

Combe Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123116
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314502
Inspection date	29 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Charalambos Loizou

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 on roll	116
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Richard Stockwell
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Jones
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
School address	Church Walk Combe Witney OX29 8NQ
Telephone number	01993 891644
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following areas:

- the quality of teaching and the curriculum, particularly their impact on standards in science and pupils' personal development;
- the ways in which pupils assess and understand their own learning;
- the extent to which the school acts on pupils' and parents' views;
- the pupils' understanding of cultures and customs beyond those of the school's immediate locality.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the analysis of test results and assessments of pupils' performance, as well as parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. 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, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Combe is a small village school. It has close links with its parish community and church, as well as the Woodstock partnership of schools. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes and all Reception aged children attend full-time. The vast majority of pupils are white British and a small number come from a range of backgrounds, the largest group being of Indian heritage. There are currently no pupils learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low compared with schools nationally. A very small number of pupils have moderate learning difficulties and require additional support in lessons. The school has the Healthy Schools Award and the Sports Activemark. Building work and refurbishment have just started to provide a school hall, additional classrooms, including more indoor and outdoor areas for the Foundation Stage. The headteacher retires at the end of this school year and the governors have appointed a new headteacher who will start in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve extremely well and reach exceptionally high standards at this outstanding school. Pupils are enthusiastic about all that their teachers and support staff offer them. Standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are, and have been since the school's last inspection, exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Outstanding teaching and the headteacher's strong leadership underpin the school's success. Governors and staff have accurately assessed most aspects of the school's work. Some modest evaluations reflect their high expectations and lack of complacency in determining to take the school still further. The school has made good progress since its last inspection. Its strong track record demonstrates that it has excellent capacity to build on its outstanding performance still further.

The teaching is always at least good and is often outstanding. This enables pupils of all abilities to make excellent progress. The children start school in the Reception year with skills and abilities that are well above those expected of four-year-olds. They make rapid progress despite limited indoor and outdoor resources and spaces. Very skilled Foundation Stage staff do all that they can to accommodate the children's needs, and the current building programme is going a long way towards improving facilities for Reception children. In all classes, teachers skilfully plan for mixed ages so pupils of all abilities are provided with work that is well matched to their needs. There are excellent opportunities provided for pupils to read and write independently and to apply more advanced skills, such as skim reading, note-taking and editing when preparing, for example, special texts such as autobiographies, poetry, riddles and descriptive writing. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well to support pupils' learning. Pupils are adept at using computers to undertake research, investigate data and prepare spreadsheets or graphs in mathematics and science. An excellent range of topics and themes enables pupils to apply their skills from a range of subjects. For example, science is very well taught so that pupils apply their literacy and mathematics skills to research and enquiry when testing hypotheses about the effects of forces on objects or changes to materials and plants in different climates and conditions.

Teachers skilfully use assessment to accurately track pupils' performance and to adapt their planning to set challenging learning targets for pupils to aim for. In the most effective lessons, teachers expect the pupils to assess their own learning. For example, in an excellent English lesson, pupils in Years 5 and 6 checked each other's autobiographies and identified strengths and weaknesses. This helped them to improve their writing still further, enabling them all to reach exceptionally high standards. Self-assessment such as this is not used consistently to help pupils to have a better understanding of each stage of their learning.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, which is reflected in consistently high attendance rates. The large majority of parents are very pleased with the school, many paying tribute to the efforts of the staff. As one rightly said, 'Combe is a lovely school with very high standards.' Pupils feel safe and are extremely well cared for and, as one commented, 'I like this school because everyone is helpful and there is always somebody around to re-assure and encourage you.' There are robust safeguarding procedures, as well as systematic risk assessments of activities and visits. Highly qualified teaching assistants provide very effective support for pupils who need extra help with reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop very positive attitudes to school and are extremely well behaved, polite and responsible. Pupils form

strong friendships. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils are excellent. A broad and highly effective curriculum enables the pupils to achieve extremely well in the creative and expressive arts and sport. The school has a well-established reputation for sporting success in tag rugby, athletics, swimming and a good range of other sports. The quality of art displayed around the school is very high and includes paintings and collages in the style of well-known artists. The pupils' personal development is enhanced by the school's close links with its community, parish and church, as well as activities that reach beyond the school's locality. Pupils learn about other cultures through special topics, such as the current work being done on Ghanaian art, geography, history and customs. Pupils thrive on the opportunities they have to support or represent others as school councillors, team captains and monitors. Their spiritual and moral development is improved through reflection and prayer during assemblies. There are excellent opportunities for social development through many team-building activities undertaken during residential or day visits as well as team sports. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities they have to participate in extra-curricular clubs, as one commented, 'My favourite is maths club because it is really challenging and stimulating.'

Pupils adopt healthy and active lifestyles and attitudes through sport and the very good arrangements that encourage them to eat fruit daily. Special projects, themed weeks and celebrations incorporate a wealth of visits and visitors that enhance pupils' learning. For example, the visit to the Pitt Rivers museum of anthropology in Oxford helps pupils to learn about communities and customs from around the world. Work related to a range of religious and cultural festivals such as Diwali and Easter develops further the pupils' understanding of world faiths and societies. The acquisition of ICT skills, using computers and digital cameras prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their education.

The headteacher's service and dedication to the school have contributed greatly to its success and to the excellent achievements of its pupils. Governors provide outstanding support whilst holding the headteacher and staff to account. They have acted decisively to secure funding for the current extension of the school building and teaching areas. There are excellent links and partnerships with parents and other schools and these have helped to inform staff training and extend the curriculum. Most parents have expressed their complete satisfaction with the school, one accurately summing up the views of many when stating, 'I know that they (her children) are safe, cared for, nurtured and encouraged to work hard, as well as express themselves and achieve. I could not ask for more.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Despite the challenges of limited space and resources, the staff work very hard to organise their planning so the Reception children experience a good range of activities in all areas of learning. The outdoor area adjacent to the class is too small. To deal with this, the staff supervise the children in an area further away. Although this limits the children's access to spontaneous play and activity, this is the best the staff can do until the new classroom and outdoor areas are completed.

Most children work well within the early stages of the National Curriculum when they start Year 1 because of excellent teaching and support. Stimulating activities are planned, such as the recent topic on 'People who help us', when the local fire service visited. This culminated in a good range of role-play, painting and writing. The 'Teddy Bear's Picnic' was planned extremely well to develop a range of language, mathematics and personal skills, starting with the children writing special invitations to 'Teddy', then compiling a shopping list for the picnic.

The staff incorporated a special visit to the supermarket to buy items on the shopping list. The children were delighted when they received a letter from 'Teddy' thanking them for organising the picnic. Topics like this enable the staff to accurately assess and monitor the children's progress and performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more consistent opportunities for pupils to reflect and assess their own 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?	1
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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 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	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

08 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Combe Church of England Primary School, Witney, OX29 8NQ

I was very pleased to visit your school. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. I really enjoyed talking to pupils in lessons and at break time. I think that you go to an excellent school. There are many good things about your school.

- Your teachers and support staff are very good at helping you to reach high standards in English, mathematics and science.
- You are exceptionally well behaved, polite and courteous and the school council does a great deal to help support you in school.
- Your excellent attendance and punctuality demonstrate how much you enjoy school and many of you told me that you particularly enjoy the extra things like maths club, sports, art and special visits.
- I was very impressed with the quality of your work. The autobiographies I heard some of you read out were superb, well done! You also do some excellent art and computer work.
- I was impressed with your sporting achievements and I hope that the tag rugby team did well in the recent tournament.
- The large majority of parents are very pleased with you and your teachers.
- The headteacher, staff and governors manage the school very well. Many of you told me how much you will miss your headteacher when she retires, and I can see why, she has led the school extremely well.

I have asked your teachers to do the following.

- Provide you with more opportunities to check and assess your own work. This will help you to understand each stage of your learning and what to do next to improve your work.

You can all help your school by carrying on with the very good work you do to make your school even better and by coming up with really good ideas for the suggestion box. Well done, and I wish you all the very best.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou

Lead Inspector