

Inspection of a good school: Comberbach Primary School

Mather Drive, Comberbach, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 6BG

Inspection dates:

28–29 January 2020

Outcome

Comberbach Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Comberbach Primary School is a family-orientated and caring place for pupils. Leaders, governors and staff share high expectations for every pupil. Pupils attain highly in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are polite and respectful. Pupils behave well around the school and work hard in lessons. The pupils that I spoke with said that they feel safe in school. They said that bullying rarely happens in school and, when it does, staff deal with it quickly.

Pupils' talents are developed through a wide range of experiences. These include sports, residential visits and trips to museums and theatres. Older pupils have opportunities to learn a range of musical instruments and take part in the Cheshire agricultural show. Pupils relish growing vegetables on the school's allotment which they then sell for charity. They value the opportunity to take on responsibilities, such as school councillors, road safety officers and science ambassadors.

Many parents and carers are positive about the improvements in teaching and pupils' behaviour since the executive headteacher took up post. A typical comment was, 'Staff are friendly and approachable. They deal with any concerns that we have.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils and want them to do as well as they can. The executive headteacher has left no stone unturned in her quest to improve the quality of education at the school. Pupils follow a broad and enriched curriculum which follows the requirements of the national curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) take part in all aspects of the curriculum. Staff know these pupils' needs well and ensure that they receive effective support. This is helping pupils with SEND to learn more as they move through the school.

The curriculum for early reading and phonics is well organised. Staff deliver the curriculum well. Children learn about letters and sounds from the day they start at the school. Teachers check that pupils read books that match their ability. Pupils who fall behind receive extra support to help them catch up quickly. The phonics curriculum in the early years prepares children well for Year 1.

Pupils develop a love of reading. Many older pupils read widely and often. Leaders place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' comprehension skills. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their favourite books. Some Year 6 pupils said that reading 'His Dark Materials' helped them to improve their own writing. Pupils use a wide range of vocabulary in their written work.

The mathematics curriculum is well planned. Teachers are aware of which topics should be taught and when. Children in the early years develop confidence in mathematics through a range of practical activities. Pupils enjoy talking about their mathematical ideas. They are given opportunities to logically build their knowledge and skills as they move through each year group. Pupils achieve well in mathematics.

Leaders have improved the science curriculum. Topics are now planned in a logical order. Pupils revisit previous learning. Through practical work and visits to zoos and science museums, pupils gain an understanding of the world around them. Encouraging pupils to be inquisitive starts right from the early years. Children are encouraged to explore and to question in order to understand simple phenomena. In the Reception class, children are able to use their knowledge to predict what factors will melt ice. Older pupils apply their mathematical skills well to calculations and graphs, such as when investigating the effect of exercise on heart rate.

The curriculum for many subjects other than English and mathematics, such as history and geography, is very new. This means that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills in these subjects. However, leaders and teachers are making sure that curriculum plans are adapted to help pupils to gain any knowledge that may have been missed out with the previous curriculum.

The school has a calm and orderly atmosphere. During break and lunchtimes, pupils play happily with each other. In lessons, pupils concentrate well and show positive attitudes to learning. They attend school regularly.

Pupils show respect and understanding for the differences between people. They learn about different faiths and beliefs. Pupils develop an understanding of what it means to be a refugee. They regularly meet visitors, such as children's authors and staff from various professions.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They told me that leaders are mindful of their workload. Staff appreciate the opportunities to work with local schools to improve their teaching skills. Some subject leaders are new to their roles. Leaders are aware that they need to provide greater support to these staff, including subject-specific training.

Governors challenge and support leaders effectively. Leaders and governors have welcomed the support of the local authority and the school improvement leader from the Weaver Trust in reviewing and developing the school's curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of vigilance in the school. All checks on staff are complete and up to date. Staff and governors receive training in safeguarding. Staff know how to report issues. Leaders are tenacious in following these up. Records are detailed. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils are well supported. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, for example when they are online. Staff and parents agree that pupils are safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have planned a well-structured and coherent curriculum. The plans for some subjects are relatively new and have not had sufficient time to become established across the school. As the new plans are implemented, some gaps have emerged in pupils' knowledge. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum plans are successfully delivered so that pupils make up for any gaps in their learning in order that they know more and remember more in these subjects.
- Some subject leaders are new to their roles. They are beginning to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of what is taught in their subject areas. Leaders have begun to provide focused training and support for these teachers. Leaders should continue this work so that subject leaders can carry out their roles consistently well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Comberbach Primary School to be good on 7–8 June 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	111152
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10122124
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Matthew Lord
Executive Headteacher	Annette Williams
Website	www.comberbach.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 June 2016

Information about this school

- The school has experienced some changes in leadership since the last inspection. The executive headteacher was appointed in 2019. She is also the chief executive officer of the Weaver multi-academy trust. Two new assistant headteachers were appointed in 2019. They were previously subject leaders in Comberbach Primary School.
- Since September 2017, the school has had provision for two-year-olds.
- The school is in the process of becoming incorporated into the Weaver Trust.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, I met with the executive headteacher, two assistant headteachers and groups of subject leaders and teachers.
- I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also met with the school improvement leader from the Weaver Trust and a representative of the local authority.
- I spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. I also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.

- I reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school’s self-evaluation, improvement plans and attendance records. I also looked at minutes of governing body meetings.
- To inspect safeguarding, I looked at safeguarding policies and reviewed the school’s record of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. I met with the designated safeguarding leaders. I also spoke to pupils and staff about safeguarding and considered parents’ views.
- I spoke with parents before school to gather their views. I considered the 103 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire and the 103 free-text responses. I considered the 12 responses to the staff survey.
- I started the inspection by focusing on reading and phonics, mathematics and science. I visited a sample of lessons in these subjects, met with subject leaders, reviewed pupils’ work and had discussions with teachers and a small group of pupils. I observed staff listening to pupils read.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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