

Comberbach Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111152
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310518
Inspection date	4 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Maryez
Headteacher	Mrs J Groom
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Mather Drive Comberbach Northwich Cheshire CW9 6BG
Telephone number	01606 891336
Fax number	0

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement, provision in the Foundation Stage and the quality and extent of academic guidance across the school. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, nationally published assessment data, the school's own assessment records, relevant policies, observations of the school at work including visits to lessons and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions were also held with staff, members of the governing body, pupils and parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average-sized school lies in a predominantly rural area, but four fifths of pupils travel from further afield and come from a range of social and economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most pupils are White British and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. Increasing numbers of pupils are joining the school during Key Stage 2. Comberbach Primary is an Investor in People, an accredited Healthy School and also holds the Activemark Gold award for its work in sport.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support provided for them are outstanding. As parents say, 'The school brings the very best out of our children, celebrates all their achievements and gives them a confidence and a desire to learn.'

Children's skills on entry to the Reception class vary from year to year but are broadly average. Pupils leave Year 6 with above average standards in English and mathematics and therefore make good progress overall. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as their peers because of the impressive care and support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants. The school recognised that standards in science declined somewhat over the past two years but has addressed this issue effectively and attainment in the current Year 6 class is much better than in 2007. Nonetheless, pupils' skills in scientific investigation are still not fully developed.

Pupils love their school and their attendance is well above the national average. Their behaviour in class and around school is outstanding and they are courteous and welcoming to visitors. They pay attention in lessons, follow their teachers' instructions to the letter and are generally fully engaged in the activities. They enjoy their work and are often quite desperate to answer questions in class. They get on very well with each other and are more than willing to offer their classmates help when it is needed. They are delighted when their classmates succeed, whether when practising cartwheels in the gym or reaching high standards in class. For example, pupils burst into spontaneous applause after a thought-provoking presentation by pupils in a Year 6 class and were also fulsome in their praise for Year 4's assembly on Ancient Egypt.

Pupils have a perceptive awareness of how to eat healthily and are keen to offer visitors relevant advice on the elements of a good diet! They recognise the importance of keeping fit and take part in a plethora of games and sports, mixed gender tag-rugby and football, for example. Pupils have a wide range of responsibilities in school, run clubs and competitions and give excellent support to a variety of charities. Year 6 enjoy paired reading with the 'little ones' and comment, 'We make friends fast here because everyone helps everyone else.'

The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are examples of outstanding practice in all key stages. Teachers treat their pupils with the utmost dignity and respect and smiling from all ages is the order of the day. Teachers use the electronic whiteboard with consummate skill as both a teaching and learning tool and pupils respond eagerly to their challenging questions.

There is an appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics and information and communication technology in the curriculum and pupils are able to develop their speaking and listening skills across all subjects. As a result, writing continues to improve steadily and pupils are also not afraid to present their work orally to their classmates. There is good range of extra-curricular activities and the school is rightly proud of its reputation in sport. Teachers have spent considerable time developing curricular links between the Reception class and Year 1 but this continuity of approach and content is not as evident between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

One parent spoke for many with the comment, 'I feel happy knowing that the school is excellent at helping to build my child's confidence and self-esteem.' Indeed, pastoral care is outstanding and the school does its utmost to support each individual, irrespective of ability. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified rapidly and with accuracy. The school is therefore able to intervene at just the right time to make sure that any

possible underachievement is addressed. Systems to ensure that pupils are safe are fully in place and meet current guidelines.

Academic guidance is of the same high quality and pupils have a keen understanding of how well they are progressing, their targets for the future and how to meet them. Marking of pupils' work is regular, detailed and offers pupils accurate advice on how they can improve their work.

The inspirational headteacher leads by example and engenders high levels of teamwork among both staff and pupils. Complacency is not tolerated and there is a clear vision, shared by all teachers and support staff, for development. The governing body knows the school's strengths and areas for development well. Members are fully supportive of what the school stands for and of what it tries to do for the pupils in its charge. However, they hold the school rigorously to account and are never afraid to question the leadership if they feel it necessary to do so. Comberbach Primary is a school which has outstanding sporting and curricular links with other schools and in which its pupils come first. It has good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision and outcomes in the Foundation Stage have improved markedly since the previous inspection. More effective use of the outdoor area now leads to children developing very well physically and emotionally. In addition, there is now an ideal balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated learning. As a result, children are most creative in their play and have even made a pretend village with little more than cardboard boxes. Parents recognise the improvements in provision and believe, in their words, 'Our children have become very secure readers, writers and mathematicians through play.' Inspection evidence confirms this and visitors have been able to buy tickets for a train journey to Egypt and have also been offered ice creams to take with them en route! Teaching is outstanding and adults make copious notes on children's learning in the classroom and outside in order to plan the curriculum so that it meets the needs and interests of each individual. Leadership and management are of the highest order. Leaders have a profound understanding of the implications of the very latest thinking on early years education and recognise that children's personal development has a direct bearing on their future academic success.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop pupils' investigative skills in science, in order that improvements in standards already noted can be maintained.
- Make closer curriculum links between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in order to ensure a smooth transition for pupils in their learning.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you so much for your wonderful welcome when I inspected your school recently. I enjoyed visiting your classes and watching you learn and I am particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to me at lunchtime on Friday. The Year 4 assembly on the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb was a delight to attend and I know all the parents and grandparents who were there enjoyed it very much too! I would now like to tell you the good things about your school.

Comberbach Primary is a good school and you are right to be very proud of it. Your behaviour is excellent and you make good progress in your lessons because you try hard and because your teachers and teaching assistants teach you well. Those of you who sometimes find the work a little difficult also make good progress because you get very good support in class and also outside lessons. All the adults who work with you do their very best to make sure that you are happy and that you know exactly what you need to do to make your work better. Your teachers are now going to help you improve your investigation skills so that your standards in science will rise even higher. They are also going to link your work in Year 2 more closely to the things you have to do in Year 3, so that you can continue to do well when you start Key Stage 2.

You look after each other really well. Year 6 enjoy working with the 'little ones', helping them with their reading and also with their games at playtimes. Prefects and monitors do a lot to help your school run smoothly and they have so many ideas about how to make sure that everyone enjoys school. You know why it is important to eat healthily and you take part in many sports and games to help you keep fit. You realise that it is important to help those who are less fortunate than you are and you raise lots of money for charities.

Your headteacher and all the staff work very hard to make Comberbach Primary the school that it is. You have your part to play too, so please keep working hard, trying your best and getting on really well with each other!