

Isambard Brunel Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116219
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	379218
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2012
Lead inspector	Margaret Coussins

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 of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Treacher
Headteacher	Iain Gilmour
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins

Additional inspector

Terence Payne

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 15 lessons or part lessons, totalling approximately seven hours, involving nine teachers, as well as hearing children read and looking at their work. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, members of the governing body and pupils. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, pupils' progress records and the safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires from 88 parents and carers were received and analysed along with those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Isambard Brunel is an average-sized junior school. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The largest other groups are from any other White or Bangladeshi backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Their needs relate mainly to moderate learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. There have been considerable and ongoing staffing changes over recent years as well as staff absences. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. There is a Nursery on the school site managed by a private provider and therefore not included in this inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because some inconsistencies remain in achievement and teaching, particularly in challenging the more-able learners, and because of lack of rigour in some aspects of leadership and management. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Attainment in mathematics is better than it is in English because pupils are making faster progress in the subject as a result of strong subject leadership and a whole-school focus on mathematics. Progress in reading and writing is beginning to accelerate but not yet at a fast enough rate to enable pupils to catch up. The gap between achievement in mathematics and in English, however, is narrowing. In writing, presentation, spelling and handwriting are not good enough and there is often a lack of real audience and purpose for pupils' writing.
- Despite much good and sometimes outstanding teaching observed during the inspection, teaching is satisfactory overall because the school has just relatively recently eradicated incidents of inadequate teaching and there has not been enough time for better teaching to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. A few inconsistencies remain unresolved in the level of expectations for what pupils can achieve, particularly for the more-able pupils.
- Pupils enjoy school, as reflected in above average attendance, and have good attitudes to learning. Behaviour and safety, however, are satisfactory overall.
- Targets for the performance of staff are appropriately linked to school priorities and increased leadership capacity ensures that monitoring of teaching is clearly focused on learning. There remains, however, a lack of rigour in linking school improvement planning to pupils' outcomes or the performance of different groups.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable pupils to make more consistently good progress through the school to ensure attainment is above average by the end of Year 6 by ensuring that :
 - teaching is consistently good or better
 - expectations are consistently high in all lessons
 - ensuring more-able pupils are appropriately challenged in their learning.

- Raise achievement in English by:
 - improving pupils' handwriting, presentation of work and spelling
 - providing pupils with sufficient opportunities to write for real audiences and purposes across the curriculum.

- Ensure school improvement planning is more sharply focused on improving outcomes for pupils and raising the performance of different groups of pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils join the school in Year 3 with attainment that is below average and sometimes well below average as in the current Years 5 and 6. Pupils make satisfactory and improving progress by the time they leave. By the end of Year 6 attainment is broadly average overall. Attainment in mathematics, which has been a whole-school focus for improvement, is stronger than in English where pupils' writing skills in particular have held them back. School data and standards seen in lessons and pupils' books show that the gap in pupils' attainment in English is narrowing compared with all pupils nationally, as they are beginning to make faster progress in their learning. Most parents and carers feel that their children make good progress. Inspection evidence, however, shows that although progress is improving and is sometimes good, a few inconsistencies remain. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make similar satisfactory progress to others as their needs are identified accurately and they are given appropriate support. The more-able pupils are sometimes held back in their learning when expectations for their progress are not high enough.

There has been a focus on guided reading, through training and monitoring, in all classes to improve achievement. As a result, pupils are making faster progress in reading from their below average starting points. However, there has not been enough time for this to have an impact on attainment in the Year 6 national test results, where the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 remains below that found nationally. Pupils enjoy reading and talk about favourite books and authors. The more-able readers are fluent and read aloud with good expression and confidence. Readers of all abilities use a range of strategies to help them read unfamiliar words and are competent in some higher reading skills such as skimming

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and scanning texts to aid their comprehension.

Progress is most rapid in lessons where teaching really engages pupils. This was evident in a mathematics lesson in Year 4 where expectations were high and pupils' understanding of an investigation into square numbers was constantly checked to promote a good pace of learning. In an effective writing session to design a remote control, pupils in Year 5 made good progress in writing explanation texts making good use of rhetorical questions and complex sentences to produce inventive and imaginative writing. In Year 6, pupils' developed empathy by writing imaginatively about characters' feelings using good descriptive language. Spelling, however, is often inaccurate and pupils said that sometimes they write a word they can spell rather than the word they would like to use.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers feel their children are taught well and many good lessons and occasional outstanding lessons were observed. However, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Inspection evidence, including a scrutiny of pupils' work, indicates that the impact of teaching has not been good enough for pupils to be achieving well over time and this has led to inconsistent pupil progress and underachievement. However, there have been significant staff changes, inadequate teaching has been eradicated and the leadership team carefully monitors the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, are beginning to make accelerated and satisfactory progress, although some inconsistencies remain, especially for the more-able pupils. Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning, particularly now that they work with individuals or groups in the classroom, which enables pupils with specific needs to participate fully in learning.

Where teaching is good or better, teachers have high expectations, engage pupils' enthusiasm well and pitch the work at the right level. In other lessons, work does not always provide enough challenge and pace to move learning on quickly and expectations are not high enough to enable pupils to make the accelerated progress of which they are capable. On occasions, pupils are less committed than they should be to their writing tasks because they do not have a clear idea of the audience for their work. Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well by, for example, providing many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. An example of this was observed in a history lesson on the ancient Greeks, exploring the concept of democracy and voting systems then and now. There are some examples of good marking and feedback by teachers which identify the next steps in learning and provide pupils with useful information on how to improve their work. The best assessment practice seen is not consistently implemented across all classes. Well-organised and delivered teaching of phonics (linking sounds and letters) in Years 3 and 4 is helping to improve pupils' reading and writing skills.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Pupils respond well to teachers' increased expectations that they work hard and behave well in lessons. A group of pupils agreed that one of the main recent changes in the school is that behaviour has improved. A small minority of pupils and parents and carers, however, are not yet confident that behaviour is good in the school and one third of parents and carers feel that lessons continue to be disrupted by inappropriate behaviour although inspectors observed good behaviour in most lessons. The school acknowledges and inspectors judge that it needs to work closely with parents and carers to address their perception, which is based on previous behaviour issues. Behaviour around the school is satisfactory. Pupils need regular reminders, from prefects and adults, about taking care in moving around the school and in the playground, where some pupils feel behaviour is over boisterous at times.

A large majority of pupils say that they feel safe in school and most parents and carers feel that the school keeps their children safe. In discussions, pupils show that they understand what constitutes bullying in all its forms, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying, and are confident that should any bullying occur, teachers would deal with it quickly and fairly. Attendance is above average and pupils arrive at school punctually.

Leadership and management

The recent expansion of the leadership team has brought about considerable and rapid improvement, most significantly resulting in the eradication of inadequate teaching and improving progress, particularly in mathematics. This demonstrates capacity for further improvement. Leadership and management, including the governing body, are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's performance through robust monitoring involving all leaders. They have identified what needs to be done to move the school forward. Leaders acknowledge that the task of securing consistency in all aspects of the school's work is incomplete. There is, however, a lack of sharpness and rigour in linking the success of improvement initiatives to outcomes for pupils and in particular outcomes for different groups of pupils. Many members of staff spoke of positive changes in the culture of the school and welcomed the increased accountability and responsibility brought about by shared leadership and professional development opportunities.

Almost all parents and carers feel that the school cares for their children well. Inspection findings confirm this is a strength of the school and this is underpinned by good relationships between staff and pupils, promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a broad and balanced curriculum and a commitment to promoting equality. There is an appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy but not always enough promotion of the use of literacy skills across the curriculum. The performing arts have high status in the school and the curriculum is enriched with a range of activities that meet pupils' interests and needs. School

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leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet all current requirements and are well known and implemented by all staff. As a result the school provides a safe environment where pupils learn without fear of discrimination. The governing body has a growing understanding of the school's performance and increasingly provides challenge as well as support to the school.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

15 June 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Isambard Brunel Junior School, Portsmouth PO2 7HX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed visiting your lessons, talking to you and your teachers and looking at the work you have been doing. You are very friendly and interesting to talk to and we appreciated the way you helped us find out about your school. Thank you also to those of you who completed the questionnaire. We found that Isambard Brunel is a satisfactory school.

- Overall, you make satisfactory and improving progress and by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, your attainment is broadly average. Currently you do better in mathematics than in English because this is what the school has focused on improving. The quality of what you write is often good but your handwriting, presentation and spelling need to be better.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. However, you learn well in many lessons especially when teachers have high expectations of what you can achieve.
- You enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning, which is reflected in your above average attendance. Well done for coming to school regularly! You behave well in lessons although some of you and your parents and carers are not confident that behaviour around the school is as good as it should be, but you told us that this was getting better.
- The school's leaders have worked hard to make sure they check how well you and the teachers are doing and they understand what remains to be done to improve the school.

To help you to do better, we have asked the school to:

- make sure you do as well in English as you do in mathematics by improving your handwriting, presentation and spelling and giving you more opportunities to write for real audiences and purposes across the curriculum
- ensure that teaching is consistently good or better and all teachers expect the very best from you and challenge you so you make the progress of which you are capable
- ensure that when school leaders plan for the improvements needed they are very clear about how this will improve your achievement.

You can help the school to improve by working hard and always doing your very best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Coussins
Lead inspector

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