

Courthouse Junior School

Blenheim Road, Maidenhead, SL6 5HE

Inspection dates

2–3 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Behaviour is good and at times exemplary. Pupils relish the responsibilities they are given. Pupils, parents and carers all agree that pupils are safe and cared for well. Attendance is high.
- Pupils achieve well and progress is good because, in groups as well as classes, teachers plan engaging activities. Pupils talk confidently and articulately about their learning and are keen to share their work with each other as well as with visitors to their classrooms.
- Pupils who are disabled, those with special educational needs and the most able achieve as well as their classmates and sometimes even better. This is as a result of the tailored support provided for them.
- Unvalidated test results for Year 6 pupils in 2012 show attainment to be well above average in English and mathematics.
- Teachers use questioning well to challenge and extend pupils' learning. Marking across the curriculum is good and often involves pupils assessing their own and each other's work. This helps them understand what they need to do next to improve.
- Governance is strong. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness and are fully involved in driving forward improvements.
- Monitoring of the school's performance by its leaders is good. The increasingly rigorous focus on tracking pupils' progress has led to the rise in standards and achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While teaching is good, not enough matches the outstanding practice seen in some lessons. Some leaders do not always check quickly enough that their suggestions of how teaching can improve have been consistently implemented.
- Pupils are not always reminded to use the skills they have learnt in English lessons when they write and this restricts progress.
- Occasionally, pupils spend too much time listening to teachers telling them what they are about to do rather than getting on and doing it. Learning and achievement are restricted because pupils are not always engaged quickly enough in activities that are closely matched to their abilities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons, taught by 17 teachers and were accompanied by senior staff for the vast majority of these. Alongside leaders they scrutinised work in pupils’ books from both the current and previous years.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils in Years 3 and 6, staff, school leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- In considering reading within the school, guided reading sessions were observed. In addition inspectors listened to pupils from Years 3 and 6 read individually.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at documentation such as policies, including those relating to safeguarding, data on pupils’ progress, attendance figures and the school’s development planning.
- Inspectors visited the school’s website. They observed pupils during their breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors took account of the 73 responses to the on-line Parent View survey as well as talking to parents and carers informally during the inspection. Questionnaires from staff and leaders were also considered.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Marshall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Howard Jones

Additional Inspector

Bimla Thakur

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average junior school.
- A large majority of the pupils come from a White British background. Others are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support from pupil premium funding, including those eligible for free school meals, is average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and receive support at school action, school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is average.
- There are three classes in each year group. Pupils are taught in four ability groups for English and mathematics.
- The school meets the government's floor targets which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, to enable more pupils to make outstanding progress, by ensuring:
 - teachers actively engage pupils in their learning at all times and introductions to lessons are sharply focused so pupils make progress at a faster pace
 - leaders share best practice and quickly check to make sure new initiatives and areas for development have been consolidated and become everyday practice in all teachers' lessons.
- Accelerate achievement, especially in writing, by:
 - ensuring pupils are involved in work appropriate to their ability at all times, building on what they know and understand, not merely teaching what has been planned
 - setting clear expectations that pupils will transfer the skills they have been learning in English to their writing in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- In all classes pupils are clear about what they are learning. They are able to talk with confidence about what they have learnt in each lesson. They are keen to share their ideas with one another and confidently talk about their learning to any visitor to their classroom.
- Pupils pay careful attention to comments teachers make when marking work during lessons and in their books. This engages them effectively in the next steps in their learning.
- Older pupils in particular know what levels they are working within and what features and areas they need to work on to reach the next level. For example, in English books in Year 6, pupils assess each other's work with considerable maturity, highlighting aspects that have worked well and identifying where it could be improved.
- Attainment rose sharply in 2012 as a result of the school's long-term focus on tracking pupils' progress and using the information from this to increase the expectations for the progress pupils make each year. Consequently, unvalidated test results show attainment to be well above average in both English and mathematics. However, while still strong, standards in writing do not yet match those seen in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils read widely from a rich range of texts and are successfully encouraged to draw from a range of strategies to help if they are stuck. Pupils from all ability groups enjoy the guided reading sessions that are planned. They explain their preferences for different books and talk confidently about characters and themes in the stories they are reading.
- Pupils enter the school in Year 3 with broadly average attainment. Compared with attainment when they leave Year 6 this demonstrates that during their time in the school pupils have made better than expected progress. Pupils' progress has accelerated over the past year in particular, with an increasing proportion making good progress and some even better than this.
- By increasing staffing and setting pupils for English and mathematics the school has ensured that good levels of closely tailored support are available in smaller intervention groups. This enables those pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium support to achieve as well as and sometimes better than their peers. Similarly, closely tailored groups for the most able have allowed the school to accelerate their learning, with some reaching the higher Level 6 in mathematics and writing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils' achievements, work in their books, parents', carers' and pupils' views indicate that the quality of teaching is good overall. Some is outstanding, and in these lessons and classes pupils make rapid progress.
- Interesting activities and positive relationships between staff and pupils keep the pupils focused and support learning well. For example, Year 5 pupils were highly motivated as they studied the text of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. As a result of the teacher's own enthusiasm and skilful explanations and demonstrations they were fascinated by the language and enjoyed developing their own Shakespearean insults. They successfully grasped the concept of an oxymoron, before offering their own suggestions including 'crash landing' and 'strangely normal'.
- Teachers and other additional adults in lessons use questioning effectively to extend and challenge pupils. Where learning is best they also ask questions to explore and strengthen the depth of knowledge and understanding of pupils. Talk partners are used well to involve pupils in discussing the questions raised by teachers.
- Additional adults are especially well deployed to ensure pupils' individual needs are met, whether for those eligible for the pupil premium or those with special educational needs. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, adults skilfully focused the attention of a number of pupils as they touched, tasted and smelt different foods in order to generate adjectives for their writing. This ability to target support where most needed in lessons or small focused groups enables pupils to achieve

well.

- In a few lessons teachers do not pay enough attention to what pupils already know or respond quickly enough to the progress they make during a lesson. This hinders the rate at which pupils move on their learning and can lead to unnecessary repetition for some and to a lack of understanding for others.
- In the best lessons, such as a Year 3 mathematics group, pupils' learning is moved on quickly. Little time is wasted as they move from one activity to the next and teachers' input is effectively focused to maximise learning. However, at times pupils have to wait too long, particularly at the start of lessons, to get on with their work. Teachers talk for too long and do not always leave enough time for pupils to demonstrate their understanding practically.
- Pupils' work demonstrates that teachers plan plenty of opportunities to write in a variety of subjects other than literacy, such as science, history, religious education and geography. However, because teachers do not always articulate high enough expectations, pupils' written work in these subjects does not always match the quality seen in their English books. Consequently, opportunities are lost to consolidate pupils' skills or raise achievement in writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is typically good and sometimes exemplary because school systems are implemented rigorously, both in lessons and during play times. Pupils know these expectations for their behaviour and the consequences if they do not follow them. They respond very well to the positive approach and the praise they receive for their efforts and their successes. Pupils say this is typically the case and think behaviour is good.
- Attitudes to learning are good, attendance is above average and pupils show their enthusiasm for learning whether in English, music, science or information and communication technology (ICT). On occasions, there is minor off-task behaviour when pupils have to wait as they listen to instructions for other pupils before they can begin their own learning.
- The school positively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is a key factor in pupils' good and sometimes exemplary behaviour. Pupils get on together well and show considerable support for one another regardless of age, gender or ethnicity.
- Pupils' moral awareness and social skills are developed well so that pupils are keen to take on responsibilities. As a result there are pupils writing for the school website, acting as buddies for the newly arrived Year 3 pupils, becoming a peer mediators and sitting in on meetings with school leaders and external advisors as they discuss areas for school development. They are rightfully proud of these responsibilities.
- Incidences of bullying, such as racist name calling and cyber bullying, are rare. Indeed pupils were adamant they did not happen. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded commented positively on how the school deals with behaviour and bullying.
- Pupils feel safe because they are aware that the staff will always do their best to respond if asked for help. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who expressed an opinion agreed the school kept the pupils safe.

The leadership and management are good

- The effective leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team is ensuring the aspirations and aims for the school are being achieved. Very well supported by the governors as well as by year and subject leaders they have been responsible for the rise in attainment and good achievement of pupils.
- All leaders effectively play their part in monitoring the quality of teaching. Performance management is well established and provision for the training of all staff, including those new to teaching, is good.

- Leaders are responsible for introducing initiatives to improve the quality further and remove any inconsistencies in order that all matches the best teaching in the school. They timetable visits to lessons as well as checking work in pupils' books and teachers' planning. However, agreed areas for improvement are not always followed up swiftly enough to ensure those changes become regular practice at the earliest opportunity and ultimately accelerate pupils' learning.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - governors monitor closely what is taking place and so have a very good understanding of data about pupils' progress and hold the school to account most effectively
 - governors are very well trained and informed about educational matters including the recently introduced pupil premium
 - the governing body ensures that statutory duties are met, particularly regarding health and safety and safeguarding issues
 - governors actively seek out parents' and carers' views.
 - The school is effective in ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities. Pupil progress meetings are increasingly holding teachers to account and are effective in tackling any discrimination between groups. They enable interventions and additional support to be effectively tailored to the needs of individuals and groups such as those eligible for the pupil premium and the most able.
 - The school recognises the effective level of support it has received from its local authority and other educational advisors, particularly in developing aspects of self-evaluation and the school's work in mathematics over the previous year.
 - The school engages effectively with parents and carers encouraging them to become involved in reviewing school policies and making suggestions for areas for school development. Staff regularly ensure that parents and carers are fully informed on how their children are doing. The majority of parents and carers are appreciative and supportive of the school's work, citing examples including improvements to the school website and events such as the induction morning for Year 3 families held during the inspection.
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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	109819
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	403096

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	381
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathy Newbound
Headteacher	Gerry Heynes
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 September 2007
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