

Inspection of Conifers Primary School

Radipole Lane, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 0QF

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The headteacher has ensured that the school sits at the heart of its community. For example, there are strong links with the nearby fire station and other local employers. Businesses come together at the annual careers fair. The headteacher has, successfully, raised the aspirations of pupils in what the future might hold for them.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils and of each other. The school is a calm and orderly place for pupils to learn, without disruption. Pupils come happily to school. Staff have created a nurturing environment, where pupils feel safe. For pupils who struggle with their emotions and behaviour, staff meet and greet them and make sure they are ready to learn. Some pupils attend a breakfast club, so they can make a more positive start to their day.

Everyone in the school community shows respect towards each other. There is an understanding of tolerance. Pupils say that bullying is rare. When it does happen, staff deal with it swiftly.

Pupils learn about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. For example, pupils complete a daily mile in the school grounds. From Reception Year onwards, pupils learn about eating healthily. There are several extra-curricular activities, which enrich pupils' lives. There is a range of sporting and cultural after-school clubs and trips, aimed to broaden pupils' horizons.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They review and develop the school curriculum regularly. Staff use assessment proficiently to determine pupils' successes, as well as where there are gaps in their understanding. For example, leaders know that pupils' writing is not yet as precise as it should be. Following the decline in the quality of pupils' writing caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have not maintained a critical focus on the finer aspects of pupils' writing. Therefore, some pupils are failing to have the correct pencil grip, so their handwriting is scruffy and illegible. Equally, there are occasional inaccuracies in punctuation and grammar.

Many of the leaders of the foundation subjects have thought about what pupils need to know and when. This helps pupils retain and deepen their knowledge over time. There are a few subject curriculums, however, where this thinking is not detailed enough. Leaders are wisely using external expertise to support the necessary improvements.

Leaders have made sure that reading is a priority. They have successfully introduced a new phonics scheme. Children in Reception learn phonics from the start and are already recognising sounds. Pupils in key stage 1, including the weaker readers, are becoming more fluent and are widening their vocabulary. Leaders have thought

carefully about which books pupils should read. As a result, pupils' reading and understanding improves. Teachers, in every year group, read stories to pupils to encourage their interest.

There are many improvements in the mathematics curriculum. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. They know how to present learning effectively to pupils. As a result, pupils retain knowledge over time. They apply knowledge skilfully when reasoning and solving problems. Children in Reception are developing an awareness of numbers and are starting to use this well in their learning.

Leaders correctly identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND receive the right support, particularly to regulate their emotions. However, the support provided for some other aspects of learning is not as useful. For example, sometimes teachers do not give clear enough instructions for pupils to follow.

Leaders provide high-quality pastoral support. Pupils learn a conscientiously-devised personal, social, health and economic curriculum (PSHE). They understand what age-appropriate relationships are. Most pupils respond maturely to any given situation. They know how to discuss and debate issues and ideas in a considered way. Pupils respect differences in gender, race and religion. They say that staff treat boys and girls equally.

Pupils have leadership opportunities. These are in the school council and as sports leaders. The school ensures that pupils develop into responsible future citizens. They know right from wrong and interact with others with purpose and confidence.

Governors understand their strategic role. As a group, they have a useful and diverse skill set. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge and continually strive to be the best that they can be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders check safer recruitment information carefully. They protect the most vulnerable.

Staff receive annual training and regular updates. They know how to identify and report any concerns about pupils.

The school has suitable policies in place to raise awareness among staff and parents about the dangers of sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have secure curriculums in place for most foundation subjects, but a few require further revision. In these subjects, pupils are not learning the key concepts nor building effectively on prior learning. Subject leaders need to consider how to build cumulatively towards the complex knowledge necessary for the next stage of a pupil's journey in education.
- Much work has been done to improve English across the school but writing needs further work. Some pupils are not yet fluent in writing accurately, coherently and legibly. As a result, they are not able to communicate effectively in this medium. Leaders need to ensure that teachers focus on improving the quality of pupils' writing.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	134080
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10241237
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	373
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dorothy Woods
Headteacher	Andrew Johnson
Website	www.conifers.dorset.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	12 – 13 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chair, vice-chair and other governors, local authority education challenge leaders, the headteacher, two assistant headteachers, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, history, geography and physical education.

- For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at the single central record and discussed case studies of vulnerable pupils with the designated safeguarding leader. They spoke to staff and pupils about the training and education they have received about keeping safe.
- Inspectors took account of the Ofsted survey, Parent View, and the results of the staff and pupil questionnaires

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Adam Matthews	Ofsted Inspector
Sean Millar	Ofsted Inspector

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