

Combe Down CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109230
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	337248
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Kekshan Salaria

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Coates
Headteacher	Richard Bullard
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Twenty-two lessons, taught by 12 teachers, were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspectors looked at records of the pupils' progress, minutes of the governing body's meetings, lesson and curriculum planning, some of the school's policies and a sample of the pupils' work. Questionnaire responses from pupils, staff and 148 parents and carers were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well pupils are currently learning and making progress in English, mathematics and science
- whether achievement is uniform throughout the school
- the steps the school has taken to identify the needs of groups of learners and set challenging, but realistic targets to promote greater achievement
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in contributing to the school's improvement.

Information about the school

Combe Down Primary is larger than the average primary school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than average and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is much lower than average; the pupils in this group most commonly have moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication difficulties, and behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is, therefore, given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the application of safeguarding procedures as part of the staff recruitment process. Although Combe Down Primary School provides a satisfactory education for the pupils, its overall effectiveness is inadequate because its leaders have failed to ensure that all government requirements relating to the safeguarding of pupils are followed. Consequently, care, guidance and support, and governance, are inadequate. Significant improvement is required in relation to its safeguarding procedures.

Combe Down Primary is popular with many parents because of the regard they have for the staff's care and concern for their children. As one parent wrote, 'The school has very committed teachers who go the extra mile.' The school's care and support for the pupils result in good personal development and well-being. The day-to-day support for vulnerable pupils, for example those with social or emotional difficulties, has a good impact and improves their attitudes, self-esteem and achievement. Pupils really enjoy school, display positive attitudes to learning and behave well, even when some lessons lack pace and challenge. Their attendance is outstanding.

Children start in Reception with skills and understanding that are above those expected for their age. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, but this is not built upon sufficiently in Key Stage 1 or in lower Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6 standards are above average in English and mathematics and they are in line with those found nationally in science. Achievement is no more than satisfactory because there are inconsistencies in the standards pupils attain in different year groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same satisfactory progress as their peers because they are motivated and effectively supported.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Despite some pockets of good and outstanding teaching throughout the school, teaching is not consistently challenging enough to ensure all pupils reach the standards they are capable of. Where teaching is good or better, pupils are well motivated, behave well and make good progress because activities are challenging and well matched to their needs. In less effective lessons teaching is uninspiring and pupils spend too long sitting and listening. Opportunities are missed to extend pupils' learning, for example through more challenging questioning. Information gained from assessment during lessons is not being used to full effect to adapt teaching to meet pupils' needs. Consequently, the pace and challenge of learning

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activities are inconsistent and opportunities are missed to positively channel pupils' eagerness to learn.

School leaders track pupils' progress carefully and use this information to provide additional support for pupils who are falling behind. However, it is not being used with sufficient rigour to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. Targets are set for pupils in some subjects, but pupils' understanding of these is limited. Although teachers' marking is improving, it lacks the detail and consistency to set out what pupils need to do to improve and so accelerate their progress.

The school has faced some difficult challenges in recent years, including headteacher and staff absences due to ill health. Although progress has been made since the last inspection in some areas, little has been accomplished in others. Monitoring of the school's work lacks rigour and does not consider the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Weaknesses in management have been compounded by inaccurate self-evaluation; the involvement of middle managers in this process is insufficient. As a result, the school's self-evaluation is not comprehensive. Additionally, senior leaders have not formulated a coherent programme for developing the current satisfactory teaching so that it becomes securely good; this is necessary to help accelerate achievement. The governing body has experienced some changes in membership recently and new governors are still familiarising themselves with the school. In the light of the above factors, the school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure procedures for safeguarding pupils comply fully with current government requirements by ensuring compliance in the staff recruitment process.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school by July 2011, so that the majority of it is good or better by:
 - making effective use of assessment to plan consistently challenging work for all groups of pupils
 - ensuring that teaching strategies and resources maximise learning opportunities for each pupil in every lesson
 - assessing pupils' work within lessons in order to adapt teaching to the pupils' needs as the lesson progresses
 - providing clear guidance to all pupils so that they know how to improve their work, through setting clearly understood targets and by ensuring marking indicates what pupils need to learn next.
- Improve leadership, management, and governance of the school by the end of July 2011 by:
 - ensuring all leaders pursue improvement relentlessly and rigorously by systematically monitoring all aspects of the work of the school and developing and implementing improvement programmes.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The good progress children make in the Reception classes is not matched in the Key Stage 1 or lower Key Stage 2 classes due mainly to weaker, albeit satisfactory, teaching. In upper Key Stage 2 progress accelerates so that by the time pupils leave the school in Year 6 they attain standards that are above the national average overall.

The school is clearly committed to developing the whole child and this is reflected in pupils' enjoyment, behaviour and attitudes. Pupils know that they are valued and that their contributions matter; they respond well to the opportunities they have to help improve their school. They have a strong awareness of the school as a community and accept responsibility with enthusiasm and vigour. Members of the school council, for example, take their role seriously in thinking about ways to make improvements. Pupils' awareness of the importance of eating healthily is outstanding. Pupils are conscious of the need for a balanced diet and exercise in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They gave an inspector good advice on the value of eating fruit and vegetables. They enjoy opportunities for physical exercise in lessons, at break and lunch times, and at after-school clubs. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Pupils take a lively interest in different places, people and customs. They enjoy their developing friendships and are happy and supportive in each other's company. Effective transition arrangements involve parents, pupils, and staff from the local schools. These arrangements ensure that transitions, particularly to and from the Early Years Foundation Stage, are smooth.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3 1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The reason that teaching is no more than satisfactory is that it varies in quality. Pupils make the most rapid progress when teachers question pupils well and assess learning throughout the lesson. This enables them to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the pupils as they learn. The school's current focus on English is evident throughout the school and a good feature of this is the effective use of key vocabulary in lessons. In other areas of the curriculum, such as science and mathematics, learning slows as a result of weak assessment. The feedback pupils receive about their work, both during lessons and through marking, contributes to the better progress made by pupils in the most effective lessons. There are examples of this good practice throughout the school, but it is not consistently applied in all classes and subjects. The environment for pupils is excellent. Staff have worked hard to ensure classrooms are bright and attractive, and the very well-maintained accommodation and playground provide pupils with very good opportunities to learn and play.

The curriculum is enhanced by a strong creative element. Some of the results of this can be seen in the impressive range of art work on display and the good provision for music. The school is developing a cross-curricular approach, but this is not consistent across year groups and subjects. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is sound. However, the consistent use of ICT as a cross-curricular tool remains variable across the school. Pupils' understanding of 'green' issues is developed well through use of the school's environment area. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. All Year 6 and Year 4 pupils, for example, have residential trips and Year 5 has an activity week which provides first-hand learning experiences and promotes pupils' social development.

Care, guidance and support are inadequate because steps to safeguard pupils do not meet statutory requirements. However, staff provide particularly strong pastoral care. They know and care for pupils and their families very well. There is a good level of supervision at break times and arrangements at the end of the school day ensure that pupils are handed over to their parents and carers safely.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3 4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4
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How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leaders of the school work with staff to provide a secure and welcoming learning environment for pupils. They have been less successful in promoting their academic achievement. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is not incisive enough. Performance data are not used with sufficient rigour to identify weaknesses in the performance of the school. Consequently, actions to improve attainment have been piecemeal and largely ineffective. There is a core of committed, dedicated and experienced staff in the school. However, their expertise has not been sufficiently utilised to ensure that pupils consistently make the progress of which they are capable.

Good tracking systems enable senior leaders to monitor the progress of individual pupils. However, these are not being used effectively enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress from year to year, or in different subjects. The governing body has not been providing a satisfactory level of challenge for the school. This is largely because the school does not have effective enough self-evaluation processes in place to provide governors with the information and insights that they need. Their oversight of safeguarding procedures is inadequate.

Links with parents are satisfactory, although the school is aware of the need to improve communications with parents and carers. The school promotes equal opportunities satisfactorily in ensuring, for example, that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities participate fully and make the same progress in their learning as their classmates. There is a strong cohesive community within the school. However, senior leaders acknowledge the promotion of cohesion within the wider community is at an early stage.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children flourish in the Early Years Foundation Stage in response to a very well-organised learning environment. The well-established induction procedures help children to settle happily and quickly. As a result of good teaching and secure assessment procedures, children make good progress. In 2010, they reached higher than average levels in most areas of their learning.

The appropriate deployment of staff and the safe environment help children to develop good social and play skills. Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, the lively curriculum provides children with varied opportunities, both inside and out. Adults are constantly helping children to develop their speaking and listening skills through skilful questioning, although this practice is not consistent in both of the Reception classes. Staff use exciting and plentiful resources to plan a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, to develop children's self-confidence and independence. Children are happy in their activities and sometimes display sustained levels of attention. The leadership and management of the Reception classes are very good, with an excellent grasp of how to improve provision further.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who returned questionnaires are generally happy with their child's experience at school. However, a significant number expressed the view that their child was not making enough progress and that the school does not help parents and carers to support their child's learning. The inspection team investigated these issues and agreed with the concerns raised by parents regarding a lack of challenge in teaching. This is an area of improvement for the school. The concern regarding communications with parents is an area which the school has identified and is planning to address.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Combe Down C of E Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 148 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 420 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	53	61	41	5	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	67	45	78	53	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	25	94	64	15	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	27	73	49	22	15	6	4
The teaching is good at this school	60	41	71	48	9	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	34	71	48	23	16	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	40	80	54	5	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	76	51	64	43	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	30	78	53	15	10	7	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	24	84	57	23	16	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	25	90	61	14	9	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	56	38	71	48	13	9	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	73	49	60	41	6	4	5	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Combe Down C of E Primary School, Bath BA2 5JQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school and for completing the questionnaire. We enjoyed the discussions we had with you and learnt a lot about the work and activities that you do at school. Your school is working hard to make learning more interesting for you and you told us that you really enjoy your lessons. You are clearly enthusiastic learners and told us you like the visits that you take part in and the after-school clubs. You are kind and considerate and behave well. You told us all about how you keep healthy and about various responsibilities that you have in school. The youngest children in your school settle in well and learn through a wide variety of interesting activities. You make sound progress and reach above average standards overall by the time you leave at the end of Year 6.

Although we think the school has many satisfactory, and some good aspects, we judged it inadequate overall and have given the school a notice to improve. This means that, although there have been some improvements recently, there is more to do to make the school as good as it should be. Inspectors will visit the school again to make sure it has improved. The school needs to improve systems for safeguarding everyone so that important government requirements are met. We have asked the teachers to increase the challenge in lessons and make their marking more useful, so that you have a good understanding of how to improve your work. We have also asked the leaders and governors of your school to make sure they have a really clear picture of how good your school is, so that they know where to make improvements in the future.

Remember, you can all help to make your school even better by continuing to work hard and by always behaving well, especially in the playground.

Yours sincerely

Kekshan Salaria

Her Majesty's Inspector

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