

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



28 April 2016

Mr Russell Clark  
Headteacher  
Combs Ford Primary School  
Glensford Road  
Stowmarket  
Suffolk  
IP14 2PN

Dear Mr Clark

### **Short inspection of Combs Ford Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 April 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress from their individual starting points. The achievements of the most-able pupils was an area for improvement at the previous inspection and the changes make sure that this group of pupils are doing well.

When families ask for help, staff are quick to respond and this makes an important difference to pupils' confidence, motivation and emotional well-being. Support from the Rainbow worker and the special educational needs coordinator is especially valued. Similarly, the Family Learning Project is very popular with parents and pupils, and successfully motivates the pupils involved.

Learning is not only purposeful and planned well but also gives pupils memorable and meaningful experiences. Pupils enjoy lessons and concentrate well. They are confident to ask for help when they are unsure or confused. They trust adults to help them learn from mistakes and know that if they keep trying they will learn more. Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively so that learning takes place in a calm and relaxed atmosphere.

Classrooms are vibrant, resourced and well organised so that pupils have what they need to succeed. Successes are celebrated frequently and publicly. Pupils' work in books is presented carefully to show what they have learned. Pupils like the

feedback to help them know what they could improve and teachers use pupils' work effectively to plan what needs to be covered in future. Development of the outdoor space for the Reception classes, an area for improvement at the previous inspection, gives more opportunities for children to learn outdoors.

The transition from a first school to a primary school has gone well. This is because the potential problems have been thought through carefully to make sure that the first group of Year 6 pupils are ready for the high school. Staff have high expectations for pupils' personal development and academic performance, and pupils rise to the challenge. Pupils have additional responsibilities and privileges, which they carry out maturely, and they take initiative. Younger pupils look up to the Year 5 and 6 pupils and look forward to the time when they can be in upper key stage 2.

Staff are proud to work at the school and feel part of a strong team. They are very positive about your support. In particular, they value the training and guidance to improve teaching. As a result of your support, staff try new things with confidence, which develops their professional expertise.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that the school's arrangements to safeguard children are fit for purpose and that records are sufficiently detailed. Two particular things play a significant part in maintaining high vigilance for pupils' safety.

Firstly, staff and governors are well trained to safeguard children. Governors keep a close check on these arrangements. Staff understand that safeguarding children includes a wide range of issues and these are built into the curriculum. As a result, there is a range of appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe and healthy. These include road safety, safety on the internet and the physical and emotional changes that pupils can expect as they get older.

Secondly, the good relationships between staff and pupils' families mean that parents often ask for advice on a range of issues relating to children's well-being. There are many examples where the collaboration between parents and staff has given pupils the help they need to stay successfully engaged with their education. Timely referrals are made to outside agencies such as mental health teams and other health professionals. There is effective support for pupils at risk of exclusion because of their inappropriate behaviour. Their needs are well understood and managed so that their education, and that of their classmates, is not disrupted.

### **Inspection findings**

- The senior leadership team has a very clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. The current priorities reflect the most important things for development. Responsibilities for improvement are appropriately shared within the leadership team, with you and the deputy headteacher taking a strategic overview to challenge the effectiveness of the leaders' actions.

- You encourage staff to reflect on their performance and to look for good practice when they make changes. The collaboration with local schools and the partnership with a school in Hackney provide staff with good opportunities to reflect and make changes. This has improved the teaching of phonics, for example, so that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard has increased. In addition, staff and governors make good use of a wide range of courses provided by Suffolk local authority to reflect on what they know and do.
- The monitoring of teaching, conducted by all members of the senior team, is welcomed by staff, who see it as a collaborative process that improves their performance and pupils' achievements.
- The new approach to professional development for a group of teachers at different points in their careers, introduced this year, is definitely improving their expertise and is very popular.
- Changes in response to national developments for curriculum and assessment have been made confidently. This confidence comes from checking with external professionals the accuracy of assessments and how well the assessments link to the curriculum.
- The curriculum sets out, for each subject, the skills and knowledge expected by the end of each year. You have quite rightly prioritised the assessment of reading, writing and mathematics. There is some information for pupils' performance in other subjects, particularly through the reviews of lessons and plans, and those for physical education are a good example. There is also information for improvements in pupils' personal skills, especially in response to additional support. However, the systematic assessment of pupils' achievement across a range of subjects, including their personal development, is not yet in place.
- The review of the curriculum identified the teaching of science as the next priority for whole-school development. This is because topic work has not always made scientific knowledge and skills explicit to the pupils. A comprehensive review of the current position is complete and a clear plan for the improvements is already in place.
- Disadvantaged pupils are as highly enthusiastic about, and focused on, their learning as others in the school. They get extra help when needed to maintain their motivation or improve their attendance. This often involves collaborative work with their families and the support is well received. As a result, the academic performance of disadvantaged pupils improves rapidly and their progress is good. Staff make frequent checks on their progress. Over the past year, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved and is now in line with the national average for all pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability have appropriate opportunities to show what they know and can do by themselves, with suitable resources and prompts from adults when needed. The special educational needs coordinator has prioritised improvements to individual targets so that success is measured in finer detail.
- The most-able pupils are appropriately challenged to work at a higher or deeper level than others. They are highly motivated. Not only do they produce good-quality work but they also explain clearly how they persevered at tasks that they found difficult.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the science curriculum provides pupils with good-quality scientific knowledge, skills and understanding
- pupils' achievements across a wide range of subjects are recorded and tracked systematically.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the chair of the governing body with the vice-chair and two other governors, staff, pupils and two parents. I spoke on the telephone with the standards and excellence officer from Suffolk local authority.

I observed pupils in lessons. I scrutinised documents regarding pupils' performance, the quality of teaching and assessment, and the school's arrangements to safeguard children. Thirty-four staff and 13 pupils responded to Ofsted's questionnaire. Nineteen parents responded to Parent View during the inspection. Seventeen parents and 12 staff gave written comments.