

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **COMBE DOWN CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Bath

LEA area: Bath and North East Somerset

Unique reference number: 109230

Headteacher: Mr P Buckley

Reporting inspector: Mr C Kessell  
20695

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 246900

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Summer Lane Combe Down Bath
Postcode:	BA2 5JX
Telephone number:	01225 840324
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L Wishart
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Combe Down CE Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Bath and serves an area of predominantly private housing. It is larger than most other primary schools with 376 pupils on roll; 181 boys and 195 girls. The school provides education for pupils between the ages of 4 and 11. The majority of pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language, but none are at the early stages of learning English. At three per cent, the proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is below average. Fourteen per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs; this is below average. The majority of these pupils are identified as having specific learning difficulties. Three pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is above average. Their social skills are well above average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good school. It is popular with parents and the local community and is oversubscribed. By the time pupils leave the school, they attain high standards in English and mathematics. Pupils have very good attitudes and they are well motivated to learn. Pupils' behaviour is very good as is the quality of their relationships. Teaching is consistently good and literacy and numeracy skills are particularly well promoted. The headteacher provides the school with positive leadership and, together with the deputy head and a hard working and committed team of staff and governors, is effective in ensuring that pupils receive a good quality education. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- At the end of Key Stages 1 and 2<sup>1</sup> pupils achieve high standards in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good and pupils learn effectively.
- The school is well managed and this ensures that pupils receive a good quality education.
- Very good moral and social development contributes well to the very positive attitudes, behaviour and relationships found in the school.
- The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in science could be higher.
- The organisation of the school curriculum.
- Aspects of the school's accommodation.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to the parents and carers of all pupils in the school.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected in March 1998. The positive features identified then have been maintained. The quality of teaching is still good and the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are strengths of the school. These make a significant contribution to the enthusiastic learning that takes place. The school has sustained high standards in English and mathematics and the school's trend of improvement has kept pace with the national trend. The key issues from the previous report have been tackled successfully. Schemes of work and policies for different subjects are now in place and assessment procedures have improved. The issues related to the management of the school have been addressed particularly the governors' role in the school's development. The school is well placed to build on its many strengths and improve still further. There is a clear, shared commitment to improvement amongst the staff who are very receptive to new ideas and advice.

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<sup>1</sup> Key Stage 1 caters for pupils aged 5 to 7 and refers to pupils who are in Years 1 and 2.  
Key Stage 2 caters for pupils aged 7 to 11 and refers to pupils who are in Years 3 to 6.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools <sup>2</sup>
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	A	A	A
Mathematics	B	A	A	A
Science	C	B	C	D

  

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

The information shows that in the 2002 National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 6, standards were well above average in English and mathematics and average in science. When the results are compared with similar schools, pupils reached standards well above average in English and mathematics but below average in science. The trend of attainment over the last three years has been consistently high in English and mathematics, but less consistent in science. However, the school's overall trend of improvement, that includes the results from all three subjects, has kept pace with the progress seen nationally in the tests.

In 2002 the results of the national tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 2 indicate that their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was well above the national average. Standards in all three aspects have been higher than those found in the majority of schools for the last three years with, the exception of mathematics in 2000, when standards were average. Standards in reading were well above average when compared with similar schools. Standards in writing and mathematics were above average.

The findings of the inspection very much reflect the attainment in National Curriculum tests with English and mathematics being the stronger subjects. Although the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected Level 4, or above, in science was slightly higher than the other two subjects, the proportion who achieved the higher Level 5, was not so high. The pupils' achievement in English and mathematics is good, but it is less consistent in science. The school achieved its statutory target for English in 2002, but was slightly below in its target for mathematics, despite the high standards achieved. The targets were challenging. The school's targets for 2003 indicate that the high standards in English and mathematics are likely to be maintained. These targets are both realistic and challenging.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to learn and are highly motivated to produce work of high quality.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school ensures a positive learning environment. The older pupils are outstanding role models for the youngest pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. When required in lessons, the pupils show very good independence. Those with responsibilities, such as the pupils who act as monitors in Year 6, carry out their duties maturely and sensibly. The strength of relationships throughout the school is a notable feature.
Attendance	Attendance is good and above the national average.

<sup>2</sup> 'Similar schools' are defined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; this measure has been found to be significantly related to the levels of attainment normally found in schools nationally.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. At Key Stages 1 and 2, the teaching of English and mathematics is particularly successful. These lessons are well planned and teachers have high expectations of pupils. Basic skills are continually reinforced and the management and control of the pupils is very good. In the majority of lessons, pupils are well motivated, maintain good concentration, and have a good understanding of their learning. The pupils always apply a lot of effort to their work and generally acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. However, the teaching of science is not so effective as that of English and mathematics. Teaching in the Foundation Stage<sup>3</sup> is also effective because the teachers have made good progress in linking the curriculum to the nationally recognised areas of learning. They have a good understanding of how young children learn. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported ensuring that they make equal gains in their learning to their classmates. The school meets the needs of all its pupils well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent and a good range of music tuition is provided. The school has very effective strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, but there are some areas for development with regard to the curriculum. For example, with the exception of Year 6, the amount of time spent on teaching science is lower than the majority of schools.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Provision is very well organised and the school recognises the needs of these pupils well. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of these pupils and classroom assistants provide good quality support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils at the early stages of learning to speak English and those pupils who do speak English as an additional language make the same good progress as their classmates.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall with the pupils' moral and social development being promoted very well. These areas have a strong impact on the quality of pupils' learning.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory action is taken by the school to ensure the pupils' welfare overall. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are particularly effective and the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have developed well since the previous inspection. The teacher with responsibility for assessment has a good understanding of what the school does well and of the areas needing further improvement. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the pupils.

The parents' views of the school are very good. An active 'Friends of the School' association is very successful, provides good support, and makes a valuable contribution to school life.

<sup>3</sup> The Foundation Stage relates to children from the age of three to the end of the reception year.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides the school with good leadership and management. He has been a pivotal figure in the development, improvement and popularity of the school over many years. He is supported well by the deputy head and other senior staff. It is very noticeable how well the staff work together in continuing to move the school forwards. However, the school's development plan is brief and does not extend beyond the current academic year.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors are very supportive of the school and have a clear understanding of the school's many strengths, as well as areas for development. They are effective in fulfilling their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively and performance targets are in place for all pupils in English and mathematics. The school has a clear understanding of what it does well and areas for development. Staff and governors are always looking to improve.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes effective use of the resources given to support pupils' learning. In seeking to provide best value, the school satisfactorily compares its performance with others and looks to analyse the results of major spending decisions.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a good atmosphere and the school is friendly and welcoming. Children like school.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good and new pupils settle into the school well.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and pupils make good progress.</li> <li>• The school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. Older pupils look after the younger ones.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school accommodation.</li> </ul>

The observations above are taken from the pre-inspection meeting, which was attended by eight parents, and the 153 responses to the parents' questionnaire. Overall, parents are proud of the school and inspectors would fully support all of the positive comments. The school's accommodation does have some unsatisfactory elements. For example, some of the classrooms are in poor condition and the site does not lend itself to delivering some subjects well, for example physical education. A new school hall is being built during the current term and this will enhance the premises, but there is still work to be done. A small minority of parents identified homework and the closeness in which the school works with parents as areas that they would like to see improved. These aspects are judged to be at least satisfactory.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

#### **At the end of both key stages pupils achieve high standards in English and mathematics.**

1. The results of the national tests in 2002, taken at the end of Key Stage 1, showed pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics to be well above the national average. When the results are compared with similar schools, standards were well above average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. High standards in national tests has been a feature since the previous inspection, although there have been some variations from year to year. For example, standards in mathematics were average in 2000, whilst those in reading in 2001 were not as high as in 2002. Much of this is due to differences in ability of the groups taking the tests, and, where the school is aware of any areas for development in their teaching and learning, they are quick to respond. For example, measures to improve the standard of pupils' handwriting and spelling are identified in the current school development plan. Inspection findings support the test results and standards continue to be well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Although pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are above average, they make good progress, and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.
2. The results of the national tests in 2002 taken at the end of Key Stage 2 showed that pupils attained standards that were well above average in English and mathematics. When compared with similar schools, standards in English and mathematics were also well above average. As in Key Stage 1, this pattern of high attainment in these subjects is one that has been evident at Key Stage 2 for a number of years. The high standards observed during the previous inspection have been sustained, both in terms of schools nationally and similar schools. The school's trend of improvement has kept up with the national trend. Inspection findings very much reflect the attainment in the national tests at the end of both key stages.
3. The school places significant emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy skills, and the National Literacy Strategy has been implemented well. Particular attention is placed on planning, and work is well organised to ensure that pupils of different ability are given appropriate work but are also challenged effectively. This was seen to good effect, for instance, in Year 2 when pupils looked at rhyming words and syllables, as they listened and discussed A. A. Milne's, *'When I was One'*. The majority of pupils read fluently and expressively and were able to produce their own amended versions of the poem they had discussed maturely as a class activity. Scrutiny of pupils' previous work shows that most pupils are able to write using appropriate sentence construction and correct punctuation. Spelling is accurate and pupils take a pride in their work. Presentation is good. The higher-attaining pupils complete more sustained writing, with a wider and more creative vocabulary. After the good start pupils receive in Key Stage 1, standards are maintained well as they move through Key Stage 2. By Year 6, pupils' writing is well organised and there is evidence of pupils enjoying a good range of writing experiences, such as note-taking, drafting, instructional writing and producing work for a younger audience. As part of a topic on journalism, pupils in Year 6 were observed looking carefully at newspaper texts and showing a good understanding of the specific vocabulary used by journalists. They also recognised that behind some newspaper headlines and articles there are hidden meanings. The majority of pupils contributed to this discussion and made astute observations about newspaper articles.
4. In mathematics, pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of number, and their mental agility skills are very well developed. This was seen to good effect as the pupils played 'number bingo' at the start of a numeracy session. The pupils' knowledge exceeded addition and subtraction facts to ten, as they confidently answered number problems to thirty. Their mental recall of number facts was very secure. When identifying two-dimensional shapes, the pupils were quick to identify common features, including those for pentagons, hexagons and octagons. The pupils had a good mathematical vocabulary and were confident when discussing their work. They explained why their answers were correct, with higher-attaining pupils explaining their mathematical thinking. The majority of pupils currently in Year 2 have already reached the level of attainment expected by the end of Year 2. A significant percentage of pupils are likely to achieve the higher level 3. As with English, these standards are sustained in Key Stage 2 with pupils in Year 6 achieving standards

that are well above average. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of place value and appreciate the relationship between decimals, percentages and fractions. They solve number problems, often using their own strategies. Work is well organised and well presented. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 showed a good understanding of handling and interpreting data as they studied information provided by line graphs.

5. The school has done well to sustain the high standards found in English and mathematics at the previous inspection.

### **Teaching is good and pupils learn effectively.**

6. The quality of teaching and learning across the school is good and this has been maintained since the previous inspection. During the previous inspection, there was some unsatisfactory teaching and this no longer exists. Overall, 74 per cent of lessons were good or better, with the remainder being satisfactory. Two lessons were judged to be very good, both in Year 3. One was in physical education, the other in science. The findings of the inspection support the parents' positive views about teaching and learning. When responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, 98 per cent of parents agreed that teaching in the school was good. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents' comments included how impressed some were at the quality of learning they had seen and how work is planned and organised well for groups of different ability. These observations were confirmed during the inspection. At the same meeting, homework was identified as developing appropriately as the pupils moved through the school, although 12 per cent of parents responding to the questionnaire disagreed that their children were given the right amount of homework. Discussions with pupils in Year 6 indicated that homework provision is at least satisfactory and supports pupils' learning in school effectively.
7. The first thing that is noticeable about the teaching at Combe Down is the quality of classroom relationships. These are consistently very good, as is the control and management of the pupils. This benefits pupils' learning. Pupils are enthusiastic, interested in their work and productive. This was well illustrated in a literacy lesson in Year 4, as pupils explored chronology in texts using the story *'Alice in Wonderland'* as an example. All of the pupils showed great interest in the task, were attentive, involved, and eager to contribute to class discussion. This mature approach to learning, which is seen throughout the whole school, is an outcome of the good teaching. Literacy and numeracy are taught particularly well and this contributes to the high standards found in English and mathematics. Very good use is made of the literacy and numeracy strategies and these lessons are well planned. Good attention is paid to ensuring that pupils of all abilities are catered for well, including pupils with special educational needs. For example, in a Year 6 numeracy lesson, a small group of pupils received good quality support from a classroom assistant as part of their maths group education plan. Expectations are high, both in terms of pupils' behaviour and academic performance. However, classrooms are not intense and oppressive, but relaxed purposeful environments, where pupils enjoy learning and have a good knowledge of what they are doing. When questioned, pupils talked confidently about their work and what was expected of them. In a Year 5 information and communication technology lesson, pupils explained the use of spreadsheets for carrying out calculations and producing costings confidently. This lesson also showed the pupils' ability to work independently. As only half a class could work in the school computer suite, the remaining pupils carried out work related to probability, working by themselves.
8. Another feature of many lessons is the interactions that teachers have with their pupils. They know their class members well and are very alert to how pupils are responding to activities and tasks. However, on occasions, better use could be made of time limits to ensure that pupils achieve an expected amount of work and, although extension activities are often identified for the higher-attaining pupils, there is not always a request that these are completed. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. The reception classes are warm and purposeful and the children settle quickly into the school and their new surroundings. At the start of the current academic year, the teachers recognised the need to plan more effectively in accordance with national guidance. The recognised areas of learning for children of this age are now effectively planned for, but more needs to be done with regard to assessing children's progress, against learning objectives, and classroom assistants could be used more effectively and productively in this process.

9. Overall, classroom assistants contribute well to pupils' learning, particularly the support offered to pupils with special educational needs. However, on a minority of occasions their role is too 'passive' during teacher introductions to lessons and they are merely spectators. At these times, better use could be made of their skills.
10. The very good teaching observed in Year 3 was characterised by outstanding relationships, very good teacher intervention and dynamic pace. In these lessons, pupils learnt very well. The depressing school hall came to life, as pupils undertook a very active warm-up session that started an indoor games lesson developing hockey skills. The pupils identified the need and importance of warming-up and showed very good physical effort. While the warm-up session built progressively, the class teacher ensured that the pupils were breathless so that she could instigate a discussion about changes in the body after exercise. As the main part of the lesson developed, there was a very good balance between teaching points and activity. Questioning was brief and to the point, so that no time was lost. Good stick and ball control was continually emphasised which resulted in pupils being careful and considered as they used hockey sticks to pass a ball in a confined space. The pace of the lesson was maintained and groups of pupils who succeeded in activities were challenged further. Pupils were encouraged to observe each other to improve their own practice. Similarly, a Year 3 science lesson, about teeth and eating, reflected many of the positive features identified above. Very good questioning, which was targeted at most of the pupils, kept the pupils motivated and interested. Pupils were expected to expand or justify their answers and all ideas were valued which encouraged everyone to contribute. The use of humour made the lesson fun and subject-specific vocabulary was continually reinforced. As pupils started the written part of the lesson, the teacher monitored what all pupils were doing very closely. During both of these lessons no time was lost and much was expected of the pupils. However, they were prepared to respond very well because of the high quality teaching.

**The school is well managed and this ensures that pupils receive a good quality education.**

11. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, his senior staff and the governors. The headteacher provides leadership that is sharply focused on ensuring that the high standards pupils reach in many aspects of school life are maintained. Governors, staff, and parents, see him as, very much, the pivotal figure for the school and its continued development. Ninety-eight per cent of the parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school is well led and managed. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents were impressed that the headteacher knows all of the pupils by name and that they react well to him. 'The school gives children a good start in life', was a comment from one parent, who attributed much of this to the headteacher. The headteacher has high expectations in terms of pupils' achievements and behaviour. When answering the questionnaires, several parents commented that the headteacher does not respond well to criticism or negative comments. This was not the case during the inspection. Both the headteacher and his staff were very receptive to new ideas and suggestions. Some elements of the headteacher's leadership are very good. On entering the school one cannot fail to notice the positive, purposeful and friendly atmosphere. It is quite clear that pupils enjoy coming to school and the teachers enjoy teaching. The happy, smiling faces of the pupils are testament to this. The headteacher is very good at identifying the strengths of the school, particularly in terms of teaching and learning. Parents commented that he is not afraid to delegate, which allows other staff to develop and use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the pupils. The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs is an example of this. The school operates very well as a successful team involving pupils, parents, staff, governors and the community. The headteacher has contributed much to this.
12. The headteacher is well supported by other staff with management responsibilities. During the inspection, staff with specific responsibilities conducted themselves well in interviews with inspectors regarding curriculum subjects or aspects of school life. The deputy head is an effective manager with a good understanding of current educational issues. He is also well respected, and a number of staff identified him as providing professional expertise and support with areas that were being developed in the school. The head and deputy head's different styles of management complement each other well to make them an effective team.

13. The governing body is fully involved in many aspects of the school's management and is effective in its work. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and the governors themselves would recognise that they have developed well over the last four years, particularly in putting together an efficient committee structure. Many of the governors are frequent visitors to the school and many give freely of their time to help in classes for example, by hearing pupils read or undertaking monitoring roles with the curriculum or special educational needs provision. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of the quality of the school's provision, especially in terms of teaching and learning, and of the quality of work that pupils produce. The relationships between governors and staff are clear, visible and genuine, and governors are well placed in their role as 'critical friends' as well as being supportive to the school in the work that it undertakes. Although the governors are involved in the implementation of the current school development plan, they were not involved in its conception, as they have been during previous years. Although the plan identifies the school's development priorities for the current academic year, it does not extend beyond this, nor does it identify an educational vision for the school and what action is necessary to bring this about. Development planning has been dominated since the previous inspection by accommodation issues, particularly a new school hall but this does not excuse the limited agenda for improvement identified in the current plan.

**Very good moral and social development contributes well to the very positive attitudes, behaviour and relationships found in the school.**

14. Moral and social development are well promoted and strengths of the school. Social development is a significant feature of most lessons. Pupils in all classes are encouraged to work in pairs, or small groups, and learn the importance of working together. This was seen in the reception classes, as the children measured each other's feet in the class 'shoe shops', and in a science lesson in Year 1, where the pupils searched for partners with similar physical characteristics, such as eye colour. The provision for pupil's social development is further enhanced by school events, such as 'Sports Week', or 'Arts Week', and residential trips to the Isle of Wight and to France or Holland. When responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, 99 per cent of parents agreed that the school helped pupils become mature and responsible. Older pupils in Year 6 are able to become school monitors, which gives them responsibility for looking after younger pupils when break-times are indoors because of wet weather, and as they move around the school. Their work was observed during the inspection and they are effective in what they do. They are also able to explain their roles very clearly and coherently to visitors. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents commented on how happy they were that older pupils helped the younger ones. Pupils through the school are very sociable. The pupils are welcoming to visitors, and happy to hold discussions about class work or talk proudly about their school. The newly formed school council will also contribute to pupils' social development with representatives from all Key Stage 2 classes being elected by their classmates. The school has strong links with the local community that supports the pupils' social development. The parents identified the annual school fête as an important community event that keeps 'growing' every year.
15. Moral development is also very good and pupils have a strong perception of what is right and wrong, and how the actions of others can impact on the day-to-day wellbeing of other people. Parents believe that the school promotes good attitudes and values and that a strong emphasis is placed on this. Christian values are well promoted, but in a broad sense, with respect for other religions and cultures. Ninety-four per cent of parents agreed with the parents' questionnaire statement: *behaviour is good*, and, at the pre-inspection meeting, parents were quite clear that pupils are very well behaved and that there is no bullying. All adults in the school act as very good role models for the pupils, successfully promoting honesty and fairness. During the inspection no inappropriate behaviour was observed. In contrast, during a whole-school assembly held in the cramped school hall, pupils were seen to be helpful and uncomplaining, as they were shuffled together, before listening to a well-presented story about 'sharing' that was adapted from a Buddhist script. "We're like sardines in a tin!" commented a pupil in Year 6, but in an amused and friendly manner. The school hall also emptied in a calm and very orderly manner.
16. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils in the lessons observed was judged to be very good overall. The school's behaviour policy contributes well to this, as do the high expectations of the headteacher and staff. During the inspection the weather was extremely inclement, and many of

the pupils were unable to get out of their classrooms during lunch and break times. However, the relationships between pupils remained amicable and the calm orderly atmosphere observed around the school was kept to consistently high levels. Pupils settled immediately to their work after their break, despite having little time outside to 'let off steam'. Pupils continued to move around the school site sensibly and remained enthusiastic about their work. Despite the 'monsoon' conditions outside, to the pupils it was as if nothing had happened.

### **The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent.**

17. The inspection team would support the views of 92 per cent of parents responding to the parents' questionnaire about the range of activities outside lessons. Extra-curricular provision is excellent and a credit to the hard work, commitment and enthusiasm of the staff. The range is exceptional. Beyond those clubs normally found in schools, pupils can participate in Italian and French classes and appreciate global music. It comes as a surprise that five per cent of parents disagreed that the school offered a good range of activities. Seventeen extra-curricular activities is a greater number of clubs than one would normally expect to find in a school the size of Combe Down. The provision contributes well to the pupils' social development. Some parents may consider the provision inadequate, because a number of activities are only open to pupils in Key Stage 2 and some are oversubscribed, thus preventing membership. It is not unusual for pupils in Key Stage 1 to have more limited opportunities but at least they will be spoilt for choice, as they get older.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

#### **Standards in science could be higher.**

18. The 2002 test results at the end of Key Stage 2 indicated that standards in science were average and not as high as those found in English and mathematics. When the results are compared with similar schools, standards were below average. Since 1999, standards in science have not been as high as the other two core subjects.<sup>4</sup> Prior to this, standards were well above average, with test results in 1999 being in the top five per cent of school nationally.
19. Inspection findings reflect the most recent test results and scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that the high standards, in terms of teaching and learning, found in English and mathematics, are not always consistent in science. The pupils show an interest and enthusiasm for the subject. They approach group work sensibly and use observational skills well. Pupils in Year 6 have an appropriate understanding of how to carry out a fair test and identify variables. However, when carrying out scientific investigations and drawing conclusions, there are some inconsistencies in pupils' understanding and knowledge. Some pupils are able to explain results, whilst others identify the outcome rather than deduce why something has happened. A minority of pupils are confused with scientific vocabulary and others take too long to collate and record findings. An analysis of pupils' work indicates that the subject coverage for the older pupils is less than one would normally expect to find and evidence of experimental work is limited. The amount of teaching time allocated to science is not as high as one would find in the majority of schools. Work analysis also indicates, that although the pupils are often presented with extensive information relating to areas of study, the use of duplicated worksheets inhibits the opportunities to plan their own work. Higher-attaining pupils are not challenged as effectively as they are in English and mathematics. Nationally, the percentage of pupils who achieve the higher level 5 in science is higher than in English and mathematics; however, at Combe Down the reverse occurs, with more pupils gaining level 5 in English and mathematics.
20. The science co-ordinator is fully aware of this issue, although it is not identified in the school development plan. Staff have already met to look at good practice and current developing issues in the subject. Further developments have been identified including, a review of the teaching time spent on science, developing pupils' scientific enquiry, and providing more challenge to the higher-attaining pupils. Currently, pupils do not achieve as well in science as they do in English and mathematics.

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<sup>4</sup> The core subjects are English, mathematics and science.

## The organisation of the school curriculum.

21. Although the school offers a broad and relevant curriculum, it is not as balanced as it could be. It is recognised that English and mathematics are best taught daily but at Combe Down, these subjects dominate the morning timetable. This can lead to overlong literacy and numeracy sessions. For example, during the inspection a Year 6 class was observed undertaking mathematical activities for one hour and twenty minutes. Although the pupils remained motivated and interested, one would question the necessity for lessons of this length, when the quality of teaching and learning in the school is consistently good. Currently, the amount of teaching time allocated to mathematics is higher than in most other schools. Increasingly, many schools are timetabling three lessons in the morning to offer more flexibility and to use the mornings more productively. Although there are no statutory time allocations for National Curriculum subjects, in many instances the amount of time allocated to literacy and numeracy at Combe Down exceed the recommendations of the national strategies for these areas of learning. In science, where standards are lower, less than average teaching time is allocated through most of the school.
22. The Foundation Stage has now been in place for two years. It is not as well established in the school, as one would expect, although the teachers in the reception classes are very aware of the shortcomings and what is required to improve further. The curriculum is closely linked to the nationally recognised Early Learning Goals<sup>5</sup>, although more work is required in developing structured play activities for the children and assessing children's progress. The teachers evaluate their teaching, but there is a need for all adults working in the Foundation Stage to link the valuable information obtained from day-to-day assessments to future planning. This will ensure that tasks are planned to suit the different abilities found in the reception classes.

## Aspects of the school's accommodation.

23. At the pre-inspection meeting with parents the only area of the school identified for improvement was the accommodation. The inspectors would agree with this observation and a number of health and safety issues have been discussed with the headteacher and governors. Although a new school hall is being built during the current term, the governors recognise that there are still more improvements required. Many of the classrooms are in fact temporary buildings that are in a poor state of repair. Although there is probably just about sufficient playground space for outdoor games, the school does not have its own playing fields and this limits physical education activities. There are insufficient toilet facilities for staff and, although this might improve slightly with the new building, it still constitutes a serious concern. Despite the efforts of the school and governors, and the judgement in the previous inspection that the accommodation was unsatisfactory, it remains the same. However, despite the shortcomings, the use of the accommodation is well managed and the school is not prevented from delivering the National Curriculum

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

24. The inspection team recognises the good quality teaching and learning, the good leadership and management, and the very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils, but, in order to improve standards and the quality of education, further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- Raise standards in science by:
    - reviewing the amount of teaching time spent on the subject;
    - ensuring that higher-attaining pupils are fully challenged by providing appropriate work to different ability groups;
    - developing and promoting the scientific enquiry element of the subject further. (*Paragraphs 18, 19 and 20*)
  - Improve the curriculum organisation by:
    - considering all options with regard to timetabling and timings of subjects after reference to the publication '*Designing and Timetabling the Primary Curriculum: QCA 2002*';

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<sup>5</sup> The Early Learning Goals set out what children should achieve by the time they reach the end of the reception year in primary school.

- continuing to support all staff in the Foundation Stage with curriculum development, and developing a profile that monitors the progress of children as they progress through all the areas of learning. (*Paragraphs 21 and 22*)
- ☐ Develop the school accommodation by:
- considering the health and safety issues identified during the inspection. (*Paragraph 23*)



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	2	12	5	0	0	0
Percentage	0	11	63	26	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than five percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	376
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	52

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	14	30	44

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	12	13
	Girls	27	29	30
	Total	38	41	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (91)	93 (100)	98 (94)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	14
	Girls	29	28	29
	Total	41	41	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (89)	93 (89)	98 (94)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	27	31	58

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	23	24
	Girls	29	27	28
	Total	51	50	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (94)	86 (88)	90 (94)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	23	24	25
	Girls	29	27	30
	Total	52	51	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (83)	88 (89)	95 (87)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	366	0	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

### ***Financial information***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.1
Average class size	26.9

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	211

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	706,803
Total expenditure	657,389
Expenditure per pupil	1,753
Balance brought forward from previous year	42,484
Balance carried forward to next year	91,898

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.2

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	375
Number of questionnaires returned	153
Percentage of questionnaires returned	41

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	35	1	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	53	40	4	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	35	1	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	42	11	1	3
The teaching is good.	63	35	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	44	8	1	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	29	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	39	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	34	52	11	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	61	37	0	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	42	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	44	4	1	2