

Somers Heath Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114847
Local Authority	THURROCK LA
Inspection number	290057
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Sandra Tweddell

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Misra
Headteacher	Mr G Miller
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001
School address	Stifford Road South Ockendon Essex RM15 5LX
Telephone number	01708 853397
Fax number	01708 852582

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves an area of high social disadvantage. An after school care programme is run by Surestart for 20 pupils. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is higher than average. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is broadly average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small number of pupils are at early stages of learning English. The school has awards from Healthy Schools, Investors in People and the Basic Skills Agency.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Somers Heath is a good school that gives good value for money. Pupils achieve well and standards have risen steadily over the past three years. The school self-evaluation is perceptive and is used to drive school improvement. Inspectors agree with its analysis. Parents are very supportive of the school.

Achievement is good. Children, particularly boys, enter the Nursery with much ground to make up. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception class because teaching takes account of their many needs. Despite this, standards on entry to Year 1 are below average. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is good and the gap between girls and boys narrows significantly. Standards are just below average but lower in mathematics. Progress is good in Years 3 to 6, especially taking into account the large number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities who reach their targets. At the end of Year 6, standards remain close to average except in mathematics which remain below those of English and science.

The personal development of pupils is good. The youngest children learn to be confident, and to relate to adults. Behaviour across the school is good and pupils enjoy their work. They learn how to stay safe and have an excellent understanding of a healthy lifestyle, making good choices of food at lunchtime and explaining their reasons. Pupils learn about the world of work through, for example, running the fruit and vegetable tuck shop. The school does all it can to promote good attendance. Spiritual, moral and social development is good and cultural development satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good and teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning. The curriculum is effectively designed to support good achievement. Care, welfare and guidance for pupils are good. Pupils receive very good guidance for their personal development. Academic guidance is satisfactory; some pupils are given good guidance but this is inconsistent.

Leadership and management are good and the leadership of the headteacher and senior managers is very good. They have successfully led the drive to raise standards. Effective use of assessment has been a key to this but not all teachers are confident to use the wealth of information that is available and sometimes are unclear about management systems. Leaders have used assessment very well to follow the progress of groups of pupils but do not yet have an overview of progress across the school. Governance is good, governors visit regularly enabling them to ask appropriate questions of the school's management. The school has acted well upon the issues from the last inspection and the capacity for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics.
- Secure teachers' understanding about how best to use the information from assessment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average and many boys have particularly poor personal and literacy skills. Young children achieve well as teaching focuses upon these areas so much ground is made up. However, standards are below average on entry to Year 1. Between Years 1 and 6, standards have steadily risen, particularly in English where much work has been done. Results at the end of Years 2 and 6 in English and science

have recently been close to average. The very large number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and high mobility of pupils affect standards but pupils achieve well from their starting points. Mathematics, where standards are lower across the school, is being successfully tackled with more work planned for next year. Teachers are aware of differences in standards between boys and girls and teaching takes good account of this so the gap closes. Pupils who are at early stages of learning English achieve well because the school earmarks resources for them. More able pupils achieve satisfactorily, helped in mathematics by attending classes for gifted and talented pupils. Last year, the school exceeded its targets which were appropriately challenging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This area is good. Pupils have a good understanding of moral values, develop good social skills and learn to appreciate the wonders of the world. They develop a sound understanding about the richness and diversity of cultures other than their own. They begin to understand the world of work through activities such as the school council managing its own budget and older pupils organising the school tuck shop. Pupils say they enjoy school, quoting their work and teachers as some of the reasons. This is confirmed by the very positive responses to the question about enjoyment in parents' and pupils' questionnaires. Pupils work hard, display positive attitudes to their learning and their behaviour is good.

Pupils learn effectively about how to keep safe, for example how to take care of themselves when walking to school. Their understanding about leading healthy lifestyles is outstanding. They appreciate the benefits of exercise and a balanced diet. The school council is effective and these pupils and others take responsibility willingly. Pupils encourage others to contribute to the school and wider community through fund raising and charitable works. Attendance is satisfactory, although below average, mainly because parents take their children for cheaper holidays in term time. Attendance has improved because of hard work by staff and the school recently received a reward in recognition of this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Throughout the school pupils make good progress because teachers respond appropriately to their learning needs. Boosting pupils' confidence and encouraging them to do well is at the heart of the school's work. This work starts in the Foundation Stage where children are given ample opportunities to develop social skills and acquire positive attitudes to learning. In the other classes, teachers actively involve pupils in their learning. For instance, the recently introduced interactive whiteboards motivate pupils, especially the boys, so they enjoy learning. Behaviour is managed well and ensures that pupils are kept busy with their work. Skilled teaching assistants make an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning. Not only do they give one-to-one help where this is appropriate but they are particularly adept at supporting pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Recently, considerable progress has been made in improving the tracking of pupils' progress, especially in literacy. Teachers set pupils targets for learning, based on the use of newly introduced assessment strategies, and pupils also set their own personal targets but this practice is

inconsistent. Teachers' marking in English is becoming more focused on recognising success and identifying areas for improvement, but again practice is inconsistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and caters well for different abilities, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. More able pupils have reached their targets this year because their progress is checked regularly. Given the low standards on entry, there is a strong focus on personal development, English and mathematics. Speaking and listening has a high priority across the school through discussion in pairs and 'circle time'. Dance and drama enhances the curriculum. Information and communication technology (ICT) has been strengthened over the past year although there is scope for more use in writing. Personal, social and health education is taught well. Pupils are successfully encouraged to eat healthily and to exercise. They enjoy the programme of physical activities at lunchtimes and the weekly 'fitness challenges'. Many pupils attend the wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs. Homework supports learning and teaching assistants give additional support to those who have difficulty doing homework at home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Procedures to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare are in place. There is a strong commitment from all staff to caring for pupils. Teachers know pupils well and offer them very good pastoral support. Academic guidance has been a focus for recent development and is satisfactory. The introduction of meetings between teachers and pupils to discuss each pupil's progress is starting to support academic guidance well. Closer attention is being given to checking how well pupils are learning, particularly in English. As a result, some pupils are aware of, and talk about working towards their personal learning targets in English. Procedures for checking their progress in other subjects are not as thorough. Outstanding additional support from teaching assistants has a positive impact on ensuring good achievement and improving standards. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities are supported very effectively. They make good progress and achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is a very good leader with a thoughtful and strategic approach to management. Leadership by the newly formed management team is very good as members take responsibility for roles yet work closely together so all decisions are well informed. However, some teachers are not clear about the school's processes of management. External resources are drawn in very effectively to support the quest to raise standards. Monitoring of the school's work is good and involves the leadership team and subject leaders. Information from assessment has been used well to raise standards in English and the same process is being used to raise standards in mathematics. Leaders have not yet used assessment to gain a clear picture of achievement across the school, although they have used the information to look at more able pupils and those who are at risk of underachieving. Governors, led by an experienced chair, are effective. They visit to a regular schedule and their reports contribute well to their monitoring and holding the school to account. They are not

involved in the early stages of school self-evaluation. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and standards have risen steadily for the past few years. The capacity to improve further is good.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

13 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Somers Heath Primary School, South Ockenden, RM15 5LX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school a few weeks ago. It was good to talk to you and we enjoyed hearing about how much you like school and feel that you are cared for. A special thank you to the school council for telling us so much about your work.

Somers Heath is a good school where you make good progress in your work and in your personal development. You learn to become good citizens. We were impressed by the confidence of pupils in Year 6, who are about to leave for secondary schools. Teaching is good and so you learn well. Mr Miller and the adults in school have worked hard to make sure that you do well and the standards of your work have risen over the past few years. We agree with you that you are cared for well. We were interested in hearing how you set your own targets for your work and how some of you understand what you need to do to improve your work. Your governors give up much of their time to support Somers Heath and they do a good job.

We have asked Mr Miller and the staff to do two things to improve your work even more. The first is to raise standards of mathematics to the same level as English and science. The second is to make sure that every teacher in the school uses assessments of your work to help you to achieve the best you possibly can.

Thank you once again and every good wish for your futures.

Yours sincerely,

Sandra Tweddell

Lead Inspector