

Cobham Free School

89-95 Portsmouth Road, Cobham, KT11 1JJ.

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	Select
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good teaching and the interesting ways in which subjects are taught are helping all groups of pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils’ attainment is at least as good as the national standards in reading, writing and mathematics and is improving.
- Many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their musical and sporting talents so they flourish in these areas.
- Relationships are very good. Pupils are well supported in their learning by their teachers and their classmates. They develop self-confidence and are willing to keep trying, even if they find learning hard.
- Pupils’ behaviour and attendance are good, which supports their good progress.
- Teachers are ambitious for their pupils. Leaders support them effectively to develop their teaching. As a result, pupils do well.
- The headteacher has an inspiring vision for the school. The whole school community is fully behind her.
- Leaders and governors are putting in place strong systems and procedures to support the school’s work. As it grows, the school is moving from strength to strength.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils in Key Stage 2 do not receive enough opportunities to write at length and to explore different kinds of writing in order to reach the highest levels of attainment.
- Support from teaching assistants is not consistently good in all classes or for all groups of pupils.
- Teachers’ marking does not help pupils know well enough how to improve their work and move to the next level.
- Measures of success in the school action plan lack precision so it is not a useful enough tool for school leaders and governors to check how well the school is doing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed ten lessons taught by 13 teachers and teaching assistants, including specialist teachers of music and physical education. The headteacher and senior leaders joined the inspectors in these observations.
- The inspectors heard pupils reading and looked at their workbooks.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, human resources officer and bursar, the special educational needs coordinator, two governors and a group of parents.
- The inspectors met with pupils and observed playtime and lunchtime. An inspector visited the pre-school club and spoke to parents at the school gate.
- The inspectors took account of 136 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Responses to the staff questionnaire were also analysed.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work. A range of documents was scrutinised including those related to the tracking of pupils’ progress, the school’s records of checks on the quality of teaching, risk assessments, records of attendance and behaviour, improvement plans, the school’s self-assessment, documents relating to performance management and minutes of meetings held by the governing body. The inspectors scrutinised checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

Inspection team

Amanda Gard, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Sian Thornton

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2012, with 40 pupils across the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes. The school was initially housed in temporary accommodation, moving to its permanent site in November 2013.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school but continues to grow in size. Pupils were admitted into a new Year 4 class in September 2013 due to a demand for places. Numbers have increased to 115 pupils on roll. There are plans to convert to a school for pupils aged four to 18, beginning with Year 7 in September 2014.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus is above average. The proportion supported through a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents in the armed forces, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below average.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a range of other ethnic groups represented in the school. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The school works in partnership with the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Chelsea Football Club Foundation to provide specialist teaching in music and sport.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by ensuring that:
 - pupils have opportunities to write at length and explore writing topics in greater depth at Key Stage 2 in order to make more rapid progress
 - teaching assistants lead learning effectively when they have responsibility for groups, and are directed effectively to make a difference to pupils' learning in the classroom.
- Raise attainment by ensuring that teachers' marking and feedback tell pupils exactly what they need to do to improve their work, and by giving pupils more regular and frequent opportunities to respond to marking in their books.
- Sharpen the effectiveness of leaders and managers by including more precise measures of success in the school action plan so these can be used to check carefully the impact of actions taken.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- A number of children enter Reception with standards below those typical for their age. All children make good progress, including those who need to catch up, and they are well prepared for Year 1. Standards in literacy, although ahead of those seen nationally, are not as high as for mathematics.
- Cobham's first Year 2 pupils entered the school with standards lower than expected for their age. They caught up well and by the end of the year, their attainment was in line with national standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils in the current Year 1 and Year 2 also make good progress from their different starting points. In reading, writing and mathematics, the vast majority are on track to meet expected levels by the end of the year. Progress is faster in reading and mathematics, in which many pupils are working at a higher standard than typically expected for their age. Pupils' work books show that they have opportunities to write in a range of styles. However, progress in writing is sometimes limited because there are too few chances for pupils to write at length and produce work at a higher level.
- In Year 3 and Year 4, pupils continue to do well. The majority make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion making very rapid progress remains higher in reading and mathematics than in writing. This is because in writing, pupils are often moved too quickly from one topic to the next so they do not have enough time to explore and develop each type of writing in the right amount of depth.
- Higher ability pupils are usually given work of suitable challenge which engages them fully in their learning. As a result, they make good progress and reach the higher levels they should.
- There is effective support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This helps them to make more rapid progress so they catch up quickly to where they should be.
- The few pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium achieve at least in line with their peers. Where they have fallen behind, they receive well-targeted support which helps them make up lost ground. As a result, there is little difference between their attainment and that of their classmates.
- There is no difference between the attainment of pupils from the different ethnic groups in the school, or those who speak English as an additional language, and their peers.
- The school promotes enjoyment of reading well through events such as World Book Day and visits by authors. Pupils are keen to read the books their teachers help them to select, tackling them with confidence. Pupils across the school make good progress in reading.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching in the school is good, and, as a result, pupils make good progress from their wide-ranging starting points. This is especially noticeable for pupils who have been at the school for the longest time. Prompt assessment when new pupils join the school means that they immediately receive the support or challenge they need. They make good progress and those who need to catch up do so quickly.
- Teachers have high expectations for their pupils, reflecting the ambitious character of the school. Pupils learn in classrooms where the climate is extremely positive and encouraging, and where relationships are good.
- Skilful questioning by many teachers checks pupils' grasp of ideas and also makes them think hard. Pupils are encouraged to work out the answer, with support from their peers if needed, and this helps them to develop both understanding and confidence in their own ability.
- Skills in reading, writing and mathematics are developed well, although there is not enough focus on writing at length. Teachers regularly assess how well pupils are doing, and use this information to help in their planning for the next steps in learning.

- All pupils benefit from the school's creative approach to learning which allows them to express their strengths in different curriculum areas such as music and sport. As a result, pupils' previously unrecognised talents emerge and develop. This is a real strength and a distinctive feature of the school.
- Homework is set regularly, and most pupils read frequently at home. The homework policy has been designed bearing in mind the views of parents. The deputy headteacher supervises a daily homework club after school. Homework therefore makes a meaningful contribution to pupils' progress and keeps parents in touch with their children's learning.
- Teaching is not outstanding because marking and feedback are not used effectively to help pupils improve their work. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, comments are often brief and do not tell pupils how they can correct or extend their learning. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to reflect on their teachers' feedback and take action.
- The effectiveness of teaching assistants is variable. Often it is focused, purposeful and effective, guided by clear instructions from the teacher. However, in some lessons, assistants are unsure about how to support and extend pupils' learning, so they miss opportunities to make a difference. Some teaching assistants do not show the knowledge and confidence they need when teaching groups of pupils about letters and sounds.
- Teaching in the Reception class equips pupils well for the next stage in their education, with a keen focus on basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Reception pupils experience well-planned learning indoors and outside. At the time of the inspection, a focus on life-cycles included growing sunflowers and recording observations in a mini topic book, looking at worms and insects with magnifying glasses, and digging in the earth. Pupils engaged enthusiastically in the practical aspects of this learning, and showed care and pride in their writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils around the school is good. They are courteous and helpful and play well together at playtime. At lunchtime, pupils eat in 'family groups' together with staff. They enjoy one another's company and show good manners.
- Most pupils show good attitudes to their learning. They work hard during lessons, work well together when this is required and encourage one another when learning is a challenge. However, a small number disengage too easily from their learning and need reminders from adults to sit up and listen or to write. In physical education, some silly behaviour from individuals means that occasionally teaching has to stop briefly while the teacher speaks to the pupils concerned. This is why pupils' behaviour is not outstanding.
- Pupils' attendance is good. They arrive on time for school with everything they need for the day. The start of the day is a happy time for pupils, parents and staff. Pupils who attend the pre-school club enjoy a range of activities in a warm atmosphere, and their parents value this facility. There is a small number of holidays taken in term time without the permission of the school, which undermines the excellent attendance record of the vast majority of pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Lessons teaching safe use of information and communication technology and personal development help pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and look out for others.
- The required procedures and training for child protection and safer recruitment are in place. However, during the course of the inspection, one training issue arose. The headteacher was made aware and immediately took appropriate action. The headteacher and governors are alert to the importance of these systems, especially now, while premises work continues and the school is recruiting an expanding staff team.
- Pupils know about bullying. They told inspectors that they have not experienced bullying or name-calling at Cobham. They were clear that this would be unacceptable. Pupils are confident that if problems occurred, they would tell an adult and action would be taken. Although serious incidents are rare, the school keeps scrupulous records, and members of staff work as a team when disciplinary action or work with parents is needed.

- Pupils regularly play off-site in a nearby park. Full risk assessments are in place and as a result, staff are alert and supervise closely, checked by senior teachers. All staff receive the required child protection training during induction and in updates.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the pupils in her care. She is passionate about ensuring the very best for each and every child, including the most vulnerable, and she sets the bar high. Parents appreciate her commitment, one saying, 'She always wants to make things better.' All members of staff are right behind her and are fully committed to realising the school's motto, 'optimum omnibus: the best for all'.
- Despite the strong vision and drive of the headteacher, leadership is not yet outstanding. This is because the quality of teaching, although good overall, still has a few aspects which require improvement. The school action plan sets out the right actions but it does not set measurable targets to show precisely what the school is aiming to achieve. This makes it hard for leaders and governors to know exactly how well the school is doing.
- The school works in partnership with the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Chelsea Football Club Foundation to deliver high quality specialist teaching in music and sport. This broadens the range of opportunities available to pupils. An external consultant has supported school leaders to evaluate the school's work as it starts out. This has helped leaders to make accurate judgements and plan the next steps for the school.
- The leadership team is developing in size and impact as the school grows. The special educational needs coordinator organises effective support, which results in the pupils concerned making good progress. As the school is very small, senior leaders are currently responsible for leading the curriculum. They ensure subjects are well planned so that pupils make good progress. Senior leaders work together to check the progress pupils are making and they meet with teachers to discuss it. This means that every pupil's progress is kept under review so that support and any special opportunities are provided promptly and fairly.
- The pupil premium is effectively targeted to meet the needs of the relatively few pupils in this category so they make good progress.
- The school promotes equal opportunities effectively, ensuring that all pupils have access to the full range of subjects and activities, and learn without fear of any type of discrimination.
- The lively curriculum provides all pupils with access to a wide range of opportunities. Provision of specialist music and sports tuition, together with a varied range of after-school clubs, means pupils can try activities new to them, such as learning an instrument or gardening. This effectively promotes pupils' enjoyment of learning. Because of these opportunities, some pupils have unlocked previously hidden potential, such as musical talent, which the school is helping them to develop.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well, underpinned by the very positive relationships in the school. Pupils have regular opportunities to celebrate their achievements, for example through assemblies and displays, and this successfully raises their self-esteem. Pupils' participation in large-scale musical performances develops their creativity and the ability to work together, as well as a strong sense of confidence. The 'Thought for the Day' displayed around the school lets pupils reflect and offer views on a range of issues.
- Performance management procedures are fully in place for all members of staff. Teachers' targets for development link closely to the school's action plan so everyone works towards the same goals. An effective system is in place to ensure any training needs are identified and followed up.
- The school is making good use of additional funding from the government to promote sports and physical education. Following consultation with parents, the teaching of gymnastics has been enhanced by a specialist teacher. The recently appointed sports coordinator is helping to arrange fixtures with other schools to increase the amount of opportunities for pupils to participate in sport. Pupils say one reason they like school is because there is 'lots of sport'. The school

provides a good range of different activities so pupils can try out sports such as rugby from an early age. In this way, the school promotes enjoyment of physical activity and encourages healthy lifestyles.

■ The school fully meets all requirements regarding safeguarding.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governors have a well-organised structure of committees. These ensure that thorough systems and procedures are developed to support the school as it grows. Governors have useful skills in areas such as education and finance which they direct effectively to support and challenge school leaders. They have a good understanding of the school's performance data and how well it compares to national figures where these are available. They receive regular reports about the quality of teaching and know how it affects pupils' progress. Governors know the school well because they make regular visits and see it at work. They plan to create a more formal programme of visits to confirm how well the school is reaching the targets in the action plan. This will be helpful in ensuring all areas are checked as the school grows in size. They know how pupil premium and sports funding is spent and keep a careful eye on it to ensure it remains effective. Performance management is fully in place, including for the headteacher. Governors are fully aware of the link between teachers' performance and decisions about pay. Formal partnerships which the governors have developed with the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Chelsea Football Club Foundation enhance the work of the school.

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	138226
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	430676

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Free school
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Howard Morris
Headteacher	Michaela Khatib
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0330 330 0237
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Email address	info@cobhamfreeschool.org

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