

Somerhill Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114446
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	311605
Inspection date	19 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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 on roll	
School	382
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sam McGregor
Headteacher	Ben Parkhurst
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003
School address	Somerhill Road Hove BN3 1RP
Telephone number	01273 739659
Fax number	01273 733614

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

The impact of the school's work to improve the progress of specific groups of pupils, such as those speaking a language other than English at home.

The success of work to manage the behaviour of more challenging pupils.

The quality of leadership and management at all levels, and its impact on raising achievement.

Evidence was gathered by observing lessons, scrutinising documents and pupils' work, and from discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not evaluated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This junior school of above average size serves an area of mixed private and social housing within the Hove urban area. Most pupils have previously attended the adjacent infant school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well. 'It is a positive, nurturing environment and children are given encouragement and responsibilities', is a typical quote by a parent. It has outstanding features, which include an excellent curriculum and outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils. Pupils start school having attained standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 that are broadly average. By the end of Year 6, they attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Because of the rich curriculum offered in the creative arts and links with a local specialist secondary school, standards attained in music, drama and art are above those expected. Pupils are articulate and have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. For example, when asked by the inspector to comment on the healthiness of school lunches, pupils aged 7 to 11 engaged in a vigorous and intelligent debate about the salt and sugar content of the meals. Older pupils showed understanding of the constraints placed on the school in improving the quality of the meals by limited budgets and existing contractual arrangements. Pupils attain high standards in physical education, due to the many opportunities for sport and exercise on offer, and in Modern Foreign Languages, due to the good teaching of the subject.

Pupils behave well because of the effective strategies used to improve the behaviour of those who have difficulties. Expectations are clear and explained well to pupils. Additional provision, such as the use of independent counsellors, has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and forms part of the excellent care, support and guidance that pupils receive. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. For instance, the many faiths and cultures represented in the school are celebrated by pupils through sharing artefacts and food that represent their culture. In an assembly, pupils prepared a presentation on the achievements of Mahatma Gandhi, drawing parallels with the work of Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community through the school council, acting as playground friends or as members of 'The Green Team', and by taking part in local events and performances, for instance by the school orchestra and steel band.

Teaching is good. Teachers use questioning and discussion among pupils very well to expand pupils' understanding, which is enhanced by assessing their own and each other's work. Targets are used very well to show pupils what they need to learn next. Much of the work is exciting and uses information and communication technology (ICT) very well, for instance when pupils analysed a television advertisement for its use of persuasive language. The school has recognised that on occasions work is insufficiently demanding for more able pupils, and is working effectively to improve this. Less able pupils and others in need of extra support, such as those at an early stage of learning English, get good support and make good progress along with their peers. While pupils receive good oral feedback from teachers, the marking of written work is variable and does not always show the pupil how to improve it. Less able pupils in particular do not always receive appropriate praise for making a good effort.

Pupils get excellent opportunities to extend their learning through clubs and other activities, such as sport and educational visits. A few parents complain that some activities are oversubscribed, limiting access for their children. The staff recognise that this is the case and where possible make extra provision, for instance by ensuring that the many pupils in Years 5 and 6 who want cycle training have access to it. Arrangements to protect children and ensure their welfare are excellent, with all current requirements being in place.

There is considerable strength in leadership and management at all levels. Staff are given very good opportunities to use their own interests and experience to the benefit of the school, for instance in developing the curriculum to teach skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT through other subjects. Leaders and managers have very effectively developed the support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those who speak a language other than English at home. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and tackles the latter effectively, although it is modest about its achievements. Through careful analysis of the progress of each pupil, it sets itself challenging targets, which are achieved. The governors are effective and enthusiastic, and as with the staff, use their individual expertise well to the benefit of the school. The school has made considerable improvements since the last inspection, not least in the accommodation which is now of good quality. Rightly, there are plans developed with the help of pupils to improve the outdoor environment of the school. The school is well placed for this good rate of improvement to continue. While the majority of parents and carers recognise the school's strengths, a significant minority feel that aspects of communication need improvement. There is good evidence that the school has done much to improve this aspect of its work, but it has not ensured that more parents and carers feel fully informed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of the marking of written work to ensure that all pupils receive appropriate praise for good work and are shown ways of further improving it.
- Ensure that more parents are satisfied with the quality of the school's communication about their children's progress and the work of the school.

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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?	2
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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

04 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Somerhill Junior School, Hove BN3 1RP

I very much enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work when I visited your school recently. I especially enjoyed talking to you, as I found you confident, friendly and able to express your views very clearly.

I agree with you and your parents that yours is a good school. These are some of the most important things about it.

- You make good progress and pupils in Year 6 get above average results in tests and assessments in English, mathematics and science.
- You get lots of opportunities to study art, music, drama and PE, and you do well in these subjects.
- Teaching is good; lessons are interesting and fun.
- You have an excellent understanding of right and wrong and of how to keep safe.
- Your behaviour is good.
- You enjoy school, especially all the different activities on offer; there are lots of clubs for you to take part in.
- You get lots of opportunities to help people, for example as 'buddies', school council members and in the 'Green Team'.
- You learn a lot about people from different places, for instance by sharing food and things to do with your culture.
- You get excellent care.
- The headteacher, other staff and governors lead the school well.

I have asked the school to improve two things. I have asked that marking helps you to improve your work. You can help by politely telling the teacher if you do not understand. I have asked that the school makes sure that all your parents and carers feel that they are kept better informed about your progress and the school's work.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler Lead inspector

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