

# Somersham Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110689
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	325198
<b>Inspection date</b>	2 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Nelson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	321
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Daniel Bates
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Graham McArthur
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Parkhall Road Somersham Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 3EU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01487840412
<b>Fax number</b>	01487741194

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the consistently good achievement in mathematics, particularly at the higher levels and why it has been better than in English and science
- how the school is preparing pupils for the culturally diverse world of contemporary British society and promoting community cohesion
- the impact of curriculum enrichment on pupils' personal and academic development.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, looking at pupils' work, records of assessments, school policies and plans, scrutiny of the school's website, and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school serving the village of Somersham and surrounding areas. Nearly all the pupils come from White British backgrounds and all have English as their first language. A small number of pupils from Traveller families attend the school. The proportion of pupils identified as needing extra help with their learning is well below average, as is the proportion of families eligible for free school meals. Four year olds in the Early Years Foundation Stage are catered for in Reception and enter with skills and knowledge below that expected of their ages.

External accreditation and awards held by the school include, the Information and Communication Technology Mark, Investors in People, Healthy Schools Award, Intermediate International School Award, Silver Eco Schools Award, Football Association Charter School, Cambridge University Partner School, and RSPB bird friendly school.

There is a breakfast and after school club, which are not managed by the governing body, and these were inspected around the same time as the school and are the subject of a separate report.

## 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 that has improved since it was last inspected. It has addressed successfully the issues from its last inspection and raised overall standards to above average by Year 6. Mathematics is particularly strong throughout the school with standards that were exceptionally high in the 2007 national tests at Year 6 and close to that level in 2008. Overall achievement in English and science is good, for mathematics it is excellent. Pupils attain particularly good standards in other subjects including information and communication technology, which is used extensively in lessons. There is also evidence of very striking art work around the school. The school's exceptionally strong focus on environmental awareness means that pupils understand the importance of conservation and saving energy. This is typified in the way the school has installed solar panels to reduce heating costs. It is also using these to engage the pupils in checking energy savings and recording their findings, thus putting their good mathematics skills to practical use. The school's garden, complete with compost bins and a pond area dedicated to growing plants native to the region, enables the pupils to grow flowers and vegetables and enhances the school's work on encouraging healthy lifestyles.

One of the keys to the school's success is the range of activities staff provide to help pupils to learn. The outstanding curriculum includes all that is required by the National Curriculum and as one parent explained, 'the number and diversity of school clubs is excellent and provides a range of experiences and much enjoyment'. Staff create meaningful links between subjects. This provides opportunities for pupils to improve their language and writing skills through paired discussions and reports in mathematics or, for example, in writing down what inspired the weaving they have done. The school's excellent website also makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. A very strong focus on personal, social, and health education means that pupils have an outstandingly mature understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They acquire responsible attitudes to the local and wider community and to their role in protecting and enhancing the environment. As a result, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and behaviour, is excellent. The school works to remarkable effect with the local community as its involvement in the parish plan shows. It also has links with the meteorological office through its rainwater collecting and reporting scheme. Links with an area with a culturally diverse population, and with a school in Japan help to promote pupils' understanding of the nature of society beyond their local community particularly well. The school has also consulted parents on its policy on community cohesion, though it has not yet formally evaluated the impact of its work in this area.

Alongside this very rich curriculum is consistently good teaching that motivates pupils and makes them want to learn. Pupils greatly enjoy the practical activities that teachers provide. For example, in a mathematics lesson with older pupils they loved working on the likelihood of certain things happening, like the probability of a roll of two dice giving specific numbers. A real strength of teaching is the encouragement adults give pupils to explain their ideas. The adults challenge pupils to think things through in a logical and measured way, which promotes effective speaking and listening skills as well as encouraging deep thinking. Lesson plans show how less able pupils will be supported and more able will have extension work. However, they do not always identify the precise learning that each ability group needs.

While the school clearly has a strong focus on raising academic standards staff never lose sight of their duty to enable pupils to develop fully. They have a commitment to ensure that all the pupils thrive academically, socially and emotionally in an environment of mutual respect and

support. This results in good development of the skills that promote pupils' future success. The words of a parent sum it up, 'there is a strong sense of togetherness within the school and I always feel that we, the parents and the teachers, have the same goals and priorities - the children'. Staff give pupils extensive opportunities to have a say in matters that are important to them, for example, refurbishing the toilets. Pupils also have a range of responsible roles around the school, such as supporting younger ones at lunchtimes or checking that lights are switched off in empty rooms. There are rigorous systems to check how well individuals and groups of pupils are learning so that any underachievement is identified quickly and extra support provided. This ensures that those who need extra help with their learning make good progress towards their targets and that no groups of pupils fall behind. This excellent quality of care, guidance and support ensures the school is a happy and harmonious place where pupils feel cared for and safeguarding procedures meet requirements. This contributes strongly to their wellbeing and enjoyment, and good attendance.

A parent wrote, 'Somersham school is extremely well led by Mr McArthur'. Another commented, 'There is a great team of staff - the office staff are approachable and friendly and my daughters speak very highly of their teachers and teaching assistants'. These parents are correct. Leadership is good at all levels with staff and governors having a common sense of purpose. Staff and governors check regularly how well the school is doing by looking at lessons, checking pupils' progress in their books and seeking the views of parents and their children. They have an accurate view of the school's performance and its priorities and a clear determination to move the school from good to great. They have yet to identify precisely why mathematics results are stronger than those in English and science but are committed to resolving this apparent anomaly as soon as they can. They set challenging targets for improvement which have helped the school to raise standards since the last inspection while extending the breadth and depth of the curriculum and community involvement. The school clearly has what it takes to continue to improve. It is hardly surprising therefore that more than one parent commented, 'my children love this school and I am delighted'.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

A good balance between activities children choose for themselves and those directed by the adults ensures effective learning. While there is an outside area, children do not have direct access to it from the classroom and staff have to timetable its use rather than allowing activities to flow freely from indoors. The school has plans that are well advanced to rectify this situation and improve matters. Children make good progress throughout their time in Reception so that when they enter Year 1 standards are at the expected levels for their ages. Statutory requirements for children's health and safety are met. Very close links with early years providers, including the playgroup on the school site and with parents, ensure that children's welfare needs are met outstandingly well. Teaching is good, and children have a settled start when they enter the Reception class. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour, so any inappropriate lack of attention is soon checked and behaviour is good. The adults give children regular feedback and guide them to ensure that they form letters correctly for example, and do not therefore acquire poor habits. Staff provide a balanced focus between the basics of reading, writing and number work with the other areas of learning so that children are happy and motivated.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Identify what is needed to bring achievement and standards in English and science up to the high levels of those in mathematics and implement appropriate strategies to see that this happens.
- Fully implement the policy on community cohesion and evaluate its impact.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

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

<sup>1</sup>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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

3 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Somersham Primary School, Somersham, PE28 3EU

Thank you for looking after us so well when we came to inspect your school recently. I am sorry we could only stay for one day and could not see all of the classes at work. We did enjoy the time we spent at Somersham and meeting the school and eco councils. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school during our visit.

Yours is a good school that has improved well since the last inspection. You have an excellent range of exciting activities to help you to learn in lessons and in after school clubs. I did enjoy listening to the school band and choir in assembly. Your teachers plan good lessons with practical work that you like so that you learn a lot. You have done well in English and science, but particularly well in mathematics and we have asked the staff to check why this is and make all subjects as good as mathematics. You do a lot of work with the local community and we have asked the staff to check what impact this is having. Some of you told us that there is always an adult to turn to if you are worried about anything and your parents also said very nice things about the school. We told Mr McArthur and the chair of governors what you told us about the toilets needing to be improved and they assured us that this will be done as soon as possible.

I am sure that your school will continue to get better because the staff and governors work hard to keep improving things. You can do your bit by continuing to behave as well as you do, by working hard in lessons and by letting the adults know your ideas for making the school a better place.

I wish you all well for the future.

Ian Nelson

Lead inspector