

Inspection of Combs Infant School

Lesser Lane, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Combs High Peak, Derbyshire SK23 9UZ

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2022

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 16 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and say they feel safe at Combs School. The unique location adds to pupils' enjoyment and pride in their environment. The school's vision of, 'a school with a view' is not only lived out through the picturesque landscapes: leaders say, 'we look forwards and are outward looking'. This shows through the strong community links and the inclusive nature of the school.

The expectation for all pupils is high. They have made their own class rules. Pupils know and follow the class routines well. They enjoy having their own school responsibility. These include distributing fruit, looking after the equipment shed and being line monitors.

Pupils behave well. They genuinely care for one another and know how to be kind. Relationships between pupils and staff are respectful. Playtime is a happy and enjoyable time. Children in the early years play together and know how to share. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour. Bullying rarely happens. If it does, leaders deal with it quickly.

All pupils are personally greeted each morning by an adult. Parents and carers value the caring nature of leaders and staff. They say leaders are supportive and approachable.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to do well. The curriculums for some subjects such as English and mathematics, are well planned. They build up the knowledge pupils should know step by step. This is not the case for the foundation subjects or the wider areas of the early years curriculum.

Leaders do not regularly check the quality of pupils' work. Some pupils say the work is 'easy'. For example, some children in the early years learn initial sounds when they can already read three-letter words. Some pupils do not complete activities that match what they should be learning. The teaching of writing is not yet consistent. Not all pupils develop their writing skills as quickly as they could.

Leaders do not consistently check the effectiveness of the curriculum pupils receive, including the early years provision. In some lessons, teachers check what pupils know and have learned. However, they are not yet checking consistently well. Pupils do not always remember what they have learned. Leaders check what pupils know in mathematics and reading. However, they do not always use this information to plan what pupils do next.

Reading is a priority. The teaching of the new phonics scheme has started to show an impact on pupils' reading ability. Teachers identify pupils who may be falling

behind. Support is in place to help these pupils catch up. Leaders have not yet ensured that the reading books match the sounds that pupils already know. For pupils who are more confident readers, the reading curriculum is not yet ambitious enough. Pupils are not becoming fluent readers as quickly as they could.

Pupils have good attitudes to their learning. They are eager to learn. They have a calm and purposeful start to the day. Low-level disruption rarely happens. If it does, teachers deal with it and learning is not disturbed.

Children in the early years enjoy their rotunda-shaped building. The 'classroom without corners' is a vibrant place for children to enjoy learning together. Leaders support children well to recognise key vocabulary and numbers in their environment. Children enjoy learning outdoors and caring for the class guinea pigs, Sparkle and Nibbles.

Pupils with SEND achieve well in lessons. Staff receive training to help support these pupils in the classroom. Teachers adapt learning to ensure they meet individual needs.

There are opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths. They have an age-appropriate understanding of a range of religions. Leaders understand the importance of pupils learning about cultures different from their own. Staff and visitors share their own experiences of culture. For example, pupils are proud of learning to say 'hello' in Swahili during a geography lesson.

The forest school helps pupils to develop their own interests and talents. Pupils say this is the highlight of their week. Teachers use the forest school to teach about staying safe, for example fire and water safety. There are clubs available for all pupils to attend. These include gardening, Zumba and book club.

The school's leadership has recently gone through a time of uncertainty. Leaders are working hard to make the necessary improvements to the provision in the school.

Staff feel supported by leaders with their workload and their well-being. Governors involve themselves in all aspects of school life. They are fulfilling their statutory duties.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take safeguarding seriously. All staff receive training and are knowledgeable about safeguarding children. They know how to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff know how to report concerns. Leaders act quickly to support pupils and their families following a concern. Leaders work well with outside agencies to secure the relevant support. Leaders complete the necessary checks when recruiting new members of staff.

Staff teach pupils about potential risks. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not fully identified the knowledge pupils should learn in the foundation subjects in key stage 1, and the wider areas in the early years. Pupils do not always remember what they have learned. Leaders should ensure there is clarification around what pupils should learn and when, so that they build their knowledge securely over time.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics scheme. They have not ensured that the books match the sounds pupils already know. Pupils cannot reliably read the books they are given. Leaders need to ensure that the books pupils are given match what pupils know so they become fluent readers as quickly as they can.
- The teaching of writing is inconsistent. Pupils do not develop their writing skills as quickly as they could. They do not write accurately and precisely. Leaders need to ensure that pupils receive the support they need to become confident writers.
- Leaders do not regularly check on the effectiveness of the quality of education being delivered and the early years provision. As a result, they are not ensuring the high expectations of what they want pupils to learn are consistently being met. Leaders should ensure they have an accurate view of the quality of all aspects of the school's provision so that they can act promptly to bring about the necessary improvements.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	112525
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10199273
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Nick Boden
Headteacher	Joanna Sweatmore
Website	www.combsinfantschool.com
Date of previous inspection	11 September 2006

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up their post in September 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, art and geography. As part of these deep dives, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, visited a sample of lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work, listened to pupils read and held discussions with teachers and pupils. Inspectors also reviewed curriculum documentation for other subjects.

- An inspector met with members of the local governing body and the chair of governors.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also spoke informally to parents on arrival at the school gate. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s survey for the school’s staff.
- An inspector met with the school’s designated lead for safeguarding to check the effectiveness of the school’s arrangements to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including that relating to: safeguarding; governance; recruitment; behaviour; exclusions; the use of pupil premium; SEND and attendance.

Inspection team

Anita Denman, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Helen Atkins

Ofsted Inspector

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