

Inspection of a good school: Combe Martin Primary School

Hangman Path, Combe Martin, Ilfracombe, Devon EX34 0DF

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 March 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Combe Martin is a friendly and welcoming school. Leaders work hard to build trusting relationships within the school community. This helps pupils to feel valued and safe.

Throughout the school, pupils learn and work together well. However, some aspects of the curriculum are not designed effectively. Where this is the case, pupils do not build their knowledge well enough. The youngest children enjoy learning and developing their ideas. Older pupils concentrate and work hard. They cooperate with each other and with staff. Pupils follow established routines, which helps the school to run smoothly.

Pupils play respectfully together at playtimes. They appreciate the support of the Year 6 play leaders. They say that this helps them to be even kinder to each other. Pupils know that asking for help from an adult, if they have a problem, is the right thing to do. They say that bullying is rare, but it can happen. Pupils have confidence in teachers to respond to any concerns that they raise with them.

Residential trips and outdoor pursuits are an important part of the school's work to develop pupils' confidence. These trips start in Year 2 with a 'shark sleepover'. Pupils enjoy a range of after-school clubs, including gymnastics, French and football.

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

The new leadership team is ambitious for pupils. Leaders are reviewing and updating the curriculum. Leaders have targeted the right areas first. Effective curriculums for English and mathematics are in place. This is true of some other subjects too. However, some subject curriculums are not designed well enough. Leaders are aware of this, but their work to improve these subjects is at an early stage. In these subjects, the important knowledge pupils need to know and remember is not set out clearly. The curriculums do

not show how pupils' knowledge should build step by step over time. Teachers' assessment does not focus on the most important content. Leaders do not know the gaps in pupils' knowledge and how to shape future learning. Consequently, some pupils are not learning or remembering important concepts.

Developing a love of language and reading is evident across the school. This starts in Nursery and Reception. Leaders have created an exciting environment where children can explore their interests and enjoy books. In Reception, the teaching of early reading and writing prepares children well for key stage 1. The English curriculum for older pupils centres on appealing books that help to enhance pupils' language and comprehension. Pupils enjoy using the well-resourced and comfortable library.

Leaders' work on improving the early reading curriculum is successful. They have organised the content of the phonics programme effectively. Teachers model sounds accurately and deliver learning precisely. They check pupils' understanding and provide them with the right help to close gaps in their knowledge. As a result, pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are mastering the sounds they need to read words and become fluent readers. Leaders provide parents with important information on how to support their child's reading at home.

In mathematics, pupils with SEND receive support that matches their individual needs well. This allows them to study the same curriculum as their peers. In key stage 2, leaders prioritise reading skills over other areas of the curriculum, as they see this is essential for future learning.

Character development is seen as the foundation for pupils' learning. Fundamental British values are promoted effectively through the curriculum. Pupils know the importance of respect for each other. They understand that they should be understanding even if others hold views with which they do not agree. Leaders give pupils the opportunity to take responsibility and develop their leadership skills. For example, pupils elect representatives to the school council. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. They understand that their behaviour has consequences for themselves and others. Pupils acknowledge the shared responsibility for making the school a safe and happy place for everyone.

Staff are proud to be part of the school and work together as a team. They feel supported by leaders. Most parents would recommend the school to other parents, but a significant minority would not. Leaders' communication with parents is not as effective as it could be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils know who the trusted adults are. They know that staff will listen to their concerns or worries. Leaders make it clear that bullying and harassment are not tolerated. Pupils learn about healthy relationships in their personal, social and health education lessons.

Staff receive training so they can spot signs of abuse and report any concerns. Leaders know the issues that affect their community and work with external agencies to provide families with early help.

The school has suitable policies in place to raise awareness among staff and parents about the dangers of sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, the important knowledge pupils need to know, and the order in which they need to learn it, has not been set out clearly. As a result, pupils are not developing their knowledge as well as they could. Leaders need to set out the important knowledge that all pupils need to know at each stage of their learning so that they build their knowledge well over time.
- Assessment practice is not effective in identifying what pupils know and can do in some foundation subjects. As a result, leaders do not understand the precise gaps in pupils' knowledge. Therefore, learning is not adapted to address this. Leaders need to put in place effective assessment that identifies gaps in pupils' knowledge.

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/outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Combe Martin Primary School, to be good in 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 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	145764
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10256724
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	164
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sharon Beckwith
Headteacher	Dee Seddon
Website	https://combemartin-sch.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Combe Martin Primary School converted to become an academy school in October 2018. When its predecessor school, Combe Martin Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- This school is part of Alumnis Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school runs a nursery for children aged two to four years.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school club.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other school staff and trust leaders.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject

leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector reviewed curriculum planning and pupils' work across other subjects in the curriculum.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour when arriving at school, in lessons and during breaktimes.
- The inspector reviewed and sampled leaders' checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and reviewed safeguarding records.
- The inspector reviewed and discussed support plans for pupils with SEND.
- The inspector considered responses to the Ofsted survey, Ofsted Parent View, and met with parents on the school playground.

Inspection team

Gareth Simons, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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