

# Comberbach Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111152
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	367392
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Tolley

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	192
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Michal Marycz
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Groom
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 July 2008
<b>School address</b>	Mather Drive Comberbach, Northwich Cheshire CW9 6BG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01606 891336
<b>Fax number</b>	-
<b>Email address</b>	admin@comberbach.cheshire.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 13 lessons and saw eight teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's analysis of pupils' progress and improvement plans. They analysed 101 pupil questionnaires and 85 from parents and carers.

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

- Whether there is sufficient evidence that most pupils make good progress across the school, leading to good achievement in English and mathematics.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels to determine the school's capacity to improve further.
- The accuracy and effectiveness of the use of assessment and the subsequent independence of pupils as learners.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. Pupils are of predominantly White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. The school has achieved awards for its work within the community, has Healthy School status and the Gold Activemark award for its work in sport. The leadership of the school is now shared in a part-time capacity by the headteacher, who has been in post some time, and a newly-appointed acting headteacher.

**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 is a good school. Attainment is above average and pupils' achievement is good. Attainment in English is high and in mathematics it is above average. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made good progress from their starting points. This is the result of good teaching and a curriculum which meets pupils' needs and interests well. The school has excellent links with other institutions which enrich the curriculum, for instance in design and technology and sport. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates as a result of the effective support they receive. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their enthusiastic response in lessons, their outstanding behaviour and their high levels of attendance. Although teaching and learning are good and assessment is used well to meet the needs of pupils, opportunities are missed to fine tune activities and resources to better meet the needs of individuals in lessons. Similarly, although marking is regular and encouraging, pupils do not always have a precise understanding of how they can improve their work.

Pupils' personal development is good and their contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding. They very willingly take on responsibility and are fully involved in projects in the local community and in school decision making through, for instance, the school council and the house system. Frequent opportunities to work collaboratively and to explain their ideas to one another prepare them well for the next stage in their education. Parents and carers value the good care, guidance and support the school provides for its pupils; the good partnerships the school has with them supports their children's learning well.

The headteacher and acting headteacher provide clear direction, based on close monitoring of pupils' progress and an accurate evaluation of the school's work. They work effectively with the governing body and school morale is high. Subject leaders drive improvement in their own subjects well and are fully involved in tracking pupils' progress and in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their subjects. However, they do not always work together to exchange ideas, plan together or coordinate their work. Since the last inspection, the improved use of assessment to track and plan pupils' progress has proved to be effective in accelerating progress in mathematics and sustaining high attainment in reading and writing. Issues from the last inspection have been tackled successfully. Attendance has improved and is now high. This record of improvement provides a clear indication of the school's good capacity to improve further.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by:

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- improving the use of assessment information further to better meet the needs of different groups of pupils in lessons
- giving pupils more precise guidance and involving them in evaluating their own work and in planning next steps, so that they have a better understanding of how they are getting on and how to improve their work
- ensuring middle leaders work together and coordinate their work more effectively in order to develop basic skills across the curriculum and provide better tailored support and challenge for individuals.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

Children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and join Year 1 as confident learners, with skills that are generally above those expected for their age, particularly in reading and writing, and ready to access the Key Stage 1 curriculum. They continue to make good progress so that attainment by the end of Year 6 in English is high and above average in mathematics, and their achievement is good. In 2010, attainment dipped sharply in mathematics but school data and work seen during the inspection indicate that attainment is again above average, as in previous years. In lessons, pupils organise themselves well, are mutually supportive and increase in confidence as a result of the frequent opportunities they have to work in pairs and small groups to solve problems. In a science lesson, for instance, Year 3 and 4 pupils worked enthusiastically in small groups to identify and classify characteristics of different fruit and vegetables. Similarly, in an English lesson, Year 5 and 6 pupils helped one another to refine their pieces of writing. Pupils are frequently asked to explain their ideas to others, and they increase in confidence and skill in doing this as they move through the school. As a result, by the end of Year 6 they are articulate, confident speakers, and display a good level of independence in their learning.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about their lessons and are proud of their achievements. They feel safe at school and know to whom they can talk if they have any problems. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and demonstrate their commitment to healthy lifestyles through participation in extra-curricular sporting activities. They clearly enjoy the opportunities they have to help others and they take their responsibilities seriously, for instance, as members of the school council, as house captains, and in organising and running fund-raising events and clubs. They have good relationships with each other and their teachers. They have a good sense of right and wrong. They take time to reflect on their own actions and regularly help one another in class and around the school. They also regularly help younger children and those new to the school. As a result of the work the school does to promote international links, pupils have a good understanding of other cultures, but their knowledge of the diversity of cultures within the United Kingdom is less well developed.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Teachers present new ideas clearly and use a good variety of resources, including interactive whiteboards, to engage pupils' interest. They use questioning to good effect to support and challenge pupils both in whole-class discussions and during class work. Teaching assistants also use questioning effectively to support individuals and small groups. Pupils make the best progress when they are asked to explain their ideas or demonstrate their working to others. As a result of these opportunities, they are confident and articulate in expressing their ideas. Although assessment information is used effectively to place pupils in groups and provide an appropriate level of challenge, and progress is monitored closely by teachers during tasks, there is scope to provide more challenge for the more-able pupils and to support the less-able pupils more effectively in tasks set. Sometimes, when teacher-led activities are lengthy, the pace of learning slows and pupils have difficulty maintaining concentration. Pupils are involved in evaluating their own and each other's work but they have not been given enough information to understand what steps they need to take to improve further.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests well. Pupils use information and communication technology to extend their learning, for research or to develop their skills. Their experience is further enriched by a variety of visitors, visits and extra-curricular activities. These are popular and well attended. The curriculum is enriched by the study of French and pupils benefit from specialist teaching in music and from opportunities to

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explore subjects such as science and design technology in more depth through activities in Science Week and at the high school.

Good care, guidance and support for individuals result in an orderly and harmonious community. Each pupil's progress is reviewed regularly and this triggers extra support where necessary. Well thought-out induction procedures and close links with pre-school settings help children settle quickly when they join the school and links with the high school ensure pupils feel confident when they move on to the next stage in their education. The school works very effectively with a range of external agencies, as well as parents and carers, to remove barriers to learning for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. The reward systems as well as the good partnership the school has with parents and carers have been very effective in achieving high rates of attendance.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The thorough analysis of the school's performance by the headteacher and acting headteacher and the clear direction for development they provide are effective in helping to drive improvement and raise attainment. The joint leadership works effectively as a result of a clear, shared vision of the way forward and effective communication. Close and accurate tracking of pupils' progress informs school self-evaluation and improvement planning well and triggers a variety of intervention strategies. However, although middle leaders monitor pupils' progress closely in their own subjects, intervention is not always as precisely tailored as it might be to individual needs, and opportunities to develop pupils' basic skills across the whole curriculum are sometimes missed.

The school's focus on individual needs demonstrates its good commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. The school meets government guidelines for safeguarding and the safe recruitment of staff. Safeguarding procedures are robust and regularly reviewed, and activities designed to improve children's understanding of how to stay safe are effective because they are part of the curriculum. Parents and carers are well informed about events at the school through newsletters and the school website and value the meetings and reports they receive. A minority say they would appreciate more frequent meetings with staff in order to better support their children's progress. The school promotes community cohesion well both in the immediate area and through its links with schools abroad. The governing body is very supportive and is providing a good level of challenge to the school through regular systems to analyse and check pupils' progress. The school provides good value for money.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress during their time in the Reception class. Behaviour is good. Children respond positively to adults, play well with their classmates and display clear enjoyment in their learning. The majority join the school with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress, particularly in developing their reading and writing skills. As a result they begin Year 1 as confident learners, well equipped to access the Key Stage 1 curriculum. Children learn effectively through a good variety of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The teacher and teaching assistant work effectively as a team. They monitor children's progress on a daily basis and this information is used effectively to record milestones and to plan next steps. Adult-led activities are well planned, well matched to children's needs, and questioning is used to good effect to extend children's learning. In these activities the teacher and teaching assistant take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and develop their speaking and listening skills. Children respond very positively, display enjoyment in activities and show pride and pleasure in their achievements. However opportunities that arise to develop children's reasoning skills through questioning, for example, are not always taken in activities children choose for themselves. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Close liaison with pre-school settings and good relationships with parents and carers enable children to settle quickly and transition arrangements ensure they can settle well into Year 1. Good levels of care and welfare are provided for the children to ensure their well-being.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

In terms of the number of questionnaires returned, the response was higher than for most inspections of primary schools. The vast majority of the parents and carers, who responded, expressed positive views of the school. Parents and carers value highly the work of the school in helping their children to be safe and happy. A very small minority expressed concern about the effectiveness of the recent arrangements to share the leadership of the school. A very small minority expressed concerns that their views were not taken into account and in their comments said they would appreciate more frequent meetings with staff to discuss their children's progress. Inspectors found that the arrangements for sharing leadership were effective as a result of a clear, shared vision of the way forward and good communication. Inspectors also found that the headteachers and staff make themselves available to parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day so that suggestions and concerns can be dealt with promptly.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Comberbach 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 85 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 192 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	66	29	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	71	25	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	44	52	36	42	3	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	58	32	38	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	53	62	29	34	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	56	32	38	3	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	52	37	44	2	2	0	0
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)	43	51	29	34	4	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	58	31	36	4	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	54	34	40	2	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	44	32	38	8	9	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	47	55	29	34	6	7	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	66	26	31	1	1	0	0

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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



17 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Comberbach Primary School, Northwich, CW9 6BG**

I would like to thank you on behalf of all the inspectors for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you all and hearing what you had to say. You told us how much you enjoy your learning and how proud you are of your school. We agree with you. You go to a good school. Your behaviour is excellent and we were very impressed by the way you help each other and the work you do to improve your school and the local community. You told us that the staff look after you well and we agree the care you receive is good. We noticed how well you are doing in your reading and writing and we were impressed by the way you explained your ideas to others.

Teachers make lessons interesting and this helps you to make good progress. Younger children in the Reception class also make good progress and enjoy their learning. Some of you told us you were not sure about how you are getting on or how to improve your work. We noticed that your work was marked regularly but did not always give you precise guidance about how to improve. We have asked the school to make sure that it does. We also think that you could evaluate your own work and decide what you need to do to improve so we have asked the school to help you to do this. Younger children in the Reception class also make good progress and enjoy their learning.

The headteacher and staff are working very hard to make your school even better. Teachers in charge of different subjects monitor your work closely to ensure you are all making good progress but need more opportunities to share their ideas and plan together so that they can ensure you get exactly the support and challenge you need. We have asked the school to make this possible in order to help you make even better progress. I wish you every success for the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Judith Tolley

Lead inspector

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