

Combe Martin Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113145
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	388261
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2012
Lead inspector	Pauline Robins HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Winter
Headteacher	Joanna Walkden
Date of previous school inspection	30 June–1 July 2010
School address	Hangman Path Ilfracombe EX34 0DF
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Introduction

Inspection team

Pauline Robins

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christopher Nye

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out at no notice. Inspectors observed two assemblies and each of the six teachers were observed teaching lessons in two different subjects. Inspectors held discussions with staff, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding procedures, information about the progress and attainment of pupils, school improvement planning, lesson planning and monitoring documents. Owing to insufficient responses, inspectors were unable to take account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. However, inspectors were able to take account of the views of parents by scrutinising the school's own parental questionnaire. Also a group of parents spoke to inspectors at the school gate at the start of the day.

Information about the school

Combe Martin is a smaller than average-sized primary school. A smaller proportion of pupils than in most schools nationally are known to be eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above the national average. However, the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than average. The school shares the site with a pre-school and a Children's Centre which are not managed by the governing body and were not inspected on this occasion.

There have been significant staff changes since the school was placed into special measures in July 2010. An assistant headteacher has been seconded to the school and a new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been appointed and joined the senior leadership team. Agreement has been reached that from September 2012, the school will become federated with Woolacombe, a local primary school.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Significant progress has been made in all areas and Combe Martin is now a good school. To become outstanding, the school needs to consolidate and maintain the rapid improvements that have taken place so that pupils continue to make better than expected progress from their starting points and reach levels of attainment that reflect this level of progress. At the classroom level, teachers need to raise their expectations of the presentation of pupils' written work and develop greater consistency in their approach towards the teaching of sounds of letters (phonics). In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.
- The large majority of pupils make good progress throughout the school and are on track to reach or exceed nationally expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. As a result of the rigorous tracking of pupils' progress, the school is able to identify pupils who are falling behind and put in place suitable intervention strategies to support these pupils.
- Teaching is strongest in Reception and Key Stage 2, and in some classes it is consistently of the highest calibre. In the best lessons, pupils learn through problem solving and work cooperatively with the teacher and each other to assess their work and identify next steps in their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They feel safe, treat each other with respect and have very positive attitudes to learning. The curriculum provides exciting opportunities for them to apply their skills in ways that motivate them to do their best and contributes to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Senior leaders have a clear vision for the future, which is evident in their strategic planning. Where there is any inconsistency in teaching, determined,

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considered action is taken. School leaders and managers and the governing body have made effective decisions based on accurate monitoring and evaluation. There is a clear focus on raising attainment and continuing to accelerate pupils' progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that when teaching sounds of letters, especially in Key Stage 2, teachers are suitably trained and adopt identical approaches.
- Improve the standard of pupils' written work by:
 - ensuring that adults consistently model a clear cursive handwriting style
 - raising teachers' expectations of the standard of presentation of the pupils' written work
 - encouraging pupils to use pens rather than pencils as soon as they are using a joined, cursive style of handwriting.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below expected levels for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy and mathematical calculation. Teaching is good and has a strong focus on meeting the wide range of individual needs so children make good progress. By the time they enter Key Stage 1, most exceed expectations in all areas of learning. Children also demonstrate particular strength in their social skills, which was illustrated well during the inspection by the efficient and cooperative way in which they tidied their classroom at the end of the morning.

The school's own assessment data, the accuracy of which is confirmed by a scrutiny of pupils' work, show that there is a rapidly improving trend in achievement. An above-average proportion of pupils are on target to reach or exceed expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics in this year's teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 and national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. This is because the progress that pupils make throughout the school has been accelerated and the majority, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are making good and, in some cases, outstanding progress. The school has also taken action to raise the expectations of higher attaining pupils and the proportion expected to achieve at the higher levels in both key stages is likely to be the best the school has ever accomplished.

Attainment in mathematics, which was of greatest concern at the previous inspection, has shown significant improvement. The gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding have been assiduously identified and teaching has been targeted on these areas, particularly at Key Stage 2. In lessons, pupils show an enthusiasm for

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solving challenging mathematical problems which are relevant and are linked to other areas of the curriculum such as the study of Ancient Greece. The introduction of a systematic approach to teaching phonics is still at a relatively early stage and is more rigorously and consistently delivered in Key Stage 1. However, reading has historically been a stronger element of the school's work and this continues. Attainment in reading in Year 2 is above national expectations and by the end of Year 6 is significantly above that which would be expected nationally. The quality of pupils' written work has improved considerably as they are writing for purpose and activities are engaging, most notably at Key Stage 2, where the posting of pupils' written work onto a blog site, shared with similar schools throughout the world, has proved inspirational and greatly increased pupils' confidence and the amount they write, particularly for boys. However, teachers acknowledge that pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work requires further improvement. Parents and carers who spoke to the inspectors commented that they have seen a significant improvement in their children's work. One Year 2 parent said, 'My daughter is coming on in leaps and bounds.'

Quality of teaching

Teaching contributes exceptionally well to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. In all classes, pupils are encouraged to work cooperatively, sharing ideas and giving feedback on each other's work, which they do with great respect and maturity. The international blog site has enabled them to gain a much deeper understanding of what it means to live in countries throughout the world and in urban areas in this country. They have also come to appreciate the benefits of their own environment by sharing their experiences with children from other cultures.

All teaching is at least satisfactory and most is consistently good or outstanding. Teachers are particularly skilled in using questions throughout their lessons to assess pupils' understanding, moderate tasks and provide further exemplification as necessary. Efficient and detailed systems have been securely established to assess, track and record pupils' progress and these are effectively informing planning in the core subjects. Marking is consistent throughout the school and the policy for highlighting and annotating work is understood by staff and pupils, which results in a valuable ongoing dialogue. The content of pupils' work demonstrates their knowledge, understanding and imagination but is too frequently let down by poor spelling and presentation. Teachers are not modelling a style of handwriting that is consistent throughout the school or joining letters in a cursive style. Nor are pupils encouraged to use pens rather than pencils once they have mastered the skills of handwriting. Where pupils have the most extreme level of need, support staff are especially skilful in facilitating pupils' learning, monitoring progress and challenging pupils to achieve alongside their peers.

Teaching is particularly strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage because it is well planned and organised, provides a careful balance between adult- and child-initiated activities and ensures that children make at least good progress in all the areas of learning. The parents who spoke to the inspectors recognise the extent to which the

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quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, particularly in the Reception class.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school and are keen to talk about their experiences, which they find fun and exciting. Their behaviour is good overall, but is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and makes a strong contribution to learning and to the harmonious and safe atmosphere which permeates the school at all times. Pupils are extremely friendly and supportive of each other and the Year 5 and 6 pupils speak with great pride about mentoring the youngest pupils. They say that bullying is rare and, where there was some name calling in the past, this had been effectively dealt with by adults in the school. They have a good understanding of what constitutes different types of bullying and have a particularly strong understanding of cyber-bullying and internet safety. Although some concerns were expressed by parents about bullying, the majority are very positive about behaviour and how it is managed. One parent, whose child had recently joined from another school, talked about how happy her son is when he comes home from school. Others praised the way the school works with other agencies to support pupils and their families.

Effective action has been taken to eliminate persistent absenteeism and raise attendance. As a result, for the past two years it has been at or above the national average. A small number of pupils who are sometimes late in the morning are being carefully monitored and the school is working closely with the educational welfare officer to address this.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders, with the advice and support of the local authority, have systematically tackled the issues which were identified in the inspection of July 2010, which were fundamentally the instability and inconsistencies in teaching. The headteacher has shown great resilience and has taken some difficult, though necessary, decisions. Together with the assistant headteacher, she has driven forward improvements which have resulted in pupils' learning and progress now being above expectations. This is because of good teaching which challenges and motivates pupils so that they find learning fun. Teaching is supported by a learning environment and curriculum which are interesting and exciting. The highly effective leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has resulted in a rapid improvement in provision and outcomes. Both pupils and staff expressed their pride in being part of the changes at Combe Martin.

The chair of the governing body has played a significant role in the school's development. He has brought rigour to the monitoring of the school's action plan and developed the understanding of the governing body so that they know the questions which need to be asked in order to hold leaders to account. Senior leaders are now

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able to see beyond the immediate future of the school and are thinking and planning positively for the long term. Middle leaders are confident and understand the role that they must play in consolidating the school's improvement planning and further development. Assessment data are accurate and can now be used to hold staff to account for pupils' attainment and progress, ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all. Safeguarding arrangements in the school are secure and meet regulatory requirements, including the regular training of staff to recognise child protection concerns.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.



22 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Combe Martin Primary School, Ilfracombe EX34 0DF

Thank you for making us so welcome when Mr Nye and I recently came to inspect your school. We enjoyed our meetings with you and finding out about the things you are doing in your lessons. We were very impressed by the way you behave, both in lessons and when you are moving around the school, particularly the children in the Reception class. I am very pleased to tell you that we think there have been lots of improvements at Combe Martin since it was last inspected two years ago. We have judged that your school no longer requires special measures and is now a good school.

All of the adults in your school take good care of you and support you with your learning very well. You are certainly enjoying your lessons and this is because you have good teachers who make learning fun. Most of you are making good progress in your learning and getting good results in your tests and assessments. There has also been a real improvement in your attendance, which helps you keep up to date with your work.

To help your school become even better, we have asked your headteacher and teachers to do the following:

- Make sure that when they are teaching you your letters and sounds, they all do so in the same way and ensure they have some extra training to help them in doing this.
- Help you to improve your handwriting and spelling so the presentation of your work gets better. We have asked them to make sure that they use the same style of handwriting as they expect from you, and also to encourage you to use pens rather than pencils when you are able to join up your handwriting.

I shall really miss visiting Combe Martin each term but I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Pauline Robins
Her Majesty's Inspector

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