



Somerles Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109575
Local Authority LUTON
Inspection number 288430
Inspection dates 21–22 February 2007
Reporting inspector Gillian Smith

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Wigmore Lane
School category	Community		Luton
Age range of pupils	7–11		Bedfordshire LU2 8AH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 738810
Number on roll (school)	245	Fax number	01582 738810
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr R Davies
		Headteacher	Mrs K Jones
Date of previous school inspection	27 May 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is similar in size to most primary schools. The socio-economic circumstances of most of the pupils are average. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with a statement of special educational need or whose home language is not English are similar to the national average. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those eligible for free school meals are below the national average.

The headteacher has recently returned after an extended absence and the deputy headteacher left shortly before the inspection took place.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Someries Junior School provides a satisfactory education. The standard of pupils' work is average from the time they join in Year 3 to the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory because the standard of teaching and learning and the quality of educational guidance provided are satisfactory. Progress is not better because the proportion of good teaching is not high enough. In addition, teachers do not yet make full use of the available assessment information to provide timely support for those who need it.

Pupils' personal development is good and their positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning are a very strong feature of the school. Pupils enjoy the time they spend at school and are unfailingly polite and responsive; indeed, they remain well behaved and very co-operative even when they do not find their lessons to be especially interesting. The school works well with the local community; for example pupils distribute harvest festival produce, plant saplings in local woodland and invite senior citizens to school productions.

The curriculum is satisfactory and all the required subjects are taught. It is enriched by a residential visit in Year 6 and a good range of additional musical and sporting activities. These opportunities broaden pupils' experiences and contribute well to their enjoyment of school. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and pupils of all ages go swimming. The curriculum as a whole, however, lacks 'sparkle' and creativity and does not yet stimulate and foster effective learning in each class.

The standard of care, support and guidance is satisfactory overall. Pastoral support is good and pupils feel safe and secure. Vulnerable pupils are well looked after, as are those with medical conditions. The standard of educational guidance provided is satisfactory. There is, however, too much variation between classes and year groups. While some teachers, for example, ensure their pupils clearly understand what they have to do to improve their work, others do not. The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership. A long-serving deputy headteacher left just before the inspection and the two temporary, newly appointed assistant headteachers are providing satisfactory support. The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection. A comprehensive programme for monitoring teaching has been introduced and this has resulted in a reduction in the level of inadequate teaching. However, although the proportion of good teaching has increased, too much remains only satisfactory.

The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and she fully understands what the school needs to do to improve. This vision, however, is not fully shared by governors and all members of the school's senior and middle management. Available information on aspects of school life, such as pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching, is not yet used effectively to monitor pupils' progress and bring about change. Based on its track record since the last inspection, the school is demonstrating that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the incidence of good or better teaching to ensure all pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Improve and enliven the curriculum to ensure that pupils experience a more vibrant range of stimulating learning opportunities.
- Raise achievement by assessing pupils' work more frequently and analysing the data more effectively.
- Ensure that senior managers, subject leaders and governors monitor the performance of the school in a more rigorous manner.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Satisfactory teaching ensures they make steady progress as they move through school and pupils maintain these average standards until they leave at the end Year 6. The achievement of pupils of all abilities, including boys and girls, those with learning difficulties, and those who speak English as an additional language, is satisfactory.

In 2006, the school did not meet some of its targets for pupils' attainment and exceeded others; this reflects shortcomings in the system used for the assessment of pupils' work and tracking their achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They feel valued and enjoy coming to school. Pupils like and trust their teachers and want to please them. During lessons, they are very well behaved and willingly undertake the work set, even when it lacks excitement and provides limited challenge. They are polite, listen well and are very keen to answer questions. They work pleasantly and co-operatively in pairs or small groups, offering spontaneous applause if someone has done particularly well. They feel they make good progress in their work but said, for example, that they do not always understand why work has been set. Attendance is satisfactory.

Pupils relish taking responsibility and voice their views through the effective school council. They are keen to adopt a healthy lifestyle and take plenty of exercise, participating in the wide range of additional clubs and sports. Pupils feel safe at school and say that any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. They make a valuable contribution to the school and wider community through initiatives such as charity fund raising and the prefect scheme in Year 6. Pupils' satisfactory basic skills equip them soundly for the next stage of their education and their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Across the school the management of pupils is generally good and most teachers work hard at developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Good teaching is characterised by work that is well matched to pupils' needs and learning is brought to life because pupils are challenged and are encouraged to investigate, think creatively and flourish as independent and inquisitive learners. However, such qualities are not yet evident in enough of the teaching and this is hindering pupils' overall achievement. Pupils enjoy learning and share a fervent desire to do well, but teachers do not always match this by providing a vibrant, exciting and thought provoking range of learning opportunities. There is too much reliance on textbook exercises and other, more mundane activities. Despite several training sessions, some teachers do not make effective use of new technology such as their interactive whiteboards.

Assessment is satisfactory. The school tracks pupils' progress and uses the information to set long term targets. The weakness is that pupils' performance is not assessed, recorded and analysed on a regular enough basis. This hinders the identification of under-achieving pupils and the timely provision of additional support or challenge. The marking of pupils' work is regular but does not consistently tell pupils what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy during lessons that focus on these skills. However, the extent to which these basic skills are used in other subjects is limited and this is limiting pupils' progress. Pupils who find learning difficult receive satisfactory support through a range of strategies and groupings to provide additional help for them.

Although pupils enjoy learning, the curriculum lacks excitement and many of the activities undertaken are routine. In addition, teachers do not always plan activities that suit the full range of abilities present in the class. The school is well-resourced and these resources are generally used well to enrich pupils' learning.

The good range of additional activities promotes pupils' personal development well. The school works well with outside agencies and a good range of visits and visitors, including a residential trip in Year 6, broadens the range of pupils' experiences and supports learning effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's caring ethos means that pupils feel safe and very well looked after. This good standard of pastoral care supports pupils' personal development well and helps to put them in a positive frame of mind for learning. Health and safety and child protection procedures are robust and familiar to all adults. Risk assessments are carefully carried out to ensure safety, for instance, for pupils on educational visits. The school works well with other professionals as appropriate to support its most vulnerable pupils.

Systems for tracking and analysing pupils' academic development, however, are not regular enough to have the best possible impact on their achievement. Whilst some pupils in school have a secure awareness of targets they are working towards, this is not the case in all classes or between classes within the same year group.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher manages the school effectively and this enables it to run smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Teaching and learning are monitored on a regular basis by the headteacher, the senior management team and subject leaders and this has led to a reduction in the amount of inadequate teaching. However, monitoring and evaluating of teaching and analysis of assessment data are not yet rigorous or analytical enough to bring about a higher incidence of good or better teaching and to ensure that all pupils achieve well. The headteacher consults pupils, parents and other stakeholders through, for example, annual questionnaires. These show high levels of support for both the headteacher and the work of the school and are helping to establish a good partnership with parents. Governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of, and committed to, the school but are not always proactive enough in evaluating its work and performance.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 February 2007

Dear Children

Someries Junior School, Wigmore Lane, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU2 8AH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school earlier this week. We enjoyed listening to what you had to say about the school and your work. We are pleased you enjoy school so much and were very impressed by your good behaviour and strong desire to do well. We agree that your teachers take good care of you and that the school provides you with plenty of opportunities to take part in sport and other activities.

What your school does well.

- You work hard and develop into polite, friendly and considerate young people.
- Your teachers and other staff take good care of you while you are in school.
- Your school works well with outside organisations and arranges interesting trips and visits.
- Your headteacher manages the school well and knows what should be done to make it better.

There are a few things your teachers could do to improve your school further.

- Help you to make more progress by making sure that the work and support provided during lessons are always at the right level for each of you.
- Provide a more interesting range of activities for you to do during your lessons.
- Check how well you are doing more frequently and carefully analyse the results so that they can help you quickly if you are falling behind.
- Your senior teachers and governors should check your test results and the overall education provided by the school more closely.

Once again, thank you for your friendly welcome. All in all, we think you are getting a fair deal from your school and believe it will continue to improve. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Smith

Lead Inspector