

Comber Grove School

Comber Grove, Camberwell, London, SE5 0LQ

Inspection dates 6–7 May 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Since the last inspection, leaders have ensured that teaching and achievement have improved. Expectations have risen. Consequently, pupils now make much better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Previously low standards at the end of Year 2 are improving rapidly.
- The teaching of phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) has improved significantly.
- There have been good improvements in provision for early years children. Children now make good progress because activities are stimulating and well taught.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning, feel very safe and behave well.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making increasingly good progress. Consequently, the gaps between their attainment and that of their peers, both in school and nationally, are closing.
- Sport funding has had a positive impact upon the involvement of pupils in competitive and extra-curricular sport.
- Senior leadership is effective. Leaders constantly seek to improve the quality of education provided. The monitoring and improvement of teaching have had a significant and positive impact.
- Governance is effective. Governors are ambitious for the school. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and make a significant contribution to driving improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are too few planned opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Although attendance is broadly average overall, the attendance of a small, but significant, group of pupils is stubbornly low.
- The reorganisation of the leadership structure of the school is incomplete.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 25 lessons, seven of which were seen jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils’ written work for the current school year. They listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, a representative of the local authority and the school’s senior and subject leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 35 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of school documents, including plans for improvement and records of checks on the quality of teaching. They also considered records of governing body meetings and those relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the systems used to check pupils’ progress.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Worgan	Additional Inspector
Milan Stevanovic	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Comber Grove School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- This is an ethnically diverse community. Black British pupils, just over half of those on roll, constitute the largest group. Around one in 14 pupils is White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly above the national average.
- Around half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. Other than in the early years, few are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above the national average. This is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- In the early years, Nursery children attend either a morning or afternoon session each day, while Reception children all attend full time.
- The school receives support from a National Leader of Education who is the executive headteacher of Bandon Hill Primary School in Surrey.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing skills in a wider range of subjects across the curriculum.
- Take robust action to improve significantly the attendance of the significant minority of pupils with a track record of persistent absence.
- Complete the restructuring of senior and subject leadership roles, so that leadership capacity and impact are increased still further and greater levels of efficiency are achieved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- At the last inspection, the recently-appointed school leaders, supported by the local authority, were still addressing a number of inherited issues, particularly around teaching, which were adversely affecting pupils' learning. Subsequently, school leaders responded positively to the issues raised. It has taken time to address complex personnel issues, which have had a particular impact upon, for example, achievement in Years 1 and 2. However, school leaders have shown tenacity in challenging past attitudes and taking robust action. Expectations have increased significantly. The pace of change has continued to accelerate, with a positive impact upon pupils' achievement.
- Senior leaders promote positive attitudes and strong values. Some work has been done to streamline and strengthen further the leadership team, particularly at subject leader level. However, the school has yet to complete fully its planned reorganisation because of inherited contractual arrangements. Consequently, while the current leadership team is effectively promoting a culture where pupils achieve increasingly well and behaviour is good, there is scope for still greater efficiency in the way the most experienced and expensive staff are deployed.
- School leaders have high expectations of all staff and this has contributed significantly to the improvements achieved. Information about pupils' performance is used effectively.
- Most key subject leaders have an accurate overview of the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects and there is evidence, for example, of significant improvements in the teaching of literacy. They understand the need to drive further improvement.
- The leadership and monitoring of teaching are effective. As a result, there have been improvements in pupils' achievement. The quality of pupils' written work has improved, and teachers' marking is mostly thorough. Procedures for setting targets to improve teachers' practice are well established and effective.
- The school has made a good start to implementing the new National Curriculum. Pupils learn all the expected subjects, with significant strength in music and drama. However, coverage in subjects other than English and mathematics, as reflected in pupils' books, is sometimes limited. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills through work in other subjects.
- The school has already implemented a new system which provides a manageable approach to evaluating pupils' progress.
- School leaders review the impact of pupil premium expenditure rigorously. They can demonstrate that eligible pupils are making increasingly rapid progress.
- The school's evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. School leaders know which initiatives have had most impact and where further improvement is needed.
- Primary sport funding is used well to improve staff training and to provide specialist sports coaching. The school has a higher level of participation in competitive sport and after-school sports clubs than previously.
- The local authority has provided good support to improve teaching and boost achievement, including additional training and support for teaching. It has also provided funding for additional staffing to enable the school to provide early intervention for the younger pupils. The school recognises the positive impact of its work with the attached National Leader of Education.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school promotes British values effectively through, for example, celebrating St George's Day and Shakespeare's birthday. Mock elections raised pupils' awareness of the imminent General Election. Consequently, pupils recognise their rights and responsibilities as British citizens and are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The school works hard to ensure equality of opportunity for all. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- The school has established good links with most parents. Good links with other schools promote smooth transition as pupils move between schools.
- Statutory safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are effective. Risk assessments are thorough. All staff are trained to the expected levels.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are ambitious for the school. They bring a range of relevant professional expertise to their work. They recognise that raising achievement has been a priority. They readily undertake training to improve their skills and understanding. Governors have access to a wealth of information and are well informed about the school's work. They are closely involved in school improvement and hold school leaders to account with rigour.
 - Governors' grasp of data is thorough. Governors have a good understanding of the performance of all groups of pupils. They evaluate how the school is doing in relation to schools nationally and are well

informed about the effectiveness of teaching. The management of teachers' performance is effective. Pay increases are securely linked to the outcomes of this process. They support school leaders in responding to any underperformance.

- The governing body ensures, alongside senior leaders, that all statutory duties are met, including those for keeping pupils safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour around the school is orderly and responsible. Pupils treat each other well. They enjoy their learning and have positive attitudes. While pupils are not always keen to volunteer their ideas, their written work indicates that they are committed and generally work hard.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed well. School records show that there are few behavioural incidents, with no recent exclusions. Incidents of racist behaviour are rare. Pupils willingly take on duties as playground friends, and as health monitors in the lunch hall.
- Attendance is marginally lower in the current year than previously. However, broadly average attendance, with high attendance levels for some pupils, masks relatively high levels of persistent absence for a significant minority of pupils. The local authority has recently implemented more rigorous checks on attendance, but these have not yet had a significant impact.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and are confident that staff will deal with any issues quickly. All staff undergo full safeguarding checks prior to appointment.
- The school helps pupils to protect themselves from a range of risks. Staff ensure that pupils are aware, for example, of road traffic risks. Pupils are alert to the risks of cyber bullying and grooming. The school makes them aware of the possible risks around internet abuse and inappropriate usage.
- Pupils know that bullying may take many different forms. They say that, while there were a few reported bullying incidents in the past year, these were dealt with promptly.
- Pastoral care is a strong feature. Case studies indicate that the school works hard to ensure that vulnerable pupils are supported appropriately.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils are now making more rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and attaining higher standards because of the significant improvements in teaching. The quality of pupils' written work has improved because teachers' expectations are higher.
- Pupils learn best when work offers high levels of challenge. Year 6 pupils, for example, extended their knowledge of averages in mathematics in a whole-class activity which explored their understanding of mean, mode and median. All activities were closely matched to pupils' level of understanding. Pupils were very engaged and eager to demonstrate their understanding. The standard of work in pupils' books was high, indicating extended challenge for those who required it. Pupils were keen to offer their ideas and opinions, in response to effective questioning.
- Effective support and guidance are provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Learning support staff are suitably trained to meet a wide range of individual needs.
- The teaching of phonics has improved. Extra support is available for older pupils who do not have sufficient understanding of sounds and letters. The teaching of reading has improved, so that pupils gain the necessary technical skills.
- The school has introduced manageable and effective systems to check and improve pupils' progress. Teachers' marking of writing is particularly thorough, showing clearly what pupils need to do next. However, current good practice in marking is not always replicated in all subjects. Targets are generally used well to guide pupils' progress. Pupils mostly act upon teachers' comments.
- Homework contributes well to pupils' learning. Set activities are provided each week.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement has improved significantly since the last inspection. Achievement, especially in reading, writing and mathematics, is now above the national average at the end of Reception. Until 2014, most

cohorts entered Year 1 with barely average skills and knowledge.

- Better early years provision, more effective teaching of phonics and early reading skills, and the elimination of weak teaching have together contributed to much more rapid progress in Key Stage 1 and the elimination of past weaknesses. Previously low attainment at the end of Year 2 is now improving at a more rapid rate than is found nationally. The school's tracking data, and pupils' recorded work, indicate that pupils are now making more rapid and sustained progress and standards are likely to be significantly closer to the national average in 2015 than in any recent year.
- More pupils in Years 1 and 2, than in other classes, enter the school at times other than the usual points of entry. Some pupils who have benefited from the improved early years provision move away because of local social housing issues. The make up of any group of pupils at the end of Year 2 is often very different from its entry to Year 1 two years previously. Consequently, the accurate tracking of the extent of pupils' progress is not straightforward.
- Much more effective teaching of phonics has led to better outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check. The proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level in 2014 was above the national average. Pupils across the school have secure skills in reading.
- The attainment of Year 6 pupils in 2014 was broadly average overall, with strengths in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Attainment in mathematics was the weakest element. While the proportion of pupils making the expected progress in 2014 was at least at the national average, the proportion making accelerated progress was below average in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' written work suggests that current progress is good in Years 3 to 6. Particularly effective teaching in Year 6 is enabling these pupils to make rapid progress, thus eliminating some past deficits in learning. Writing is a particular strength. The school's data indicate that current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain above average standards in 2015.
- The achievement of Black British pupils, the majority, is at least as good as that of the others, and sometimes better than similar pupils nationally. The proportion of White British pupils in any cohort is too low to make a valid judgement on their achievement.
- The few most-able pupils have typically underperformed. Most-able pupils in Year 6 in 2014 attained less highly and made less rapid progress than similar pupils nationally. The current picture is much stronger. While the level of challenge in some lessons remains variable, there has been consistent, good support for current most-able Year 6 pupils. Several are attempting the Level 6 tests in mathematics, writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- In 2014, disadvantaged Year 6 pupils outperformed the others in writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling. In 2014, the gap between these pupils and others in the school was around half a term in reading and mathematics. They were ahead of all pupils nationally, other than in mathematics where the gap was around half a term. In 2014, they made more rapid progress than other pupils nationally. School data show that disadvantaged pupils are currently progressing as least as rapidly as the others, so that the gaps in attainment are narrowing year on year.
- The needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are accurately identified. With effective support, their progress is now similar to that of other pupils.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, the majority, typically make better progress than the others. The school is currently focusing, with emerging success, on improving the progress of disadvantaged White British pupils.

The early years provision

is good

- Effective leadership, together with good support from the local authority, has ensured that the quality of early years practice has improved further since the last inspection.
- Most children enter Nursery, and subsequently Reception, with skill levels below those typical for their age, and at levels lower than are typical of the local authority. Around one quarter of children have limited understanding of English when they enter the school. Staff give priority to developing children's key basic skills, including their personal and social skills. More effective teaching of phonics has ensured that children now acquire a secure knowledge of sounds and letters, leading to more rapid progress in reading.
- Staffing levels are generous. Children, including those who have special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English, now achieve well, particularly in the Reception classes, because of consistently effective teaching. They are well prepared for entry to Year 1. The proportion of children reaching levels typical for their age was above the national average in 2014.
- The balance between activities led by adults, such as reading, writing and mathematics, and opportunities for children to choose from a wide range of activities, is good. Opportunities for the most-able children to

advance to more challenging work are currently better developed in Reception than in Nursery.

- Children have good access to outdoor learning. The outdoor area offers a wide range of activities which further extend children’s growing knowledge of the world.
- Children behave well and show high levels of independence, positive attitudes to learning and the ability to sustain attention for a lengthy period.
- Children are safe and well looked after. The school works well with parents prior to their children joining the school and supports parents well once their children are in school. Several parents attend Family Reading Fridays, an initiative to promote home reading.
- Staff undertake detailed checks and observations and accrue detailed, accurate information about children’s progress.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. Recent training has supported improvements in the rigour and accuracy of assessment and in other aspects of the provision.

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	462137

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	334
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorelai Ciortea
Headteacher	Richard Dax
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2013
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