

Somerhill Junior School

Somerhill Road, Hove, BN3 1RP

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Somerhill is a happy, exciting and nurturing school of which pupils, staff, governors and parents and carers are rightly very proud.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school. He has created an exceptionally strong staff team that shares the commitment and determination to provide the best possible learning and experiences for the pupils.
- Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. Actions taken have improved the school since the last inspection when it required improvement. Achievement and teaching are now good. This demonstrates that the school has the capacity to improve further.
- From their starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Overall standards are above average by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and a shared, clear sense of purpose to ensure that pupils enjoy learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They have excellent attitudes to learning and really enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and secure and are well looked after.
- Pupils are confident, respectful of each other and adults. They show great understanding, tolerance and acceptance of diversity within the school and beyond.
- The governing body knows the school very well and is active in ensuring that the school continues to improve. The governors provide very effective support and challenge for school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Achievement in writing, although improving, is not yet as good as it is in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching is not yet typically outstanding. The very best practice is not evident in every class to ensure that pupils make more rapid progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons, some of which were joint observations with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work, looked at books and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and staff with key leadership responsibilities. Discussions were held with pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including the school's own check on its performance and the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan, information on pupils' progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at the 139 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, three letters from parents and carers and spoke to some parents and carers at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Jude

Additional Inspector

Carl McCarthy

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- The school has a diverse ethnic population. Two thirds of the pupils are of White British heritage and many other ethnic groups are represented in smaller numbers.
- At about one pupil in six, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- At about one pupil in four, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There is a breakfast club and an after-school club. These are managed by a private provider and not included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the effective actions already taken to improve writing in order to raise achievement so that it matches that in reading and mathematics.
- Improve teaching so that it is typically outstanding by ensuring that all teaching matches that of the best and more pupils make even more rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides outstanding and inspirational leadership. He has motivated everyone in the school to aim for excellence and ensured that the school has improved since its previous inspection.
- There is a shared, clear sense of purpose to promote an enjoyment of learning. All staff are committed to meeting the personal and academic needs and aspirations of every single child and to develop pupils as well-rounded individuals who are happy, confident and excited by their experiences at school.
- All leaders make an excellent contribution to creating a calm, hard-working, motivated school community where a culture of respect, strong values and excellent attitudes prevails. All staff and pupils live up to and actively promote the school's values of kindness, honesty, respect, positivity, equality, creativity and determination.
- Staff and pupils want to achieve their best. There is very strong teamwork and morale is high. The work of the deputy headteacher, senior leaders and teachers who lead in subjects is very effective because they offer excellent guidance and support to colleagues and are skilled in their areas of expertise.
- Expectations for staff are high and clearly communicated so that all teachers know they are accountable for their pupils' progress. Rigorous checks on the quality of teaching ensure that any weaknesses are quickly identified, effective support is given and rapid improvement is expected.
- Judgements on teachers' performance and pay awards are linked to the national Teachers' Standards and pupils' progress. These inform appropriate further training for the staff as a whole and for individuals.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement by keeping a close check on what is working well and what aspects need further development.
- Staff are excellent role models in promoting the school's values and foster exceptionally strong, trusting relationships with pupils. Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins all that the school does and is promoted exceptionally well by all staff.
- There is no discrimination as the school is committed to equal opportunities for all pupils. Not only do pupils show an understanding, respect and tolerance of differences among various groups, they are active in promoting equality in the school. The Bumblebees group, with a representative from each class, meet to promote an ethos of inclusive and caring practice. Their work includes helping to inform the school's disability policy and produce the Bumblebees magazine. This culture in the school helps to ensure that every child is celebrated and able to reach their full potential.
- The curriculum and the school's values foster excellent relationships, tolerance, respect and understanding of diversity in all its forms. In understanding and abiding by the expectations and conduct within the school community, pupils understand that there are rules and democratic values in the wider community. These aspects prepare them extremely well for life in modern Britain.
- The school provides an exciting, rich and broad range of subjects planned in an innovative and engaging way that meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. Pupils' needs and interests are met very well, including through an excellent variety of additional activities, visits, visitors to school and clubs. Music, art, drama and sports have a high profile and pupils enjoy excellent opportunities to develop and use their talents and skills across different subjects.
- The additional funding for primary sports has been used effectively to enhance the already strong provision in the school. Funding is used mostly to employ a specialist sports coach to work with pupils and staff to improve skills and promote active lifestyles. This has a positive impact on pupils' confidence, self-esteem and well-being. Additional before- and after-school clubs have increased the number of pupils who participate in sporting activities.
- Additional funding to provide support for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively, for example, to provide an extra class in Year 6, additional support from teachers and teaching assistants, and learning mentors who support pupils and their families to help remove barriers to learning. Gaps in the achievement of different groups have narrowed. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to close the gaps completely. They are determined that this should happen by keeping a very close check on progress and ensuring that teachers' targets are linked to this objective.
- Parents and carers are exceptionally positive about all aspects of the school's work. They are very well informed about their children's learning and several parents and carers said how much they welcomed the new homework arrangements. They have great confidence in the leadership of the school and strongly appreciate the fact that the headteacher and deputy headteacher are in the playground to greet them and their children every morning and at the end of the day. A typical comment, which many parents and carers agreed with was, 'I love the feeling of respect which everyone shows, from the front office, through

the classrooms and out into the playground.’

- The safeguarding arrangements are well established and known, and fully and effectively implemented by all staff.
- The local authority has supported the school well to ensure improvements over time. There is every confidence in the school’s capacity to continue improving.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The highly committed governing body has worked with senior leaders and staff to ensure the school has improved since the previous inspection. Governors know the school well, including its strengths and areas for further improvement. They are very well informed by the headteacher, senior leaders and their own monitoring activities about the school’s performance and how it compares to other schools nationally.
 - Governors now have a clear understanding of the school’s information on pupils’ progress and use this to provide effective challenge and to hold the school to account for its performance. They have an excellent awareness of how the school is spending additional funding and the impact it has on pupils’ achievement. These were issues for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection.
 - Governors take an active role in the school. For example, they visit lessons, assemblies, parents’ events and school council meetings. They know about the quality of teaching and ensure that pay rewards and promotions are linked to pupils’ progress. They ensure that teachers, senior leaders and the headteacher are set challenging targets linked to pupils’ progress and school priorities.
 - The governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They have exemplary attitudes to learning and enjoy their lessons, which helps them make good progress. Around the school, in the playground and in lessons pupils’ conduct is excellent and demonstrates how they uphold the school values.
- Pupils’ enjoyment of school is infectious and they are very positive about all that the school offers. They arrive in the morning with smiles on their faces and leave looking forward to what they will be learning the next day. A large group of pupils in the playground agreed with one who said, ‘It’s great coming here. It’s so much fun to learn new things here and the teachers are great.’ Their attendance is above average.
- Pupils are exceptionally polite, friendly and courteous to each other and to adults. They are interested in each other and other people and hold mature conversations with adults. They were very happy to talk with inspectors about their learning, their school and their aspirations.
- A group agreed with a pupil who said, ‘Behaviour around the school is really good. The teachers treat everyone really well.’ The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View agreed that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils are proud of the roles they have in school, for example as members of the school council and eco-group and as playground buddies. They carry out their roles and responsibilities with enthusiasm and dedication knowing that they make a real difference to the school. Pupils also enjoy the contribution they make in the community. They spoke with great pleasure about their visits to a local care home for blind and partially sighted people.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say they feel very safe and secure in school at all times. Almost all parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree that the school keeps their children safe and that they are well looked after.
- Pupils understand the different kinds of bullying including cyber bullying and prejudiced-based bullying. They have a very good awareness that using certain vocabulary can be offensive to others including the use of homophobic language. Pupils agreed with one who said, ‘We have never heard people be racist or unkind to anyone, we all just play and work together. We would tell a teacher straight away if anybody did use those kinds of words. We are all the same and we don’t treat each other differently.’
- They say they are not aware of any bullying in school. They are very confident, however, that if any incidents should arise, they could talk to their teachers who would sort things out fairly and quickly.
- Pupils demonstrated that they know how to keep themselves safe when online, using computers or mobile phones. They have a clear understanding of potential unsafe situations and are very aware of how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because it enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Sometimes teaching is outstanding. Good subject knowledge and carefully planned lessons ensure that pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Teachers ensure that tasks are purposeful and motivating.
- Staff have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and as a result, pupils work hard and want to do well.
- There is a very strong climate for learning. Pupils are confident to ask if they do not understand, are willing to take risks and to persevere with a task. All pupils are challenged to do their best. One pupil said, 'The challenge is quite hard but sometimes when you really have a go at it, you find out that you can do things you didn't think you could do.' The most able pupils are prompted to complete work, which makes more demands on them so that they make more rapid progress.
- Reading is taught well. Teachers ensure that pupils read widely and encounter a good range of authors to promote enjoyment of reading. Good quality texts are often the starting point for learning.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and pupils all make a significant contribution to the learning and good progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language. This is because all opinions are valued and respected.
- Teachers' enthusiasm inspires in pupils a real thirst for learning and curious and inquiring minds. One pupil said, 'You really start to find out interesting stuff in science.'
- Teachers make good use of technology and purposeful classroom displays to effectively support teaching and learning.
- Teaching assistants successfully support pupils of all abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants are very skilled at using questions to check pupils' understanding. This often prompts further thought and discussion and challenges pupils to think deeply and extend their thoughts and ideas.
- Pupils are clear about what they are learning and what they need to do to be successful. Teachers ensure this by reminding pupils throughout lessons what they should be aiming for, which helps pupils make better progress.
- There are some excellent examples of marking and feedback. Teachers mark pupils' work in detail and often discuss with pupils how they can improve. Pupils pay careful attention to these comments. Pupils are also skilled in checking their own and others' work, which they do extremely effectively and say it really helps them. One pupil commented, 'You can get good ideas. They spot errors you haven't noticed and they help you improve.'
- The use of homework is carefully linked to the learning in lessons and motivates pupils to continue and extend their learning at home. Teachers ensure that parents and carers know what the homework is and how they can best support their children's learning.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are motivated and engaged in learning and learn social as well as subject skills. For example, one pupil commented on working in teams to design moon buggies, 'We discovered lots of things for ourselves and have got better at working in a team.'
- As yet, the very best practice in teaching is not evident in every class, which is why teaching is not yet outstanding.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection and is now good.
- The school gets a clear idea of pupils' starting points when they join in Year 3 through its baseline assessments. From these starting points, pupils make good progress and by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 they achieve standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are above average overall. Many pupils make progress which exceeds that made by pupils nationally as a result of high expectations and the improving quality of teaching.
- In the 2014 national tests, pupils did better in reading than they did in writing. This year the school has focused on improving writing and has introduced several effective approaches. These include more opportunities for writing at length and specific targets for pupils across the school in grammar, punctuation and spelling. In addition, the school has increased pupils' enjoyment and motivation to write by linking writing tasks to learning in other subjects. As a result, progress in writing is improving although it remains less rapid than it is in reading.
- Reading for enjoyment is promoted well across the school and by Year 6 most pupils are fluent, expressive

readers. They read widely and express preferences for favourite authors and styles of writing, giving well-considered reasons for their opinions.

- The school's work to improve achievement in mathematics has been successful. Standards have risen considerably since the previous inspection when it was highlighted as an area for improvement. In the 2014 Year 6 tests, the proportion reaching the expected level was significantly above that found nationally.
- Throughout the school, the most able pupils are provided with, and encouraged to choose for themselves, challenging tasks that help them make good progress. As a consequence, the proportion of pupils who reached the higher levels in 2014 was above the national figure and most notably so in reading and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs across the school are successfully meeting challenges set for them and make similar and often better progress than others because their needs are well met. Any barriers to learning that they have to overcome do not lower the school's expectations of what they can achieve. By the time they leave the school, their attainment is at least equal to and often above that of similar pupils nationally.
- In 2014, the attainment by the end of Year 6 of disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional funding was behind that of their classmates, by around 12 months in writing, four months in reading and around eight months in mathematics. However, compared to disadvantaged pupils nationally, their attainment was approximately six months ahead in reading and mathematics; writing was nearly four months behind. Over three years, the school has narrowed the gap and has used the additional funding effectively to achieve this. Consequently disadvantaged pupils across the school are currently making good progress.

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	448997

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	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	494
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Roberts
Headteacher	Shaun Collins
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 December 2012
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