

Combs Ford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124576
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	359711
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	371
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Warner
Headteacher	Russell Clark
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2007
School address	Glemsford Road Stowmarket IP14 2PN
Telephone number	01449 613112
Fax number	01449 672207
Email address	combsfordprimary@yahoo.co.uk

Age group	4–9
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2011
Inspection number	359711

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 21 lessons taught by 12 teachers. In addition, the inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of displays, planning documents, pupils' work and policies. The team analysed 176 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- Inspectors checked the attainment and tracking of progress for current Year 4 pupils.
- They looked at what the school does to support the more-able pupils.
- They considered the impact of recently changed systems for marking and feeding back on pupils' learning.
- They looked at the impact of a new system for homework in Key Stage 2.
- They considered the effectiveness of the school's work to support pupils facing a range of challenging circumstances.

Information about the school

This is a very large primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The vast majority of the pupils are White British with very few from other ethnic backgrounds. A very small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average but high in some year groups.

The school has a Healthy Schools Award, an Activemark Award, an ECO Schools Gold Award and Napta Good Practice Award for the training provided for non-teaching staff. The governing body runs a breakfast club before school each weekday morning for pupils who arrive by bus. The school is one of a number of local schools currently consulting about their reorganisation.

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

This good school has maintained and improved on many of the strengths identified at its last inspection. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas needing some improvement. Its self-evaluation is honest and accurate and based on some very rigorous and thorough assessment. For example, after recognising girls' mathematical skills needed improving a number of measures were successfully put in place to do so. The school has also dealt successfully with a recent reduction in pupil numbers and some uncertainty over future reorganisation plans. Because of the good self-evaluation, and improvements made, it is clear that the school has a good capacity to improve further in the future.

Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above average at the end of Year 2, and also when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. This is the result of good progress from starting points. The school has developed a very detailed and useful system for tracking pupils' progress. This is used to highlight any underachievement or slower progress in reading writing or mathematics. The data is used by all staff when planning and in meetings with senior leaders to discuss pupils' progress. The school has worked hard and successfully to improve boys' writing using a variety of tactics such as more drama and use of film to inspire them. The latest data shows that the attainment of girls in mathematics and that of boys in writing has improved. The new system for homework in Years 3 and 4 has resulted in pupils being inspired to produce some very high quality research and project work. Good learning is also supported by pupils' good behaviour and above average attendance.

The good learning and progress made by almost all pupils is the result of good teaching. The best lessons are lively and pacy and involve pupils in imaginative and active tasks. Teaching assistants provide good support especially for the less-able pupils. However, in some lessons activities do not challenge and extend the learning of the more-able pupils. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress to reach often above average attainment. However, the outdoor learning areas are not always used as effectively as the indoor areas to enable children to follow their own interests and imaginations. The good, well-planned curriculum supports good teaching especially through the outstanding partnerships with a range of external agencies, especially those supporting the learning of the pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The school's excellent care, guidance and support have a very positive impact on those pupils' learning. This is particularly the case through the use of the nurture room and the excellent support staff provide here. The improved system for marking and feedback is helping pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work and, hence, it is having a positive impact on achievement.

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

The school is well led and managed at all levels. Senior leaders, headteacher and governing body all have a clear vision and ambition to do the best possible for their pupils. This is reflected in the outstanding care provided and also by the school's desire to improve further the standards attained and the pupils' basic skills.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the outdoor learning area and resources to provide more opportunities for children in Reception to develop their own interests and independence, and have access to more creative activities.
- Ensure that all lessons contain opportunities for more-able pupils to be provided with challenging activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The above average attainment shown consistently in the test results and other data over time is supported by the evidence of pupils' achievement in lessons. Teachers have worked hard to boost girls' confidence in mathematics and their involvement in question and answer sessions. This has had a positive impact on their achievement. Boys' writing skills have also improved. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress, as do those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Those pupils with behavioural or emotional difficulties are particularly well supported. They are able to access the curriculum and make progress that is often better than that made by similar pupils nationally. Pupils at an early stage of learning English are catered for well with appropriate resources and support from adults. In one excellent lesson Year 3 pupils demonstrated how well they use their good understanding of angles in mathematics. Others in Year 4 showed outstanding imagination in their writing about the story of Beowulf. Standards in information and communication technology have risen and are now above those expected thanks to the improved resources. Outstanding singing supports the good standards in music and pupils have produced some very high quality work in art and design. However the more-able pupils find themselves working on tasks they can easily complete before being allowed to move on to other work.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, including when using computers and the internet. They make a good contribution to the school and local community, especially by raising a lot of money for charities. They take on good roles and responsibilities when they have the chance. Pupils in Year 4, for example, enjoy reading with Year 1 pupils, and this activity supports the learning and builds confidence for both age groups. The school provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this is most evident in their high quality singing and other work in the arts.

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

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	2
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

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The good teaching has a positive impact on learning throughout the school. Staff work together very effectively as year teams. This supports the spread of good practice and the sharing of planning and resources. Teaching assistants form an important part of these teams and they are well deployed by teachers to make best use of their time. The development of an improved marking scheme helps teachers in the assessment of pupils' progress. For example, in the best lessons pupils' groupings are altered on a daily basis as a response to their prior work and to ensure they are provided with appropriate activities.

Teachers use the good curriculum to make imaginative and effective links between subjects. This means pupils are able to use the skills learned in one subject when working on a different topic. For example, computers are used very effectively in Year 4 to produce animations related to the class history topic, which in turn has a strong English focus through stories about the Anglo-Saxons. The curriculum is also enriched by visits and visitors and a range of out-of-school activities. The school provides outstanding levels of care and guidance for pupils. For example, the governors realised that pupils who arrive by bus to the school had to arrive early and so they were invited to a separate breakfast club in order to help them. Pupils in challenging circumstances are sometimes invited to the breakfast club as well to help them prepare well for the day. The nurture room and staff are used extremely effectively to support a variety of pupils and help them access the school's day-to-day provision successfully.

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

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership demonstrates a clear intention to raise standards and continue the drive for improvement that has been evident since the last inspection. The caring nature of the school and its outstanding links with a wide range of external partners and agencies have had a very positive impact on helping some pupils whose circumstances make them very vulnerable to access schooling that they might otherwise have been unable to do. Because of this, the progress and achievement of those pupils is good, and demonstrates the school's good commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. Subject leadership and year group leadership are good and the staff teams work well together planning and monitoring the success of their work effectively. The school works hard to engage with parents and carers, holding days when they can visit and learn about the curriculum as well as how well their pupils are doing. Parents' and carers' positive responses to this are evident in the way the homework scheme is supported and the efforts made to help with children's work.

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place and these help ensure pupils' safety. Systems are rigorous and documentation extensive. Governors regularly check on the practice and procedures and the headteacher shares his expertise in this area with other schools. The school is a cohesive community with strong local links. It has thoroughly audited its work on promoting pupils' knowledge and understanding about how other people in different countries, and in other parts of this country, live. They have well developed plans in place to address areas identified as needing further work such as links to schools in different circumstances. Good efforts are made to teach pupils about, for example, Indian culture and food through some memorable first hand experiences. The governing body provide good support for the school. There is a detailed and regular monitoring system which provides information so governors can challenge the school to ensure continual improvement and rising standards. A good range of visits to the school take place, including for staff training and curriculum planning meetings, which governors regularly attend.

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

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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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 make good progress from their starting points. By the end of the Reception year they attain above the national outcomes for their personal and social development, and their learning in mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. Attainment in communication, Language and literacy matches national averages and this reflects children's good progress. The outdoor activities are not always sufficiently linked to the classroom work or provide enough opportunities for children to show independence and follow their own interests. Even so, good relationships are fostered between adults and children and there is a welcoming atmosphere that allows children to play co-operatively and focus on some interesting tasks. Children enjoy taking part in whole class learning about letters and sounds. Good assessment arrangements ensure that staff know children well as individuals although the records kept are not extensive enough to illustrate fully the learning they make. Healthy eating and drinking is encouraged and children are taught to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They demonstrate real enthusiasm for some of the imaginative aspects of the provision. For example, one small group very excitedly showed an inspector fossils 'from dinosaur times' and a rock containing 'jewels'.

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

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

Views of parents and carers

A larger proportion of the parents and carers than usual responded to the inspection questionnaire. Their views are largely very positive. Almost all parents and carers say their children enjoy school, the school keeps the children safe, the teaching is good and overall they are happy with their children's experience at the school. The inspection findings support these positive opinions. A small minority of parents and carers feel the school does not deal with behaviour very effectively, take account of their suggestions and concerns or keep them well enough informed about their children's progress. However, the inspection evidence shows that the school is very caring and effectively deals with all pupils including those who have some significant special educational needs and/or disabilities which affects their behaviour at times. Parents and carers are able to talk to staff on a daily basis to make their concerns or suggestions known. This has been recently extended by the creation of a forum for parents and carers through which their views are also able to be made known.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Combs Ford 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 176 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 371 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	97	55	74	42	5	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	107	61	68	39	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	71	40	89	51	11	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	86	49	81	46	6	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	89	51	81	46	4	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	75	43	89	51	7	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	39	99	56	5	3	1	1
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)	92	52	76	43	3	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	81	46	84	48	6	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	71	41	85	49	10	6	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	67	39	88	51	10	6	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	81	46	81	46	6	3	5	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	105	60	64	36	5	3	1	1

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 31 December 2010 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.



6 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Combs Ford Primary School, Stowmarket, IP14 2PN

Thank you for the way you welcomed us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you at work and play. I am writing now to tell you what we found.

Yours is a good school. The staff work very hard to continue improving how well you learn. You reach good standards in reading, writing and mathematics. We were especially impressed with your singing in assembly and the art work you have done that is displayed around the school.

We agree with you that pupils behave well and this helps your teachers give you interesting things to do. Those of you who find learning more difficult are helped really well and we thought the Rainbow Room really helped a lot of you. You are lucky to be at such a caring school.

To make the school even better we have asked them to do two things:

- make better use of the outdoor area so Reception children have more interesting and imaginative activities that they can choose from
- in all classes make sure those of you who find learning easier are given things to do that really challenge you and extend your thinking.

You can help by continuing to behave well and taking a full part in all lessons. Many thanks again for your help. Enjoy your time at Combs Ford and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.