



Combs Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112525
Local Authority DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number 289312
Inspection date 11 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Martin Newell

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Lesser Lane
School category	Community		Combs, Combs
Age range of pupils	4-7		High Peak, Derbyshire SK23 9UZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01298 813120
Number on roll (school)	25	Fax number	01298 813120
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr.Nye Rowlands
		Headteacher	Mrs. Avis Curry
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average infant school serving the village of Combs and surrounding areas. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and with a statement of special educational need are all below the national average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are no pupils at an early stage of acquiring English. There is very little pupil mobility.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Combs is an outstanding school and inspection evidence fully endorses the school's judgement of its own effectiveness. The school provides outstanding value for money and enjoys great levels of support and confidence from parents and the community. A comment made by one parent and echoed by others was, 'This is a special place.' All staff go the extra-mile in meeting the needs of pupils and so ensure that pupils make exceptional progress in both their academic and social development. This is a school that is not content to rest on its laurels but instead constantly strives for excellence. The school's many successes owe much to how well it is led and managed, the high quality teaching, the care and support that envelops the school and the exciting and vibrant learning experiences that are constantly on offer. All staff and governors work extremely well together as a team and share the desire and vision to provide the best that they can for all pupils. Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors are very effective at analysing and reviewing the school's performance and in robustly tackling any weaknesses they come across. Given the small size of the school, the head successfully brings in outside agencies, specialist teachers or Local Authority support to enhance the achievement and well-being of pupils. Attainment when children start at the school covers the full ability range but is average overall. During their time in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 all pupils make exceptional progress and standards by the end of Year 2 are consistently well above the national average. Staff know individual pupils very well and their individuality is both recognised and celebrated. The very robust systems that are in place for tracking pupils' progress and for setting challenging targets mean that any dips in progress are quickly spotted and, importantly, tackled. The only relative weakness is that staff do not actively involve the pupils enough in evaluating and reviewing for themselves how well they are doing. A significant strength of the school is the quality of teaching and how it impacts on pupils' learning and achievement. Lessons bristle with pace and are packed with activities that captivate them. Pupils thrive on the challenges that are set for them and tackle them head on. The curriculum and the Foundation Stage provision on offer are outstanding because they motivate and enthuse the pupils and bring another dimension to how well they achieve. Learning is brought springing to life not only through exciting lessons and the excellent use of computers but also through a wide array of enrichment opportunities. Pupils play their part to the full in making the school what it is. Their excellent behaviour, infectious enthusiasm and readiness to take on responsibilities are a pleasure to observe. Pupils' awareness of what is needed to keep fit, healthy and safe is impressive. They clearly love coming to school and some are reluctant to leave at the end of the day. They genuinely feel that they have a voice that is listened to and the high academic successes of the school are matched in no small measure by the care, support and guidance that is constantly present for all pupils. This is a winning combination. It enables pupils to leave the school as very well rounded individuals both academically and socially, and more than well prepared to meet the challenges of the next stages of their educational lives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to evaluate and review for themselves how well they are doing and how they could improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children start at school with attainment levels that cover the full ability range and are average overall. They get off to a cracking start in the Foundation Stage where children of all abilities make excellent progress because of high quality teaching that provides a plethora of learning activities that captivate and challenge them. By the end of the reception year, standards are securely above national expectations in all areas of learning. There is no let up in the exceptional progress and achievement of all pupils, regardless of gender, ability or ethnicity, as they move through Years 1 and 2. Outstanding teaching and the setting of challenging targets, combined with a vibrant curriculum, keep pupils fully engrossed and hanging on teachers' every word. National test and assessment data and inspection evidence concur in highlighting the fact that, by the time pupils leave school, standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are well above the national average with a high percentage of pupils consistently reaching standards beyond those usually expected of seven-year-olds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. Their behaviour is exemplary and they show a tremendous work ethic and desire to do well. These qualities contribute significantly to their achievement. Staff expect a lot from the pupils in terms of taking responsibility and pupils relish this. They have even produced a glossy booklet for new pupils starting at the school telling them how good it is. Pupils run the school council and know they can make a difference. Pupils are seldom absent from school 'because we don't want to miss anything.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are reflective and thoughtful and know very well how their actions may impact on others. They have a good awareness of cultures other than their own. Pupils have a very good understanding of precisely what is needed to keep fit, healthy and safe even quoting the need for 'lots of sleep and fresh air.' Staff are excellent at raising pupils' awareness of how to keep safe and in helping them to acquire literacy, number, and information and communication technology skills that they can build on in their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Central to the school's success is the outstanding quality of teaching and learning. Teachers and the teaching assistant work together extremely well and have an innate sense of how young children learn best. An excellent balance is struck between pupils learning through finding things out for themselves, through investigations and through the direct teaching of key skills. Lessons are lively and challenging yet laced with good humour and enjoyment. Relationships are excellent and every opportunity is seized upon to enhance pupils' learning. The individual skills and talents of staff are used very effectively across the different year groups to ensure that pupils always get the best deal. Specialist teachers are brought in to enhance pupils' learning and achievement in subjects such as music and physical education. Assessment is robust and rigorous and based on thorough tracking of pupils' progress and challenging but achievable target setting. The only weakness is that staff do not involve the pupils enough in evaluating for themselves how well they are doing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and adds significantly to pupils' achievement. From the Foundation Stage to Year 2, basic skills and computer skills are developed in a highly effective manner. There are many well planned opportunities for pupils to carry out problem solving and investigative tasks and excellent use is made of computers and interactive whiteboards to enliven learning. Very good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and for higher attaining pupils. The school provides a wide variety of enrichment activities through trips, participation in musical and community events, visitors to school, working with local primary and high schools. After school and break-time clubs include music, sport and learning a modern foreign language. The headteacher's vision for a curriculum based around excellence and enjoyment is realised and is further embellished by the plentiful chances pupils have to take part in physical activity, to learn about healthy lifestyles and good citizenship and to make a telling contribution to the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This aspect of school is outstanding because pupils are cared for exceptionally well. A number of parents described the 'wonderful' atmosphere that pervades the school and contributes to pupils' feelings of security. Very thorough attention is paid to procedures for child protection, risk assessment and health and safety. Pupils are confident to talk to any adult in school about their concerns, certain that they will be listened to carefully and helped. Excellent procedures are in place for tracking pupils' academic and social development. Equally good arrangements support children's

smooth induction to school where they attend a morning a week in the last half term before they start. Strong partnerships with a variety of professionals and agencies contribute very well to supporting pupils experiencing any difficulties.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management by the headteacher are outstanding and she has ensured that the school's self-evaluation is highly effective. The headteacher has created a tremendous team spirit where all at the school are focused on maintaining high standards and quality of education for all pupils. All teaching staff are involved in evaluating the school's performance, monitoring teaching and learning and tackling any identified weaknesses in a determined manner. Under the very skilled leadership of the head, there is no sense of complacency - the bar is just set higher. This approach is at the heart of all that the school does and is a pivotal reason as to why all pupils achieve and attain so well. Governance of the school is excellent. Governors are great supporters of the school but play an influential role in both questioning and monitoring the school's performance. Based on its past track record of improvement the school is very well placed for continued success.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Children You will probably remember that I visited your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what I found out. Before I do, I would first of all like to say a big thank you for making me feel so welcome and making my visit one that I will remember for a long time. I have told your teachers how you were all so polite and that you were great ambassadors for the school. I managed to talk to lots of you and it was great to hear how much you enjoy school, the after-school clubs and all the other exciting activities that are on offer. I found so many impressive things about Combs School that it is actually an OUTSTANDING SCHOOL! Teachers and other staff make learning fun and enjoyable and help you to achieve exceptionally well. The school is excellent in the way that it helps you to learn about the importance of keeping fit, healthy and safe and works very hard at making sure you are cared for and looked after very well. Another strength is the impressive way in which your headteacher runs the school and helps to make it such an exciting place to learn. But another great strength of the school isYOU. The way you behave, how hard you work, how you contribute to the life of the school and how you care for one another are just some shining examples. I have talked to your teachers about how they can help make the school even better. They are going to ask you more often to judge for yourselves how well you think you are doing with your work and how you think you could do better. The headteacher and all the staff want the school to continue to improve. Having met you, I am sure you will play your part as well. I wish you every success in your futures. It was a pleasure and privilege to meet you. Martin Newell Lead Inspector