

Somerles Infant School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109583
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	377947
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2012
Lead inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean Green
Headteacher	Jennifer Meara
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2008
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Wynford-Jones

Additional Inspector

Janev Mehmet-Christofides

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited two assemblies and 14 lessons, observing seven teachers. They heard some pupils in Year 2 read. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection; they observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan. Inspectors analysed 61 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, together with those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Someries Infant is broadly similar in size to most schools of its type. The majority of the pupils are of White British origin. However, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is considerably higher than average. Most are of Asian, Black African or Black Caribbean heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. There are no pupils at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and the proportion joining or leaving the school part way through the school year, are lower than average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.

Someries Infant shares the site with the junior school. The junior school and the privately run breakfast and after-school clubs, which meet in the infant school, were not visited as part of this inspection.

The headteacher is seconded for four days a week, until the end of the summer term 2012, to support a local school. The assistant headteachers assume responsibility in her absence.

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. It is not outstanding because the quality of teaching is not consistently high enough to ensure high attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, and assessment procedures are not sufficiently refined.
- Pupils achieve well. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Girls tend to reach slightly higher standards in reading and writing than the boys. Standards in reading and writing are marginally higher than those in mathematics.
- Effective teaching ensures pupils make good progress. Recent strategies to raise attainment in English and mathematics are proving effective. Most lessons are taught well and there are examples of outstanding practice. Adult support is deployed effectively to support learning. Just occasionally, lessons lack pace. Not all teachers are confident in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make). Staff in Early Years Foundation Stage have yet to make best use of the outdoor area to promote the children's early literacy and numeracy skills. Marking is undertaken systematically and there are some good examples of informative marking, but this is not consistent throughout the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Most have a positive attitude to learning but do not take enough responsibility for their own learning. Pupils have a good understanding of personal safety. Attendance is above average.
- Good governance and senior leadership, coupled with effective systems for monitoring teaching and learning, including teachers' performance management, have ensured that standards in the school have been sustained during the headteacher's secondment. A realistic evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development has underpinned improvements. The school has an abundance of assessment data but staff at all levels have not analysed it sufficiently deeply to pinpoint specific areas for development.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics and consolidate the improvements in English by:
 - making certain that all pupils extend their understanding of mathematical terminology
 - promoting activities that encourage boys to read and write well
 - maximising the use of the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor areas to provide more opportunities for children to practise their literacy and numeracy skills.

- Ensure greater consistency in quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - all lessons proceed at a good pace and pupils take more responsibility for their learning
 - all teachers are confident in teaching phonics
 - marking consistently helps pupils understand what they have to do to improve their work.

- Refine procedures for analysing assessments data to pinpoint areas of development for different groups of pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The majority of children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected for their age. They settle quickly and make good progress. They feel secure and grow in confidence. Several initiated conversations with inspectors, asking, 'Who are you and what are you doing?' Some eagerly explained to the inspectors the activities they were undertaking. Good use is made of the outdoor area to promote most aspects of the children's learning, especially their physical development and their social skills, but it is not used as well to promote children's writing and mathematical development.

By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. Pupils are the equivalent of around a term ahead of pupils nationally. The recent emphasis on ensuring pupils develop their skills in undertaking investigations in mathematics and science is proving effective in raising standards and accelerating progress. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics group, pupils eagerly collected data from their peers. They asked about their favourite colours, countries and animals, and constructed and interpreted tally charts carefully. In another group, pupils identified lines of symmetry on different shapes. However, in neither groups did pupils use subject-specific terminology with sufficient confidence and accuracy.

Pupils are developing the skills of selecting their own reading books well. Older pupils

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talk knowledgably about their favourite author. Most have a good understanding of the different ways to read unfamiliar words, including the use of phonics. However, not all pupils use phonics sufficiently confidently. Some are uncertain of the different sounds and blends. The girls tend to find reading more enjoyable and more often practise their reading skills at home.

Pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences. Most have a good understanding of basic punctuation and appreciate the importance of formulating ideas before starting to write. Pupils understand the importance of making the writing interesting and the use of descriptive and adventurous vocabulary. For example, in a Year 1 class, pupils looked carefully at examples of text linked to *Handa's Hen* and were very clear about which they preferred and why. Some commented, 'The first one is boring; the sentences start in the same way and are too short.' Others explained, 'The second is much more interesting; there is lot of description and speech, and question marks have been used.' However, pupils do not consistently use strategies such as their knowledge of phonics or a dictionary to attempt unfamiliar words and to extend their vocabulary.

Scrutiny of assessment data, pupils' work and lesson observations shows that most pupils are making good progress. However, boys are not making as rapid progress in reading and writing. This is because activities do not always capture their imagination or encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. Different groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make similar progress to their peers.

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are rightly pleased with their children's progress in acquiring the basic skills.

Quality of teaching

Relationships with pupils are good. In all lessons, teachers share the learning objective with pupils and clearly identify criteria by which learning can be evaluated. The vast majority of lessons proceed at a quick pace and teachers use questioning strategies effectively to probe and consolidate pupils' understanding. Information and communication technology is used well to enhance lessons. For most of the time, support staff are deployed effectively and provide good support, especially for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

Teachers act as good role models to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They provide pupils with reasonable opportunity for reflection and to promote good behaviour. They make good use of opportunities to engage pupils in discussion with each other and so develop their linguistic and social skills. For example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson, pupils worked effectively together to formulate descriptions of a picture by the artist L S Lowry. The teacher set high expectations by asking them to include alliteration and onomatopoeia. Excellent use was made of brief discussions to ensure the pupils understood the task and made rapid progress toward achieving the lesson objective. However, not all teachers

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provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, by encouraging boys to undertake writing activities.

The teaching of reading is promoted appropriately throughout the school. Books are colour coded. Pupils know which level they are working on and the order in which they will progress. Pupils do not always make accelerated progress in the phonics lessons because the pace is sometimes too slow and there is a lack of challenge. In part, this can be attributed to some teachers' lack of knowledge and confidence in teaching phonics. Older pupils, especially the boys, are not encouraged enough to read of their own accord.

Pupils are increasingly asked to evaluate their own learning at the end of lessons. Most do so sensibly. Their work is marked regularly. The use of the colour coding system 'tickled pink for success' is reasonably consistent in most classes. More recently, some teachers have included written helpful pointers to improve pupils' work. This good practice is not yet evident in all classes.

The vast majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's progress and view teaching over time as good. Pupils are positive about their teachers. They say that the teachers are 'friendly and help us to learn a lot.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils consistently show respect for each other, staff and visitors alike. They have a good understanding of personal safety, including e-safety. They say they feel safe in school and know whom to approach if they are worried or concerned. They confirm that incidents of inappropriate behaviour, for example fighting and rudeness, and different sorts of bullying such as name-calling, are rare. They say that if an incident occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and fairly by staff. There have been no exclusions but there have been a few reported racist incidents since the last inspection. Nearly all respondents to the questionnaire stated their children feel safe at school and are well looked after. Although pupils are keen to evaluate their own learning, the majority do not initiate their own learning. For example, by following up activities and finding out things for themselves at home. The school and the Eco councils make a valuable contribution to school life. Attendance is above average.

Leadership and management

Strong leadership and the clear vision for the school's development underpin the school's capacity to improve further. The governing body has responded well to the challenge of the last inspection. It is now monitoring the work of the school effectively and holding senior leaders to account. It ensures that the school meets the government's latest requirements for safeguarding and that the pupils are kept safe. The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. Secure and well-established systems and structures have enabled the assistant headteachers to

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continue to move the school forward during the headteacher's secondment. As a result of the secondment, middle leaders have taken on greater responsibility and all staff have worked closely with colleagues in the school the headteacher is supporting. This has contributed much to their professional development. Senior leaders know the school well. The school development plan is detailed and based on an accurate evaluation of the school's performance. The priorities for improvement are appropriate and closely linked to raising attainment and accelerating pupils' progress.

The considerable amount of assessment information is recorded meticulously. The information is analysed systematically and used appropriately to monitor the quality of teaching and to challenge teachers during their performance management meetings. However, the data has not been interrogated sufficiently deeply by senior leaders and staff to clearly identify the exact areas for development for individuals and groups of pupils to ensure that outcomes for pupils move from good to outstanding. Nevertheless, the level of data provided enables the governing body to monitor performance appropriately and quickly investigate any possible incidence of discrimination or lack of equality of opportunity.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and promotes pupils' learning, including their spiritual, moral, and social development effectively. The promotion of their cultural development is not as evident. The thematic approach to the curriculum provides pupils with a good opportunity to see the relevance of their learning in different subjects. The curriculum is enhanced by a suitable range of after-school activities, visits and visitors to the school, and is suitably modified to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

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.

16 July 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Someries Infant School, Luton LU2 8AH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and talking to you. You were very polite. In our discussions, you told us that you enjoy school and feel safe because the staff look after you well. You know that you can turn to them if you are worried. Your behaviour is good and your attendance is above average. It was a pity the weather was so bad and your sports day had to be postponed. At least the children in the Nursery managed to have theirs in the hall. It was nice to see so many parents encouraging you to take part in the races.

Your school provides you with a good education. By the end of Year 2, your attainment is above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good progress and achievement during your time at the school.

We have asked the school to help you to make even better progress and reach higher standards by making certain that:

- all lessons proceed at a good pace and you take more responsibility for your learning
- boys are encouraged to make quicker progress in their reading and writing and you are all taught phonics well
- you understand mathematical terminology and use it correctly
- teachers make better use of the outdoor areas in Nursery and Reception classes for you to practise your literacy and numeracy skills
- marking consistently helps you understand what you have to do to improve your work
- teachers and senior leaders look at assessment data more closely to pinpoint areas of development for each of you and for different groups of pupils.

Please remember that to make your school better, you must always try your best. Always read the comments teacher write and follow the advice they give you when they mark your work.

Yours sincerely

David Wynford-Jones
Lead inspector

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