

Somerfords' Walter Powell VA CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	126442
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	381237
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2012
Lead inspector	Linda McGill HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Pearce
Headteacher	Jill Rowe
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Linda McGill

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent five hours in classrooms observing parts of lessons taught by three teachers, including a visiting music teacher, and three teaching assistants, hearing pupils read, talking to them about their work and examining their books. Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, other leaders and staff, members of the governing body, three parents and groups of pupils. A telephone discussion was held jointly with a representative from the local authority and with the lead inspector of the federated partner school. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including information about pupils' attainment and progress, the school's self-evaluation and its plan for improvement, policies and minutes of meetings of the governing body. The questionnaires returned by 29 parents and carers, 22 pupils and 8 members of staff were examined.

Information about the school

Somerfords' Walter Powell is much smaller than most primary schools. It is federated with nearby Seagry Primary School; the schools share an executive headteacher and governing body. The two schools were inspected at the same time. Pupils are taught mainly in two classes; one comprises pupils in the Reception Year and Years 1 and 2 and the other includes all pupils in Key Stage 2. The school serves a mainly rural community. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage, with a very small number from other White or mixed backgrounds. A very small proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals and a small proportion is from service families. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is greater than average and includes two pupils who have a statement of special educational needs. A pre-school shares the school's site, but as it is not managed by the governing body it is inspected separately. In 2011, the results of national tests taken by pupils in Year 6 met the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for 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

- This is a good school where good teaching and close attention to pupils' well-being enable pupils to do well both academically and in their personal development. It is not outstanding because pupils do not make progress equally well in mathematics as they do in English, and because the teaching does not always fully challenge and stretch the pupils.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make excellent progress in reading and writing and many reach levels that are higher than expected for their age. They make good progress in mathematics, overall, but by Year 6 one or two do not fulfil the potential that they showed in their assessments at the age of seven.
- Good teaching is one of the main reasons why pupils make good progress. There are strengths in the relationships between adults and pupils and in the attention that is given to meeting individual pupils' needs. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning, working with groups or providing well-targeted support for individual pupils who have particular needs.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes also contribute well to their good progress. In lessons, pupils are attentive and keen to learn. They persevere with their work and support one another. During this inspection, pupils' behaviour was exemplary in those lessons and activities that inspired them, for example when they sang together, rehearsing their performance for a forthcoming music festival.
- Effective action has been taken since the last inspection to improve teaching and to boost pupils' achievement. The sharing of expertise across the federation has been particularly beneficial and has contributed well to teachers' professional development. The school's leaders and the governing body take a rigorous and concerted approach to monitoring performance and have a secure overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, improvement plans do not always feature specific, measurable targets. This in turn limits the extent to which the governing body is able to hold the school to account.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils' progress in mathematics matches that in reading and writing, by:
 - continuing with efforts to improve pupils' confidence and skills in solving problems expressed in words
 - making sure that teachers and teaching assistants quickly spot misconceptions and identify those who are struggling so that support is provided or lessons adjusted straight away.
- Enable all pupils to make maximum progress across the school by:
 - ensuring that tasks and activities always fully challenge the pupils and that questions make them think deeply
 - reviewing and revising individual pupils' targets as soon as they have reached them
 - deepening pupils' understanding of what pupils need to do in order to reach the next level in their work.
- Strengthen systems for self-evaluation and forward planning by:
 - ensuring that strategic plans contain specific, measurable targets that reflect the school's drive to promote outstanding achievement
 - ensuring that information presented to governors gives a succinct overview of areas of strength and relative weakness.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is good. Attainment on entry to Reception varies widely from year to year because of the very small numbers in each cohort, but is usually broadly as expected for their age. Children make good progress from their starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal and social development, and in their early reading and writing skills. Almost all current Reception children have already attained the level of development expected by the start of Year 1. Attainment in reading is above average by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. By the age of seven, most pupils are fluent readers and they use their knowledge of letters and sounds confidently to help them work out unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 6, attainment is above average. All pupils in last year's Year 6, including disabled pupils and those who had special educational needs, made excellent progress in reading and writing; all nine reached the level expected for their age and several exceeded it. The school's assessments show that the current Year 6 is set to match this good achievement in reading and writing. Pupils' attainment in mathematics last year mirrored that in English, but progress was not quite as strong, because not all of the pupils built successfully on the levels they reached at the age of seven. The school is taking steps to boost progress in mathematics because an analysis of test results showed pupils' skills in solving problems expressed in words were not as secure as in other aspects of the subject, but the impact has yet to show clearly. Nevertheless, taken overall, the pupils have

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made good progress so far. Across the school, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress as a result of carefully tailored support. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls.

Pupils clearly enjoy their learning and are keen to do well. They also reflect honestly on what they have learned, saying what they feel confident with and where they need more guidance. In a mathematics lesson, pupils were asked to write challenging two-step problems for their partner to solve. 'I liked writing out the problems,' said one, 'because it helped me think about what strategies to use to solve them.' Another pupil commented, 'I enjoyed this because I got better at adding decimals, and quicker.'

In discussions, and in their questionnaires, the pupils said that they learn a lot in lessons. Their parents and carers agree. The evidence from this inspection supports their views.

Quality of teaching

The school's assessments of pupils' attainment and progress, work in pupils' books and observations of lessons all confirm that teaching has a good impact on pupils' learning over time. Teachers take full account of the range of ages and abilities in their classes when planning lessons and make sure that tasks are adapted to suit individual pupils' prior attainment. Lessons are well organised, brisk and purposeful and teachers' explanations are typically clear. Pupils know what they are expected to do by the end of the lesson. There are a few occasions, however, when pupils' learning does not move on as quickly as it should; for example if they wait while explanations are given to others, or when their reading book is not changed for a more difficult one as soon as they need it. The school's records show that a few pupils have already met their target for this year, but the target has not been revised upwards. In the most effective lessons, pupils are challenged to think and explain their reasoning. For example, in a mathematics lesson one pupil suggested a way to solve a problem which was clearly not suitable. The teacher asked probing questions of the class and worked through the calculation with them, which enabled the pupils to learn not only that the method was unsuitable, but to understand the reasons why. On a few occasions, misconceptions are missed and some pupils spend too long struggling with a task. Teachers use technology well to enhance their teaching and the pupils' experiences. In a geography lesson, for example, pupils researched weather conditions on the internet and made video recordings of classmates presenting a weather forecast.

Teaching assistants understand pupils' particular needs and are careful to allow the pupils to think and work things out for themselves. This measured support enables disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to be fully included in lessons. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give helpful pointers for improvement. Many of the older pupils know the levels they are working at and understand the whole-class targets for English and mathematics. They are less clear

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about their personal targets and what exactly they should do to get to the next level. Younger pupils and Reception children benefit from regular sessions in which they learn the names and sounds of letters. However, the number of children in the youngest group means that these sessions are not fine-tuned to each child's particular level of knowledge. The youngest children have the opportunity to make choices and initiate activities for themselves, but chances for them to pursue their own ideas at length, to select from a wide range of resources or to move freely between one activity and another are constrained by the space available to them and the timetable of lessons for the older pupils.

Teachers' curriculum plans and daily assemblies include experiences and activities that broaden pupils' horizons and make a strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. During the inspection, pupils were excited and delighted to meet a children's author and to ask him questions about his life and work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school. The school's records show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour or bullying are very rare. Pupils and their parents and carers are confident that should any incidents arise, they will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils were adamant that bullying does not happen and said that they had been taught how to deal with situations that upset them or make them uncomfortable, including when using the internet or mobile phone. They mentioned that occasionally friends fall out, but also that the school's small size means that pupils of all ages get along well and look out for one another. The staff know pupils well and are attentive to their well-being. Parents, carers and staff who completed questionnaires noted that behaviour is usually good, and were unanimous in agreeing that pupils are safe at school. Pupils also say they feel safe, but they were a little more critical of their own behaviour than the adults, with a few saying that behaviour is sometimes not as good as it should be. During this inspection, pupils behaved impeccably during assembly and when they were engrossed in their work. Attention wandered, however, when they were expected to sit still and listen for too long. Attendance rates are high and pupils are punctual to school.

Leadership and management

Concerted efforts by the school's leaders and the governing body have ensured that the school's effectiveness has improved since its previous inspection. The staff work closely with their federation counterparts, sharing expertise and approaches. This, together with secure arrangements for managing teachers' performance, has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. There is a clear upward trend in the school's internal assessments and results of national tests. The school's leaders and the governing body have a good understanding of areas of strength and relative weakness, and share a determination to continue to improve; this illustrates the school's capacity for sustained improvement. There is a clear plan

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for continued improvement, reflecting the ambition to become an outstanding school. However, the plan does not contain specific benchmarks against which success can be measured. In addition, information provided to the governing body about pupils' attainment and progress is not succinct and does not always highlight the key messages, which limits governors' ability to hold leaders to account.

The governing body is meticulous in meeting statutory requirements for keeping pupils safe and for reviewing and updating its procedures. The school ensures that all pupils, including the very few who are entitled to free school meals and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, have equal opportunity to do well in their learning. This means that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school's curriculum is carefully constructed to meet the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes and to ensure the progressive development of basic skills. It also contains many opportunities for enrichment through a good range of out-of-school clubs, residential experiences and visits, all of which promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school also takes every opportunity to participate in activities that will extend pupils' connections with and experiences of the wider world, for example pupils have recently participated in the Face Britain event.

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.

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.



3 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Somerfords' Walter Powell VA CofE Primary School, Great Somerford SN15 5HS

Thank you so much for making me welcome when I inspected your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you about your work and watching you and your teachers in lessons. What you and your parents and carers told me was very useful when I was thinking about the judgements I had to make.

I have written a report, which some of you might like to read; you should ask your parents and carers to show it to you. In the meantime, here are the headlines.

- Your school is a good school. This is because it helps you make good progress in your learning and in your personal development.
- The teaching is good and your lessons are interesting. You also have the chance to do exciting things, such as your singing festival and meeting a famous author – these things help you learn well, too.
- You behave well, look after each other and are safe and secure in school.
- The headteacher and the governing body are good leaders and they have plans to make sure you and the children who come after you to continue to do well.

Even though yours is a good school, the next task is to turn it into an outstanding one. To help, I have asked the school's leaders and the governing body to:

- make sure that you always make the best possible progress in mathematics as well as English. You should always get work that makes you think and really challenges you
- make sure plans for the future include challenging targets.

You can all help with this. Tell your teachers if your work is too easy or hard for you, and continue to try your best.

I wish you well for the future

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector

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