

Portway Junior School

Robincroft Road, Allestree, Derby, DE22 2GL

Inspection dates 17-18 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Pupils make good progress. This results in reading, writing and mathematics standards that are well above the national average at the end of Year 6.
- Most of the teaching is good, with an increasing proportion of outstanding lessons. Teachers use consistent teaching strategies throughout the school so that pupils learn well.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning and relish responsibility. They feel safe in school and their attendance is well above average. Pupils are happy, courteous and welcoming.
- Leadership and management of the school are good. The governing body and other leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. They ensure that staff performance management and development results in high standards for pupils.
- Since the last inspection, leaders, teachers and teaching assistants have improved pupils' progress, particularly in writing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in writing by the end of Key Stage 2 is not as fast as it is in mathematics and reading. Pupils do not write enough at length in different subjects and some topics do not motivate pupils to write.
- Some pupils do not take enough care with their spelling, punctuation and presentation.
- In a few lessons, teachers spend too much time talking which prevents pupils from getting on with their work. Marking is not always as helpful as it might be in pointing out the next steps in pupils' learning in subjects other than English.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching in the school. Teachers do not get enough opportunities to see outstanding practice at Portway and in other schools.

Information about this inspection

- Eighteen lessons were observed by inspectors. Two of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked closely at their workbooks.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils, senior members of staff, three members of the governing body including the Chair, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke to a number of parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors took account of the 32 responses to the on the online questionnaire (Parent View), along with one written comment received from a parent. Seventeen questionnaires returned by staff were also analysed.
- Inspectors looked carefully at the arrangements and records kept to safeguard pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the school's development plan and self-evaluation documents, as well as assessment data that teachers use to monitor pupils' progress.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Paul Weston, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Thelma McIntosh

Additional Inspector

Malcolm Johnstone

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding given to the school to support the progress of pupils eligible for free school meals, those pupils who are looked after and those pupils from service families, is below the national average.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average (those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs). The proportion supported by school action is similar to the national average. The main areas of additional need include speech, language and communication, and behaviour, emotional and social or specific learning difficulties.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Around 10% come from a range of different heritages. Few pupils are in the early stages of learning English.
- The school meets the current government floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has achieved, among others, the Healthy School status, Artsmark Gold Award, Eco Schools Award and Geography Bronze Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching so that it is never less than good and more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring the time spent in lessons always supports pupils to achieve exceptionally well
 - ensuring that when teachers mark pupils work, they all give clear points about how it can be improved
 - extending opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding practice, both within and beyond the school.
- Ensure that pupils make the same rapid progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics by:
 - offering more opportunities for writing in other subjects other than English
 - giving pupils topics which excite and appeal to them so that they are stimulated to write
 - ensuring that spelling, punctuation and presentation strategies are consistently applied throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From above average starting points pupils reach standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 that are significantly above the national average. Although attainment in writing has improved year-on-year since the last inspection, it is not yet at the extremely high level found in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' learning in lessons and their progress over time are good. Their positive attitude to learning helps most pupils gain knowledge and skills quickly. The school's analysis of its assessment information indicates accelerated progress, particularly in writing.
- Good provision for those pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs ensures their progress is at least in line with their peers and attainment is generally above that of similar pupils nationally. For instance, staff not only used a radio microphone to support the learning of a deaf pupil, but the teaching assistant used sign language to ensure full engagement and participation. The daily 'basic skills' sessions, where pupils work in small groups of similar ability, are particularly effective in developing pupils' literacy skills.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, while few in number, generally make good progress because of the extra support provided such as booster groups, small group work and one-to-one teaching for English and mathematics. Consequently, the gap between their achievement and that of their peers is closing quickly. Their attainment and progress are above that of similar pupils nationally. The pupil premium funding is also used to help this group of pupils access other aspects of the curriculum, such as by subsidising their attendance on residential visits.
- Reading standards at the end of Year 6 are extremely high and well above average. Most pupils enjoy reading and the vast majority read with expression, understanding and fluency. Reading is supported well by parents and carers at home.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to write at length in subjects other than English. The reliance on worksheets in some classes limits opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of independence or to write for extended periods. Handwriting, spelling and punctuation has improved since the last inspection, however there is some inconsistency between classes.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is usually good and some is outstanding. This has had a direct impact on the consistently good progress now seen and the above average attainment of pupils. One pupil said, 'we work hard, but it is enjoyable.'
- A very positive atmosphere in the school encourages pupils to learn well. Most teachers have high expectations and work is generally pitched at a demanding level. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows when teachers spend too much time instructing, with fewer opportunities for individual pupils to be actively engaged. In these instances, pupils' interest wanes; they sit passively and become quietly inattentive. As a result, pupils' learning slows.
- Teachers plan lessons based on useful information about what pupils already know and can do.

Teachers' questioning is generally effective and often probing to deepen pupils' understanding. The setting of pupils in ability groups works well in literacy and numeracy lessons. As a result, the work given to pupils is well matched to their needs and this enables them to make good progress.

- Teaching assistants provide valuable support, particularly for disabled pupils or those with special educational needs and those in receipt of the pupil premium. Most ask good questions and use a range of practical resources well to support those who require additional help.
- There are good examples of teachers regularly checking pupils' work in lessons. Increasingly, pupils are also checking their own or each other's work and assessing how well they have completed or understood a task.
- Marking is regular and has particularly clear steps for improvement in English books which is helping to secure improvement in pupils' writing. Time is made available for pupils' to respond to these comments. However, clear points for improvement are not always provided in other subjects to the same level.
- Homework is set routinely, although some parents recorded some concerns on their on-line questionnaire evaluation. School leaders are aware of parents' worries and have plans to implement changes in response to their comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school and this is seen in their above average attendance. Over recent years the rates of attendance have been high. Pupils talk very positively about how safe they feel. One pupil summarised this by saying 'everyone is friendly and the teachers really care for you and help you.' This is reflected unanimously in the Parent View responses and confirmed when inspectors spoke with parents and carers as they brought their children into school.
- The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development promotes strong values across every aspect of its work. This makes a strong contribution to a happy and purposeful atmosphere. In an assembly to promote science, icing sugar was thrown into a flame under safe conditions. The ensuing flare caused gasps 'wow'. The look of awe and wonder on pupils' faces was spiritual.
- There is a consistent approach to behaviour management by all adults in the school. Behaviour in lessons is generally good. In all classrooms pupils have good relationships with each other, the teachers and other adults. However, some pupils do not make the progress they are capable of on the rare occasions when the teacher talks for too long.
- Behaviour in the playground and around the school is good. Pupils played extremely sensibly in the snow, working together to make snow people and dens. All different groups socialise well and new pupils to the school reported how everyone helped them settle quickly into the school.
- Pupils enjoy responsibilities, such as staffing the school office at lunchtime and being playground buddies, which they fulfil well around the school, in the playground and in assemblies. They take a prominent, active role in the life of the school as house captains and members of the school and Eco council.

- Pupils understand that bullying can take different forms including cyber-bullying, but are emphatic that this is rare in school. They report that name-calling is uncommon. On the few occasions when pupils fall out, they said that teachers quickly resolved any disagreement.

The leadership and management are good

- The vision and drive of the headteacher have steered the school successfully. His strong, decisive leadership and its impact on the school's successes have earned him the respect and admiration of staff. All those who completed the staff questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about his leadership. The school has successfully addressed previous weaknesses.
- Parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire were highly positive of the school. One parent wrote 'we are absolutely delighted with the school and its teaching staff and are especially impressed with the headteacher's leadership and style. He is a real asset'. The evidence seen during the inspection supports this view.
- Key leaders, including the governing body set challenging targets for improvement. Leaders use the evaluation of the school's performance through the monitoring of teaching and achievement to ensure there is continuous improvement and make sure that the school's capacity to improve is good.
- Accurate reviews of staff skills lead to staff performance management and training which are effective in raising achievement. Leaders regularly and rigorously track the progress of every child and apply extra learning programmes effectively as soon as difficulties arise. Regular meetings are held to look at pupils' work, teachers' marking and the quality of their planning.
- The local authority provides good support and challenge. The school improvement officer knows the school well through robust data analysis and activities such as joint teaching observations with the headteacher. This in-depth knowledge is used to help the school improve further, such as by signposting leaders to schools and external agencies which demonstrate and promote outstanding practice. This is because insufficient opportunities have been provided for staff to see outstanding practice in, and beyond the school.
- School leaders value and appreciate the local authority's guidance and have purchased additional support beyond the core entitlement package. The governing body also subscribes to a range of additional support services provided by the local authority and leaders attend the wide range of courses and briefings available to them.
- The school has a good partnership with parents and carers. It has also established a number of positive and proactive links with the feeder infant school, the local cluster of schools, the Primary Education Partnership and the Derby Schools Learning Partnership. All these have proved beneficial in supporting the school on its journey of improvement.
- A number of interesting themes are provided for pupils in other subjects such as the study of the Second World War. However, pupils say that they would like to study other topics that excite and appeal to them more.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well led and trained. It has a clear understanding of its responsibilities. Governors ask the right questions of senior leaders to ensure pupils receive a good education.

All members of the governing body are regular visitors to the school and are ambitious and passionate about the school's future and its role in the community. Good decisions are made about staffing, salary progression and the budget to support the priorities for moving the school forward. This can be seen in the effective decisions made on how to spend the pupil premium which has improved pupils' achievement. Arrangements for safeguarding meet government requirements.

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	112741
Local authority	Derby City
Inspection number	401300

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	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Brown
Headteacher	Jason Pass
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2010
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