

Somerville Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105000
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308733
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Madeley

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	458
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr E Healing
Headteacher	Mrs A Ellison
Date of previous school inspection	12 April 2005
School address	Northbrook Road Wallasey Merseyside CH44 9AR
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Introduction

The inspection was conducted by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is much larger than most primary schools and has more girls than boys. There are very few pupils of minority ethnic heritage or who are in the early stages of learning English. Pupils mostly live in the surrounding area. Nearly half the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very high. The majority of these have moderate learning difficulties or social and emotional issues. A significant minority have physical disabilities.

The school has gained national recognition for its curricular work and has received the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Sports Activemark, the Healthy Schools Award and Artsmark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school and its pupils achieve well. They really enjoy school, build positive relationships with staff and become mature young people because the outstanding curriculum meets their needs especially well. The exemplary senior leadership team check teaching and pupils' progress regularly and, following careful evaluation, have put in place measures which have improved the curriculum extensively. They know their school well. Since the last inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are much higher and attendance has improved significantly. Senior leaders' forward planning is of high quality and is driven by the desire to improve standards even further. The school has excellent relationships with parents and other schools and agencies, which promote pupils' well-being in an outstanding way. The good governing body is fully supportive of the school, its staff and the pupils. It is well informed about the school and, when necessary, holds it to account for its performance. The good quality management and the extensive improvement since the last inspection indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further. It gives good value for money.

Children start school with skills that are well below those typical for their age. They make good progress through the school and by the end of Key Stage 2 reach average standards in English, mathematics and science. Teaching is consistently good in English and science. Pupils' progress is better in these two subjects than in mathematics, where in some lessons tasks are not always matched well to pupils' differing abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning well to improve pupils' language skills. Lively presentations, often making good use of technology, stimulate pupils' desire to learn and broaden their experiences. Pupils are encouraged to become more independent, often via well chosen homework topics. An excellent example of this is the high quality work pupils completed at home in separate projects on musical instruments and the Second World War. Pupils know how to improve their English, because teachers' marking has improved during this year and is now good. Teachers' marking is less strong in mathematics because of inconsistencies in the quality of information teachers give pupils in different classes to help them improve their work.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy school because lessons are interesting, there is an amazing range of clubs for all ages and they want to learn. Their behaviour in assembly and in class is excellent, but sometimes at playtime and around the school a few pupils lack the self-discipline to make sensible choices. Pupils apply for jobs, for example as a school councillor, and if appointed carry them out exceptionally well. This is excellent preparation for life. In addition, pupils regularly give presentations to governors and others to support their views and to request funding in order to implement their ideas. They do their best to stay healthy, taking full advantage of the many opportunities for physical activity but are less keen to try unfamiliar foods.

Most parents have every confidence in the school. They also indicate that staff are easily approachable and listen to and act upon parents' concerns. The inspection agrees with these views and that pastoral care is strong. Staff regard pupils' care and safety as their highest priority and there are many examples of sensitive and helpful support given to families. Pupils receive good academic support. They are clear about their targets in English and mathematics and how to move on to the next stage in their learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children start school their language and social skills are especially weak. However, these skills, and other aspects of their learning, improve rapidly because teaching is consistently good. A strong focus on language development is having a huge impact on children's understanding of letter sounds and their use of early writing skills. For example, boys confidently write labels for flowers and receipts for purchases while playing in the florist's shop. Children count with growing confidence because they see this skill as useful to them, for example counting the eggs in the chick hatchery. Children in this year's Reception class have made particularly good progress and are currently on track to achieve the goals set nationally for them in most areas of their learning.

Because of the many varied activities in the class, children are curious and develop their ability to concentrate. The more able children are not challenged sufficiently in some situations. For example, during a class discussion all the children were expected to say a single sentence when some were capable of contributing much more. Staff effectively include parents in their children's learning at home and in the well attended family learning sessions. Good induction procedures help children settle quickly into school routines. The Foundation Stage manager provides good leadership which enables colleagues to develop and establish a successful approach to play-based learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- In Key Stage 2, improve the quality of lesson planning and marking in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Over the last few years, on entry to Year 1, standards have been below the national expectation in the key skills of identifying and using letter sounds and in reading and writing. All pupils make good progress through Years 1 and 2. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average, with writing having historically been especially weak. However, the quality of pupils' writing is now improving rapidly because of the new approach adopted by the school. At the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are average and have been rising for five years. Pupils make particularly good progress in English because exciting introductory activities give them something interesting and practical to write about. They achieve well in science because there is a good emphasis on practical work. The school sets itself challenging targets and in 2007 these were exceeded. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. They are especially well supported during small-group activities and additional programmes by experienced and skilled teaching assistants and experts from other schools and agencies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils work and play with enthusiasm and confidence. They relish the many different sporting opportunities and extra-curricular clubs on offer which help them stay fit. Most tellingly, they appreciate school because, they say, 'you always learn something new'. Relationships between pupils are positive and older pupils are very kind to younger ones. They show increasing empathy for others, as evidenced in their current fund-raising initiative to support sick children. Children

say they feel safe because they are well looked after by all staff, as well as having 'the electric gates and cameras'. Most pupils say that there is no bullying. An excellent feature of the school is the 'behaviour committee' who help sort out problems of poor self-control. The school council is exemplary in its organisation and its involvement in managing the school. As a consequence of taking firm action to deal with frequent absentees, attendance has improved year-on-year and is now broadly average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Assemblies give them the opportunities to worship through song and through prayer and all pupils are active participants. Pupils have a sensitive appreciation of their own and other cultures. They have a strong sense of values and social justice.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good and helps pupils make good progress in their learning. Behaviour is well managed and pupils respond positively to the rewards offered so that classrooms are calm places in which to learn. The quality of teaching in English and science is consistently good throughout the school. This is because teachers provide interesting and practical tasks in which pupils can apply their knowledge and skills. However, in mathematics in Years 5 and 6, the widely different needs of pupils are not fully met because some teachers set the same work for all pupils.

Staff make good use of computers in their teaching and give pupils excellent opportunities to use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in meaningful situations. For example, Year 6 pupils used spreadsheets well to calculate the cost of equipping their 'expedition to Antarctica'. The support provided by teaching assistants is of good quality and they work really well with their groups, often making good use of additional resources to help pupils better understand.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is generally very well matched to pupils' needs. Senior leaders' evaluations of lessons revealed that pupils had too few experiences to talk or write about. As a result, the school decided to start each topic with a stimulating activity. These include visits which range from going to concerts at the Liverpool Philharmonic to walking the local coastline. This approach has been used for nearly two years and it is clear that it has had a major impact on improving pupils' writing and increasing their enjoyment of school. An excellent example is the topic on Antarctica in Year 6. Pupils feel that they have 'grown up' because they had to apply for places in the various teams, work cooperatively and then promote their products by making effective use of their computing skills to create a short film. The curriculum is extended by the teaching of French. Uptake for musical instrument tuition is high. Pupils of all ages have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and demand to take part is so high that places have to be awarded on a rota basis. These clubs extensively contribute to pupils' understanding of how to stay fit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for and all the required procedures for safeguarding them are in place. Staff know pupils and their families well and so are able to offer advice and individual support. They are also very good role models for pupils and relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. This creates an atmosphere in which everyone can learn and pupils feel secure. The school makes excellent use of outside agencies to support the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attendance has improved because the school rewards classes and individuals with high attendance while keeping a close check on any absence, taking firm action where necessary. The school identified weaknesses in the quality of marking and this has improved significantly in English. It is less helpful in mathematics where pupils in some classes are unclear what they have to do to improve further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The excellent headteacher and her very effective senior leadership team know what needs to be done to improve pupils' learning. They gain this knowledge from the regular and rigorous reviews of the school's performance. Their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the school are accurate. The whole school is united in its desire to provide the best for the pupils. Actions to improve the school have worked. For example, a recent concentration on quick recall of number facts is improving pupils' confidence in mathematics. Careful thought has gone into creating a highly effective curriculum. Good class teaching has been celebrated. Where improvement is needed teachers have received appropriate support. Effective subject leaders have helped to raise standards. The management of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly effective in meeting the very varied needs of these pupils. Pupils' progress is checked regularly and reviewed to spot trends or to identify individuals who need further support or greater challenge. Finances are carefully managed. Funding is used well to ensure that pupils have access to high quality resources and ample skilled staff.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you so much for making the team welcome on our recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed talking to you and thought it was excellent that you were so proud of your teachers and the work you were doing in school.

Your school is giving you a good education. You tell us that your headteacher and her team are really good and we agree. They give you exciting things to learn and help you develop into mature young people.

Other things which are particularly good about your school are:

- the way that your literacy topics start with really exciting activities
- your school council and how effective it is in making your school a better place for you
- the really good displays of your work and the projects you have completed at home
- the huge range of clubs for all of you which give you great chances to stay fit
- your excellent behaviour in assemblies
- the fact that your teachers work really hard to help you learn
- the very good work that your headteacher does to make everything happen.

We have asked your headteacher to do one thing which will help you learn even more:

- for your mathematics lessons to be better planned and that when teachers mark your mathematics books they give you more tips on how to improve your work.

It would be good if you could continue to come to school regularly, to work hard in lessons and to enjoy the wonderful range of activities offered to you. It was a joy and a privilege to visit you and I wish you and the school well for the future.