

Somersham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124609
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	340611
Inspection dates	29–30 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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 of pupils on the school roll	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charles Downie
Headteacher	Lynette Allison
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons taught by three teachers. They held meetings with the headteacher, representatives of the governing body, the Early Years Foundation Stage staff and a group of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, curriculum organisation and information to track pupils' progress. They also looked at samples of pupils' work. Staff questionnaires and 25 questionnaire responses from parents and carers were analysed.

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

- Evidence that improvements apparent from pre-inspection analysis are continuing.
- The provision for information and communications technology (ICT) and pupils' progress and attainment in the subject.
- How well staff cater for pupils' different ages and abilities in the mixed-age classes.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school with three classes all of mixed age. All the pupils currently at the school are White British. The school caters mainly for children in the village of Somersham and neighbouring villages, but some pupils travel in from further afield. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is much lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with special education needs is about the same as the national average. Children begin the Reception year in the September before their fifth birthday; children attend full time from the start of the term in which they will become five.

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

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. However, this is a rapidly improving school under the very good leadership of its headteacher who has galvanised the staff and the school community, and created a harmonious climate in which further developments can take place. Changes made since the last inspection have contributed to significant improvements in several aspects of the school's work, for example in the pupils' progress and attainment; in the relationships with parents; and in a re-organised library which has stimulated pupils' interest in reading and helped to raise attainment in reading. The work of the governing body has improved significantly: their watching brief enables them not only to keep abreast of developments but also to contribute to these, and to challenge the progress that the pupils are making.

Parents and carers think highly of the school, work well with it in a supportive way and are pleased with the progress that their children are making. As one parent put it: 'I strongly believe that my children benefit from such a positive environment. They have developed in their confidence and have a real desire to learn.' Parents and carers also rightly praise the good quality of care for their children, the friendly approach of the staff and the way any concerns are quickly dealt with. They are proud to be associated with the on-going developments and the school's continuing progress. They rightly feel that their comments are taken on board.

Pupils enjoy school and as one said, 'We all get along very well together.' This was clearly evident during the inspection. Pupils have been making satisfactory progress over time but this is now accelerating as teaching quality builds on self-evaluation and monitoring of one another's work. However, the staff are not always consistent in their expectations of pupils' handwriting and their presentation of work. Furthermore, there has been inconsistency in the way that pupils' work in some subjects is ordered and managed so that pupils can show pride in what they have done. The curriculum is soundly planned but there is scope to provide more opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve problems in mathematics. Science is a good feature of the curriculum and pupils cover a lot of ground in this subject. The pupils use ICT in different subjects to good effect.

While staff are noticeably keen to improve the school further and work well as a team in their efforts to do so, the school currently demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is good; development planning is satisfactory. There is still room for greater and more consistent progress across the school. Subject leadership is growing stronger as the staff gain in experience. Currently, their action plans for different subjects are not always focused well enough on an improvement in quality and raising attainment still further. The harmony evident

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among the whole team is clearly visible and transferred down to the pupils. Consequently the school is a very happy place to be and the pupils are pleased to attend.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the pupils' progress and levels of attainment in mathematics by providing more opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve problems in mathematics.
- Improve action planning so that plans are more rigorous and focus more on raising attainment and rates of progress.
- Organise and order pupils' work which is completed on sheets more meaningfully to:
 - bring greater value to different subjects
 - raise expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation.
- 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

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. National test results vary from year to year dependent on the number of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities in the small year groups. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall and reach standards around those expected at ages seven and eleven. Progress has not always been as good as it should be by the end of Year 2, but there has been a significant improvement in recent times and pupils' skills in English and mathematics are much more secure, particularly in reading. Attainment has also risen in Year 6 and is securely around the standard expected, although reading is stronger than writing. Pupils make good progress in science and learn to apply their literacy and numeracy skills meaningfully in this subject. In the main, however, pupils' investigative and problem-solving skills in mathematics are not as strong as their calculation skills. Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities make similar rates of progress as other pupils because of the good attention to their needs.

Pupils behave well and relate very well to one another. Attendance is above the national average. They feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe when out of school, for example when crossing roads and in being wary of strangers. They understand the value of healthy living, such as a good diet and regular exercise, and take part enthusiastically in the good opportunities for physical activity both during the day and in extra-curricular activities. The school council is increasing its influence and has given its view on several school policies; its suggestion for a playground friendship bench is nearing fruition. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community, engaging well in local events. Their regular contributions to different charities enable them to appreciate the needs of others well. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of different cultures.

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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	3

How effective is the provision?

Staff and pupils together enjoy a harmonious working relationship. Some lessons are good. Lessons are well planned to cater for different needs and ages and usually well matched to the pupils' next stage of learning. Good use is made of modern technology to present the learning intentions. Pupils are kept thinking by jotting down ideas or answers on their own individual whiteboards. Marking is up to date and accurate and teachers' comments often point the way forward for further development in pupils' learning. At times, these suggestions are not followed up rigorously enough to ensure that the pupils have benefited. Good use is often made of equipment to assist the pupils' learning. In a lesson in the mixed-aged Years 2/3/4 class, pupils profited considerably from positioning place value cards correctly to aid their understanding of three figure addition. Staff do not always have high enough expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work, including the appropriate filing and dating of finished work on sheets in different subjects.

There is still a reliance on published materials for some aspects of the curriculum as the school brings about change incorporating more effective links between subjects.

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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Satisfactory application of literacy and numeracy skills is made in different subjects. Such application is at its best in science, but it is much less effective in history and geography. There are limited opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve problems in mathematics. The curriculum for personal, social and health education has recently been reviewed and its new format affords a better structure across the school. The curriculum for ICT gives pupils good opportunities to develop a hierarchy of skills in this aspect, and to use them in different subjects. Extra-curricular opportunities are good and contribute significantly to pupils' healthy life styles.

The school provides a welcoming and caring environment for the pupils so that they are confident to approach the staff with any problems. Staff take very good care of the pupils and the links with parents and carers are strong. Staff know the pupils and their families very well. Pupils who have special educational needs and those who may be vulnerable are carefully nurtured. Their welfare and academic progress are monitored carefully and good use is made of other professionals where necessary to obtain the best possible advice. Good attention is paid to the pupils' health and safety. Transition arrangements between classes within the school and to the next stage of their education are good. Additionally, the school gives careful attention to ensuring that pupils new to the school settle quickly.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The governing body has a wide range of skills, is well led and meets its statutory requirements. It plays a full part, for example in contributing to the school development plan and reviewing its progress. Consequently it has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and its areas for improvement. Members of the governing body are active, involved and able to challenge the school. The curriculum committee has devised its own programme to examine the progress of pupils anonymously and thus query any pupil who is not making expected progress. An audit of community cohesion has taken place and a plan for its development is shortly to be drawn up.

The school development plan has the correct priorities for further improvement. Subject leaders are gaining in their skills to evaluate teaching and learning. However, plans for different aspects of work are currently not rigorous enough because they do not focus firmly enough on raising standards further.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and the school has appropriate policies in place

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which centre on the children's welfare and safety. Staff have regular training to keep them updated on child protection matters. Staff ensure that pupils have equal opportunities. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of diversity.

School self-evaluation is good and it is largely accurate. A range of strategies is used to keep the quality of teaching and learning under review. There is a clear drive to improve and embed ambition and this is beginning to show through in improved results and parental views. It is also recognised that consistency has yet to be maintained.

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	2
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills and experiences are often above age-related expectations in some aspects of work such as attitudes, communication, knowledge of the world, labelling numbers and in the creative aspect. They make satisfactory progress in these aspects and good progress in their calculation and literacy skills, which are often nearer to those expected when they first enter. While the small groups vary in their academic attainment from year to year, usually a good proportion exceed the expectations, albeit in different areas of their learning. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The children are well cared for and enjoy the practical approach adopted to much of their learning. Staff provide a satisfactory learning environment.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children do not learn to build up aspects of their social development well enough. This is because the children sometimes crowd activities. It is not assured that they adhere well enough to routines, for example in putting away equipment that they have used to help keep the working environment tidy

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and taking turns to speak in whole class situations. The children can maintain concentration for lengthy periods as when they tried to get a piece of plasticine to float. They really enjoy story to which they listen very attentively.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers have extremely positive views of the school and recognise the very significant improvements that have taken place since the last inspection, not least in the interaction between teachers, and parents and carers to benefit the children. They praise the positive atmosphere which helps new children settle quickly and the happy, kind and caring learning environment. The leadership of the headteacher receives special praise. The inspection team endorses the parents' and carers' responses.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Somersham Primary 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 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 62 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	72	6	24	0	0	1	4
The school keeps my child safe	21	84	4	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	48	13	52	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	64	9	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	80	5	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	56	11	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	72	7	28	0	0	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)	14	56	10	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	56	10	40	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	48	12	48	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	56	11	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	80	5	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	80	4	16	0	0	1	4

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.



1 July 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Somersham Primary School, Ipswich, IP8 4PN

Thank you for your warm welcome when I visited your school, for sharing your work with me and for talking to me about what you do. You very clearly enjoy school and get along well together, showing lots of respect to one another and to your teachers. The teachers take good care of you and I know that you really appreciate this. Although I found that your school provides a satisfactory education for you at the moment, it is improving rapidly in many ways. Your parents and carers have noticed the improvements and are glad that you attend Somersham School.

I have asked the school to consider three things to improve the school further.

Give you more opportunities to investigate and solve problems in mathematics so that you get even more excited about the subject and develop greater confidence in tackling your mathematics work.

Help you to improve your handwriting and the way you present and organise some of your work, so that you develop a greater sense of pride in what you do.

Focus more in their development plans for different subjects on how to improve your knowledge and understanding.

Thank you once again for your help when I visited. I wish you well in the future and hope that you will work as hard as you can at all times.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth

Lead inspector

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