

Cobden Primary School & Community Centre

Cobden Street, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 1AF

Inspection dates

16–17 May 2018

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school. As a result of their decisive actions, standards improved significantly in 2017. This applies equally to the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have made sure that improvements have been sustained and strengthened throughout the current academic year.
- Leaders have ensured that the well-designed curriculum enables pupils to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good throughout the school. Teachers have high expectations for what pupils can achieve.
- Teachers and support staff use questioning effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Pupils of all ages say they enjoy books and an increasing number are confident readers.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. Pupils have regular opportunities to develop good mathematical reasoning. However, some pupils' presentation in mathematics is untidy.
- The teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling has improved significantly over the past two years. In 2017, standards of attainment at the end of key stage 2 exceeded the national average.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning have a good impact on their progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils say they feel safe and the school has a culture of care and concern for pupils' welfare. However, governors have not completed all of their training.
- In the early years, staff place strong emphasis on developing children's early language skills. As a result, the majority of children who speak English as an additional language receive effective support and quickly begin to speak, read and write in English.
- The leadership and teaching in the early years is effective but the outdoor area is uninviting and not used productively. Nevertheless, the majority of children make good progress in their learning and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Although attendance is improving, persistent absence is still high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that governors:
 - complete the required safer recruitment training
 - gather the views of parents and carers, so that they know what parents think about the quality of education the school provides.
- Establish high expectations of pupils' presentation in mathematics, so that their work is as neat as it is in other subjects.
- Improve pupils' attendance and reduce rates of persistent absence.
- Improve the early years outdoor areas and renew the resources in them so that these areas may be used effectively and frequently to support children's learning and development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have an aspirational vision for the school. The experienced headteacher, with his effective deputy, has established a set of well-thought-out plans to prioritise actions for ongoing improvement. The deputy headteacher aptly summed up leaders' vision, saying their desire is to 'lift the lid' on what each pupil can achieve.
- Leaders have put in place a thorough system for checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Consequently, leaders have an accurate and up-to-date overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's performance. Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good in all year groups.
- As a result of effective leadership and teaching, pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 improved significantly in 2017. Leaders have ensured that this improvement has been sustained and strengthened throughout the current academic year.
- Middle leadership is strong. For example, the leaders with responsibility for English and mathematics have a clear and enthusiastic grasp of their roles. They are confident to work alongside less experienced colleagues in order to strengthen teaching and improve outcomes for pupils. Teachers are receptive to the guidance they receive and say they value the wide range of training opportunities available to them.
- The leadership of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is effective. The special educational needs coordinator makes sure that staff receive regular training on a range of themes, and that there is a good system for the early identification of pupils' needs. Several parents of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities spoke warmly to inspectors about the quality of provision for their children. Staff use the outcomes of regular reviews to plan the right level of support for pupils. As a result of this well-coordinated approach, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders are passionate about their work, which includes reviewing and successfully remodelling the curriculum so that it reflects the context of the school and the particular needs of pupils. Following an intense period of staff training, leaders and teachers have launched their new, enquiry-based approach to the curriculum. This means that pupils have increased opportunities to research topics in, for example, history or science, through direct experiences such as practical activities, handling artefacts and educational visits. Vibrant, interactive displays and 'mini exhibitions' around school, together with evidence from work in pupils' topic books, provide an effective showcase for the richness of the curriculum and its positive impact on pupils' skills and knowledge.
- Leaders effectively promote pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils take part in regular charity fundraising activities. Each classroom has its own, personalised noticeboard to reflect themes such as 'friendship', 'relationships' and 'emotions'. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils confidently presented an assembly on the theme of 'The Second World War – how life has changed'. The rest of the pupils listened respectfully

and attentively.

Governance of the school

- Members of the governing body rigorously challenge leaders and hold them effectively to account for the school's performance.
- Individual governors make regular visits to school as part of the joint monitoring programme. They join leaders in carrying out a range of activities to check on the quality of teaching and learning, for example observing learning in lessons or checking pupils' workbooks. This means that they have an accurate overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Governors receive regular information about how the school spends its additional pupil premium funding. Leaders and governors have made sure that the funding is used effectively. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made good progress compared to other pupils nationally.
- Training for governors on safer recruitment is not up to date. Governors are aware that this needs to be rectified as soon as possible.
- Governors do not gather and respond to the views of parents. Consequently, they do not have an up-to-date overview of parental opinions or concerns.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements to keep pupils safe are effective.
- Leaders have made sure that all of the school's employment checks are in place, in line with statutory requirements.
- The school's safeguarding team has a good understanding of the particular local safeguarding issues. This enables them to respond quickly and appropriately to any pupil welfare concerns which may arise.
- All members of staff have a secure understanding of the school's procedures. There is a culture of watchful care for pupils' welfare. Records are well maintained and show that staff are tenacious in following up concerns. Where necessary, the school works well in partnership with outside agencies, not shying away from difficult decisions in order to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils are keen learners because, in the vast majority of cases, teachers set thought-provoking activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Time in lessons is used productively. Teachers make sure that activities flow briskly and purposefully. As a result, pupils concentrate on their work and make good gains in learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, regardless of their ability or whether a pupil speaks English as an additional language. This means that teachers frequently model the use of ambitious vocabulary as an example for pupils to follow.

The success of this approach was seen, for example, in two Year 5 lessons about the 'golden age of Islam'. Pupils were able to discuss with confidence their prior learning on the subject. They explained features of Islam such as 'education was crucial to them' and 'they were technologically advanced'. In their written notes, pupils used terms such as 'calligraphy' and 'mathematicians' accurately.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge across the curriculum. They plan sequences of lessons that build on and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers use assessment effectively to address pupils' misconceptions. Teachers provide helpful feedback to pupils so that they can understand how to improve their work, in line with the school's policy for marking and feedback.
- Most teachers and support staff use questioning effectively to draw out thoughtful responses from pupils. As a result, pupils are becoming independent and reflective learners.
- The teaching of reading has improved as a result of the school's focus on this aspect of its work. The teaching of phonics is good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan and teach interesting activities that build securely on what pupils already know. Younger pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them make faster progress in reading and writing.
- Pupils are rightly proud of the attractive and well-stocked school library. The library provision mirrors that of a public library; it is open to pupils and parents daily and pupil librarians help to run it. Older pupils are keen readers, making good choices based on recommendations from fellow pupils or by consulting the 'blurb' about a book.
- The teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling is effective. The majority of pupils are able to apply the knowledge and skills they learn in lessons to their written work, across a range of subjects.
- The majority of parents who spoke with inspectors said that they were happy with the information they receive from the school about their children's progress and with the homework that is set.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. Pupils' work shows that they have regular opportunities to practise their mathematical reasoning, through problem-solving activities. However, pupils do not present their work as neatly in mathematics as they do in other subjects. This is because teachers do not have the same high expectations for pupils' handwriting and presentation in mathematics as in English and topic work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. Those who spoke with inspectors said that their learning is 'like an adventure' and that teachers 'help expand your mind' so that it is 'flooded with ideas'. One even described the school as 'an educational paradise'.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and this has a good impact on their progress

in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Pupils who spoke with inspectors say they feel safe in school. They have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying and can explain the difference between that and friendship problems. There is, throughout the school, an obvious culture of openness, care and concern for pupils' welfare.
- A very small minority of parents expressed concerns about how the school handles bullying. However, records show that instances of bullying are rare and are handled appropriately, in line with the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policy.
- Leaders' records also show that exclusions are reducing, as a result of effective work with pupils and families. In particular, the learning mentor provides effective additional support for pupils' welfare. She is available to meet with parents daily, before and after school, and follows up any concerns posted by pupils in the 'worry box'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around school is consistently calm and orderly. This can be seen at lunchtimes, playtimes and at other times such as during whole-school assemblies.
- The majority of parents who spoke with inspectors and who completed the online survey hold positive views about pupils' behaviour at the school.
- The vast majority of pupils show courtesy and respect towards others. They typically cooperate well with each other in lessons. For example, pupils in key stage 2 showed maturity in their ability to organise their learning quickly and fairly, negotiating roles within a group activity.
- Overall attendance has improved over time and has now stabilised at a level which is just below the national average. Leaders have a range of strategies for working with families to encourage good attendance and punctuality. Absence is followed up promptly. Repeated absence results in staged warning letters and is dealt with personally by the headteacher. Requests for the headteacher's approval for absence in term time are not authorised and, as a result, these particular absences have reduced.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent increased sharply in 2017 and figures to date remain above the national average, despite leaders' persistence in following their rigorous procedures. Leaders do not precisely analyse patterns of persistent absence by pupil groups in order to identify how they might most effectively target their efforts.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The progress made by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics increased significantly in 2017. As a result, standards at the end of key stage 2 in writing and mathematics also improved markedly. Similar improvements were seen throughout the school. At the end of key stage 1, attainment also improved. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics increased notably.
- Standards of grammar, punctuation and spelling have improved significantly over the

past two years. In 2017, standards of attainment at the end of key stage 2 exceeded the national average.

- The improvements made last year have been maintained and strengthened throughout the current academic year. Evidence from work in current pupils' books shows that, in all year groups, they are making better progress in mathematics and in writing across a range of subjects. Analysis of the school's current assessment information provides further evidence that pupils' progress continues to build on the improvements of the last academic year.
- Weaker performance in the recent past was the result of low attainment in reading. Current assessments show that the standard of attainment in reading in Year 6 has improved further, as a result of a successful focus on improving the teaching of reading.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils benefited from the drive to raise standards. They made good progress by the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2, compared to other pupils nationally. As a result of good support, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress.
- The proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2017 increased considerably so that it is now in line with the national average for the first time.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership and management of the early years are strong. Leaders are knowledgeable and have high expectations of children's learning. Staff provide a range of stimulating activities that motivate and encourage children in different areas of learning.
- Good teaching and warm nurturing enable children to make good progress. The vast majority of children join the early years with skills which are lower, or much lower, than those typical for their age. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has steadily increased over time. In 2017, that figure improved significantly, although it remains below the national average.
- Provision in the early years is inclusive. Children who speak English as an additional language and children who have SEN and/or disabilities receive effective support. Activities and additional adult support are well targeted to ensure that these children thrive during their time in the early years. As a result, children who speak English as an additional language and children who have SEN and/or disabilities, in line with other children in the Reception Year, are well prepared for Year 1.
- Teachers continually check the progress of children's learning. Teachers in the early years classes use the range of information gathered from their assessments in order to ensure that activities are well matched to children's needs. As a result, children make good progress across the areas of learning in the early years curriculum.
- Parents regularly share in their children's achievements. Teachers encourage parents to tell them about their children's learning experiences at home so that teachers can use the information to effectively build on children's learning in school.
- Children's reading, writing and mathematics skills are developed well in the early years.

Children receive regular opportunities to develop these skills through exciting learning activities. For example, in the Reception class children observed eggs hatching to learn about life cycles. Adults skilfully consolidated children's understanding further through stories and mathematical activities.

- Teachers and teaching assistants in the early years provision develop children's independence skills well. Routines are established and children follow instructions promptly. Children are encouraged to do things for themselves such as choose their own activities, put on their own apron and help themselves to their fruit snack. As a result, children behave sensibly, feel safe and are willing to try new experiences.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective. The environment is safe and secure and adult to child ratios meet requirements. Staff have received all of the relevant training and are well versed in child protection procedures.
- Staff provide the appropriate level of care for two-year-old children. They provide a range of activities suitable to their level of development. As a result, these very young children settle well and make a good start to their early education.
- The quality of the environment and resources in both of the outdoor areas is not as good as that found indoors. The areas are poorly maintained and some of the resources are worn and uninviting. During the inspection, the outdoor areas were not used often enough by children to promote their learning and development.

School details

Unique reference number	139366
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10047626

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	382 (not including Nursery)
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Post vacant
Headteacher	Michael Stevens
Telephone number	01509 263485
Website	www.cobden.leics.sch.uk
Email address	office@cobden.leics.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 September 2014

Information about this school

- Cobden Primary School is larger than the average primary school.
- The school is a charitable company known as Cobden Primary School Academy Trust. The governors act as the trustees and are also the directors, for the purposes of company law.
- At the time of the inspection, the post of chair of the governing body was vacant.
- The school works in collaboration with a group of local schools known as the Loughborough Primary Academy Partnership.
- In 2016, the on-site pre-school provision was incorporated into the school. This provision caters for children aged two to four and comes under the management of the governing body of the school.
- The early years provision consists of two Reception classes, which are taught as one unit, and a Nursery class, which caters for children aged two to four. The Nursery is

known to the school and to parents as 'Pre-School'.

- Less than half of the pupils are White British. The rest come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, including a well-above-average proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 22 lessons or part lessons, across all classes, some jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at work in an extensive range of pupils' books and considered the school's assessment information on the progress and standards achieved by current pupils.
- Inspectors visited the school library, listened to pupils read and talked with them about their enjoyment of reading.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and leaders with responsibility for English, mathematics, early years and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Inspectors met with those responsible for attendance, behaviour, bullying and exclusions, disadvantaged pupils and the sport premium. They also met with other teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and spoke informally with pupils during lessons, lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day. The lead inspector also considered the 23 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation summary, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's current information on pupils' attainment and progress, attendance records, behaviour and exclusion logs, external reports on the work of the school, monitoring and evaluation records and a range of documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Christine Watkins, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Claire Buffham	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Innes-Taylor	Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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