



29th June 2020

Dear Parents

As you will be aware, before Easter and before lockdown, Somerfords' Walter Powell was inspected by Ofsted. This is the first inspection that the school has had under the new, more rigorous 2019 Education Inspection Framework. Owing to strict rules surrounding the confidentiality of Inspection outcomes, today is the first time that we have been able to talk to our school community about the outcome.

The grades that can be awarded are Outstanding (1), Good (2), Requires Improvement (3) or Inadequate (4). In recent years, the term 'Requires Improvement' has replaced the previous grading of 'Satisfactory' in the new OFSTED inspections.

Previously the school was judged as 'Good' (2) in 2018. However, in this recent inspection, the school was judged overall to be within the category of 'Requires Improvement' (3).

A school does not become or cease being 'Good' through any single event. A school is a partnership of children, teaching staff, parents and carers, leaders, and the wider community. It is a continuous journey of improvement. We are, naturally, disappointed with the judgement of the inspector and want to assure you that the strengths of the school as noted in the report will continue while we work more on the improvements required.

What did OFSTED say?

"Pupils enjoy school and attend well. They are kind and courteous. Pupils value the school's Christian ethos and appreciate what it means to be part of the school community. Staff celebrate pupils' efforts to demonstrate the school's values. Pupils feel safe in school. Leaders have adopted a new approach to teaching science and the foundation subjects. Their aim to develop pupils' enthusiasm and a love of learning is paying off."

"There have been changes to leadership since the previous inspection. This has slowed the pace of improvement. However, this pace has picked up of late. Leaders, at all levels, know the school well. They have prioritised further improvements and are taking steps to achieve these. Leaders have introduced new curriculum plans. This work is still taking shape. Staff are trying to make these plans fit the school's mixed-aged classes, but this is proving to be difficult. Staff are working diligently to overcome this by adapting plans as they go, but this is not consistent across the school."

A specific area highlighted in the inspection is early years reading. "Children get off to a delayed start when learning how to read. They struggle to read whole words, which slows their reading speed. The number of phonetically decodable books is in short supply. This limits how well children apply their phonic knowledge. Older pupils have positive attitudes towards reading".

What is the school doing?

	What we had already been doing before the inspection	What we will be doing from September
Early Years Phonic Knowledge	<p>Teaching staff have visited other schools to observe good practice in EYFS.</p> <p>Shared planning sessions with the three-school EYFS Lead has led to a more consistent approach.</p>	<p>Parents/carers support session will be held in the Autumn focussing on how phonics is taught.</p> <p>Ensure that there is consistent teaching throughout the week.</p>
Reading Comprehension	<p>Staff have participated in the DBAT-wide literacy programme (both face-to-face and this has continued remotely during school closure) to strengthen the teaching of literacy skills.</p> <p>Three-school staff sessions to share good practice and compare standards.</p>	<p>Increase the number of high-quality texts and phonic-matched books.</p> <p>Launch of “reading ribbons” reward scheme to encourage reading at home.</p> <p>Invest in a new spelling and vocabulary programme. This programme, through its mixed age approach to spelling and closing the vocabulary gap, will improve comprehension skills.</p>
Science and Foundation Subjects (Geography, History, Art, D&T, Music, PE)	<p>Implementation of Cornerstones Curriculum to engage pupils throughout the school in cross-curricula learning using project-based teaching.</p>	<p>Embedding Cornerstones Curriculum to ensure planning meets the needs of all pupils to build upon prior knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Increase the capacity of the leadership team across all three schools to support the teaching staff with the sequencing of learning.</p>
Expectations in the Reception Year	<p>Teaching staff have visited other schools to observe good practice in EYFS.</p> <p>Regular meetings with pre-school staff about what children moving into Reception can do and understand.</p> <p>EYFS staff from across all three schools meet regularly to compare standards and share good practice.</p>	<p>Increase the capacity of the leadership team across all three schools to improve the monitoring of standards.</p> <p>Participate in the trial year for new Early Years Baseline Assessment programme to ensure a more accurate understanding of children’s starting points.</p>

Had the Ofsted report been published whilst the school was open, we would have invited you to meet with DBAT staff, Local Board members and ourselves. However, this is not currently possible, so should you want to discuss any of the report findings and our approach to bring about the necessary change, we are happy to arrange a phone call or Zoom meeting on Friday 3rd July. Please email to arrange an appointment if required.

Your sincerely



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