

Somerford Nursery and Primary Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113736
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	325871
Inspection dates	22–23 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	386
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	113
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Peirce
Headteacher	Neil Tarchetti
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Draper Road Christchurch BH23 3AS
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Somerford Nursery and Primary Community School serves an area of considerable social disadvantage. It also has a children's centre with a day nursery and occasional crèche for children from 0 to 5 years that serves a wide area. A nurture unit for pupils with specific emotional needs has been recently established. The school is part of a federation with The Grange School, which is a secondary sports college. Attainment on entry is well below that normally found. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has risen significantly since the last inspection and is well above average, being high in some year groups. Most of the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are at the early stages of learning English. The school holds the Activemark and Healthy School awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate because, while personal development is good, academic achievement slows as pupils move through the school and is therefore unsatisfactory overall. Significant improvement is required in relation to raising pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 and particularly in mathematics.

Satisfactory provision in the Nursery and Reception classes means children make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning. Children's progress in personal, social and emotional development is good. Progress is improving in other areas, as new initiatives, such as the programme for teaching sounds and letters begin to take effect. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. It is good in English, especially writing, where pupils have made rapid progress this year. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is inadequate. National test results for Year 6 pupils over the past three years have been significantly below average, and were exceptionally low in 2008, with the school missing its targets. Previously, these targets were too modest and this limited teachers' expectations for what they could achieve. Whilst there has been a rising trend in English and science where pupils make satisfactory progress, there has been little improvement in mathematics as pupils do not make enough progress in this subject. Pupils' preparation for their future life is held back by their weak numeracy skills.

This is a very caring school, which pays rigorous attention to pupils' safety and welfare. Pastoral support is good and the most vulnerable pupils are very well provided for. For example, the extended provision of the school, including the work of the children's centre and productive partnerships with a range of different agencies, provides very good support for children and their families. In addition, the new nurture unit is already helping to improve pupils' confidence and their attitudes to school, although it is too soon to have had a significant impact on their academic progress. Behaviour has improved significantly over the past year and is satisfactory. The school has a number of very challenging pupils, which is a concern of many parents. However, adults support these pupils especially well so that lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils are friendly and helpful. They enjoy school but the poor attendance of a small proportion of pupils limits the progress they make.

The capacity of leaders and managers to bring about improvements in the quality of provision has been severely hampered by considerable staff changes in recent years. The arrival of a permanent headteacher this term, along with a more settled senior leadership team, has led to strategies being put in place that are beginning to eliminate underachievement. For example, more rigorous systems have been put in place to monitor and track pupils' progress and intervene swiftly when this slows. This, together with the challenging targets now being set, is beginning to tackle underachievement, which means that leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent procedures for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning have ensured that they are satisfactory although the quality is still too variable. Variation in the rigour and pace of learning combined with some weak marking, especially in Years 3 to 6, mean that pupils' progress is inconsistent. Nevertheless, through better professional development, teachers are gaining higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and so there is noticeable improvement in the level of challenge in lessons.

The satisfactory curriculum has improved, and includes activities well matched to the levels at which different pupils are working. A programme to develop pupils' calculation skills more effectively is now in place, but this is relatively new and the full impact on pupils' progress has yet to be seen. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are good. In particular, pupils benefit from close links with the Grange Secondary School, which provides many opportunities for sports activities. A much-improved system for monitoring pupils' progress has recently been introduced. This provides good information on how well pupils are doing and is helping to improve the quality learning in lessons, although the full extent of its impact is yet to be seen. Recent targets are much more challenging and effectively shared with pupils and their parents to encourage progress. However, staff do not always remind pupils frequently enough in lessons to check their targets in order to identify how they can improve.

There is a clear understanding among staff and governors of what the school needs to improve, and there is determination to tackle remaining weaknesses. An improved development plan clearly sets out strategies to help the school achieve its aims. This, together with the success of strategies to improve behaviour and progress in English, gives confidence that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the school Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make satisfactory progress. However, children's well below average starting points mean that few reach average standards by the time they enter Year 1. Their personal, social and emotional development is fostered well and children make good progress in this area. Developments over the last 18 months have led to improving progress, especially in early literacy skills. Children's learning and development are satisfactory. However, some staff are relatively new to this phase of education and are still developing their skills. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) leader has developed new assessment and planning systems, which provide staff with good information, helping them to plan effectively for the next steps in learning. However, the full effect of this has yet to be seen on standards. Staff pay rigorous attention to children's welfare and in this, the children's centre provides very good support. The very spacious accommodation, including that outdoors, is used well by staff to provide a wide range of interesting activities, which engage children and support their development. However, the role-play areas in Reception are not always used to best effect to support learning. Induction procedures are good, as is the information provided to help parents support children's learning at home.

Provision for 0 to 3 year olds in the Day Nursery Good leadership is evident in the smooth running of the Nursery and the underlying routines, procedures and practices, which make it a safe and stimulating environment for the children. Children's needs are met well. Children settle in quickly and behave well in their key groups and when playing alongside others. Key workers plan effectively for children's learning and use the indoor and outdoor play opportunities well to support development needs. Parents are involved effectively in checking their child's progress. Children are well prepared for moving on to school life although only a small minority transfer to the Nursery and Reception classes at Somerford.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement by ensuring that more pupils attend school when they should and that pupils in Years 3 to 6 make the progress they are capable of, particularly in mathematics.

- Raise the quality of teaching by making sure that there is a rigorous pace in learning in all lessons and that marking consistently indicates how pupils can improve.
- Ensure that teachers make the best use of pupils' improvement targets in lessons to encourage them to do their best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' progress over time has been unsatisfactory because of a lack of challenge in teaching and in the targets set to help them improve. Although progress is now improving, most notably in English and science, weaknesses remain in the progress made in mathematics in Years 3 to 6. This is because, although progress in lessons has recently improved, pupils' progress in mathematics over time is unsatisfactory. As a result, by the time pupils leave, standards are low, most noticeably in mathematics. Progress in other year groups is satisfactory although standards by Year 2 remain well below average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards their individual targets, which helps to ensure that the majority make satisfactory progress overall. Other groups, including pupils who speak English as an additional language, make the same progress as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Although parents raised concerns about the number of disruptive pupils, behaviour is satisfactory overall and good in lessons where the improved activities engage pupils' interest. For example, in a Year 4 literacy lesson pupils were working enthusiastically on a piece of work for their topic. The school works hard to encourage good attendance, but the poor attendance of a small minority of pupils results in well below average attendance levels and limits the achievement of these pupils. Despite this, pupils' good attitudes to school have been considerably strengthened by the increase in interesting and challenging lesson activities, which helps support improvement in their progress. Pupils' good moral and social development is evident in their ability to create effective rules for helping to keep the school a safe and happy place to be. The very well led assemblies significantly support pupils' good spiritual development. Pupils gain a good understanding of their own and other cultures through activities such as arts week. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility and contribute well to school life, especially through the work of the school council. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in sport and are knowledgeable about the importance of healthy eating and staying safe. Pupils are very keen to support the work of the school and raise funds for different charities. The school provides well for community cohesion. In this, the work of the children's centre provides very good support for the most vulnerable pupils and their families.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved over the last year and are satisfactory with some strong features now emerging, although these are not yet consistent across all year groups. In particular, lesson planning is now based more effectively on accurate assessment information, ensuring that activities are matched to the level at which pupils are working and encourage their progress. Teaching of English has improved and is helping to enhance progress. Teachers explain new

concepts clearly and question pupils to help them understand. Very good behaviour management helps ensure there is little disruption in lessons. However, there is still too much variation in the quality of lessons, so that progress is better in some classes than others. In particular, marking does not always show pupils how to do better and staff do not refer to targets often enough to encourage pupils to improve. In addition, the excitement and rigour in learning seen in some lessons are absent in others, especially where the pace is slow, which limits the rate of progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Recent improvements have ensured that pupils' learning activities satisfactorily support their progress. Programmes for reading and writing, and links between subjects, which allow pupils to use their literacy skills, support progress well. Programmes to enhance learning in mathematics have resulted in better progress in lessons although because this is recent, its full effect is not evident. The effective personal, social and health education programme supports pupils' development well. Extra activities such as clubs and special focus weeks enhance pupils' learning and enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides well for pupils' safety and welfare and fully complies with government guidelines for these aspects. The most vulnerable pupils are very well supported, especially through the recently established nurture groups, which are already having a positive impact on their attitudes to learning. The children's centre provides effective support for families, and its extended partnership work provides very well for the pupils most at risk. Guidance and support for pupils with learning or behavioural needs are good including for pupils in the nurture unit. Academic support and guidance for other pupils are satisfactory because, until recently, their progress was not tracked rigorously enough to ensure that challenging targets were set to help them improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders and managers have brought about good improvement in pupils' personal development although they have not been sufficiently successful in the past in improving pupils' achievement. This is partly a result of staff changes and absences, but is also due to a lack of aspiration for how well pupils could achieve, which meant that improvement targets were not challenging enough to ensure pupils made at least satisfactory progress. However, the current senior leadership team is setting a clear direction for improvement and has set challenging improvement targets to help pupils reach the standards of which they are capable. Recent initiatives are effectively focused on raising achievement, as demonstrated in English. The school recognises that much more needs to be done in mathematics and is working hard to address this. For example, new systems are in place for regular and rigorous checking of pupils' progress, and challenging targets have been set to help raise achievement. These developments indicate the school is on the right track to bring about the necessary improvement. Although many improvements are too recent to have had a significant impact on pupils' achievement, there is evidence that pupils' learning in lessons is now satisfactory. Governors fulfil their statutory

duties and are well informed. They are fully involved in development planning and, with the better information they now receive on how well pupils should be doing, are increasing their role in monitoring the school's performance.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

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

24 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Somerford Nursery and Primary Community School, Christchurch, BH23 3AS

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their lunchtime to talk to us. There are signs that the school is getting better. However, we do not think that you are doing as well as you should, especially in the older classes and particularly in mathematics.

Here are some of the things we found were good about your school.

- Pupils in the younger classes are making satisfactory progress, and progress in English in Years 1 and 2 is good.
- Behaviour is much improved and is satisfactory, despite a number of you finding it difficult to behave well. Your good behaviour in lessons is helping you to learn better.
- You do well in your personal development; know a lot about different ways you can keep healthy and safe and you contribute well to school life.
- There are many other activities for you to do outside of lessons, such as in clubs and special weeks like the arts week.
- Staff take good care of you and those of you who find learning difficult receive good support.

Here are some of the things we would like to see improved.

- Many of you could make better progress, especially in Years 3 to 6 where you need to make more progress in mathematics.
- Although you enjoy the interesting activities teachers plan for you, sometimes learning in lessons is too slow and, when they mark your work, teachers do not always give you enough advice on how to do better.
- Teachers need to refer more to your targets in lessons so that you will know how to improve.

In order to make sure that you can make better progress, we have given the school a 'Notice to Improve'. This means that the school will get extra support to help you with your learning. An inspector will visit the school to check how much progress it is making to help you learn well. You can help by making sure that you attend school regularly and always try to do your best.

Thank you again for all your help and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

D Wilkinson

Lead inspector