

# Somers Heath Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 114847         |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Thurrock       |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 357633         |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 3–4 March 2011 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Mary Summers   |

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

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|--|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                                   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                                 |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–11                                      |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                     |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 236                                       |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                        |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Jack Misra                                |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Kevin Imbush                              |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 11 November 2009                          |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Foyle Drive<br>South Ockendon<br>RM15 5LX |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01708 853397                              |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01708 852582                              |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | admin@somersheath.thurrock.sch.uk         |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>         | 3–11           |
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 16 lessons which were taught by eight different teachers. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents associated with procedures to protect and keep pupils safe, and self-evaluation. They examined data and information about pupils' progress and looked at samples of their work. They also scrutinised improvement plans as well as planning for lessons and the curriculum. Minutes from meetings held by the governing body and monitoring and evaluation reports written by senior leaders as well as the local authority were also examined. Inspectors took account of the views of pupils and of 11 members of staff who had completed questionnaires, as well as the content of 108 questionnaires that had been completed and returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key questions.

- What is the extent of boys' achievement in writing across the school?
- How well do girls achieve in mathematics at Key Stage 1?
- How effectively are teachers using assessment information to plan lessons that meet the different needs of pupils?
- What is the impact of the school's work to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence?

## Information about the school

Most pupils who attend this average-sized primary school come from the immediate area. The very large majority are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is rising steadily but remains below average, with only a few pupils in the early stages of learning English. More pupils than average are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average. Many of these have moderate learning difficulties. The present headteacher took over the substantive post in September 2010 after one term as acting headteacher.

The school has won a number of awards in recent years, including the International Schools Award at intermediate level.

At the previous inspection in November 2009, the school was issued with a Notice to Improve.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Over the last year, the school has systematically tackled the weaknesses identified at the last inspection with regard to safeguarding pupils and some aspects of leadership and management. Policies and procedures have been strengthened to ensure the school runs smoothly and provides a safe environment for pupils. The new headteacher has quickly gained a thorough understanding of the school's performance and has been rigorous in his actions to secure improvement.

Teaching is good. The new tracking system provides useful information to help the headteacher and teachers assess pupils' progress. This information is being used well to help teachers plan appropriate activities in lessons for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although the more-able pupils make satisfactory progress, activities in lessons do not always provide enough challenge to enable them to reach the levels of which they are capable.

Pupils' achievement is good. Many begin Year 1 at levels that are below national expectations. They make good progress in Key Stage 1, and their attainment by the end of Year 2 is broadly average, having risen from below average levels prior to 2010. Pupils' progress through Key Stage 2 has improved greatly over the last year and as a result, attainment has risen from below to broadly average. Evidence from lesson observations and the school's tracking data shows that attainment is still rising, as teachers build systematically on recent gains in Key Stage 1. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make as good progress as their peers. Pupils are well known as individuals and receive high levels of support and encouragement. They grow into confident young people, who show respect for one another and have positive attitudes to their education. They are well behaved in and out of lessons. They know what to do if bullying occurs, but they say this happens rarely. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Pupils develop strong moral values and good social skills but their knowledge and understanding of communities and cultures outside their own experience are limited.

The curriculum is satisfactory and pupils enjoy lessons because teachers are creative in their approach and often make lessons practical and exciting. However, there is only a limited number of visits and visitors to the school to add interest and relevance to pupils' learning. There are not enough opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to develop their skills at higher levels.

There is a strong sense of teamwork within the school. Staff have risen to the high expectations set by the headteacher and show a firm commitment to improvement. A rapid rate of improvement over the last year, effective self-evaluation and the dedication

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and enthusiasm of senior leaders, coupled with strong support from staff, parents and carers give the school a good capacity for further improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the work set in lessons is at a sufficiently challenging level for more-able pupils to help them make the best possible progress.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum by:
  - planning more opportunities for pupils to learn about communities and cultures outside their own experience
  - ensuring gifted and talented pupils are given more opportunities to develop their skills and talents at higher levels
  - organising more visits and visitors to the school to make learning relevant and interesting for pupils.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Children's skills vary considerably when they start in the Nursery but are often well below those typical for their age. They make good progress throughout the school. Attainment is broadly average in both key stages and is rising as is seen in the work in pupils' books and the school's tracking information. Pupils are keen to learn and apply themselves well in lessons. They work well individually, in pairs and small groups. Girls and boys from all ethnic backgrounds, and those from homes where English is not the first language, achieve well and thoroughly enjoy learning.

Boys are making better progress in reading and writing than last year. Their interest and motivation have been captured by competitions to reward good effort and by a new homework scheme which involves parents and pupils working together. Progress was good in a Year 6 lesson for example, when the pupils learned how to describe a setting for the stories they were going to write. Boys and girls keenly discussed the language and vocabulary to provide a good opening sentence, and came up with striking examples of their own. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties were well supported by the teacher who encouraged them to take a full part in the lesson. Girls in Key Stage 1 are now making good progress in mathematics. In Year 2, for example, they developed a secure understanding of capacity by comparing the contents of different sized containers.

Pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and the vast majority adopt them. Many enjoy the nutritious school lunches and packed lunches usually contain healthy options. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to their own school community through the school council. Their average attendance and level of basic skills mean they are satisfactorily prepared for the future. The school is presently looking at ways of developing the school council to enable pupils to have a greater say in school improvement. The work to gain the International Schools award at intermediate level has begun to give pupils an understanding of overseas communities. However, pupils have only a limited understanding of life in communities in the United Kingdom that are socially and culturally different from their own.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:  |          |
| Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>   | 3        |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress  | 2        |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress                      | 2        |
| <b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Pupils' behaviour</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:  |          |
| Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>   | 3        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>  | <b>3</b> |

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers have positive relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. Consequently, little time is wasted and pupils spend the maximum time learning. Interactive whiteboards are used well to illustrate key learning points and to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Teachers' use of assessment to support learning is, in most respects, effective. For example, marking is good and provides pupils with helpful information on how to improve their work. Planning meets the needs of most pupils because it is based on a clear understanding of their recent performance. Activities are particularly well-matched to the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and enable these pupils to make good progress alongside their peers. Occasionally, however, activities for more able pupils lack challenge and in these lessons their progress is just satisfactory.

Curriculum plans are satisfactory and provide teachers with clear guidance about what has to be taught in different subjects over the year. Teachers present their lessons in creative ways. In a Year 3 English lesson for example, the pupils took on the role of a character in a story, to experience what it would be like to face a dilemma. Pupils were enthralled by the teacher's imaginative presentation, discussing the options with great excitement before writing about their choices. Pupils keenly checked their work against clear 'steps to success' which were available on each table. With the support of one of its partner schools, the school has recently introduced a programme of instrumental music tuition.

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However, there are limited opportunities for pupils with different gifts and talents to develop their skills at higher levels. The school offers a range of out-of-school clubs, for example football and chess, but there are too few visits to and visitors from the local area to add interest and relevance to pupils' learning and to give them a better understanding of their local community. Similarly, the curriculum lacks planned opportunities for pupils to learn about communities further afield.

Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive good teaching: for example through intervention groups, which help them improve different aspects of literacy and numeracy and improve their confidence and self-esteem. Their progress is tracked carefully to assess the effectiveness of the interventions and changes made as necessary. Good links with external support agencies ensure that teachers receive clear advice about how to meet pupils' specific needs. The family support worker, shared between a cluster of schools, has been successful in helping families and pupils understand the need for regular attendance. An innovative approach to recognising and rewarding good attendance has been instrumental in achieving a rapid rise in attendance levels which have, until recently, been low but are now broadly in line with schools nationally.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The quality of teaching</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The use of assessment to support learning  | 2        |
| <b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>   | <b>2</b> |

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides a firm steer to the school's work. A clear monitoring timetable means that everyone is aware of each other's and their own responsibilities in helping the school to move forward. Teachers confirmed this, saying, 'We feel part of what we're trying to achieve.' Senior and middle managers have adapted well to the increased expectations of their roles. They monitor teaching and learning effectively to identify weaknesses and provide useful support to secure improvement.

There are clear procedures to ensure that pupils are safe in school. Staff are properly trained in how to protect and safeguard pupils and new staff are checked carefully to ensure their suitability. Staff promote equality of opportunity well. The progress of different groups of pupils is tracked carefully and measures taken to address underachievement. As a result, the progress of some groups, for example pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, has improved. Racist incidents are rare, but procedures are in place to ensure that any which arise are tackled promptly.

Partnerships with parents and carers are good and continue to improve as a result of some innovative work to help them support their children more effectively at home. Parents' and carers' strong support for the school is shown not only through the positive

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response to the questionnaire but through their good attendance at Friday morning assemblies. Strong partnerships with other local schools have improved provision for pupils. For example, the local secondary school provides music lessons for pupils in Years 3 and 6 and by doing so strengthens provision for music in the school. Similarly, an effective partnership with the educational welfare service has resulted in good improvement in attendance levels.

The governing body is supportive and has a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring procedures have been strengthened. At present, the governing body has a limited role in evaluating performance and in prioritising areas for school improvement but is currently seeking to improve this aspect of its work. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. The school has completed an audit of provision and is working to improve links with communities and cultures outside the immediate environment.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning   | 2        |
| <b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>  | <b>2</b> |

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle in quickly to the Nursery and begin to develop their confidence and independence. The atmosphere is warm and inviting and this means that children come into school happily each morning, ready to engage in all the activities provided for them. They make good progress throughout Nursery and Reception but transfer to Year 1 at levels which are still below those expected for their age but nonetheless at considerably higher levels than when they started school.

The development of literacy and mathematical skills begins as soon as children start school. Children in Nursery learned about two-dimensional shapes when they built junk models of police cars and ambulances, and pretended to write about where they would keep an imaginary dinosaur. Children build upon these skills in Reception, writing simple



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sentences about what they would like to be when they grow up, and matching the number of dinosaur eggs to different numerals.

There is a good balance between activities that are directed by adults and those that children choose for themselves. Adults model language well, helping children to increase their vocabulary and communication skills. Adults record useful observations of children's progress and this builds into a unique portfolio which tracks their development and identifies children with specific needs. Although children with special educational needs are well catered for through focused support from adults, there is no specific provision to meet the needs of gifted and talented children.

Leadership is good. There is a good focus on keeping children safe and secure. A clear action plan is based upon accurate self-evaluation and identifies a clear way forward. This includes the development of the outdoor area to increase the range of opportunities to stimulate children's learning.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>                   | <b>2</b> |
| 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 | 2        |

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are extremely positive about the school's work. They agree that their children enjoy school and that children are kept safe. They are very happy about the teaching and that the school helps them to support their children at home. A few commented that they did not receive enough information about their children's progress. Parents' and carers' views are similar to those held by inspectors. From discussion with the headteacher, inspectors noted that the school has increased the amount of progress reports sent home to parents and carers and holds termly consultation meetings to keep them informed.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Somers Heath 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 108 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements  | Strongly agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |    | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | %  | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 59             | 55 | 46    | 43 | 2        | 2  | 1                 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 51             | 47 | 56    | 52 | 1        | 1  | 0                 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress  | 27             | 25 | 67    | 62 | 13       | 12 | 0                 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 31             | 29 | 66    | 61 | 5        | 5  | 1                 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 32             | 30 | 73    | 68 | 1        | 1  | 1                 | 1 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning  | 34             | 31 | 67    | 62 | 4        | 4  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 32             | 30 | 69    | 64 | 5        | 5  | 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) | 33             | 31 | 63    | 58 | 2        | 2  | 1                 | 1 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs  | 34             | 31 | 64    | 59 | 5        | 5  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 31             | 29 | 64    | 59 | 6        | 6  | 1                 | 1 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 23             | 21 | 76    | 70 | 5        | 5  | 1                 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 36             | 33 | 64    | 59 | 6        | 6  | 1                 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school   | 45             | 42 | 57    | 53 | 4        | 4  | 1                 | 1 |

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 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      | 59  | 35   | 3            | 3          |
| Primary schools      | 9   | 44   | 39           | 7          |
| Secondary schools    | 13  | 36   | 41           | 11         |
| Sixth forms          | 15  | 39   | 43           | 3          |
| Special schools      | 35  | 43   | 17           | 5          |
| Pupil referral units | 21  | 42   | 29           | 9          |
| All schools          | 13  | 43   | 37           | 8          |

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul> |
| 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.**



7 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Somers Heath Primary School, South Ockendon, RM15 5LX**

Thank you for welcoming us and for telling us your opinions about your school. Thank you also to those pupils who returned questionnaires. Your views, along with everything else that we saw, helped us form a clear view about how well your school works. Your school is giving you a good education. Here are some of the important things that we found out:

- the teaching is good and helps you make good progress in lessons
- you behave well in lessons and around the school
- you understand how to keep healthy and fit
- you work hard in lessons and always try to do your best
- adults look after you well so that you feel safe and secure in school
- the people who run your school are improving things rapidly.

We have asked your teachers to make sure they always set work that is at the right level to help you make even faster progress. There should be more opportunities for you to develop skills that you are particularly good at, for example in art, sport or mathematics, to help those with special gifts or talents reach really high levels. We have asked the teachers to help you learn more about different communities so that you understand about their lives and cultures. Finally, you said you would like more visits and visitors to the school to make learning fun - so we have asked the staff if they could organise that too.

You all can play your part in helping your school become better by making sure you work hard, behave well and attend school every day unless you are ill.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead inspector

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