

Somercotes Infant and Nursery School

Nottingham Road, Somercotes, Alfreton, DE55 4LY

Inspection dates 24–25 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Standards are below average by the end of Year 2 and are declining. Pupils' achievement is inadequate, particularly in reading and writing. Their skills are not developed effectively in these subjects.
- Leaders do not ensure that staff implement policies for teaching early reading consistently. The school does not work closely with parents to develop pupils' reading skills.
- Pupils have few good opportunities to write at length. Teachers do not model good writing effectively or provide pupils with clear feedback to help them improve their work.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and to apply their mathematical skills.
- In common with other groups, disadvantaged pupils underachieve. They are not taught well enough to help them catch up with their classmates.
- Teaching in the early years requires improvement. Staff in Nursery and Reception do not do enough to stimulate children's imagination and support their learning.
- Teaching in Key Stage 1 is inadequate. Teachers' expectations for pupils' progress are sometimes too low. Staff do not always question pupils effectively to check their understanding and to extend their learning. Additional adults often over-direct pupils' work.
- Pupils' behaviour in the dinner hall and the care they take over their work require improvement.
- Leadership and management have broken down. Systems for managing the school are non-existent or uncoordinated and do not enable leaders at all levels to make an effective contribution to the school's work. Leaders do not demonstrate the capacity to bring about sustained improvement.
- The school's methods for checking on teaching and pupils' achievement are extremely weak.
- The school's policies and procedures for ensuring pupils' safety at school are inadequate.
- Governance is exceptionally weak. Members of the governing body have not ensured that the school fulfils all statutory requirements. These include the school's duty to establish a website containing all the required information for parents.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils relate well to staff and feel well cared for.
- The breakfast club makes a good contribution to pupils' social development.
- The school is making good use of extra sports funding to improve pupils' enjoyment of, and participation rates in, sporting activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching through visits to classrooms to check on pupils’ learning. On one visit, they were accompanied by the assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors heard individual pupils read and also looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, a group of pupils, three members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 23 responses to the questionnaire completed by staff. There were too few responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, to provide a summary of parents’ views. An inspector spoke informally to a small number of parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors checked a range of evidence including: monitoring records; consultants’ reports; the school improvement plan; the school’s own data on pupils’ attainment and progress; and policies, procedures and practice relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Derek Aitken, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graham Marshall

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Somercotes Infant and Nursery School is similar in size to most primary schools.
- Children attend the nursery on a part-time basis, either in the mornings or the afternoons. Reception children attend on a full-time basis and are taught in two classes. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are taught in four single-age classes.
- A breakfast club operates on this site. It is managed by the governing body and was observed during this inspection.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children, is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- Staffing has been unstable in the last three years. The headteacher was away from school at the time of the inspection. The assistant headteacher and the coordinator for special educational needs are temporarily in charge of leading and managing the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and pupils' involvement in their learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations for pupils' progress
 - teachers use questioning well to check and to extend the learning of all groups of pupils
 - teachers set activities for children in the early years that stimulate their imagination and guide their learning
 - additional adults do not overly direct the work of the pupils they support in lessons
 - teachers help pupils to take greater care over the work in their books.
- Raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that teachers:
 - implement policies for teaching early reading well
 - develop useful links with parents to enable them to contribute more fully to improving their children's reading skills
 - model good writing skills effectively
 - provide pupils with good opportunities to write at length
 - provide pupils with clear feedback which helps them to improve their writing
 - provide pupils with good opportunities to use and to apply their mathematical skills.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - policies and procedures for pupils' safety are urgently reviewed and that robust systems are implemented quickly so that all safeguarding requirements are fully met
 - rigorous systems for coordinating the school's work are quickly established which enable all leaders to contribute effectively to driving improvement
 - rigorous systems for managing staff performance are established and used effectively to identify training needs, and to improve teaching, leadership skills and the quality of self-evaluation
 - disadvantaged pupils receive the good teaching and support they need to make good progress
 - systems for managing pupils' behaviour in the dinner hall are effective
 - governors rapidly improve their capacity to hold leaders firmly to account

- the school’s website is established and contains all the required information for parents.

An external review of governance, including the use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Systems and procedures for reviewing the school's work are inadequate. Relationships between the headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body have broken down. Poor lines of communication between the headteacher and staff compromise leaders' ability to do their jobs properly.
- Leadership is disjointed and has not demonstrated the capacity to secure improvement. The school has not taken effective steps to develop the curriculum (the subjects taught) or the quality of teaching. It has not provided leaders for phonics and literacy with good, regular training opportunities to enable them to gain the necessary expertise to improve teaching and pupils' progress.
- The local authority has only very recently become aware of the depths of the problems within the school's leadership and management. This has reduced the effectiveness of the support it has provided since the previous inspection, although it has taken some useful actions to help the school improve teaching in the early years.
- The school is not able to show that it keeps pupils safe. Required policies do not reflect the school's circumstances, and there is no evidence that they have been reviewed or updated.
- School self-evaluation is flimsy because it is not based on a secure body of evidence. Procedures for managing the performance of teachers to ensure the quality of their teaching and their accountability for pupils' progress are not fit for purpose. Consequently, many of the actions taken by senior and other leaders are ineffective.
- Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.
- Although there has been a recent, small improvement in arrangements for checking the performance of disadvantaged pupils, pupil premium funding is not being used well enough to close gaps in attainment, especially in reading and writing.
- The school ensures that there is no discrimination; for example, by running a small group to help pupils develop their social skills. It does not, however, promote equal opportunities for all groups of different abilities to make the progress that they should. Weaknesses in pupils' achievement, particularly in reading and writing, show that the school's curriculum does not prepare pupils adequately for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development requires improvement, and pupils are not prepared as well as they could be for life in modern British society. The school has not planned purposefully to promote all of these elements and British values in depth. However, pupils understand and respect the school's rewards and sanctions system. Values, such as team spirit and cooperation, are passed on effectively in assemblies. Pupils gain a basic awareness of the workings of democracy through the school council and the rule of law, as they take part in framing the school rules. Pupils acquire some awareness of cultural diversity through the topics they study, such as Diwali, and through visits from Polish families who come into school to talk about their traditions.
- The school has spent the additional primary sports funding appropriately. It has used its detailed action plans for the development of physical education and the results of a pupil survey to increase the number of clubs available to pupils. Participation rates have risen and are high. Pupils' success in sporting activities, such as orienteering, running and cycling, has increased motivation and boosted resilience in competitive sport.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is ineffective. Governors have not ensured that the school has conducted its annual safeguarding audit. Checks on the suitability of staff for teaching pupils and the required records are not fully complete. Governors do not know if they have ensured that at least one governor has received safer recruitment training.

- The governing body is disunited. Its systems and procedures are exceptionally weak. Over time, governors have had little input into checking the school's performance and influencing its direction.
- Governors' knowledge of the school's work is extremely limited. Consequently, they do not have an accurate understanding of how well groups of pupils are doing or the quality of teaching. They have not ensured that arrangements for managing the performance of staff are effective.
- The school's website is long out of date and has very little content. Governors have not ensured that it includes the required information for parents.
- Recognising the inadequacy of the governing body, a small group of governors implemented a temporary co-chair arrangement. They drew up committees to direct their work in April 2015. They have drafted a governors' action plan, but there is no record of subsequent actions being taken.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Lunchtimes in the dinner hall are noisy. Some pupils have not developed good habits of listening to each other; pupils talk across each other at one table or shout over towards other tables. Midday supervisors have to clap their hands loudly to get pupils' attention when they give them instructions. Pupils leave the dinner hall in a disorganised way and do not always respond quickly at the end of playtimes to the instructions from staff to line up properly before re-entering school.
- In the outdoor areas, most pupils behave well. They enjoy lunchtimes and take full advantage of the diverse resources which staff provide to take vigorous physical exercise or to play quietly with construction toys. Most pupils are kind and thoughtful, pick up litter and deposit it in the bins.
- Pupils have a few opportunities to develop responsibility, for example, as mini-leaders, helping with outdoor play. They also respond well in assemblies and join in with enthusiasm, because they enjoy singing.
- In lessons, pupils are often compliant rather than active learners. Not all pupils take sufficient care of their workbooks. Most pupils in Year 2 are attentive, have positive attitudes, and maintain their concentration. They try to complete tasks, even if they do not understand key concepts fully. On some occasions in Year 1, pupils drift off task if they are not directly supervised by an adult. When they concentrate on their work, they are often overly dependent on the support of adults to carry out tasks, lacking the skills and knowledge to work confidently on their own.
- There have been few exclusions this year. Staff ensure that behaviour records are regularly updated.
- Pupils' attendance is below average. It rose sharply last year, but has dropped this year as a result of a chickenpox epidemic.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is inadequate. Several aspects of safeguarding work have not been coordinated, and documentation is not properly collated. Some required policies and procedures have not been implemented to guarantee pupils' safety. More recent developments in statutory requirements, such as the checks on prohibition from teaching, are not recorded in the school's single central record.
- Staff questionnaires report that, over time, pupils' behaviour has not been managed consistently well, so that some issues with individual pupils are not resolved in a timely way.
- Little account has been taken of parents' and pupils' views, so their perceptions on questions of behaviour and safety have not been analysed or acted upon quickly. Pupils, however, show few signs of being anxious or worried in their lives at school. They are very friendly to visitors and relate well to staff, who supervise them closely at break-times on the playgrounds. Staff treat pupils kindly, investing time in promoting the development of their social skills.

- Pupils report that they are encouraged to tell an adult if they have any worries and that staff take the necessary actions to support them. Pupils report very few concerns with bullying. They say that adults teach them the principles of good behaviour, thoughtfulness, and kindness to others.
- Pupils have an understanding of e-safety that is appropriate for their age. They mostly feel safe at school but say they have some concerns if they are not well supervised when they cross the right-of-way between the school's sites.
- Staff check the drop-off and collection of pupils by their parents carefully. Access to the internal areas of the school buildings is secure.
- The breakfast club provides pupils with a carefully considered 'menu' of educational activities to help them meet the challenges of the school day.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Over time, teaching is inadequate. Instability in staffing and a legacy of weaker teaching in Year 1 have prevented pupils from making expected or better progress from their starting points, especially in reading and writing. Teaching, while inconsistent across the year group, is more effective in Year 2 than in Year 1.
- Teachers' expectations for pupils' progress are sometimes too low. Often, teachers do not vary their questioning to ensure that pupils of different abilities can understand and participate in lessons; especially the most able. Additional adults often do too much for the pupils they are supporting in lessons, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Sometimes, they provide them with the answers to tasks rather than encouraging them to develop strategies to enable them to work things out for themselves.
- The teaching of reading skills is inadequate. Staff do not follow agreed policies for teaching phonics (the sounds represented by letters) consistently, and pupils have few good opportunities to reinforce their understanding of sounds in speaking and writing activities. Teachers have not developed effective links with parents to support pupils' reading skills at home. However, effective teaching of reading in one of the Year 2 classes enables some pupils to demonstrate accurate phonic knowledge.
- The teaching of writing is inadequate. Teachers do not provide pupils with enough models of good writing, including handwriting. Pupils have few opportunities to develop the skills of writing at length and do not regularly get clear feedback from teachers' marking to help them to improve their work.
- The teaching of mathematics is better than reading and writing. It enables pupils to acquire an accurate understanding of basic operations, such as addition and subtraction, and how to measure length and capacity. However, it does not ensure that pupils can apply this knowledge confidently without adult assistance when solving problems.

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- The attainment of pupils in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has dipped since the previous inspection and was below average in 2014. Provisional results for 2015 show that there has been a further decline this year. Although the pupils currently in Key Stage 1 started Year 1 with below-average starting points, they have not made sufficient progress over the two years, particularly in reading and writing, to enable them to reduce gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally.
- Results in the screening check for phonics at the end of Year 1 were well below the national average in 2013 and 2014. This reflects the slow progress that many pupils make in developing their early reading skills. Pupils' interest in reading is shown by their spontaneous comments on the stories and pictures in the texts they read. However, many lower- and middle-attaining pupils have difficulty in splitting up and blending words; they misread them or skip over them. They lack basic skills in spelling key words. This impairs the fluency of their reading and, sometimes, their ability to make inferences or draw conclusions

from what they have just read.

- Most higher- and middle-attaining pupils in Year 2 recall number facts quickly. Lower-attaining pupils often struggle to do this. All pupils sometimes find it difficult to decode the information contained in problem-solving questions. This limits opportunities for them to use and to apply their understanding of simple mathematical operations.
- Handwriting skills are not secure, in spite of recent actions taken by teachers. Middle- and lower-attaining pupils form their letters inaccurately and cross them out often, resulting in untidy work. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 1 struggle to write more than a few words. In recent years, not enough has been done to develop children's unaided writing in the early years. This factor, combined with few good opportunities to develop their narrative writing skills, hampers pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 in extended writing.
- Throughout the school, disadvantaged pupils make inadequate progress. Gaps between their attainment and that of their classmates and of other pupils nationally increased in 2014. This meant that disadvantaged pupils in Year 2 last year were around three terms behind their classmates in reading, and two and a half terms behind in writing and mathematics. They were behind pupils nationally by a similarly wide margin. Leaders and teachers have not identified those who are slipping behind or acted swiftly enough to provide suitable support.
- The numbers of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in Key Stage 1 are too low to draw firm conclusions about their achievement as a single group. Individual pupils sometimes make good gains in their social and emotional development. Rates of progress in their academic work are variable.
- Overall, the most-able pupils do not make adequate progress. Teaching does not consistently ensure that they can work at the more challenging levels to enable more pupils to achieve the higher Level 3 by the end of Year 2. However, during phonics lessons, they talk and write confidently and write some extended, correct sentences with interesting content. Some of the most-able pupils in Year 2 can recall number bonds instantly and carry out simple multiplication questions accurately.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children's knowledge and skills when they join the nursery are below those typical for their age, especially in their communication skills and in their personal and social development. The progress they make in the early years requires improvement. Although the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen over the last two years, it remains below the national average. This means that the proportion of children who are fully prepared for learning in Year 1 is below the national average.
- The leadership of the early years requires improvement. It has not ensured that gaps in attainment between boys and girls and between disadvantaged children and their classmates have reduced. The development of teaching and the organisation of children's learning have been hampered by changes in staffing, which have required the upskilling of staff who had not previously had early years training. Adults are not always consistent in following school procedures; for example, when annotating children's work.
- Adults interact closely with children, and children play contentedly either on their own or in small groups. Children relate well to staff and follow their guidance. They treat each other in a friendly way and behave well in the outdoor area. Overall, their behaviour requires improvement because they sometimes lose concentration during teacher-led activities on the carpet and start to fidget.
- Teaching requires improvement. Adults' commentary and questions sometimes do not challenge children's thinking or provide them with a suitable incentive to try out their speaking skills on their own. Adults do not always intervene to move children on to more challenging tasks when they have dwelt too long on one activity.
- There are few visual clues or models for children to copy to stimulate their imagination and to help them develop their skills in greater depth. This was observed, for example, when the 'master builders' stacked

their foam blocks horizontally in a crate, rather than making a building, with the result that their plastic spirit levels served little purpose.

- However, there have been some useful improvements in teaching this year. Adults ensure that there is a range of activities for children to pursue indoors and outdoors, where they can socialise, play and learn.
- Adults make good use of snack times to establish routines for children, such as making healthy eating choices. They emphasise regularly the importance of hygienic self-care habits, which children respond to well by using the washing and electronic hand-drying facilities unaided. Adults keep children safe and ensure that welfare requirements are met. The indoor areas are fully secure, and the well-maintained outdoor areas provide safe conditions for children's learning.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112499
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	461844

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John McCabe
Headteacher	Sarah Sisson
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2012
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