

Somerles Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109575
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	337322
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Val Hooton
Headteacher	Karen Jones
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 12 lessons, observing nine teachers, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and three members of the governing body. Informal discussions were also held with parents as they arrived with their children at the start of the day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and improvement plans. They analysed 92 responses to the questionnaire for parents and carers, 89 to the pupils' survey and 13 to the staff questionnaire.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- evidence to show whether the emphasis on improving writing is having an impact
- how well teachers make clear to pupils what they need to do to be successful in lessons and how they help them to improve their work through their marking
- the rigour of systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Information about the school

The community served by this average sized school is changing and becoming more culturally diverse. Although the large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, nearly a quarter of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. None are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has risen to above average. Their needs are mostly associated with learning difficulties related to literacy. The school has received the Active Mark award and has achieved Healthy Schools status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Someries Junior provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. It is improving and has established several good features. A major strength is the way the school identifies pupils whose circumstances make them very vulnerable and tailors support closely to meet their needs. Any learning difficulties are identified early and programmes carefully adapted to meet their needs. Assessment has become more rigorous and is used carefully to check the pupils' progress towards their increasingly challenging targets and identify action to be taken should they fall behind the school's expectations of them.

Pupils are making satisfactory but improving progress from average attainment on entry to the school. Attainment is average but rising by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. One area of improvement is the pupils' writing. There has been an increase in the number of pupils working at levels above those expected for their age in all subjects, although not all teachers are consistent in the challenge they provide for the more able pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets.

Teaching is satisfactory but remains inconsistent in its impact on the pupils' learning across the school in spite of the emphasis placed on its improvement by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In the most effective lessons, teachers generate pace and enthusiasm for learning by adopting a variety of interesting activities and ensuring that all pupils participate in discussions. However, this does not happen in all classes and pupils can become passive learners who do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning. The curriculum is kept constantly under review and the pupils' experiences have become more rich and varied since the last inspection.

Pupils enjoy most aspects of school life, as shown by their regular and punctual attendance. They feel safe and understand how to stay fit and healthy, which are views endorsed by their parents. Their great enjoyment of sport and other physical activities contributes to this. Generally, behaviour is good and improves as the pupils go through the school, so that lessons are able to proceed without interruption. Pupils responsibly undertake jobs around the school, such as when representing others on the school council. Pupils value the increasing cultural diversity they see around them and learn to be tolerant of the views and customs of others.

The school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have established more rigorous systems for checking on the performance of pupils and staff. They use this to identify priorities for action in their drive to raise the pupils' levels of achievement and the quality of teaching, but not all

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teachers have risen to the challenge as much as is needed for progress to rise to a consistently good level. Governors support the school, but many are new and are not closely enough involved in monitoring the impact of their policies or the progress of action taken to tackle priorities for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the pupils' progress and ensure that they take greater responsibility for their learning by:
 - using more effective questioning techniques and engaging them more consistently in their learning
 - providing greater challenge for the more able
 - ensuring that pupils are clear about how to assess their success in each lesson
 - provide pupils with clear written feedback on how to achieve their personal targets.
- Promote more effective teaching by:
 - setting clear targets for each teacher and checking carefully on their progress towards them
 - ensuring that procedures are in place to hold teachers to account for the progress made by pupils in their classes.
- Ensuring that the governing body takes a greater role in monitoring the impact of plans and policies.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Lesson observations show that pupils learn and develop their understanding at a satisfactory rate. They work with enthusiasm and concentration in lessons when they find the work engaging and interesting. However, this is not always the case and pupils can become restless when teaching does not grab their attention or fire their imagination. When the opportunity arises, teamwork and collaboration enable the pupils to share ideas and learn through discussion but they do not always listen carefully when in dialogue either within or outside the classroom.

Around the school, pupils interact well. Bullying is rare and the pupils know what to do and where to go if it happens. Pupils attend regularly and are punctual to school. They say they feel safe in school and have the confidence to confide in staff because they know their concerns will be dealt with sensitively. They learn how to deal with risks faced in their everyday lives such as when using new technology.

Pupils are interested in the many activities that the school provides and want to participate, especially in the sporting activities, which they enjoy immensely. They have

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a genuine voice in school developments and many pupils are engaged with clubs and other activities in the local community. Pupils find an identity in the school and learn to be good citizens. The emphasis on the pupils' moral and social development is instrumental in producing a school family where respect for each other and harmonious relationships exist between pupils, whatever their backgrounds.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Paired talk and group work are promoted well in the most effective lessons and questions are used skilfully to make pupils think and check their understanding. However, these techniques are not a consistent feature of lessons throughout the school. At times, teachers do too much of the talking and do not engage all of the pupils in their lessons. As a result, pupils' concentration can falter and the pace of their learning slows. Work is not always challenging enough for more able pupils. Pupils are increasingly taking responsibility for their learning by teachers helping them to see what they need to do to be successful in a lesson, but this is another area of inconsistency. While objectives for each lesson are usually visible to the pupils, the criteria to judge

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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whether these have been met are not always explained or time taken at the end of a lesson to explore the extent of pupils' learning. Although work is marked regularly, marking does not always help pupils to improve the quality of their work. Pupils have personal targets, but they do not have enough guidance on how to achieve them.

Close attention is paid to developing basic skills while at the same time seeking to make the pupils' experiences more memorable. The successful focus on improving writing comes, in part, by providing more interesting contexts to stimulate the pupils' imaginations. The pupils' experiences are broadened by a wide range of much enjoyed educational visits and visitors to the school. Sport and music are considerable strengths of the school and, along with activities to support gifted and talented pupils, benefit considerably from links with local schools and other providers.

The school is a welcoming environment for new parents and their children. The family workers represent a significant resource of skilled support for parents and carers. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly those with higher levels of need, is well led and managed, with programmes carefully tailored to meet their individual needs. The support of external agencies is sought where necessary and is used to good effect. Carefully planned transition arrangements on entry to Year 3, and when pupils leave to move on to secondary school, help to reduce anxieties for all pupils as they enter the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is establishing a clear direction based on improving teaching so that the pupils' learning and achievement can become more consistent. However, targets for individual teachers have not led to consistent improvement, and are not always tightly linked to the progress of pupils in their classes. The thorough analysis of data enables the school to identify where its qualities lie and the action that is needed to maintain recent improvements. Phase leaders are taking a much more prominent role and accountability for achievement in their year groups and are involved in a wide range of activities to support the performance of their colleagues.

The governing body supports the school in meeting its challenges, but does not have a secure structure for monitoring the impact of their policies. So, while staff and governors have put in place secure arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of the pupils and for making sure that those working with the pupils are properly vetted, the governing

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body does not monitor their impact sufficiently closely so that practices can develop further.

Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling any discrimination is at the heart of all that the school does. As a result, no group is left behind and this is a cohesive school, where everyone feels valued. Senior leaders and the governing body have a clear understanding of the context within which the school operates and have planned activities to help promote community cohesion. However, this is another area where they have not evaluated the impact of their work sufficiently so that they can identify what should be done next.

The school has many links with outside agencies, which contribute significantly to broadening the pupils' experiences and bring in valuable additional expertise in support of the more vulnerable. Most parents feel well informed about their children's progress and development but, as some have pointed out, their views are not sought systematically and used to inform priorities for development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents are happy with some aspects of the school but a significant minority have concerns about others. Almost all parents report that their children enjoy school. Most parents say their children feel safe and agree that the school helps their children to adopt a healthy lifestyle. While most parents feel teaching is good, their children are making good progress and that they are prepared well for the future, the inspection team found these aspects to be satisfactory. Inspection evidence does not support the

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views of parents who feel that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour or meet their individual child's needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Someries Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 228 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	42	51	55	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	40	51	55	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	28	50	54	12	13	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	27	52	57	13	14	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	26	28	53	58	11	12	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	23	56	61	13	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	28	58	63	4	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	26	50	54	11	12	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	21	59	64	11	12	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	13	50	54	13	14	10	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	21	46	50	17	18	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	28	30	52	57	2	2	9	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	30	49	53	9	10	3	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Someries Junior School, Luton, LU2 8AH

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers take good care of you. You behave well and those of you who have special jobs, like members of the school council, carry out your duties responsibly. Thank you for sharing your views with us. You make satisfactory progress during your time in school. Most of you reach the standards expected by the time you leave Year 6, and increasing numbers are exceeding these levels.

Your headteacher, other staff and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. The three things we have asked them to do are to:

- involve you more in your learning, provide greater challenge for those of you who find learning easy and make marking more helpful so that you understand how well you are doing
- develop systems to improve the quality of teaching
- make sure that governors check up more closely on the progress and performance of the school.

I am sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make these improvements. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to show pride in your school and working hard.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

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