

Somersham Primary School

Church Lane, Lower Somersham, Ipswich, Suffolk IP8 4PN

Inspection dates

19–20 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. This results in pupils not making consistently good progress across key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 are not high enough over the previous two years.
- Frequent changes in the leadership of the school have impeded progress and slowed the pace of improvement since the previous inspection.
- Until recently, middle leaders, particularly those responsible for English and mathematics, have not had the opportunity to introduce and impact on improvements effectively.
- Not all teachers provide precise enough feedback to help pupils improve. This means that pupils' progress is not as rapid as it could be.
- Teachers do not consistently follow up on pupils' inaccurate spelling appropriately.
- Learning activities are not adapted appropriately to enable all pupils to make good progress.
- Assessment and tracking systems have not enabled leaders to evaluate pupils' progress sharply enough to remedy any underperformance swiftly.

The school has the following strengths

- The new executive headteacher has quickly and accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. Plans for improvement are strong, detailed and appropriate.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Most children make good progress from their starting points.
- There is some effective teaching and learning in the school.
- Standards at the end of key stage 2 have risen and were broadly in line with the national average in 2017, following a dip in 2016.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite and courteous. Safeguarding systems and procedures are robust. Pupils are safe and well cared for.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - subject leaders, particularly those for English and mathematics, are given the necessary time and support to help them raise standards and improve outcomes in their subject areas
 - leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and provide precise feedback to teachers on how to improve their practice
 - leaders use information about pupils' progress effectively to identify children who may fall behind so they can be helped to catch up quickly.
- Improve the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment, in order to continue to raise standards in key stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that teachers:
 - make better use of assessment information to plan lessons that are well suited to the needs of all pupils
 - benefit from appropriate training and opportunities to learn from colleagues in order to improve their practice
 - provide pupils with precise feedback, in line with the school policy, on how to improve their work, most notably their spelling, and insist that pupils act on this.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because standards have declined since the previous inspection and are not showing consistent improvement. Frequent changes in the senior leadership of the school have affected the capacity of leaders to bring about and sustain improvements.
- During the changes, leaders have not ensured that teaching and outcomes are consistently good. Assessment information has not been accurate enough, and teachers have not been able to use this effectively to plan work which ensures that all pupils make good progress.
- Middle leaders, particularly those with responsibility for English and mathematics, have not been allocated the time or support to enable them to introduce improvements in their subjects consistently well.
- Until recently, leaders have not done enough to challenge or support staff to address variations in their practice. Consequently, some weaker teaching has remained for too long. This has had a negative impact on pupils' progress and outcomes over time.
- Following a dip in standards, the local authority provided a range of appropriate support. Governors and leaders acted on advice received, which brought about improvements in some areas, for example at the end of key stage 2 and at the end of the early years. However, inconsistency in senior leadership has meant that improvements have not been sustained across the school.
- The new executive headteacher has swiftly and accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. Development plans are detailed and appropriate. They show how the newly formed leadership team plans to address inconsistencies that have arisen since the previous inspection. Plans rightly include actions to strengthen leadership at all levels, to improve systems for assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress and to make teaching consistently good across the school.
- The use of the pupil premium funding is having a positive impact on the progress and outcomes of the small number of disadvantaged pupils. Some of this funding supports the employment of a family support worker who provides good support for pupils and their families across the school, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Pupils enjoy a good range of clubs that offer activities in music, art, board games, dance and sports. The physical education and sports premium funding is spent effectively, successfully providing enhanced opportunities for competitive sport and improving teachers' practice.
- The use of additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and /or disabilities is carefully planned. The small number of pupils who have complex needs are well supported.

- Curriculum topics link subjects together well and provide interesting subjects for pupils to write about. These are supplemented well by trips and by visitors to the school. At the time of the inspection, Year 6 pupils were looking forward to visiting the Science Museum as part of their topic learning about space.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, which form an integral part of the school's ethos and values.

Governance of the school

- The governing body underwent major personnel changes at the time of the formation of the federation. A new chair has been in post since September 2016.
- The governing body has improved its own capacity over the last 12 months. Following support from the local authority, governors have become more strategic in their work. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that governors now provide greater challenge to senior leaders about their decisions and are able to hold them to account more stringently for standards in the school.
- Governors undergo the necessary training to carry out their responsibilities. For example, they undertake safeguarding training and ensure regular review of policies. They ensure that all statutory responsibilities are fulfilled.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Appropriate systems and procedures ensure that the school is a safe and secure environment for pupils and staff.
- All staff receive regular and up-to-date training about all aspects of safeguarding. This ensures that they know what to do and how to raise concerns in different situations.
- Records are detailed and well organised. They show a clear chronology of any concerns raised, actions taken and outcomes.
- The recruitment of staff is safely managed. All required checks are made on staff prior to employment. Office staff ensure that all key information is appropriately recorded and regularly updated.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are variable across the school. Inconsistent teaching has resulted in the underachievement of pupils historically. Leaders are aware of weaknesses but have not always checked the quality of teaching regularly enough to ensure that these are fully addressed.

- Teachers do not consistently ensure that tasks are adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. This means that some pupils do not make the progress that they could because work is either too easy or too hard for them.
- Pupils are not always given precise enough feedback in order to improve their work, in line with the school policy. Where this is the case, pupils' progress is slower than it could be.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' spellings are not always high enough. They do not check that pupils make accurate corrections to their spellings and use correct spellings following feedback.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check improved in 2017 to be in line with the national average, following a dip in 2016.
- Some teachers ensure that all pupils are challenged at the right level, providing additional extensions for the most able pupils and the right support and adaptations to ensure that less-able pupils can access tasks. These teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons and consistently challenge them to do their very best. This is not the case in all classes.
- Teachers link subjects together well to engage pupils in their learning. Topics are often enriched by trips to outside locations or by visitors to the school. For example, pupils in the mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class were learning about the location of the school in their topic work. To enhance their understanding, they had written questions to ask a visitor who had lived in the village all their life.
- Additional adults support pupils well, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are particularly effective when working with pupils who have high needs, on a one-to-one basis and when tasks provided by teachers are well suited to pupils' abilities.
- Relationships between pupils and their teachers are positive. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and apply the school's reward system consistently. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they are given to collaborate and discuss their ideas. Pupils in the mixed Year 5 and Year 6 class explained their learning very enthusiastically to the inspector.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well cared for in a safe and secure environment. Teachers know all pupils well and are highly vigilant. Pupils and their parents said that pupils feel safe.
- Pupils are very happy at school. Older pupils are caring towards younger ones. They like the fact that the small size of the school enables them all to get to know one

another. One commented, 'You can never be lonely because there are always people who want to play with you.'

- Pupils appreciate the worry box where they can write down any concerns they have, knowing that these concerns will be picked up and dealt with. The family support worker provides pastoral support for pupils and their families who are experiencing difficult times.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to carry out additional responsibilities. For example, members of the school council are proud to have been involved in the planning of new playground marking and in ensuring that there is more outdoor play equipment for use at break and lunchtimes.
- Parents spoken to, and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were unanimous in their praise for how well their children are cared for. One commented, 'Somersham Primary is a lovely small rural school where the children all look out for each other whatever the age group. The teachers seem to know each pupil individually, whether they teach them personally or not.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, confident and well mannered. Good relationships exist across the school between pupils of all ages. At break and lunchtime, pupils play together happily. They enjoy the outdoor equipment that is available to them. They benefit from a spacious field on which to run about. Wearing wellington boots means that they can do so at all times.
- Pupils mainly behave well in lessons and respond quickly to their teachers. They said that most pupils behave well. They understand that a small number of pupils who find it difficult to regulate their own behaviour require additional help to do so.
- Pupils are confident that adults will sort out any concerns that they have. They understand bullying and the different forms it can take but reported that bullying is very rare.
- The school has good systems to track and monitor attendance. All absence is followed up rigorously. The importance of regular attendance is promoted to pupils and parents. For example, a cup is awarded each week to the class with the highest attendance. As a result, overall attendance has improved. In 2017, attendance was in line with national averages. Attendance during the inspection was above this figure.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because pupils have not made consistently good progress across the school. This reflects inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

- Some pupils currently in school are making good progress from their starting points. However, this is dependent on the quality of teaching that pupils experience. Pupils in some year groups, who have not benefited from consistently good teaching in the past, have not made good enough progress. Where teaching remains weak, pupils' progress is not as good as it should be.
- Although children in the early years achieve well, this is not built on consistently well in key stage 1. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 were too low in both 2016 and 2017. Pupils did not make good progress from the end of the early years. Not enough pupils achieved greater depth in 2016, although 2017 showed slight improvement.
- Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 were below average. Too few pupils achieved the higher standards. In 2017, there was some improvement. The proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations was broadly in line with the national average for each of reading, writing and mathematics. However, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in all three subjects combined remained below the national average.
- Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check were in line with those seen nationally in 2017, showing an improvement on 2016.
- There were too few disadvantaged pupils in each year group to make meaningful comments on their progress and attainment as indicated by published data. However, across the school, disadvantaged pupils make the same variable progress as their peers, depending on the quality of teaching they receive.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also make variable progress. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is good when the quality of teaching they receive is good.
- In 2017, the proportions of pupils in Year 6 who reached the higher standards in reading and mathematics and greater depth in writing were above average. This represented good progress for the most able pupils from the end of key stage 1.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the Reception Year with a broad range of aptitudes. Many have abilities and skills which are below those typical for their age, but proportions vary from year to year. In 2017, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year was in line with the national average. In 2016, it was above the national average, following a dip in 2015 when it was well below the national average. Overall, children are well prepared for Year 1.
- At the time of the inspection, children were just coming to the end of their first half term in school. All are happy and settled. This is because staff provide secure, calm and purposeful environments with clear routines. High-quality activities engage

children and stimulate learning.

- Staff make detailed assessments of children, against all the areas of learning and use these effectively to plan activities to move children's learning on. Staff identify any children who need extra support and extend the learning of the most able.
- An electronic assessment system allows parents to contribute to their child's learning journey, which parents appreciate. These documents detail children's learning since the start of school and reflect the rich experiences that they have had.
- Good leadership ensures that staff work together effectively as a team. All staff question children carefully to encourage them to think harder and are skilled at providing additional provision for those pupils who need this. This includes those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- All statutory welfare arrangements are met. Both the indoor and outdoor environments are well organised and stimulating. Leaders recognise that there is more work to be done to develop the outdoor area when current building work is completed.

School details

Unique reference number	124609
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10031459

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Newson
Headteacher	Emma Burgess
Telephone number	01473 831251
Website	www.bramsonfederation.net
Email address	office@somershampriamary.net
Date of previous inspection	1–2 May 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In 2016, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than the national average.

- A large majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has entered into a hard federation with another local school, Bramford Primary School. The schools share an executive headteacher and governing body. The leadership of special educational needs is shared across both schools.
- There have been a number of changes in teaching staff since the last inspection. This includes the leadership of the school. There have been four different executive headteachers during the last three years. There has been long-term absence of some staff due to sickness.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed teaching across the school. This included joint observations with the head of school. She listened to pupils read and scrutinised a large amount of work in pupils' books in all current classes and those from last year.
- The lead inspector talked to pupils about their experiences of school and spoke with them during play and lunchtimes and around the school.
- Discussions took place informally with parents when they were delivering their children to school. The lead inspector took account of 49 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 43 free-text comments.
- A conference call was held with governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke with leaders in the school and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised. This included all aspects of safeguarding, the school's information about pupils' progress, school development plans and self-evaluations. External reports were also considered.
- On the second day of the inspection, there were no pupils present because the school was closed for staff training.
- On the same date as the inspection of this school, the other school in the federation was inspected by a different inspector.

Inspection team

Joan Beale, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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