

Somerfords' Walter Powell VA CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126442
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	328499
Inspection date	17 March 2009
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	46
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tricia Morris
Headteacher	Jill Rowe
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Dauntsey Road Great Somerford Chippenham SN15 5HS
Telephone number	01249 720797

Age group	4–11
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01249 720797

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Somerfords Walter Powell School is a very small school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The school has a small Early Years Foundation Stage. It became part of a federation with a nearby primary school in September 2008, and both are led by a new headteacher after a period of temporary leadership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Somerfords Walter Powell School is satisfactory. The school was completely transformed in September 2008 when it became part of a federation and a new headteacher, governing body and largely new staff were appointed. The school has adjusted well to these changes and, firmly led by the new headteacher, is now poised to improve. The small Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

Parents are supportive and are warm in praising the advantages of this small school, such as its family atmosphere. A typical comment was, 'Our school is small and we appreciate the care and individual attention that it gives our child. I always feel able to discuss any issues with the teachers.' Few parents have significant worries, but a small number raised concerns about teaching in the mixed-age classes.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and governors have a clear understanding of the school and their plans for the future are relevant and workable. There is currently insufficient delegation of responsibilities as this has been a low priority in recent months, but plans are afoot to change this. While there are strong local links, the school acknowledges that it should do more to promote community cohesion and broaden pupils' horizons by developing links with cultures and places that are further afield. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Careful monitoring has led to better classroom practice and improving behaviour. The atmosphere in classrooms is positive, but teachers do not always provide the correct support and challenge for each pupil. More effective teaching is slowly starting to raise standards. Pupils' starting points when they enter the Reception class are similar to expectations. Standards when they leave the school at Year 6 remain average, reflecting satisfactory achievement.

Pupils receive good pastoral care and feel secure. However, academic guidance and support is not as strong. Pupils are not given consistently clear information about the standards of their work and what they should do to improve them. Pupils enjoy school and display good attitudes to learning. In the playground, most show consideration for others. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory, but is slightly held back by satisfactory progress in gaining basic skills in literacy, numeracy and with computers. The curriculum is currently being re-planned and is satisfactory. The school offers a notable range of very popular after-school activities.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children benefit from the close attention of adults, and their learning and personal needs are well known. The school has developed effective methods to assess children's progress, including maintaining a portfolio of their ongoing work. These systems provide clear evidence that children enter the school with the skills and understanding that are expected for their age. When they enter Year 1, nearly all have achieved the expected Early Learning Goals. Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory, but is less rapid in social development.

Temporary leadership and management arrangements use the skills of staff in the federation to maintain the quality of provision. Leaders ensure that planning for these youngest children is appropriate, even when they are taught in a mixed-age class. Plans are in place for new, permanent leadership of this age range.

Well qualified teaching assistants support children's learning, but they are sometimes reluctant to allow children to initiate their own activities and find out things for themselves. Spacious accommodation enables young children to work away from older pupils, but the outside area is unattractive and lacks nearby storage facilities. Consequently, opportunities for pupils to choose their own activities are limited by what equipment is available on the day. The school is aware of this shortcoming and has plans to build storage adjacent to the outside play area. Children's welfare is uppermost in the minds of all adults and the school works effectively with parents and carers to make sure that all children feel happy and secure. Behaviour is well managed, children are happy and cooperative and the atmosphere in the Reception class is calm and positive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop teaching so that it is more challenging, in order to improve pupils' learning and achievement.
- Ensure pupils know their standards of work and what they have to do to improve them.
- Enhance pupils' understanding of the wider world and its variety of cultures.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter Year 1 with average standards. Satisfactory provision, especially teaching and learning, means that their achievement during their time at school is satisfactory, as it has been for a number of years. Effective support for pupils with moderate learning difficulties ensures that they also achieve satisfactorily. Improvements to teaching and assessment are starting to raise standards. When pupils leave Year 6 to move to secondary school, their standards are average. There are few variations between subjects. However, in the past, there has been some underachievement amongst younger boys. The school is aware of this weaker area and has developed new learning opportunities and resources that boys find more stimulating. This is beginning to have a positive effect on their standards and is improving overall standards in Key Stage 1.

Achievement in Key Stage 2 is also satisfactory. The collaborative atmosphere in classrooms and small teaching groups with pupils, who are well known to their teachers, ensures that few lag behind.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The school's strong focus on pastoral care and the introduction of 'golden rules' ensures pupils feel secure and settled. Behaviour in lessons and around the building is satisfactory, but pupils feel that the rare incidents of bullying are sometimes not fully resolved.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe in modern society and know about internet safety. Their attendance is similar to the national average. They make a positive contribution to their school and local community and are confident about and understand what they should do to lead a healthy lifestyle. They are keen on physical exercise and enthusiastic about the sports clubs and competitions that the school organises. School council members

speak proudly of the improvements that some of their suggestions have helped bring about, particularly the paper recycling bins. Such is their enthusiasm, they wish for greater powers to make further improvements.

Pupils' good spiritual development is promoted successfully in lessons and assemblies, but there are fewer opportunities for independent work to develop social skills, or to extend pupils' multicultural and global awareness. Weaknesses in skills of enquiry and average standards in basic skills, like literacy and numeracy, mean that pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

With largely new staff it has taken some time for teaching to settle down into a consistent pattern. However, more thorough monitoring of lessons is promoting more consistent and effective teaching. The headteacher has started to systematically identify strengths and areas for development and recognises the key importance of teaching in promoting good achievement. Behaviour issues were quickly identified and staff have received consistent support to help them 'raise their game'. In consequence, behaviour is now better and the atmosphere in classrooms is pleasant and cooperative. Pupils' relationships with each other, and with their teachers, are good and there are few interruptions to learning.

Improved assessment is helping the school to gain a clearer picture of where pupils need stronger support or greater challenge. Better marking has improved the presentation of pupils' work. However, classroom practice does not always reflect the wide age and ability range found in each class. Depending on the planned activity, this can result in pupils not having enough to do to keep them at full stretch. Whilst pupils are patient, they become fidgety when bored. Some teaching occasionally fails to stimulate and, when this happens, the pace of learning suffers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Changes to the curriculum, to combine subjects in more interesting ways, are in the process of being introduced. The adoption of a reading scheme aimed more specifically at boys, and more interventions to support them where they are underachieving, are leading to pupils' greater engagement in their learning and are beginning to raise standards. Cross-curricular topics and activities to provide a wider range of writing opportunities have been introduced in both key stages.

Extra-curricular provision is good, offering pupils a wide range of activities and opportunities to take part in competitive events with other schools. These clubs and societies are very popular. Pupils in each key stage benefit from regular French lessons. The school makes good use of the educational opportunities offered by out of school visits. Visitors from many walks of life afford pupils a first-hand view of the wider world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Whilst the school's pastoral care is strong, its academic guidance and support are less effective. Pupils feel safe and know who to go to if they have worries or concerns. Procedures for health and safety, including those specifically aimed at safeguarding pupils, are thorough and meet requirements. Teachers and their assistants know their pupils well. There is a strong partnership with parents of pupils with moderate and other learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and parents are actively encouraged to participate in their children's education. Individual education plans are well focused and include clear targets for improvement.

Procedures to assess and support pupils' achievements are improving and are currently satisfactory. Systems now in place track the progress made by individuals. However, staff members do not use assessment information consistently in their planning or to set challenging targets for pupils. In addition, pupils do not receive sufficiently clear information about their standards and what they need to do next to make their work better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There were numerous changes to the leadership and management of the school in September 2008. Improvements are too recent to have had a significant impact on pupils' standards and achievement. Nevertheless, the new headteacher has tackled the challenges of this new situation vigorously. Newly drawn up improvement plans provide a clear roadmap for the future. They identify what requires improvement and offer positive strategies to address these issues. The plans draw on the federation's resources to enable the school to maximise the benefits of small schools, such as a family atmosphere, yet avoid some of its disadvantages, such as the limited resources. The new federation governing body monitors the school thoroughly and has a strong grasp of what needs to be done. Governors offer consistently strong support to the headteacher, yet are equally robust in challenging the school when appropriate. Arrangements for running the school when the headteacher is on the other site are clear. However, there is as yet too little delegation of responsibility, so that monitoring is largely in the hands of the headteacher and governors. School plans have this extension of responsibility in hand for the near future. The school has very strong links with its partner school and the local village community, and a clear understanding of the needs of its pupils and locality. Children play happily in mixed groups. These links make a strong contribution to community cohesion. There are good links with international charities. Whilst the curriculum increases pupils' understanding of the wider world beyond Wiltshire, the school is well aware that its next step is to develop further pupils' understanding of different national and international environments. The school has made satisfactory headway since the previous inspection and, based on its recent track record, its capacity for improvement is also satisfactory.

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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?	3
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?	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?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/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	3
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	3
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	3

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?	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	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**

18 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Somerfords Walter Powell VA CofE Primary School, Chippenham SN15 5HS

Thank you for meeting and chatting to the inspectors when we visited your school recently. It was good to hear your views and how much you enjoy your school.

Your school provides a satisfactory education. As you know, almost everything about the school was new last September and everyone has had to adjust to these changes. This is starting to work out well. Staff have worked hard to improve the school and the governors support the school strongly. When you start and leave the school, the standard of your work is similar to other pupils of your age. This means that your achievement is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, too. Behaviour and attitudes have improved and this helps you learn. Some lessons could be better planned, so that all of you make equally good progress. You are generally well cared for but the school should give you clearer advice about how your work could be improved. Your personal development is satisfactory and the inspectors were impressed with your understanding of how to grow up as fit and healthy adults. The subjects and topics you study, called the curriculum, are satisfactory and the school is making improvements so that it is more interesting. I have asked the school to concentrate on improving three areas:

- Make sure all lessons are challenging enough to keep you all interested and working at full stretch. This approach will improve your achievement.
- Give you clearer advice on how good your work is and how to improve it. If you do not understand how to make improvements, you should ask your teachers.
- Plan to improve your understanding of other cultures and of the wider world.

Once again, thanks for your help. It was good meeting you and we wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

John Carnaghan Lead inspector