

Somerford Primary School

Address: Draper Road, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 3AS

Unique reference number (URN): 113736

Inspection report: 28 April 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have strengthened their oversight of pupils' attendance considerably since September 2025. Improving attendance is everyone's responsibility. Teachers monitor attendance and lateness very closely. In addition, there are a myriad of successful leadership strategies, including working with the pastoral support team and external agencies, such as health and school transport services. This ensures that the school gets to the root cause of any non-attendance. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are absent has reduced markedly this year. Pupils' attendance is now in line with the national average and being sustained. Persistent absence is much reduced, including for disadvantaged pupils. The school ensures that when pupils arrive on part-time timetables that they build up their time in school incrementally.

Across the school, pupils benefit from early morning routines and the caring support of staff. This ensures that the school day gets off to a smooth start, including for pupils who benefit from a bespoke support package. The school's behaviour policy is implemented effectively. Staff teach pupils about the importance of good conduct in lessons and making positive choices, and that discrimination is wrong. When bullying happens, it is sorted out effectively. Pupils' suspensions have decreased markedly this year. Lessons are disrupted rarely now. Pupils follow the school rules at lunchtimes and enjoy playing a range of games inside and outside.

Early years

Expected standard 

The early years curriculum is ambitious and well sequenced. Staff use their expert subject knowledge to implement the curriculum effectively across all 7 areas of learning. This ensures that children are well prepared for Year 1. Staff are astute at using their detailed assessments of children's starting points to ensure that the curriculum is adapted to meet children's changing needs, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for example, to develop children's physical skills. Staff consistently motivate children and celebrate their individual achievements. As a result, children settle quickly, learn routines and build their confidence and resilience to learn effectively.

High-quality adult and child interactions deepen children's vocabulary, knowledge and experiences well over time. Staff support children to sustain their concentration and conversations with each other. This in turn extends their language and vocabulary well. Children learn their phonics knowledge effectively. They learn accurate pencil grip, how to form their letters correctly and the basics of number. Teaching supports children to use models of known stories to create their own writing. Regular routines such as snack time provide effective opportunities to practise important life skills, such as listening and taking turns.

Inclusion sits at the school's core. The work with young carers and those who are known or previously known to social care is particularly effective. Leaders and staff work with tenacity and dedication alongside parents, external agencies and specialist teams to plan multi-agency support for pupils. This means that pupils are ready to learn and have improved attendance over time.

The school uses additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils wisely. For example, interventions are effective in addressing these pupils' learning and/or social and emotional development targets. This ensures that pupils' gaps in learning are closing.

The school identifies and assesses pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities accurately. The school's 'Forest Den' provision is effective in supporting pupils who are or have been at risk of permanent exclusion. This helps these pupils to re-engage in learning and manage their emotions with increasing success. When needed, the school uses appropriate alternative provision and checks the suitability and quality of the ongoing support.

Personal development and wellbeing

The school provides pupils with a wealth of pastoral support. Staff are always on hand to talk through any worries or concerns. Pupils are encouraged to speak up, and when this happens, staff listen and act appropriately. A range of bespoke play and talking therapies for pupils with adverse childhood experiences and social and emotional health needs are particularly effective in ensuring that pupils grow in confidence, character and belonging. As a result, increasingly, pupils learn to trust others and make lasting friendships.

There is a school-wide focus on pupils learning about self-regulation and right and wrong, and understanding the consequences of their actions. The school teaches pupils the importance of fundamental British values and why valuing difference and diversity is important. Pupils report being treated fairly, with equal access to learning opportunities. There is a considerable range of class and school assemblies to learn important skills such as 'perseverance'.

The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum and the school's relationship and sex education and health education curriculums include all the necessary knowledge that pupils need to learn. For example, pupils gain an understanding of how to stay safe online and about consent. In addition, the programme ensures that pupils are knowledgeable about wider safety themes and risks, such as drugs, alcohol, gangs, fireworks and road safety.

The school teaches pupils about different world religions. Pupils talk about their experiences. They learn about the characteristics that are protected by law, for example, about disability, and how to respect different types of families. The school provides many wider opportunities through visits and visitors to broaden pupils' horizons, for example, through sporting events and in-school music band lessons.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Leaders have started to take action to improve pupils' achievement. As a result, more pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need in early reading. This means that more pupils can access their learning across the curriculum. Since September 2025, a raft of work has taken place to address weaknesses in the mathematics curriculum and teaching. Pupils now gain greater fluency and recall of number facts. However, this work has not yet helped pupils to learn more complex aspects of mathematics securely, such as reasoning and problem-solving. Pupils' attainment in spelling, punctuation and grammar and in how to write with better cohesion is improving. Nevertheless, pupils have gaps in knowledge and skills as a result of previous curriculums and teaching.

Pupils' progress and attainment in key stages 1 and 2 are inconsistent. This is evident in published outcomes that are significantly below the national average in mathematics and writing.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

There is a broad, balanced and generally well-sequenced curriculum. However, there are weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum across some subjects and classes. Leaders know this and are working systematically to bring about necessary change in the right order. For example, leaders' determined focus on developing basic skills means that they are beginning to improve the teaching of writing and mathematics.

A detailed programme of training is being rolled out to upskill staff and provide them with the subject knowledge and skills they need. This is evident in the improvement to teachers' modelling and use of assessment in mathematics. Pupils have more opportunities to practise mathematical concepts and increase their fluency in number. However, the teaching of mathematical reasoning is at an earlier stage of development.

Staff work effectively to secure pupils' English knowledge. For example, pupils generally learn their phonics knowledge and develop their early reading skills successfully. Leaders focus on addressing gaps in pupils' writing knowledge in key stage 2. Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' writing are on the rise now. However, inconsistencies in teaching remain.

In other subjects, some staff do not have high enough expectations or deal with pupils' misconceptions when they arise. Currently, leaders' oversight of the impact of teaching beyond English and mathematics is less secure. As a result, some teaching activities do not enable pupils to learn the curriculum as intended.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The governing body and leadership team have an accurate understanding of what the school is doing well and what it needs to improve. Governors understand and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. For example, they understand and check safeguarding

arrangements at the school particularly well. Leaders at all levels understand the school's context and the barriers pupils typically face. They address school improvement with resilience. Recently, the school has improved as a result of leaders' carefully planned and effective actions. For example, leaders have improved the early years provision and pupils' behaviour.

Leaders use the external support they receive productively. For example, school leaders deliver a considerable package of staff development with emerging impact. More stringent systems to pinpoint and address gaps in pupils' learning are in place. This has started to bring about tangible improvements to the curriculum and teaching in English and mathematics. However, leaders are only part way through this work. In some areas, the impact on pupils' achievement is too inconsistent.

Leaders and governors have not shied away from making big decisions in the best interests of pupils this year. This includes introducing more stringent systems to challenge pupils' absence and developing provision for pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion. However, weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum remain. The governing body has not held leaders to account for raising academic standards consistently well. The school has not prepared pupils well enough for secondary school.

Staff are rightly proud to work at the school. They value leaders' focus on their wellbeing and workload.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Children get off to a great start in the early years and learn the curriculum effectively. They are well prepared for Year 1. Pupils' experiences in key stages 1 and 2 are mixed. Over time, pupils have not gained the knowledge and skills that they need to be well prepared for secondary school. Leaders now successfully address shortfalls in the curriculum and teaching head-on. Pupils recognise the improvements in the school. For example, older pupils know that staff's expectations of what they can achieve are on the rise. However, there remain some weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum across subjects and classes. As a result, some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have gaps in their knowledge.

Pupils work hard in lessons. Staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct and behaviour at social times. Typically, pupils show pride in their work and behave well. Pupils are respectful to one another. Any conflicts are usually short-lived and resolved quickly.

Across the school, pupils benefit from warm relationships and caring support. Pupils gain trusted relationships. They feel a strong sense of belonging to the school family. Parents and carers recognise the warm welcome their children receive.

The school works effectively to remove barriers that some pupils have. Young carers receive a bespoke package of support and enrichment, for example. Pupils who find managing their emotions difficult receive individualised support. This enables these pupils to grow personally and understand the importance of boundaries and keeping safe.

There are many opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences and develop leadership skills. For example, pupils develop their responsibilities through being house captains and wellbeing and anti-bullying ambassadors. Pupils enjoy residential visits where they develop teamwork and resilience. Pupils participate in many visits, such as to the beach, that provide them with new and interesting experiences.

Next steps

- Leaders must ensure that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics continues to rise so that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are well prepared for their next stage of education.
 - Leaders should ensure that all staff have expert subject knowledge in the subjects and phases they teach so that the curriculum in key stages 1 and 2 is delivered consistently well.
 - Leaders and governors need to ensure that there is stringent oversight of all aspects of curriculum implementation, including in the 'Forest Den' and in the wider curriculum subjects, so that the curriculum continues to improve.
 - Leaders should continue to develop and refine the writing and mathematics curriculums to ensure that there is sufficient opportunity for pupils to deepen their understanding of more complex concepts as soon as they are ready.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Alison Medicott.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the deputy headteacher and others leaders and staff. An inspector met with 4 members of the governing body, including the chairperson. An inspector met with 2 representatives of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole local authority. Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses 2 unregistered alternative provisions.

The school runs a breakfast club.

The school has a class called 'Forest Den' that supports pupils who need a bespoke curriculum.

Lead inspector:

Julie Carrington, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jo Walker, Ofsted Inspector

Ian Robinson, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 28 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

165

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

49.70%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

6.06%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

35.76%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	40%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	41%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	45%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	34%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	55%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	66%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	59%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	45%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	54%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	52%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	53%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	55%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	55%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	48%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	57%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	57%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	37%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	38%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	46%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	25%	44%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	52%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	67%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	58%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33%	60%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	49%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	52%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	54%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	42%	58%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	52%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	43%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	62%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	37%	68%	-31 pp
2024/25 (final)	38%	69%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	46%	67%	-21 pp
2022/23 (final)	25%	66%	-41 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	52%	80%	-27 pp
2024/25 (final)	67%	81%	-14 pp
2023/24 (final)	58%	80%	-22 pp
2022/23 (final)	33%	78%	-45 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	49%	78%	-28 pp
2024/25 (final)	52%	78%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	54%	78%	-24 pp
2022/23 (final)	42%	77%	-36 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	52%	80%	-28 pp
2024/25 (final)	43%	81%	-38 pp
2023/24 (final)	62%	79%	-18 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	6.5%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	8.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.3%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	20.4%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	26.7%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	24.8%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional 

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard 

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard 

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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