

Comber Grove School

Comber Grove, Camberwell, London, SE5 0LQ

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Pupils' progress is not consistently good in all year groups.
- In recent years, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 has dipped in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching.
- Teachers sometimes spend too long introducing lessons, going over previous work and explaining tasks to be carried out. This limits the time for pupils to participate actively in learning.
- Not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels in their work because activities in lessons are not always hard enough, especially for the more able.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is not yet secure.
- Teachers' marking does not offer sufficient guidance to pupils as to how to improve their work, and pupils are often not given time to make the improvements when these are suggested.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching with increasing rigour but with insufficient focus on its impact on pupils' progress.
- The new leadership of the school has not yet had sufficient time to make its full impact on improving standards.

The school has the following strengths:

- Governors have improved their involvement in the school and are working in close partnership with the local authority to generate further improvements.
- Parents and carers agree that the school is improving under the leadership of the headteacher with several commenting on positive changes.
- Pupils and parents and carers are resoundingly positive and proud of the school's rich tradition of music and creative arts and the variety of activities which are highly popular.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils feel safe, have positive attitudes to their work and enjoy coming to school.
- The school supports pupils facing difficulties well and staff make sure that they are fully included in the life of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons, 12 jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, they made a number of short visits to observe support and small-group sessions for pupils at risk of falling behind and pupils who receive extra language support.
- Inspectors attended a school assembly.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and met with two different groups of pupils. They discussed the work of the school with five school governors and a representative of the local authority. They also listened to the views of school staff, including senior and subject leaders.
- Inspectors noted the 33 responses to the online Parent View survey and spoke to parents and carers who were bringing their children to school. They also noted the contents of two letters received during the inspection.
- The inspection team reviewed the responses to 19 staff questionnaires completed during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' current progress, planning documents, checks carried out by leaders on the school's effectiveness, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Aune Turkson-Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional Inspector

Teresa Kiely

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the proportion speaking English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided for looked after children, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent or carer in the armed forces, is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of pupils and increase the proportion of teaching that is consistently good and outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan lessons and activities that are closely matched to pupils' individual needs so that all are effectively challenged and a greater proportion can reach the higher levels in their work
 - ensuring that the teachers' introductions to lessons are not too long so that most of the time is spent by pupils actively working on tasks individually or in groups
 - improving the quality of marking and feedback so that pupils clearly know how to improve their work, respond to teachers' comments and reach their learning targets.
- Improve the impact of leaders and managers by:
 - linking leaders' and managers' judgements on the quality of teaching seen in lessons more closely with pupils' progress and actual results
 - working more effectively alongside teachers to improve quality by sharing good practice
 - continuing to develop thorough systems to check the school's work, so that the rate of improvement accelerates.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities below the levels typically seen for their age and leave more closely in line with age-related expectations, rates of progress are inconsistent as pupils move through the school.
- Standards of attainment, particularly by the end of Year 2, have been declining. They have fallen further below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in phonics has not been consistently good enough to raise standards and promote consistently good progress in reading from an early age, because the teaching of phonics is not yet secure.
- Standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 are improving. School information and current work inspected indicate that pupils' progress is accelerating in both key stages in 2013, coming closer to national averages.
- The majority of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making progress at similar rates to the others in school, with some examples of good progress and others less so. This follows the whole-school picture of uneven progress.
- The achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to that of other pupils. Those for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to other groups as a result of the support provided by the school.
- Progress in lessons sometimes slows because teachers do not assess pupils' learning adequately and make the necessary adjustments to their work in response. Teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities are not always high enough, particularly in the case of the most able. This means that tasks set are not always demanding enough, so progress is more limited.
- When learning is at its best, pupils know their targets and make good use of their teacher's advice and comments to help themselves to improve further. For example in a religious education lesson, after discussing the symbolic meanings of different foods in small groups, pupils acted on their teacher's advice and confidently set their own targets for improving their group work. However, this is not the case in the majority of lessons.
- The achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is improving, and overall, they are catching up with their peers in school. This is because the extra funding is used effectively to provide targeted support, specialised resources and equipment and to ensure that all pupils have the same opportunities as the others in school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points. This is often because pupils have limited opportunities to be actively involved because teachers spend too much time introducing and explaining tasks and going over previously learned work.
- Some lessons are not planned accurately enough, using information about pupils' starting points, to ensure that all groups, including the most able, make progress from the start of the lesson.
- Progress is not checked consistently during lessons so tasks are not always suitably adapted and this has resulted in variations in understanding and overall success. Teachers do not always provide opportunities for pupils to check their own and other's work so that they have more responsibility for their own learning.
- Phonics teaching has not been secure and this has contributed to declining attainment in reading by the end of Year 2. The school has introduced improvements to drive up achievement in phonics. Although there are some early signs of success, new strategies have not yet had time to make their full impact on pupils' reading.
- Marking is variable across the school and although pupils understand the 'two stars and a wish' policy, they are not always given the opportunity to write their own responses to teachers'

comments. This means that it is not always clear whether they know how to improve their work

- There is a very positive climate for learning throughout the school and there are mutually caring, respectful relationships between staff and pupils. This contributes to the pupils' positive attitudes to learning which are evident even when the work is not always matched to their abilities.
- Teaching assistants are generally skilful and supportive. When effectively guided by teachers, they promote learning well in lessons and lead additional support for individuals and small groups of pupils outside the classroom. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, a small group received good support for an activity in the hall, using two large hoops on the floor and cards to sort out odd and even numbers. The teaching assistants ensured that all the pupils were fully involved and able to use the right words when selecting each card.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good. When work fails to challenge them, sufficiently, pupils retain their positive attitudes and try hard to complete it.
- The headteacher and his team have successfully maintained high expectations of behaviour and continue to discourage unauthorised absences. Staff management of pupils' behaviour is consistently good. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because pupils do not manage their own behaviour to a high enough standard without the need for adults' help.
- Pupils from different year groups act as school councillors and they are proud of their role in the school. Pupils contribute to classroom and playground rules and say that they enjoy listening to the views of others and being involved in making decisions about the running of their school.
- Pupils are polite, get on well with each other and show respect and kindness to others regardless of age, ethnicity and disability. They enjoy all aspects of school life and speak about the school community with a sense of personal pride. This is a result of the school's good promotion of social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and its active musical heritage, offering every pupil the chance to play a musical instrument and participate in the choir or school orchestra.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and speak highly of the care they receive from the staff. They understand that some situations are potentially unsafe and have good strategies to keep themselves safe. Pupils' knowledge of safety outside school has been heightened through the performances of visiting theatre groups.
- Incidents of bullying and disruptive behaviour are very rare. When they do occur, staff deal with them effectively. In a discussion with pupils during the inspection, one pupil, typical of others, commented, 'We all get on really well here.'

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good because leaders and managers have not had sufficient impact on pupils' achievement and on the quality of teaching, both of which require further improvement. When monitoring teaching, senior leaders do not link it sufficiently closely to pupils' learning and how well they are achieving.
- The headteacher and school leaders have successfully maintained a positive climate in school at a time when there have been several changes to the leadership team. School leaders have made changes to the staffing structure across the school so that new leadership roles have been created. Staff are unanimously positive and praising of the leadership team. Senior leaders have rightly recognised the need to ensure good practice in teaching is shared more widely across the school.
- The school is beginning to review all aspects of its work more regularly and has adopted new systems to track and monitor pupils' progress. Leaders are beginning to act more swiftly to address any gaps and make sure that the pace of progress is not hampered. Plans to raise standards are now linked directly to the checking of teaching and learning and pupils' progress.

- There are new systems in place to make sure that teachers' performance links directly to whole-school priorities, the impact on pupils' progress and, in turn, staff salaries. Leaders are beginning to use these to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.
- Pupils are taught a broad and interesting range of subjects and topics, supported by a large number of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Residential visits boost pupils' environmental awareness and enhance their personal skills. The school has strong links with the local community, and successfully boosts cultural knowledge with visits and trips.
- Pupil premium funding enables those who are eligible to participate fully in the school's extra-curricular provision, helping pupils to feel more settled and be more fully included in the life of the school. This has helped to secure their improved progress.
- Equal opportunities are rigorously promoted. No pupil, regardless of background or need, is denied access to anything the school has to offer.
- The local authority has begun to support the school well since the appointment of the new headteacher. It has provided support for the teaching of early reading and helped the school to develop partnerships with other local schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are developing their work in close partnership with school leaders and the local authority. They have increased their understanding of information on pupils' progress, and now use it to make comparisons with other schools. New governors are committed to developing their skills with suitable training and use this to improve key aspects of the school. Governors' visits and checks help them to have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and what still needs to improve. Governors also ensure that financial resources are efficiently managed including pupil premium funding. Governors see that targets to improve the performance of staff are checked carefully and that teachers' pay is linked to how well pupils are doing. They ensure that safeguarding meets requirements.

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	100783
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	413049

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	336
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorelai Ciortea
Headteacher	Richard Dax
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2009
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