupils are reaching standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are in line with those expected nationally. This represents good progress for all groups of pupils.
- Extra funding is used particularly well to support the high percentage of disadvantaged pupils. The gap in attainment between them and other pupils has closed by Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs enjoy well-organised provision. They are well supported and make good progress.
- Teaching is good. Pupils develop good attitudes to school because of the imaginative and creative planning and teaching of different subjects.
- Pupils are keen to learn because adults consistently promote good achievement. The school's behaviour maxim is highly visible in all classrooms and regularly referred to. It successfully encourages pupils to do their best.
- The school's values and beliefs are clearly visible in the 'rights-respecting schools' programme. They make a strong contribution to the mutual respect between adults and pupils, promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. This strongly underpins all of the school's work.
- The school's efforts to keep pupils safe and secure are outstanding. As a result of this, and exciting learning, pupils enjoy school, behave well and now attend regularly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some classes, tasks for the most able are not sufficiently challenging so they do not make rapid progress.
- Some teachers do not adapt tasks sufficiently well to move pupils' learning on more quickly.
- The school's marking policy is not consistently applied in mathematics so some pupils do not know how they can improve their work.
- Some teachers do not ensure that the presentation of pupils' work is of a high enough standard.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors looked at learning in 28 lessons and observed the work of 16 teachers. Teaching assistants were observed working with individual pupils and small groups. Inspectors attended assemblies, talked to pupils about their work and life at school, and heard individual pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including systems for checking progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and analysis by the school of how well it is doing and how it plans to improve. Records of checks on the quality of teaching and the minutes of the governing body meetings were examined.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes, especially writing and mathematics.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, school staff and groups of pupils. Individual pupils were spoken to in lessons and around the school. A telephone conversation took place with a consultant from the local schools' partnership.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed in the 21 online responses from Parent View, and held informal meetings with parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the results of 22 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Anna Sketchley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Heather Barraclough	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Carson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Conifers Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years attend the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is much higher than that found in most schools. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There is a separately managed children's centre and privately run nursery on the school site, but they were not a part of the inspection.
- The school is a member of the Chesil Education Partnership which is formed from a cluster of local primary and secondary schools. The partnership offers educational support and development to its schools in lieu of the local authority. The school retains its own governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and improve teaching by:
 - providing teachers with opportunities to learn from exemplary practice
 - developing the skills of some teachers to enable them to check learning and adjust tasks during lessons so that pupils make the best progress they can
 - ensuring that teachers plan more challenging tasks for the most-able pupils so that they make more rapid progress
 - making sure that the school's marking policy is applied consistently equally as well in mathematics as it is in writing
 - insisting that pupils improve the presentation of their handwriting and the way they set out their mathematics, especially in Years 1 to 4.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have determinedly driven the school forward since the last inspection. New appointments of middle leaders have established a higher quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics. They have effectively modelled teaching in their subjects and coached other teachers to improve their skills. This is quickening improvement in pupils' achievement and behaviour.
- Well-informed governors offer both senior and middle leaders appropriate challenge and support through links with different subjects. Governors regularly check pupils' progress and other aspects of the school's performance such as attendance and challenge the school to improve further.
- The Chesil Education Partnership checks that the school's assessments of how well pupils are achieving are accurate. A consultant supplied by the Partnership visits the school termly to check on the school's performance. Leaders realise that the local partnership offers valuable opportunities for some teachers to learn from exemplary teaching and so improve their own skills, but have not arranged this yet.
- The school has not received direct support from the local authority with regard to improving performance. However, governors have received effective training from the local authority to help them fulfil their statutory duties.
- Leaders have a relentless focus on developing good attitudes to learning through its maxim of 'LEARN', standing for 'Listen, Explore, Ask, Respond and Never give up'. This, together with a positive behaviour policy and the 'rights-respecting schools' programme, ensures that pupils are consistently supported in their endeavours.
- In this reassuring atmosphere all pupils thrive, especially those who are disadvantaged or who are disabled or have special educational needs. The school ensures that all pupils are given equal opportunities to succeed and none is discriminated against.
- Leaders have rigorous procedures for checking the quality of teaching. These have eliminated weak teaching. Teachers are in no doubt as to the progress pupils are expected to make. Where teaching skills have needed improvement, professional development has been offered quickly. Leaders are aware that some teachers still need more help to achieve exemplary practice.
- Subjects are organised in a creative and imaginative way. Themes such as 'The Deep Blue Sea' begin with a special day such as a visit to the seaside and an opportunity for pupils to offer suggestions and direct their own learning. This has a visible impact on pupils' attitude to learning, making them keen and interested in their work. Teachers check carefully to ensure that they cover properly the content and skills required by the curriculum. Literacy skills are particularly well practised across themes and subjects.
- Pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity that exists in modern Britain is very well developed and explored through a wide range of experiences. For example, 'Multicultural Week', and a 'Food Glorious Food' theme celebrated the different cultural backgrounds of pupils in the school. The school has specifically changed the Year 6 residential visit to London so that pupils have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a culture that is in real contrast to their Dorset experience.
- The school has excellent links with a school in Kenya. These promote pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own very well. For example, reciprocal visits with staff have taken place; there are regular email links and projects across the schools.
- Leaders promote democracy and British values exceptionally well. The middle leader for global learning tracks the coverage carefully. Pupils elect their class councillors and the school council elect their own chair and vice chair. The Pupil Voice group promotes pupils' rights and 'rights-respecting ambassadors' speak with pupils about whether or not they feel their rights are being met in different areas of school life. Each class also agrees its own class charter at the beginning of the school year. These activities all help to prepare pupils very well for life in modern Britain.
- The school has undertaken a thorough review of the way extra sports funding is used. Pupils have previously benefited from external sports coaches, but the school realises that this may not be sustainable in the future. The school's sports leaders have undertaken training in a comprehensive sports skills programme and as a result all teachers are receiving training. Pupils will benefit from learning skills that are useful in a wide range of sports. Currently pupils enjoy many different sports, including basketball, hockey and street dance, both during and after school. This is helping them to develop their enjoyment of sport and an understanding of how this can contribute to leading a healthy lifestyle.
- As a direct result of additional funding there has been a 25% increase in the uptake of after-school sports activities and the girls recently won the local football tournament. Sport is also making a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. For example, pupils have opportunities to become 'sports ambassadors', some working towards leadership in sport and achieving the 'Playmaker' award.

- The school spends the pupil premium effectively to support disadvantaged pupils and ensure that they make the best progress they can. Adults are highly trained to support pupils with significant emotional and complex needs and challenging behaviour. They skilfully run nurture groups and special programmes, ensuring that pupils attend regularly and achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, the gap in attainment between these pupils and others in the school and nationally has closed by Year 6.
- Help for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is very well led and managed. The school ensures that pupils requiring extra help are identified early. Interventions are put into place rapidly and teaching assistants are well trained to deliver specific programmes, especially those with a literacy focus. Pupils with specific behaviour problems are particularly well managed and supported. Due to timely and highly organised help this group of pupils make good progress from their various starting points.
- The school's safeguarding procedures are very secure. They are well managed, fully meet statutory requirements and keep pupils safe. All teachers are very aware of the protocol to follow if they have concerns about pupils' safety. Robust systems and risk assessments ensure that pupils remain safe both in school and on school visits. The school's counsellor ensures that vulnerable pupils and families are provided with appropriate help where necessary, so reducing risk.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective. Governors attend school often and as a result are well informed about its performance. They take their responsibilities very seriously and often attend training to ensure that they fully understand and meet their statutory duties. They meet regularly with various leaders to challenge and support subject performance and other aspects of the school's work such as attendance and the use of additional funding. Governors use the school and national information about pupils' achievements to ensure that they know how well pupils are performing. They receive an annual comprehensive report about the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. Governors have a full understanding of how teachers' performance is managed and used to eradicate weak teaching and also to reward teaching that is exemplary. Governors offer the school a high level of support and encouragement, but they also regularly challenge leaders and hold them to account for all aspects of the school's performance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Challenging behaviour from a small minority of pupils is well managed and not allowed to disrupt the learning of other pupils. Rates of fixed-term exclusions are low.
- The recently adopted positive behaviour policy has been well received by both pupils and parents. Pupils value the weekly focus on a 'rights-respecting' article, such as 'to do what we have been asked to do', because they say it helps them to take more responsibility for their actions. Pupils are very clear about the school's reward system to promote good behaviour and the sanctions if they are not well behaved. They commented 'Behaviour is good; teachers use systems that remind us to make good choices so learning is not spoiled.'
- Behaviour around the school and in assembly is impeccable and pupils move very sensibly and safely on the stairs. They are polite and well-mannered to adults, holding open doors, saying 'Good morning' and showing visitors the way around the large building.
- Pupils work well together in lessons. They concentrate and listen respectfully to adults. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have very good attitudes to learning which enable them to make the most of opportunities in lessons; consequently they achieve well. Behaviour is not outstanding because lower down the school learning attitudes are sometimes more busy and noisy. Sometimes, they lack pride in the presentation of their work. However, almost all pupils are fully engaged in their learning and make good progress. Pupils get along well together on the playground. 'Pupil Voice' ambassadors help pupils to resolve any difficulties. This has strengthened relationships and enables pupils to think carefully about the impact of how they treat each other.
- Pupils enjoy, and take seriously, all the different responsibilities they have, such as being members of the school council, house captains and playground buddies. These responsibilities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and help to prepare them well for secondary school.
- Below-average attendance has been addressed and there is an improving picture over time. It is now average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school is part of a national initiative to encourage best practice in schools to promote a message of anti-bullying and to equip pupils to tackle and reduce homophobic bullying. This is ensuring that pupils thoroughly explore the different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils say that bullying is now rare in the school, but that if it does happen it is dealt with very quickly. Parents spoken to during the inspection confirmed this view.
- Incident logs show that the school works quickly and effectively to prevent and tackle discriminatory and derogatory language.
- Pupils explained to inspectors that there is a filter system to keep them safe on the internet. They have a very good knowledge of safe practices because they have regular talks about using the internet.
- Pupils told inspectors that they felt very safe in school saying 'No one would let anyone in that shouldn't be in!' and 'We are never allowed home with the wrong person.' They were very sure about whom to approach if they were experiencing any kind of problem.
- Pupils are involved well in calculating risk. Regular visits from the community police develop and refine their understanding. They also enjoy and learn from safety training such as 'bikeability' to keep safe when cycling.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching enables all groups of pupils to make good progress over time.
- Pupils are keen to learn because lessons are interesting. Teachers ensure that equipment is ready and lessons are well organised so no time is wasted.
- Mathematics was very well taught when pupils were learning how to measure using metres and centimetres. The mathematics tasks were cleverly combined with sports activities on the school field. Clipboards and pencils were ready to be taken outside; teaching assistants were thoroughly briefed about the tasks for their groups and equipment was laid out in readiness on the field. Learning was very successful and pupils made very good progress because tasks were imaginative and challenging.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, especially by offering just the right level of support for those who need extra help with their tasks. They are also proficient in managing pupils with challenging behaviour. Pupils usually respond quickly because of positive encouragement. They are not allowed to disrupt the learning of others.
- Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and amend planning on a daily basis where they realise that pupils have not understood the learning. However, some teachers are not skilled in changing tasks quickly enough within lessons when tasks are too easy. This is particularly the case for the younger most able pupils who are sometimes not challenged sufficiently and so do not make rapid enough progress.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are well taught. Teachers ask searching questions to test pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils learn well.
- In a writing lesson, pupils showed that they had learned well over time. In answer to the teacher's question about the techniques they should have used in their writing, pupils understood these clearly and could then use them to check their own writing.
- The teaching of reading supports pupils' learning well across all subjects. During a class reading time pupils were observed making good progress with their reading skills because the teacher explored the text with them. Pupils learned the important skill of observing punctuation and using expression when reading aloud to others in a small group.
- Teachers use the marking policy consistently to help pupils improve their writing skills but it is less well used in mathematics, so pupils do not spend sufficient time correcting their work, learning from their mistakes and knowing how to improve.
- Pupils' handwriting and presentation in their mathematics books, particularly in Years 1 to 4, do not indicate that teachers always encourage pupils to take a pride in their work. The variable presentation of work in mathematics sometimes leads to pupils making errors in their calculations.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The achievement of children in the early years has risen since the last inspection and is now good. The good progress they make is being successfully built upon in Years 1 and 2 where standards are now average.
- Pupils are taught phonics (the sounds that letters represent) correctly and this supports pupils' reading

and writing well. Results for the national screening check for phonics have improved and attainment in Year 1 is now close to the 2014 national average.

- When reading to inspectors pupils successfully used their phonic knowledge to sound out unfamiliar words such as 'predicament'. Pupils read with increasing confidence, fluency and expression from books appropriate for their age and ability. The school's strong reading culture is conveyed to pupils who say 'We have groups and every week we read together and work together, encouraging us to be better readers.' Older pupils recognise an author's style and purpose and are enthusiastic readers.
- In the 2014 national tests, standards in Year 6 were close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- School information and inspection evidence shows that pupils' levels of skill have improved again this year. Standards are above national expectations in mathematics and writing and close to national expectations in reading. More pupils this year are working at the higher level than is expected for their age, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress. This year in Year 6 the percentage of pupils making expected progress is similar to that expected nationally. The percentage of pupils making more than expected progress is also similar to that expected nationally. This is an improvement since last year, especially in mathematics and writing.
- Evidence in pupils' books, school information and observations in lessons show that the most-able pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6, are making good progress. Pupils in Year 6 showed significant skills in writing when planning a poem. They used the text very well to support their reasoning, challenging their own thinking and moving their learning forward. In some classes the tasks for younger pupils are not sufficiently challenging so they do not make the same rapid progress.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was better than other pupils in the school by half a term in mathematics and reading; it was one term behind in writing. In comparison with other pupils nationally disadvantaged pupils were half a term behind in mathematics and reading and one-and-a-half terms behind in writing.
- This year, school information shows that approaches to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils have successfully closed the gap in attainment between these pupils and their classmates and with other pupils nationally. Where this is not the case it is because pupils, in addition to being disadvantaged, also have very complex needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as all other pupils in the school and similar progress to other pupils nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress, from their various starting points, as all other pupils in the school. This is because they are well supported in class and in small groups with appropriate tasks and interventions that meet their specific needs.
- Pupils who find it hard to attend school or who have specific emotional and behavioural needs are exceptionally well supported by highly trained teaching assistants. The work of the early morning nurture group is a good example of this excellent provision and has been key in helping to raise attendance.
- Pupils' good achievement and personal development prepare them well for secondary education.

The early years provision

is good

- Children begin Reception with skills, knowledge and understanding below what is typical for their age in all areas of learning. They make good progress because of good provision. By the end of the Reception Year the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is in line with national expectations.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. Very good links with the Nursery on site, home visits and opportunities for children to visit the school prior to joining Reception mean that they make a settled and confident start.
- Teachers and assistants warmly welcome children and parents into a safe, secure and inviting early years setting. Weekly 'stay and learn' sessions for parents help them to engage in their children's learning and provide ideas for learning at home.
- Staff make regular daily observations about how well individual children are learning and use these to plan the next steps in their learning. Children's progress is carefully recorded in learning journals shared with parents every half term. Parents make valuable contributions with 'WOW' notes of children's learning at home.
- Good teaching, through appropriate activities for early years children, provides stimulating and exciting activities across all areas of learning. For example, children were observed creating mini-beast pictures.

Others were confidently using electronic tablets to link colours to numbers and making clocks and learning what the hands do.

- Adults promote very good relationships with children, encouraging them to work purposefully and talk animatedly about their learning. As a result, they are well behaved.
- Children share equipment, cooperate and play together and learn to tidy up together and make a circle ready for story time.
- During the inspection, children were observed achieving well in reading as they focused on the front cover of a book and predicted what the story would be about. They practised their sounds and used these particularly well to build words and read simple sentences. Less-able pupils made good progress as they used electronic tablets to practise making their letter shapes.
- Staff provide many good opportunities, both indoors and outside, for children to explore number activities. Children do not currently have easy access to equipment in the outside area, but leaders are reviewing this and have plans to improve it.
- The good provision in the early years prepares children well for Year 1.

What inspection judgements mean

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

School details

Unique reference number	134080
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	456261

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	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Matthews
Headteacher	Rachel Hiscock
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 June 2012
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