

Somerhill Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114446
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	357540
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Wendy Forbes

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	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sam McGregor
Headteacher	Shaun Collins
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fourteen lessons were observed and 13 teachers were seen teach. Inspectors visited all classrooms on a learning walk to sample displays, behaviour, resources, and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and a group of pupils. Inspectors examined pupils' work and school documents, including improvement and action plans, safety records and assessment information. They analysed 95 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with those completed by 71 pupils and 26 staff.

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

- The progress all pupils make in English and mathematics, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The achievement of pupils, particularly that of more-able pupils, to ascertain whether teaching and the curriculum are challenging enough.
- The impact of assessment and pupil tracking systems in raising achievement.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in driving school improvement since the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Somerhill is a larger-than-average junior school. Most pupils are White British with the rest representing a range of other ethnic groups, the next largest, at approximately 10%, being White ♦ Any other White background. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average and includes those with speech and language difficulties and physical disabilities. The school has improved its facilities since the previous inspection and the current final phase of the new school buildings is due to be opened in 2011. There is a privately run breakfast club for pupils who attend the school. The school has achieved a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Activemark and Eco. The newly appointed headteacher has been in post for two terms.

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

This satisfactory school is moving rapidly in the right direction under the positive leadership of the recently appointed headteacher, sound governance and committed leaders and managers, many of whom are also new to their roles. Parents are very supportive and feel that their children love coming to school. As a result, pupils enjoy learning, are proud of the school, relish all that it offers and make an outstanding contribution both to the school and the local community. All this helps to ensure that a very positive atmosphere permeates the school. Relationships are strong, behaviour is good and pupils have a high regard for both their classmates and the adults who work with them. Sensitive and watchful pastoral care ensures that by the time pupils leave Year 6 they are confident, well-rounded young people, ready to play their full part in the world beyond school.

A carefully planned, imaginative curriculum inspires pupils to work hard and gain a wide range of skills. Attainment, as shown in national assessments, is steadily improving. There are effective assessment systems in place to monitor the progress of individuals and groups of pupils as they move through the school. Teachers are now more aware of the progress different groups of pupils are making, including those who need to make up lost ground. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and the school knows what to do to sustain improvement, the capacity of which is judged to be satisfactory.

Pupils join the school with skills and abilities that are above average. They make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics; consequently, attainment at the end of Year 6 is also above average. Results in national tests are getting better year on year; however, the pace of improvement, particularly in writing and mathematics, has slowed over time. Achievement is satisfactory because there is still not enough consistently good teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress overall. In many lessons, pupils spend too much time listening, with limited opportunities to work with each other or on their own. Activities are not always closely matched to the capabilities of different pupils, particularly the most able. Moreover, the time at the end of lessons is not always used well to assess how well pupils have done and what they have learned. Pupils are developing their targets in English and mathematics, but their knowledge of how to reach them is variable. Most are at an early stage of evaluating their own progress towards these targets.

However, because of the very carefully targeted support, good intervention strategies and exceptionally well-planned individual learning programmes provided, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress than their peers. Despite pupils' enjoyment of school, a few pupils regularly arrive late each morning. Attendance is broadly average. A major contributory factor in why it is not higher than this is because, against the strong advice of the school, many parents take their children on

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holidays during term time. In addition, the school has yet to put into place a fully effective range of initiatives and incentives to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of progress that pupils, especially the most able, make in English and mathematics from satisfactory to good by making sure that at the end of each lesson, pupils have a clear idea of what they have learnt, whether they have fulfilled their personal objectives and what they need to do to improve further.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that there is a sharper match between work set and the different abilities of pupils, especially the most able, and by giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve punctuality and the rate of attendance to at least above average by working closely with pupils and parents and carers to provide an appropriate range of initiatives and incentives which will encourage all pupils to arrive on time and attend regularly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The work seen by inspectors in lessons confirms the overall picture of satisfactory and improving progress, with pupils working at levels broadly expected for their age and sometimes higher. The quality of learning in all lessons is at least satisfactory and frequently better. For instance, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, all groups of pupils made rapid progress in solving shape problems and really enjoyed the challenge of the task. Pupils worked speedily and carefully within the time limit set, enjoying the pace and challenge of the activity to identify the properties of 'mystery' shapes.

Pupils' progress is checked systematically and carefully, and speedy interventions put in place for those in danger of falling behind. Most notable is the excellent support and intervention provided for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils make good progress in their learning.

Pupils greatly enjoy school, grow in confidence and develop very positive attitudes to learning. Relationships are happy and harmonious and support the purposeful atmosphere observed during the inspection. In discussions, pupils are clear about how to stay safe and have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They eagerly take advantage of the many excellent opportunities to participate in the life of the school and the local community. They are very well informed about other people's needs, and are extremely active in ensuring that the school values and provides for the needs of all, no matter what their background or need. This is evident through their work on the school's disability equality team, school council and 'green team' and in their involvement in the recent selection of the new headteacher.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They develop impressive social and interpersonal skills and relish working collaboratively. This, together with secure and improving standards in the key skills in English and mathematics, means that they are soundly prepared for the next stages of their lives.

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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	2
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	2
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	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The recently developed creative curriculum is making a strong contribution to pupils' learning. Carefully and imaginatively planned themes with strong links between subjects have successfully motivated and enthused pupils and have done much to increase their confidence as learners. Although this approach has boosted learning, it has not had sufficient time to show an improvement in pupils' attainment. In too many lessons, teachers are not taking advantage of the opportunities this skills-based curriculum provides. Local partnership schools and specialist teaching enrich this good curriculum. Pupils are enthusiastic about opportunities offered in modern foreign languages, sport and performing arts, especially music. As one pupil said, 'You just have to feel the vibrations of the steel drums to know something exciting is about to happen.'

In the most effective lessons seen during the inspection, pupils benefited from teachers who have high expectations for pupils, secure subject knowledge and who explain tasks clearly. In these lessons, pupils make good progress. However, weaknesses in teaching inhibit pupils' progress in a substantial proportion of lessons. Assessment information is not consistently used well enough in lessons to plan activities to meet pupils' different needs effectively. As a result, pupils, particularly the most able, are sometimes given activities that are not challenging and their learning is then restricted.

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Parents and carers comment frequently on the welfare, care and nurturing provided by the school. The school aims to develop the confidence, independence and enthusiasm of the pupils and this is reflected well in the day-to-day life of the school. Staff work closely with parents and with a wide a range of outside agencies to provide just the right level of support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities which helps to ensure these pupils make good progress in their learning. The school monitors attendance and punctuality rigorously, but is at an early stage in devising coherent initiatives to promote them to pupils and parents and carers.

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?

Clear-sighted leadership and management are at the heart of the school's steady improvement. The headteacher works tenaciously to improve pupils' educational opportunities. There is an understanding by leaders that good teaching is at the heart of good progress. To this end, the headteacher has set a precise path for improvement based on accurate self-evaluation and initiatives which are beginning to make a positive difference to pupils' outcomes. With sound support from the governing body and other leaders, a climate has been created where everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating.

The classroom monitoring programme has already gone some way to improving the quality of teaching and use of assessment. However, this has not yet ensured that standards are high enough in writing or mathematics, nor that all pupils, particularly the most able, reach their full potential. However, there is no hint of complacency and there is a determination to sustain and build upon the many recent gains such as the good progress that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities already make. In this way, the school promotes equality for all pupils and makes sure there is no discrimination on any grounds. The school monitors the quality of teaching regularly, although it puts too strong a focus on what teachers do rather than how well pupils learn.

The governing body fulfils all legal requirements and gives good attention to the welfare of pupils and staff. Safeguarding is taken very seriously and the school has very robust systems and procedures for child protection which are regularly monitored to ensure pupils' safety. The governing body is also developing its capacity to monitor the school and hold it to account. In this highly inclusive school, every child matters and individual needs are considered very specifically. The school works well in partnership with external agencies to secure very effective support for those pupils who need it. Parents are fully engaged in the life of the school and give it their full support. The school has worked hard

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and effectively to promote community cohesion making good links both locally and internationally and has already begun forging links within the United Kingdom.

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

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who returned questionnaires or spoke to inspectors were very positive about the school. Overall, parents and carers' views reflect the inspection findings. A very small minority of parents would like more information about the progress of their child. A few shared concerns about the relative level of support their child received and the amount of progress they made. The school is working hard to improve pupils' progress and to ensure parents receive appropriate and timely information about their child. Inspectors found that the vast majority of pupils received a good level of support in their learning. A very small number of parents expressed individual concerns about aspects of the school. Inspectors found no evidence to substantiate any individual concerns, although these were summarised and reported to the school without identifying any individual.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Somerhill 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 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 383 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	57	41	43	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	62	34	36	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	31	50	53	7	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	40	42	44	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	49	41	43	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	44	45	47	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	43	49	52	1	1	1	1
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)	47	49	34	36	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	34	52	53	3	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	35	51	54	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	33	49	52	2	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	48	51	34	36	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	64	30	32	2	2	0	0

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 all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



12 October, 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Somerhill Junior School, Hove BN3 1RP

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting and talking to you. We have found that Somerhill is a satisfactory school which is improving quickly. It has many good features and you are right to be proud of it, although there are some things that it can do better. Here are some of the good things we found out about it.

- You enjoy school and behave well in class.
- You make an outstanding contribution to your school and local community through the responsibilities you hold on the school council, 'green team' and disability equality group.
- You make satisfactory progress as you move through the school and your achievement is getting better all the time. By the time you leave at the end of Year 6 your attainment is similar to that in most other schools.
- Your teachers and teaching assistants take really good care of you. They make sure everyone feels safe and secure. They also give a lot of help and very good support to those who most need it which helps them to make better progress.

Your headteacher and all the other staff know how to make sure that your school continues to get even better. To help them to do this, we have asked that they do the following.

- Make sure that more of you, especially the most-able pupils, make faster progress in English and mathematics so that you reach higher levels of attainment in Year 6.
- Make sure that work is set at just the right level of challenge and to make sure that you are able to learn more often on your own.
- Encourage those of you who do not attend school regularly enough to come to school more often and to arrive on time.

I am sure that you will help them by always working hard and aiming really high.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Forbes

Lead inspector

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