

Somerhill Junior School

Somerhill Road, Hove, BN3 1RP

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement over time is not good enough, particularly in mathematics, despite some recent improvement.
- Recent improvements in teaching have not had sufficient time to increase achievement and some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve with the result that sometimes activities are too easy.
- The marking of pupils' work does not always tell pupils clearly what they need to do to improve, especially in mathematics.
- Teachers do not always use assessment information well enough to make sure that pupils' work is closely matched to their abilities.
- Governors do not have a sufficiently clear view of their roles in checking the impact of the school's work on pupils' achievement. Not all governors are sufficiently well informed about how additional funds are spent

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders' actions, including the effective management of teachers' performance, have been carefully considered, determined and successful in securing recent, rapid improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The progress made by pupils across the school is beginning to accelerate.
- Pupils behave well, have good attitudes towards their learning and feel safe.
- Governors have played a positive role in the successful reorganisation of Year 6 to improve achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons and part-lessons, including two joint observations with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority representative, senior leaders, staff, parents and carers and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 74 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as talking to parents and carers informally during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and analysed a range of documents and policies, including the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance data, safeguarding documents and a sample of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Allan Barfoot

Additional inspector

Victoria Turner

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Somerhill is a larger than average sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium initiative, including those eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care, is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is below average.
- The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.
- There is a breakfast club and an after-school club, neither of which is managed by the school's governing body. These were not part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics, through making sure that teaching is consistently good and better by:
 - making sure that teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils, regardless of their ability, so that pupils are given work which is not too easy and pupils' progress is maximised
 - making sure that teachers use information about pupils' progress to help them to plan lessons which meet individual pupils' needs and build on what pupils already know and can do
 - making sure that teachers' marking is of consistently good quality, including a sharper focus on telling pupils what they need to do to improve their work, especially in mathematics
 - sharing more widely the good practice that exists within the school.
- Strengthen the role of the governing body in school improvement by providing training to those governors who do not yet fully understand how information about pupils' achievement can be used to check the success of initiatives and how additional funding is used to accelerate pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the progress made by pupils over time, including different groups of pupils, has been uneven, resulting in a dip in attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2011. Some groups of pupils, especially middle-ability pupils, have not made enough progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils' progress is accelerating as a result of improved teaching. Consequently, standards improved in 2012 and were broadly in line with national averages overall. However, rapid improvements in teaching have not had enough time to have had a full impact on achievement. Inspection evidence shows that the school continues to improve.
- A legacy of weaker teaching means that older pupils have more ground to cover to make up for lost time, particularly in mathematics. The school recognises this and has introduced well-focused, intensive programmes to address gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. The school's tracking information, along with inspectors' observations of groups, indicates that pupils' progress is accelerating and that gaps are closing.
- The school's own assessments indicate that pupils' skills and understanding when they join Year 3 are broadly in line with national averages. Reading is given a high priority and pupils read regularly to an adult. A 'rapid reading' scheme has been successfully used to support pupils in Year 3 who need extra help, including addressing any gaps in their knowledge about how letters and sounds are linked. As a result, standards in reading improved in 2012 to just above average.
- In 2012, there was an increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. However, the progress made overall by more-able pupils is no better than expected because their starting points when they joined the school were already above average.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to that of other groups because there are variations in the quality of teaching overall. For example, during the inspection some pupils were seen to make good progress where teaching was good but slower progress when teaching was less effective.
- The use of pupil premium to fund intensive one-to-one and small-group support is beginning to close the gap for those pupils eligible. However, this group of pupils makes expected progress overall because other work set in lessons is not always matched accurately to pupils' needs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because there are variations in the quality of teaching which lead to unevenness in pupils' progress as they move through the school. As a result, pupils' achievement over time is not good enough, particularly in mathematics.
- Inspection evidence indicates that the quality of teaching is improving rapidly. However, recent improvements in teaching have not had sufficient time to increase achievement and some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain.
- Where teaching is good, teachers use confident subject knowledge to provide lively and well-paced lessons so that all pupils are engaged. Work is accurately matched to pupils' needs so that they make good progress. For example, pupils in Year 4 relished the challenge to design packaging for biscuits, applying their knowledge of shape and measure to good effect because activities were accurately matched to build effectively on pupils' starting points.
- In some cases teaching requires improvement because information about pupils' progress is not used effectively to make sure that activities build on what pupils already know and can do. As a result, expectations are not always high enough and some activities are too easy, so that pupils' progress slows.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly but the quality of the marking is variable. High-quality marking ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what needs to be done to improve.

However, some teachers miss opportunities to provide written guidance about what pupils can do to improve their work further.

- Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoy reading, both in school and at home, which is a testament to the school's approach to reading as well as to the support provided by parents and carers. Training for teachers and teaching assistants has increased their confidence in the teaching of reading and 'learning walks' completed by the headteacher have been used to check that there is a consistent approach to the use of guided reading lessons across the school.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers so that expectations are consistent within lessons. As a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are included well and make similar progress to their peers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well around the school. They are polite, courteous and proud of their school. They treat each other and adults with respect because they feel valued and adults provide strong role models. Almost all the parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire endorse this view and consider behaviour in the school to be good.
- A whole-school focus on developing 'behaviour for learning' has been successful in ensuring that pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes good behaviour and of the sanctions that apply if they do not behave well. They are keen to learn and are attentive in lessons. Very occasionally a few pupils become disengaged when the work they are given is too easy or when teachers allow them to 'switch off'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is, including awareness of the different forms this can take, such as cyber bullying and racism. They have a sensible awareness of how they can help to keep themselves safe and are confident that adults in the school will sort out any concerns they might have. As a result, pupils say they feel safe in school. All the parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, and those who spoke with inspectors during the inspection, support this view.
- School records show that there have been no racist incidents during the last three years and incidents of bullying are rare. School records indicate that any concerns are followed up appropriately.
- The school has introduced a range of successful initiatives to improve attendance, including class rewards for attendance and punctuality, so that attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's vision and determination have been instrumental in driving rapid improvements in the school in the two years he has been there. He is very capably supported by the deputy headteacher as well as other senior and middle leaders. One of the headteacher's many successes is evident in the way in which leaders work together as a team, complementing each other's strengths and sharing high expectations of pupils and colleagues.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching, pupils' progress, and in the shared leadership, testify to the effectiveness of leadership and demonstrate the school's good capacity to sustain the pace of development.
- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly. Weaker teaching has been eradicated and there has been a significant increase in the proportion of good teaching. However, these improvements have not had sufficient time to have had full impact on pupils' achievement.
- Performance management has been used very successfully to increase teachers' accountability and to ensure that pupils' interests are at the heart of the school. For example, teachers' individual performance management targets are linked to pupils' achievement and regular pupil progress meetings are used to check pupils' progress.

- Continuing professional development is used effectively to improve specific aspects of teaching. For example, the school realises that it does not always capitalise on existing good practice and plans to remedy this by increasing opportunities for teachers to observe colleagues.
- Middle leaders' roles have developed well since the last inspection. Subject leaders have an accurate picture of strengths and development needs within their subjects. Year group leaders play an increasingly powerful role in driving improvements by sharing and modelling the senior leaders' high expectations.
- Developments in the curriculum foster creativity and support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils' thoughtful responses to assemblies illustrate the school's success in helping pupils to become mature and reflective young people. The school is highly inclusive, pupils are treated with respect and discrimination is not tolerated.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has provided good support for school development and clearly understands the school's strengths and what needs to be done to secure further improvements. The Chair of the Governing Body and vice chair meet with the headteacher fortnightly and know about the school's work and about the success of developments particularly the improvements in teaching. They monitor, for example, how pupil premium funds are spent to support those pupils eligible through the provision of specialist teachers and intensive teaching programmes, such as 'Numbers Count'. However, they have rightly identified that not all governors fully understand how to hold the school to account for pupils' achievement by developing a more rigorous approach to the analysis of school and government information about pupils' achievement. Governors know how performance management is used to recognise strengths in teaching and links to salary progression and promotion. They are kept regularly informed of the outcomes of lesson observations completed by senior leaders. Safeguarding arrangements are in place and meet statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114446
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	405513

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	440
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Murgatroyd
Headteacher	Shaun Collins
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2010
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