

Somerton Infant School

Etsome Terrace, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6LY

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. By the end of Year 2 they make excellent progress from average starting points on entry to school. Attainment has been above and often well above average in reading, writing and mathematics since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is consistently good, with much that is outstanding. Teachers plan short, themed units of work which are often based on pupils' interests. They are well supported by a very wide range of visits and visitors.
- Pupils with disabilities, special educational needs and from other vulnerable groups are well provided for and supported effectively. They make good and often rapid progress.
- Pupils' excellent attitudes make a significant contribution to their learning. No time is lost in lessons because pupils are quick to get started on their tasks and activities once instructed to do so by their teachers.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning ensure that they want to succeed and rise to the challenges that teachers set for them.
- Behaviour and safety are excellent. Pupils feel safe. They set and maintain particularly high standards for themselves and are highly critical when these are not consistently met by all members of the school community.
- The broad and balanced curriculum plays a significant role in supporting pupils' outstanding behaviour. It promotes pupils' excellent respect for each other's feelings, their religions, beliefs and cultures.
- The interim headteacher, in close partnership with senior teachers, staff and governors, has systematically led improvements that has secured pupils' continued high achievement.
- All staff and pupils share the school's drive and commitment to do the best that it can for every pupil who attends the school.
- The school's leadership analyses the information about pupils' progress closely and checks that teachers plan lessons that help any pupil who is not on track to reach challenging targets and catch up rapidly.
- Governors have a very accurate picture of the school's performance and are very well informed about outcomes for all pupils. They make decisions about school improvement based firmly on raising achievement even further.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons or part lessons in four classes, attended an assembly and listened to groups of pupils read.
- Three lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised the 36 responses to the online Parent View survey, along with comments from parents before school. Questionnaires completed by 17 staff were also analysed.
- Meetings took place with staff, pupils, governors and the school's improvement advisor. A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised pupils' books, records of pupils' progress, the school's checks on teaching and learning, the development plan, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Carol Warrant, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Somerton Infant School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and those from service families) is below average.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- A very small number of pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- A privately run pre-school operates on the school site and shares some of the school's facilities; as it is managed independently, it was not part of this inspection.
- The school has been through a period of uncertainty and change with regard to leadership following the departure of the previous long-serving headteacher. The recently appointed, interim headteacher is also the headteacher of Monteclefe, Church of England Academy, where the majority of pupils move on to at the end of Year 2. The governors of Somerton Infants are working towards possible federation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that marking is consistent across the school, with teachers giving pupils clear guidance on how they can improve their work and ensuring pupils act on the advice given.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding in relation to their starting points and abilities. They make rapid progress across the school and, as a result, attainment is consistently high at the end of Year 2. Although standards dipped slightly in 2013, they were above those seen nationally.
- The school's records and evidence in pupils' books show that most pupils make consistently better-than-expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics because of highly effective teaching over time.
- Children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding at levels typically expected for their age. Learning gets off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children learn early literacy, number and physical skills at a rapid rate because they use these every day in a wide range of purposeful indoor and outdoor activities.
- Older pupils are enthusiastic readers and have a range of skills that help them to work out unfamiliar words and to answer questions about characters and what is happening. Pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds letters make) is better than indicated by the Year 1 check, where it was below average in 2012 and 2013. Most Year 2 pupils read at levels well above those of pupils of a similar age by recognising whole words and sounding them out.
- Pupils are adventurous, confident and accurate writers throughout Years 1 and 2. Lessons are well structured and they build into longer writing sessions where pupils write high-quality pieces on their own.
- Pupils can count and work out number problems with totals up to 20 by the start of Year 1. They continue to make excellent progress and are confident to solve problems with much larger numbers by themselves by the start of Year 2. Their knowledge and understanding of shapes, measures and fractions are very good.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the small number of pupils new to learning English make outstanding progress because of the high-quality support they receive. Pupils typically reach at least average levels unless they have complex needs. The most able pupils make outstanding progress to reach the levels of which they are capable.
- The attainment of the small number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and who are supported by the pupil premium is in line with that of other pupils in the school in writing and mathematics, and one term behind in reading. Attainment is above that of pupils in this group nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Consistently good teaching, with a high proportion which is outstanding, is ensuring that pupils make rapid progress across the school.
- Lessons are almost always planned well. Where pupils make the best progress, learning is highly effective because the pace is brisk, pupils are excited and enthused by what they are learning and the needs of all ability groups of pupils are met. In the very few lessons observed where teaching was not yet outstanding, activities were planned that were too hard, especially for less able pupils, or too easy for the most able pupils; as a result, pupils' progress was not as good as it could have been.
- In a mathematics lesson where pupils made excellent progress they were calculating halves of numbers. This was particularly successful because pupils were encouraged to decide on their own level of challenge in the size of the numbers and the methods they used. They were able to explain their calculations using mathematical language and were very proud of their success.

- Pupils know what their targets for learning are and can talk about their next steps in detail, often setting high levels of challenge for themselves. Marking is almost always effective, though not all yet matches the very highest standards seen in some classes. Verbal feedback to pupils in lessons is good at helping them to progress rapidly.
- The school places great importance on the teaching of reading skills to pupils. Pupils of average and above-average ability demonstrate skills that are excellent and their capacity to discuss the texts they are reading is very impressive. The lower ability pupils who read to the inspector were very proud of their reading and used their rapidly developing phonic knowledge to sound out unfamiliar words with confidence.
- Teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They carry out their roles and responsibilities with great skill. For example, their work in class with small groups and individual pupils with complex needs has contributed greatly to these pupils achieving the very best, both socially and academically.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning ensure that they start tasks and activities quickly and finish them to a high standard in the time that they are given. Pupils are confident to ask for help if they get stuck and try again once they have received support from teachers or teaching assistants. Pupils take great care to check that work in books is presented neatly.
- Behaviour is almost always impeccable. Pupils listen attentively in lessons, ask and answer questions politely and follow adults' instructions immediately. Pupils need little supervision to move around the school safely.
- Playtimes are amicable, with pupils enjoying a range of equipment which they use to play games with their friends.
- Pupils and staff have trusting, positive relationships and children are polite to adults and each other.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is also outstanding.
- Pupils say they feel extremely safe and know what to do on the very rare occasion that they may have a concern. They know that any adult will help as well as one of their friends. Pupils understand the different kinds of bullying, including cyber bullying, and while no-one asked can remember any bullying incidents, they are confident they know who to ask if any were to occur.
- All parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, said that their children feel safe at school, are well cared for, that the school makes sure pupils are well behaved and that the school deals effectively with bullying.
- Attendance is average but has improved when compared to the same period last year.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school's high standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. The headteacher and senior teachers have been central to the school's continuing success. Every member of staff is committed to a vision of high aspirations for every pupil's achievement.
- The school checks its performance accurately and improvement planning reflects the school's clearly stated ambition to further raise achievement for all. The plan has the right priorities and sharply focuses on improving the quality of teaching and increasing the proportion of pupils making outstanding progress in all subjects.
- Leaders' very rapid response to below-average results in the phonics screening in Year 1, including a change of approach, staff training and reorganisation of groups, has resulted in more effective phonics teaching and consequent accelerated progress.
- The school's systems for analysing pupils' progress and the standards being reached by

individuals and groups of pupils in every class are highly effective. Half-termly checks identify those who may not be on track and immediate steps are taken to give the support needed to ensure that they get back on track quickly.

- Checks on the quality of teaching are clearly linked to pupil performance and best practice. Staff are effectively held to account for the achievement of their pupils. Training is used very well to support and develop teachers' skills and to raise already high standards even further.
- Subjects are extremely well planned to capture pupils' enthusiasm and challenge them. They are delivered in short units of work that are flexible enough to accommodate pupils' interests. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills across a range of subjects which engage and excite them. A wide range of enrichment activities supports pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development very well.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide academic and personal support for eligible pupils. The progress of these pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the small number of pupils new to learning English is checked regularly and rigorously. A variety of intervention strategies have a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Primary school sports funding provides professional sports coaching, training for the subject leader and a range of after-school sports activities. Consequently, pupils have a very good awareness of how to keep fit and healthy.
- The school works exceptionally well with families. For example, the twice-weekly early morning library and classroom sessions for parents and carers with their children are very well attended. Almost all who spoke with the inspector or who completed the online questionnaire would recommend the school to another parent.
- The school has established close, effective links with its partner junior school. The local authority has a clear view of the school's strengths and gives support when requested.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have a keen understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school and how well the school compares with others. They appropriately challenge and support senior leaders. They have a good understanding of how well pupils are achieving when compared to pupils nationally.
- Governors have discussed and agreed how pupil premium funding should be spent and have reviewed the difference this has made to the progress of these pupils. They have also agreed how additional sports funding will be spent and understand how the impact of this on participation and pupil health will be monitored and evaluated.
- The setting of targets for teachers is fully understood by governors. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and make sure that pay and promotion are justified by the impact of teaching on achievement. As a result of not being able to appoint a successor to the retiring headteacher, the governors have diligently explored options for the future leadership and the continuing success of the school.
- Governors have sought advice from the local authority and put in place well-considered interim arrangements while they explore a possible federation with the partner junior school. Governors ensure sound financial management, equal opportunities for all and that discrimination is not tolerated. All statutory duties are well met, including safeguarding.

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	123661
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	432415

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katrina Raybould
Headteacher	David Norton
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2007
Telephone number	01458 272537
Fax number	01458 273987
Email address	office@somerton.somerset.sch.uk

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