

Somerford Primary School

Draper Road, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 3AS

Inspection dates 17–18 March 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher has transformed the quality of education provided by the school since the previous inspection. The school is unrecognisable compared to when it was placed into special measures in 2014.
- The executive headteacher, along with senior leaders, has successfully improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This has resulted in improved pupil outcomes and behaviour.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers now hold high expectations for all pupils. Their teaching inspires and motivates pupils of all abilities to want to learn.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Pupils across most year groups now achieve in line with age-related expectations.
- Although some older pupils still have some gaps in their learning due to a history of poor teaching, gaps in pupils' knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics are closing rapidly.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around the school is significantly better than at the time of the previous inspection. The school is now typically calm and harmonious throughout the day.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality has improved significantly over the past two years and is now in line with the national average.
- Children make a good start to their education in the early years. High-quality teaching, effective classroom organisation and a relentless focus on the learning and progress of all children ensure that most achieve well in all areas of learning.
- Governance has been transformed into a highly effective body that monitors the work of senior leaders closely. Governors are now very well informed and hold the school effectively to account.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The more recent work by teachers to support the most able in achieving the higher levels they are capable of making has yet to be embedded in all year groups.
- Children in the early years lack opportunities to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in the outdoor learning environment.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching across the school by:
 - ensuring that the most-able pupils are provided with more challenging work that will develop their higher levels of understanding
 - ensuring that the outdoor learning environment provides children in the early years with more opportunities to practise and develop their skills in literacy and numeracy.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since taking over the school the executive headteacher has demonstrated determined and robust leadership which has led to a remarkable transformation in the school.
- Rigorous staff accountability supported by focused, professional training has enabled staff to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide consistently good teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Senior leaders have grown in confidence and now provide very effective leadership demonstrated through an accurate understanding of where improvements need to be made in the school. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes have improved rapidly over the past two years.
- Senior leaders have worked closely with the executive headteacher to establish high expectations as well as to raise and restore the aspirations and the confidence of staff, pupils and parents. Work by leaders to improve outcomes for more-able pupils has only recently been introduced. It is too early to fully evaluate the impact of this work.
- The good communications that exist between all staff help to sustain a positive culture of professional accountability and a willingness to develop professionally. Teachers' performance and their management are carefully monitored by the executive headteacher. Teachers are set challenging targets linked to school improvement priorities and to improving aspects of their personal teaching, where needed.
- All teachers welcome the ongoing training provided by the school. Those new to the school said that their induction when they started was robust and gave them a good understanding of the context in which they now work. One teacher who spoke with inspectors said, 'we work hard but this is appreciated by the leaders and more importantly by the children.'
- Middle leaders have similarly benefited from focused professional training opportunities provided by a national leader of education. A supportive yet rigorous system to monitor pupils' learning and progress is now firmly established within the school. As a result, middle leaders lead their subjects with greater confidence.
- The additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who need support to catch up is used wisely to secure pupils' good learning and promote their emotional welfare. These pupils are closely monitored so that additional support can be provided when necessary. Well-trained teaching assistants work closely under the direction of teachers to provide additional and specialised support in lessons to individuals and groups of pupils. As a result of this carefully targeted support, gaps in achievement are closing as most pupils are now making similar and sometimes better progress than their peers.
- The school curriculum has been expanded significantly to provide pupils with richer and more diverse learning experiences. Subject leaders have worked closely together to carefully review and adapt their subjects to better meet a wide range of pupils' learning needs. For example, all pupils have access to additional musical, artistic and sporting opportunities.
- Physical education is promoted particularly well. The school makes good use of the additional primary sports premium funding that complements the extensive range of sporting activities on offer to pupils. This high-quality provision is further enhanced by the school's close links with its neighbouring secondary school. For example, during a 'Sport Relief' physical education lesson a specialist sports leader successfully worked with key stage 2 pupils by teaching them to play volleyball and work together as a team.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. It is firmly embedded within the curriculum. A transformational, ethics-rich culture is successfully established within the school. Leaders strongly believe their high expectations for what Somerford pupils might achieve motivates and engages pupils and their families who otherwise would remain disengaged from learning. Throughout the school, eye-catching displays celebrate pupils' work in these areas as well as reinforcing the school's aims and high expectations.
- Pupils are gaining a good understanding of people from different countries, with different cultures or beliefs. For example, the school successfully promotes and develops pupils' understanding of British values through a 'house system' based on the four countries of the United Kingdom. Pupils learn about the geography, customs and culture of their 'house country' and the common British values that unite the kingdom.

- Senior leaders have drawn wisely on a range of highly effective support and training provided by external consultants, such as the education welfare service in promoting pupils' good attendance. The work of a national leader of education has been of particular benefit in training and coaching staff and members of the governing body. The local authority's 'challenge and improvement team' have brokered and delivered a broad range of highly effective and timely support which has helped to bring about improvements to teaching and improved outcomes for pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is unrecognisable from the time when the school was placed into special measures. It has undergone a complete transformation and restructuring following a review of governance that was successfully completed at the beginning of this academic year.
 - All members of the governing body have benefited from the subsequent governor training. This, and the good communications enjoyed with senior leaders, ensure that members of the governing body are very well informed on the work of the school. They possess an accurate understanding of the school's key strengths and areas still in need of further development.
 - Governors' regular and insightful analysis of absence trends has ensured that timely support and interventions have successfully improved pupils' attendance, which is now in line with the national average.
 - The governing body has demonstrated, through its successful restructuring, its good capacity to improve. Governors are effective in holding leaders to account. They are fully aware of the challenges that imminent conversion to academy status will bring. As a result, governors are in a strong position to continue supporting the executive headteacher and manage the school for the future.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff are regularly trained on all necessary aspects of safeguarding. A clear culture of high-quality safeguarding practice exists across the school. Furthermore, senior staff benefit from regular supervision time so that they might provide effective challenge and continued support. The school works exceptionally well with parents to maintain a safe and welcoming culture in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved and is now good. Senior leaders have provided continuous support to teachers and established a culture of honest accountability in order to secure and sustain good teaching and learning throughout the school. As a result, teachers' confidence and their trust in the school's leadership have risen.
- Teachers now possess strong subject knowledge in most areas of the curriculum, which they use to plan learning that engages and motivates pupils. For example, in a Year 4 science lesson about the changing state of solids, liquids and gases, the teacher combined her good subject knowledge with an imaginative practical activity that required pupils to create comets out of ice, cream and chocolate chips. Unsurprisingly, pupils showed enthusiasm and sustained concentration throughout this activity.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are a key strength of the school. Pupils typically show good attitudes to learning and respond positively in the work they are asked to complete. Pupils are gaining the confidence to ask questions, share their ideas and work effectively together. The colourful and high-quality display found in classrooms supports pupils' learning well and provides opportunities for pupils to see the work of others.
- All teachers follow the school's marking and feedback policy. This ensures that pupils are provided with written comments in their books as well as verbal feedback, which pupils say they appreciate because it helps them to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are an asset throughout the school. They are well trained and fully able to exercise autonomy when supporting the pupils they work with. They work closely with teachers to provide good-quality support for all pupils.
- The inclusion and good support given to pupils who have special educational needs or disability ensures that these pupils are making good progress in line with their peers. Recent training has developed teachers' confidence and provided them with a clearer understanding of the responsibility they have to support pupils with additional learning needs. As a result, teachers are now better able to identify and discriminate between low-achieving pupils and those affected in the past by the legacy of poor-quality teaching.
- Disadvantaged pupils are well known to all staff. Teachers use the regular information gathered on these

pupils' current progress to plan learning that enables them to achieve well. Teachers ensure that any pupils at risk of underachievement are provided with additional support. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that 'lessons are fun' because 'teachers think carefully about the activities they plan'.

- Questioning is used effectively by teachers and teaching assistants to clarify pupils' developing understanding and promote their good learning. Systems to check on the progress pupils are making are fully embedded across the school. This information is used by teachers to set work for pupils of all abilities.
- The most-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, where pupils were practising two different ways of solving subtraction with numbers up to 20, the most-able pupils found this work too easy. They were not provided with work that challenged or promoted a higher level of understanding and so they did not achieve the higher levels they were capable of making.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils typically demonstrate positive attitudes in their learning. Pupils who spoke with an inspector said that they have seen a change in the level of difficulty of work set for them, especially in mathematics. Older pupils said that they get on well with their teachers and appreciate the efforts they go to in making learning fun.
- The school cares very well for all its pupils. A wide range of support is available for pupils and their families if needed. For example, a play therapist has been engaged to help promote children's acquisition of key social skills and ensure their continued inclusion and regular attendance in school.
- A recent 'e-safety day' helped pupils to recognise that the school works hard to help them stay safe when using a computer or engaged with social media.
- The welfare, social and mental well-being of all pupils is a priority. Whole-school assemblies give pupils regular opportunities to reflect on their school values and celebrate the achievements of others. For example, the first day of the inspection coincided with St Patrick's Day. During the school assembly pupils heard the story of St Patrick and were encouraged to share their 'good news' with their friends.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and indicate that bullying is rare. The school provides regular support in order to boost the self-confidence of pupils who evidence low self-esteem and limited perseverance in their work. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were clear about who they could turn to for support should they need it.
- Older pupils were able to talk about how to be successful learners and how important it was to be able to read fluently by the time they were ready to transfer to secondary school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively by all members of staff. Any off-task behaviour is noted and effective strategies employed to bring pupils back on task.
- At lunch and other breaktimes most pupils behave well. Lunchtime supervision is supportive and effective. Adults integrate fully with pupils to provide a safe and happy playtime. Pupils are given plenty of resources to entertain themselves and to develop collaboration. Pupils who spoke to inspectors say, 'the playground is fun and the equipment is supplied to enjoy it even more.'
- At the end of playtimes pupils respond to instructions from adults very swiftly, which ensures an effective transition back to classes and learning.
- In lessons, pupils work well together. They have a good understanding of the high behaviour expectations set by adults and how the sanctions work if anyone should misbehave.
- Members of the school council are elected on an annual cycle and take their responsibilities seriously. They told inspectors the purpose of the school council is to raise money for charity and to help improve the school environment. For example, they have recently consulted with their peers on the type of play equipment they would like to buy and have organised a number of successful fundraising activities to achieve this goal.
- Good attendance remains a high priority and the school ensures that all pupils and parents understand this. Surgeries are held regularly in order to support families who find sustaining regular attendance a challenge.

- Pupils' attendance has steadily improved over the past two years and is now in line with the national average. This is a significant improvement and testimony to the dedication and hard work of leaders, who work tirelessly in promoting pupils' good attendance.
- A 'parallel classroom' for key stage 2 pupils supports meaningful curriculum-based inclusion for those pupils who experience extreme need. Following the recruitment of a behaviour inclusion leader towards the end of 2015, exclusion levels have fallen significantly.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Leaders have successfully improved outcomes for all pupils since the previous inspection. Pupils' progress rates in the past have been well below the national average. Now children receive a good start to their education. Transition arrangements from the nursery setting to school are well managed.
- Although the majority of children still start school with skills that are generally below those typical of their age, most achieve a good level of development in all areas of learning that is above average by the end of the early years foundation stage.
- Pupils achieve well in Year 1 as a result of high-quality phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) teaching and well-planned activities that successfully engage pupils. Teachers know what their pupils need to do next to improve. For example, in a mathematics lesson teachers moved from group to group, checking pupils' answers and quickly rectifying any misconceptions. Pupils clearly benefited from the feedback they received and this in turn supported their learning well.
- The majority of pupils, throughout the school, are making good progress, from their often low starting points, in developing their reading, writing and mathematics skills. As a result, the vast majority of pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are on track to achieve age-related expectations by the end of this academic year.
- In key stage 2, pupils read well and use their good phonics knowledge to decode unfamiliar words. All the pupils who read to inspectors read competently and with reasonable fluency for their ages.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making particularly good progress in acquiring their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Any gaps in school between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are small and continue to close. In most year groups these pupils generally make similar progress to their peers. Indeed, in Year 6 disadvantaged pupils have made exceptionally good progress and nearly all are on track to achieve their age-related expectations by the end of this academic year. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are similarly supported well and make good progress in line with their peers.
- Improved teaching, especially in mathematics, has resulted in pupils in Year 6 making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and most are on track to achieve age-related expectations by the end of the year.
- Leaders acknowledge that through the rigorous and regular tracking of pupils' learning they have identified as a priority that the most-able pupils need to be consistently challenged to think more deeply about their learning in order to achieve their full potential.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is well led and effectively managed. Most children arrive at school showing skills and abilities normally associated with much younger children. However, routines are quickly established and children settle to learning because all adults ensure that they are provided with plenty of chances to be creative and use their imaginations through play-based activities.
- Children's speaking and listening skills are taught well. Any children not involved in adult-directed activities are encouraged to 'explore' independently. Skilful questioning by adults extends children's learning. Adults monitor children's learning and behaviour closely to ensure sensible and collaborative learning is maintained throughout the day. Children's strong spiritual and social development is evidenced through their enjoyment and fascination in learning.
- Well-established communications with the school's on-site Nursery ensures that transition arrangements into the Reception class is seamless and allows for minimal other baseline assessments needing to take place.
- Children involved in adult-directed activities listen well and are keen to participate. For example, taking turns was being promoted very well during a weighing activity. One child thoughtfully reminded his friend that it was now his turn to balance the scales.

- Throughout the early years environment colourful displays such as 'the tricky words tree' promote children's language and reading skills in carefully planned and meaningful ways. The strong teaching of phonics helps children develop their basic skills to read well.
- Pupils who read to inspectors showed enthusiasm for reading and used their phonics knowledge effectively when attempting to read unfamiliar words. They showed a good awareness of different kinds of books and had a good range available to them.
- Support for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities is effectively provided from the outset. Children's individual learning needs are identified quickly when they start school. However, the most-able pupils are not always given tasks that will challenge them to achieve the higher levels they are capable of making.
- Good-quality resources are used effectively by adults to support children in all areas of their learning, both indoors and outside. However, the outdoor learning environment has insufficient activities or resources to help children in the early years practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

School details

Unique reference number	113736
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10004052

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Stevens
Headteacher	Sandra Matthews
Telephone number	01202 485436
Website	somerford.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@somerford.dorset.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 June 2014

Information about this school

- Somerford Primary Community School is larger than most primary schools.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is much higher than the national average.
- Some children join the early years foundation stage in the Nursery, where there is one class. There are two Reception classes.
- There has been a significant turnover of teaching and other staff in the school during the past year.
- All members of the governing body are new and have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- An independent national leader in education consultant has been working with school leaders since June 2014.
- The school met the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 15 lessons. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. The executive headteacher accompanied the lead inspector in making short visits to lessons to scrutinise the quality of work on display in classrooms and in pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, a national leader of education, the chair of the governing body and three other members. A telephone conversation took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on pupils' outcomes, the school's development plan, minutes of meetings, and records relating to the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, behaviour and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtimes.
- Too few responses were received on the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, to be considered. However, inspectors spoke with a range of parents at the start of the day and when they came to collect their children.
- Inspectors took into consideration 27 school staff questionnaires that were completed during the inspection.

Inspection team

David Edwards, lead inspector

James Hood

Simon Cowley

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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