

# Comberbach Primary School

Mather Drive, Comberbach, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 6BG

## Inspection dates

7–8 June 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Comberbach is now a thriving school and has changed considerably since the previous inspection.
- The exceptional leadership of the headteacher and determination of the governing body have turned around this school in a relatively short period of time.
- The school has rebuilt its relationship with parents and now the vast majority are supportive of the school and recognise the improvements made to the quality of their children's education.
- Rapid improvements in achievement now mean that pupils make at least good progress.
- The strong leadership and provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability ensures these pupils flourish.
- Leaders have embraced new ways to assess pupils and are rigorous in the way they track the progress of all groups of pupils.
- Pupils rise to teachers' high expectations and benefit from the consistently good teaching they receive throughout the school.
- Behaviour is good and pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They are very caring and considerate towards each other.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel very safe; parents agree.
- The leadership and teaching in early years is strong and as a result children make good progress and grow in confidence in a safe and stimulating environment.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally chances are missed to provide learning opportunities to extend the most able pupils further.
- Pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is not assessed as effectively as it could be.
- Senior leaders have not fully developed the skills and accountability of the curriculum leaders in subjects other than English and mathematics.

## Full report

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

- Strengthen further the progress made by the most able pupils by ensuring that teachers do not miss opportunities to extend and challenge this group of pupils more effectively.
- Develop further the teaching of subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics, so that:
  - leaders, governors and teachers can more accurately assess and track pupils' progress across other subjects, to the same high standard as they do in English and mathematics
  - curriculum leaders develop skills to hold staff to account more effectively in their subject areas.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Comberbach has improved significantly since the previous inspection. This is down to the outstanding leadership of the senior leaders and governance of the school. Their focus and vision have enthused staff and led the way so that together they provide very good opportunities for pupils to fulfil the school mission to 'inspire, achieve and enjoy'.
- Leaders' promotion of equality and diversity has resulted in pupils who are caring, considerate, respectful and tolerant of each other and the wider community.
- Leaders have the respect and commitment of staff, parents and pupils. This contributes to the positive motivation of staff for continual improvement. Relationships between staff are strong. Teachers are well aware of the enormous improvements in the school; they are unanimous in the pride they feel working at Comberbach, feel well supported and feel that the school is well led and managed.
- Parents spoken to in the playground and those who contributed to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, typically comment that the school is a happy place where staff work hard to ensure that their children are well supported and make progress in their learning.
- Senior leaders know their school well. The strengths of the school and areas for improvement are clearly identified in their self-evaluation, which is accurate and honest. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough; where needed, follow-up is immediate, but sensitive and supportive. There have been many staff changes in recent years but now the school is benefiting from a stable, happy and committed team.
- The strong skills of the deputy headteacher and the growing confidence of other leaders in school have contributed to ensuring that prompt action is taken on school improvement priorities. The leadership team have regular opportunities to check that agreed strategies to secure improvement are being applied by everyone. There has been a successful drive to improve handwriting, to broaden the breadth of fiction books as a stimulus for lessons and to develop opportunities to extend pupils' thinking through what the school calls 'hashtag deeper thinking'.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to reduce any barriers to learning that may be experienced by disadvantaged pupils. The progress of pupils supported by this funding is monitored rigorously. The impact of pupil premium funding is carefully evaluated by the headteacher and the governors. This enables disadvantaged pupils to be successful and be part of everything the school has to offer.
- The primary school physical education (PE) and sports funding is also used well. Teachers have had additional training and pupils have benefited from opportunities to be involved in a wide range of sporting activities both during the school day and after school. Pupils also have the opportunity to attend residential trips.
- Accelerating and improving outcomes for pupils is a constant focus. Senior leaders and governors have worked relentlessly to raise expectations, and improve the quality of teaching and the way pupils are assessed and their progress tracked, which is now a strength.
- The leadership and organisation of special educational needs provision is also a strength. Robust, revised systems and procedures are in place. The training of all staff has increased confidence and knowledge about how to support pupils effectively within the classroom. Identification of need is swift and resources are of a high standard, ensuring that pupils who have special educational needs or disability thrive in their learning and their personal and social development.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum that engages pupils and contributes to their enjoyment of learning. However, leaders and staff are currently working to develop and embed the new primary curriculum further. The curriculum already offers opportunities to apply pupils' writing and mathematical skills across a range of subjects. Now the staff team are in the process of evaluating and reshaping the curriculum so that it increases the opportunities for creativity and captures pupils' imagination. As part of this, leaders are aware that they need to improve the way they assess subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics and support the ongoing development of curriculum leaders.
- Well-promoted spiritual, moral and social development means the school is a calm and very considerate environment where pupils mix happily together. Pupils are actively involved in the school community, which contributes to developing and promoting the school values around school. Key stage 1 pupils talk enthusiastically about having an older 'reading buddy' and at playtimes older pupils are kind and supportive to younger ones. As one pupil said, 'If you fall, there is always someone there to pick you up.' Through assemblies and the curriculum, pupils learn about the wider community, raise funds for charities and learn about tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. Older pupils are encouraged to participate in

debates and discussions. There are many displays around school that celebrate other faiths, cultures and how to be a good citizen.

- Following the last inspection, the local authority has provided appropriate and helpful support for the school. The headteacher has also sourced other beneficial external support and evaluation as needed. The school is an active member of a network of schools that is soon to become a multi-academy trust. They support each other, for example by providing opportunities for curriculum leaders to meet and discuss teaching and learning. They have also worked closely together to develop practice and checks with regard to assessment.
- **The governance of the school**
  - There has been a transformation in governance since the last inspection. Governors now know their school extremely well and are confident and skilled to ask challenging questions. The attributes of the governing body have been utilised very well to ensure that their expertise benefits the school. They lend their skills effectively to aspects of the school's development and monitoring of improvement. As a result, they have made a significant contribution to raising standards in the school.
  - Governors have a good understanding of performance management procedures and, as well as holding teachers and leaders to account, they ensure the management of teachers' pay is effective. Alongside the headteacher, they have tackled staffing issues and made strong appointments to the school that are now having a very positive effect on the learning and progress of pupils.
  - Governors are conscientious and take part in all relevant training. Governors have good levels of understanding about the progress pupils are making. They make sure that the pupil premium and the PE and sports grants are spent effectively and make a difference to pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Robust systems are in place, which are understood by staff. Regular and appropriate training for staff is undertaken and safeguarding is a high priority in school. Leaders are persistent in cases where the school is concerned for a pupil's welfare. Effective relationships with other agencies and with parents ensure pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are met.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the whole of the school and it is now consistently good. This has led to pupils making at least good progress.
- The teaching at Comberbach is characterised by friendly, warm relationships between staff and pupils and well-organised lessons. Staff have high expectations for pupils in both their learning and their behaviour. The vast majority of pupils rise to this by working hard and behaving well. Pupils enjoy their learning and say 'it is fun' and they 'find out lots of new things'.
- The subject knowledge of teachers is good. There is a sense of pace in lessons and often an excitement about learning. For example, adults ask just the right questions to aid pupils' thinking, draw out learning, and help them move on. Mistakes are seen by staff and pupils as another opportunity to learn. However, where teachers are not asking the right questions, pupils are not being offered a chance to deepen their understanding of what is being taught, and opportunities are being missed to challenge pupils, particularly the most able.
- Teachers and leaders check on pupils' learning regularly. The whole staff team has embraced their new assessment system and use it effectively. This makes an important contribution to the progress pupils make in their learning. For example, the use of assessment by the teacher to identify and plan for pupils' next steps in learning needs results in teaching that offers appropriate challenge for most pupils. Occasionally there are still missed opportunities to extend and challenge some of the most able pupils.
- Where pupils struggle with their learning an effective range of learning opportunities helps them catch up. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- Teaching assistants across key stages 1 and 2 are deployed effectively. They are knowledgeable and skilled and make a good contribution to the progress of the pupils with whom they work.
- For those pupils who have special educational needs or disability, the support they are offered is broad, clearly targeted and of an excellent quality. Additional support is planned well, resulting in these pupils making good progress in lessons.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, in line with the school's policy. They make clear to pupils what they have done well and offer appropriate guidance to help them improve their work further. Pupils are keen to get feedback and have time to respond to the comments made. Older pupils are taught how to assess their own work and provide supportive comment and advice to their peers.

- The development of reading and writing skills is a high priority in school. Texts are used very effectively in each class to create a range of interesting and stimulating activities that help pupils to learn and practise these skills. This has been a very effective way of capturing pupils' interest in reading and writing. It was evident in lesson observations and in talking to pupils that they were highly motivated and absorbed. For example, several pupils reading *War Horse* (by Michael Morpurgo) enthusiastically shared with the inspector how they had researched lots of facts about World War 1 and horses used in war. Another pupil was keen to tell me how, in *Dogger* (by Shirley Hughes), the little boy had lost his toy dog and how they were writing a poster to help him find it.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View or spoke to inspectors in the playground felt that their children were well taught. The vast majority felt that the quality of information given to them about their children's learning was much improved and of a good quality. They were also very positive about the regular opportunities taken by school to communicate with parents, in particular via the class newsletters and school social media page.
- Homework is given to pupils in line with the class guidelines. When asked, pupils said they enjoyed homework, particularly the projects that they have the opportunity to complete.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The importance placed on pupils' personal development and welfare is evident in all aspects of school. Staff and governors are diligent in their responsibility to ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment in which pupils in their care can flourish and succeed.
- Staff treat pupils with consideration and ensure that the school makes everyone feel welcome and valued. Adults constantly model respectful and caring behaviour in lessons, around school and in the way they engage with pupils. As a result, pupils are developing as thoughtful and compassionate citizens. It is not uncommon for pupils to spontaneously applaud when someone in class had been identified by the teacher as having completed a good piece of work.
- Most parents spoken to by inspectors and those that responded to Parent View expressed a great deal of praise for the school and the work of the staff. The vast majority of parents felt that their children were happy and well looked after. A number of parents mentioned how their child had low confidence and low self-esteem prior to joining the school, but now they were flourishing. They put this down to the staff's skills at nurturing and building confidence in children.
- The vast majority of pupils throughout key stage 2, and a majority in key stage 1, are confident learners and are happy to talk about their learning. The pupils told inspectors how proud they were of their school and how they felt safe and well looked after by adults. They also talked with pride about helping each other in their learning and looking after each other in the playground.
- Pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs or disability are particularly well catered for. There is a prompt focus on early identification of need or concern and things are put in place quickly to support pupils. This reduces the barriers to learning that pupils might face and ensures their progress. In some cases barriers to learning are removed completely. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability participate fully in all that the school has to offer.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection were clear about what bullying was and said that incidents were very rare. They were confident that teachers dealt with any unkind or negative language towards pupils quickly. Pupils were unanimous in their view that they felt safe in school and most, particularly older pupils, knew how to keep themselves safe personally and online. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View felt that the school deals appropriately with bullying or that they were not aware of any bullying towards their child.
- Senior leaders regularly ask for pupils' views on a variety of aspects of school. As a consequence, staff have been able to identify any areas that pupils are unhappy with and respond to their concerns.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around school. They are polite and well mannered. Staff and pupils know each other well and are friendly and supportive. As a result, the school is a calm, orderly and purposeful place to learn.

- Pupils are encouraged from Reception to Year 6 to take pride in their work. As a result, the presentation of work in most books is of a consistently good standard across the school. Key stage 1 pupils are particularly proud when they know their writing is neat enough to be able to use a pen.
- There is a productive atmosphere in the classrooms with the vast majority of pupils having a positive attitude and visibly enjoy their learning. They are attentive and eager to participate in lessons and generally work well supporting each other. Very occasionally, pupils struggle to settle to activities if they do not have an adult close at hand to focus them.
- Pupils are fully aware of how to behave and the consequences of poor behaviour. They say incidents of inappropriate behaviour are rare, dealt with quickly by teachers and responded to by pupils appropriately. Pupils are responsive and respectful to adults. For example, pupils responded well to instructions and the changes in the normal routine during sports day.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is demonstrated by their high level of attendance, currently running at above that of other pupils nationally. The systems for monitoring absence are rigorous and effective. Good attendance is rewarded and has a high profile in school. The occasional pupil that is persistently absent is picked up quickly and appropriate support ensures they are soon back on track.

## Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Senior leaders and governors have been determined to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils' overall achievement across the school has improved and outcomes are now good.
- Children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are typical for children of this age. By the end of key stage 2 the vast majority of pupils make at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics and, since the last inspection, an increasing number are making more than expected progress. This has resulted in pupils now achieving similarly to pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. At present, writing is still lagging behind but the school's in-year tracking of progress and the work in pupils' books confirms a rapidly improving picture.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2015, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics showed an improvement on the previous year. Most pupils attained the expected level, which places them above similar pupils nationally. The most marked improvement has been in pupils' attainment at the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's assessment records show that the predicted results for the 2016 end of key stage 2 assessments appear on track to be at least as good as last year. Inspection evidence from lesson observations, and looking at pupils' books, indicates that the school's expectations are realistic.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2015, attainment was above average for pupils achieving the level expected in reading, writing and mathematics and has been consistently so over the last three years. Again there are clear improvements at higher levels with more pupils achieving at these levels since the last inspection. This places them above similar pupils nationally, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the national screening check for phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) at the end of Year 1 is well above what would be expected of pupils of a similar age.
- Pupils enjoy reading and talk excitedly about books. Pupils that struggle with reading have very good support to practise skills and are very proud of the progress they make.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, they make good progress in key stage 1 and key stage 2. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment is similar to other pupils in school and other pupils nationally. This is because the school monitors the progress of these pupils effectively and ensures that they are supported well in class to improve.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make at least good progress from their starting points and often better. The excellent support offered by teachers and teaching assistants is very effective and ensures that pupils succeed in their learning.
- Overall in 2015 the most able pupils made at least the progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Nevertheless, looking at these pupils' prior attainment it is likely that more could achieve higher levels and make more than expected progress.

## Early years provision

is good

- There are a number of strengths in the early years provision. Children start school with skills and knowledge typical for their age and make good progress.
- They benefit from a vibrant and stimulating environment in which to learn. This is coupled with high expectations by adults to make sure that children thrive and enjoy a very positive start to school life.
- The proportion of children who reached a good level of development at the end of Reception in 2015 was well above that expected of children of a similar age nationally and is expected to be comparable in 2016. This ensures they are well prepared and confident to start in Year 1.
- The early years is well led. There is a clear view about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Where actions have been taken to address issues, these have been successful. For example, it was identified through assessment that boys were not always achieving as well as girls in some areas of learning. Boys' interest has been encouraged by offering a greater range of activities and resources that interest them, resulting in marked improvements in boys' learning this year.
- Provision is well organised to create a rich and varied learning environment for all children both in- and outdoors. Activities are fun, capture the children's imagination and allow them to practise their skills. Children have plenty of opportunity to explore with a range of equipment that encourages them to build, create and try out their ideas. Displays are colourful and celebrate children's learning and interests.
- Teachers' assessment and the tracking of children's learning is of a high quality. This information is used very effectively to plan a curriculum for children that is both interesting and relevant. As a result, adults know, and respond to, the learning needs of children well, including the most able. The online assessment system is available to parents, who are encouraged to add comments and any examples they have of their child's learning. Assessment information is closely linked to the system throughout the rest of school, which ensures that there is a consistency of information gathered and built up as children move through school.
- Safeguarding is effective, risk assessments are appropriate and the classroom is a safe environment for children. Children's behaviour is good and adults are quick to provide support to children to help them understand the importance of being polite and treating one another with respect. Children play and learn together well and have a good attitude to learning.
- The quality of teaching is good. There are well-established routines and a high level of expectation of what children will achieve. Adults demonstrate good subject knowledge and the teacher has a thorough knowledge of child development. The importance placed on reading, writing and mathematical skills is very evident with regular chances for children to write, practise their letters and sounds, and use number. This they do on their own, playing with friends or in time spent with an adult. Many opportunities are taken to challenge children in their learning, for example asking children to count in 10s and introducing the idea of planning how to write stories. However, occasionally there are missed opportunities to extend children further in some of the other activities on offer.
- The strong emphasis on creating a caring and nurturing environment is evident from the very positive relationships adults have with children, and children have with each other. Adults engage with children well and are skilled at asking questions to draw out children's understanding.
- There are very positive relationships between parents and Reception staff. Parents are full of praise for how well their children have settled into school and the progress they have made.
- Transition arrangements are effective, with visits made to pre-school settings before a child starts in Reception and opportunities for pre-school settings to visit the Reception class. New parents are invited to an evening meeting, and, with their children, to 'stay and play' at the end of the summer term. A pack of information has been produced to give to these new parents as part of a new initiative to make home visits at the beginning of the autumn term.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111152
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012178

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

<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>	178
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Matthew Lord
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rob Cooper
<b>Telephone number</b>	01606 891 336
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.comberbach.cheshire.sch.uk">www.comberbach.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:head@comberbach.cheshire.sch.uk">head@comberbach.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13–14 May 2014

## Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes, including joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Inspectors observed pupils in the playground and during lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and in the learning journals of children in the early years.
- An inspector listened to a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and curriculum leaders.
- An inspector met with the chair of the governing body and five other governors. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority and the prospective chief executive of the multi-academy trust that the school will be joining in January 2017.
- A group of pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with an inspector, and inspectors also spoke informally with pupils in the playground and around school.
- The inspectors took account of 11 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors considered the 82 responses from the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked briefly to parents before school and during sports day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: minutes from meetings of the governing body; information on pupils' outcomes; the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Lesley Curtis

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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