

# Combs Ford Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124576
<b>Local Authority</b>	SUFFOLK LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	314970
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5-9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	455
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Margaret Warner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Russel Clark
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 June 2004
<b>School address</b>	Glemsford Road Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 2PN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01449613112
<b>Fax number</b>	01449672207

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. This inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the standards in mathematics by Year 2 and those in writing by Year 4; the effectiveness of provision for more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and hence the progress they make; the school's use of assessment, including use of targets and feedback to pupils, and the impact on pupils' learning. Evidence was gathered from observing lessons and break-times; talking to pupils and staff; checking the school's records of pupils' progress and the results of questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a large primary school for pupils aged 4 to 9 serving a semi-rural area in and around Stowmarket. Pupils are mostly from White British backgrounds. Of the small number from minority ethnic groups nearly all speak English fluently. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds but overall their social and economic circumstances are slightly below average. Attainment on entry to Reception is a little below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but the number with a statement of special educational need is average. The school has a separate class which provides specialist learning support for a small group of Year 3 and 4 pupils with additional needs. The current headteacher took up post in April 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Combs Ford is a good school which, as one parent very aptly summed-up, 'produces well educated and well mannered children.' The school is well led and managed and has a clear direction for future development.

Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well and reach above average standards. Lessons are well planned with interesting activities that enable pupils to be actively involved in their learning. The warm and caring atmosphere contributes to the good personal development and well-being of pupils. It results in a happy school where pupils are enthusiastic about learning and enjoy the wide range of activities available. They make a good contribution to the local and wider community. Because of the excellent pastoral care, pupils feel safe and secure. They are confident that staff will always be at hand to help if they have any problems or difficulties. Many parents comment on how well staff know individual pupils and their needs despite the large size of the school.

Pupils have good knowledge of healthy lifestyles and do their best to eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly. Good provision for physical education contributes well to their health and physical well-being. Behaviour in the school is good and promotes pupils' sense of safety and good cooperation in lessons. Attendance is average. Too many parents take their children on holiday during term time. A recent tightening of procedures is beginning to have a positive impact on raising attendance and deterring parents from taking term-time holidays apart from in exceptional circumstances.

Children in the Foundation Stage get a good start to their education and achieve well, reaching standards that are slightly above average. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 1 to 4. Hence standards are above average by Years 2 and 4 and are especially strong in English. Progress in reading and writing is consistently good. However, this is less the case in mathematics where standards are not quite as high. Whilst work in lessons is reasonably well matched to individual needs, more able pupils in particular are not always challenged enough in mathematics. Staff have identified some weaknesses in pupils' problem solving skills which are holding them back. They have also identified the need to extend more able pupils further by giving them sufficiently difficult problems. Nonetheless, a high proportion of pupils make good progress to reach the expected level in mathematics, though there is scope for more to reach the higher levels. Overall, basic skills in literacy and numeracy are well developed. Hence, pupils are well prepared for the next step in their education and future lives.

A good curriculum provides effective opportunities for personal development. A wide range of visits and visitors and activities after school contribute to good social and moral development. Good opportunities for reflection through assemblies and subjects like art promote good spiritual awareness. Less extensive provision for learning about different cultures means pupils' have limited understanding of cultural diversity in Britain. The school has made good progress in linking subjects together through topics making them more relevant and interesting. Good opportunities for writing across the curriculum contribute to pupils' capacity to write well and at length unaided.

The school has made effective progress in establishing good resources for information and communication technology (ICT) and computers are used increasingly across the curriculum to support learning. Such developments are successfully driven through carefully constructed and well implemented action plans. The school's whole approach to development is very systematic

and it uses information from self-evaluation activities very effectively to secure improvement. Subject leaders are involved well in evaluating their areas and leading developments. For example, a review of writing led by the English subject leaders identified, amongst other things, limited use of adverbs by able pupils. Action was taken to address this and pupils' writing now shows much better use of adverbs. Such successes point to good capacity for further improvement.

Excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including for those in the small Year 3 and 4 class, enables them to make outstanding progress. This is in relation to literacy and numeracy and against personal targets, such as for behavioural or speech and language needs. The school's approach to checking progress for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is rigorous and thorough and contributes to the excellent progress they make.

Systems for gauging the progress of other pupils as they move up through the school, are not quite as well established. Class teachers have a good view of the progress pupils in their classes make because they have good systems for regular assessment. However, the existing system for tracking progress over time is being revised to provide an even more effective overview of how well pupils are achieving as they move up through the school. The school's intention is rightly to involve subject leaders even more actively in analysing such progress and taking action to address any underachievement. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and often make detailed comments. However, these do not always guide pupils sufficiently on how to improve their work. Pupils are aware that they have targets in English and mathematics but are not always sure what these are. The school acknowledges it is at an early stage of developing the use of such targets and more work needs to be done in terms of discussion with, and feedback to, pupils.

Governors provide effective oversight and have a reasonably good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development. Overall, the good leadership provided by the headteacher, the effective teamwork amongst staff and good use of accurate self-evaluation underpin the success of the school.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress in the Reception classes and achieve well. They make particularly rapid progress in their personal and social development and literacy. Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Children are provided with a good range of stimulating and practical activities which enable them to enjoy learning. Their progress is assessed thoroughly though the school acknowledges more use could be made of assessment information to guide planning. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and parents are full of praise for the good start it provides to their children's education.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Enable more pupils to reach the higher levels in mathematics by providing them with more challenging work.
- Improve the quality of marking and feedback to pupils so that they are clear about their targets in literacy and numeracy and what they need to do to achieve them.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	1

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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



## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Combs Ford Primary School, Stowmarket, IP14 2PN

You may remember I recently visited your school. I would like to thank you very much for making me feel welcome. I particularly enjoyed visiting classrooms and talking to those of you on the School Council in detail about your work and views of the school.

The school provides a good education. Some of the most important features that are good include the following.

- You enjoy school and are responsible in the way you behave.
- Children in the Reception classes get a good start to their education.
- You work hard and achieve well especially in English.
- Teachers and support staff make sure you are well taught and provide ready help in lessons.
- The school provides excellent support to pupils including for those in the small Year 3 and 4 class.
- The staff take excellent care of you so that you feel safe and happy at school.
- Your headteacher leads the school well and works successfully with other staff to make sure that the education provided is always improving.

To improve the school further I have asked the school to do the following.

- Providing you with harder work in mathematics, especially for those of you who are more capable.
- Make sure that you understand your literacy and numeracy targets and are given clear advice on what you need to do to achieve them.

You can certainly help by continuing to work hard and, in particular, knowing and understanding what your literacy and numeracy targets are.

I wish you all well in the future.

Gulshan Kayembe

Lead inspector