

Inspection of Combs Infant School

Lesser Lane, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Combs High Peak, Derbyshire SK23 9UZ

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 April 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this nurturing village school. Staff know the pupils and their families incredibly well. They have respectful and positive relationships with pupils and their families. Pupils say that they are happy and feel safe in school. They know that staff will listen if they have a concern and that they will help them.

Pupils show an age-appropriate understanding of respect and tolerance. They are proud of their leadership roles. Pupils understand how being voted for as a member of the school council links with the fundamental British value of democracy. They value the responsibility that comes with this role, such as choosing the prizes for the Easter bonnet parade.

The school wants the best for pupils and effectively supports them to succeed. Pupils achieve well.

The school has high expectations of behaviour. Pupils rise to the challenge and behave very well. They respond enthusiastically to praise, and they are keen to please adults. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They recognise the importance of listening to each other and valuing what others have to say.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. Typical comments include, 'We feel very lucky that our child comes to this school.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has prioritised reading. Children in Nursery, including two-year-olds, take part in buddy reading with other pupils. They share books and talk enthusiastically about them. Children develop a love of reading from the time they join the school. Staff regularly read to them. The phonics programme begins as soon as children start in the Reception Year. All staff are trained to teach early reading effectively. They ensure that pupils have sufficient practice when they learn new sounds so they can apply these to their reading. Pupils read books that are well matched to the sounds that they know. Staff carefully check how well pupils are learning. Staff ensure that pupils are supported well to catch up if they fall behind. Pupils become confident, fluent readers.

Children in the early years have a great start to school life. They love to explore in the outdoors, where they learn to be curious about the world. Early years staff support the

development of communication and language skills well when children are engaged in imaginative play. Adults skilfully use questioning to challenge thinking and reinforce vocabulary.

The school has reviewed the curriculum. Where subjects are most effective, key knowledge is clearly defined. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and create effective learning sequences. Pupils are familiar with revisiting prior knowledge, for example through 'stick it and fix it'. Pupils apply their learning and talk about it with a depth of understanding. However, in some subjects there is too much to cover. This means that teaching is less well thought out and pupils do not remember the important knowledge. The school identifies the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), effectively.

The school's personal development provision is a strength. The school ensures that pupils access a breadth of opportunities to enhance their time in school. They utilise the rural setting to enhance learning, for example watching chicks hatch and the newborn lambs play. Pupils value their role in the community. They create posters to remind drivers to slow down when driving through the village. Pupils benefit from visitors in school and school trips, for example going to the pantomime. Pupils develop their talents and interests through the range of clubs, including gardening, crafts and sporting activities. Pupils understand the importance of looking after their physical and mental health. One pupil spoke for many when they said, 'Don't think bad of yourself.' Pupils talk about their personal goals and how they will achieve them.

Pupils want to come to school. They attend well. Pupils learn in a calm and orderly environment. They work and play well together. They support one another in their learning. There are very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour. When incidents do occur, however, they are not recorded. This means that the school cannot analyse incidents to look for patterns, and governors do not have the information that they need.

Governors have undertaken training to support the development of their roles. They have an appropriate understanding of the strategic role they play in driving school improvement. However, governors are not effectively holding leaders to account across all areas of school life.

Staff are proud to work at Combs. They praise the consideration that leaders give to their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculum is too broad. It does not identify clearly what pupils will learn. As a result, teaching does not secure the most important knowledge. In these subjects, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that the curriculum is designed effectively to specify key knowledge, so that pupils know and remember more.
- Governance has improved significantly since the last inspection but is not yet fully effective. Governors do not consistently monitor the effectiveness of the school's policies. The school should ensure that the plans to improve governance are implemented swiftly so that the governing body holds leaders to account effectively in all areas of the school's work.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	112525
Local authority	Derbyshire

Inspection number	10347341
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nick Boden
Headteacher	Joanna Sweatmore
Website	http://www.combsinfantschool.com
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 October 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- There is a before- and after-school club managed by the school.
- The nursery class includes provision for two-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and the class teacher.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's survey for school staff. □ The lead inspector spoke informally with parents outside the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed: the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school site and at lunchtime. They scrutinised the school's records for attendance.

Inspection team

Donna Chambers, lead inspector

Rob della-Spina

His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/opengovernment-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025