

Branksome Heath Middle School

Livingstone Road, Poole, BH12 3DX

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too many pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, do not achieve well.
- Teaching is inconsistent in quality. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Work is sometimes too easy, especially for more able pupils. Teachers tend to talk for too long and do not give enough opportunities for pupils to work away from the teacher. Teachers' marking and use of pupils' targets in lessons are inconsistent.
- Writing is improving in quality, but not quickly enough, because pupils do not have enough opportunities to write longer pieces of work in the various subjects they study.
- The school leadership's checking of teaching focuses too much on teachers' activities and not enough on the quality of learning of different groups of pupils. Teachers do not get enough opportunities to learn good practice from each other.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn, responding very positively in lessons. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in steadily improving attendance.
- There are good opportunities for visits and after-school activities. There is very good provision for music, sport, art and the performing arts.
- Parents and pupils feel strongly that the school is a very safe place and provides high quality care and support for all pupils.
- Governors have a much improved understanding of the school's performance and are making the leadership and staff much more accountable for progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 27 lessons, taught by 19 teachers. Ten of the observations were carried out jointly with members of the school’s senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff, pupils, four governors and two representatives of the local education authority.
- Inspectors took account of 29 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 42 questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and scrutinised a variety of documentation, including the school improvement plan, data on pupils’ current progress, records of monitoring visits by the school improvement partner, governing body minutes, the school’s self-evaluation and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

John Laver, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Margaret Faull	Additional inspector
David Nebesnuick	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized school of this type.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language are rising but below average.
- An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for funding available through the pupil premium, the great majority of them being pupils eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action, and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are both above average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- There have been several changes in the teaching staff and in the governing body since the previous inspection.
- The school operates a breakfast club for pupils before the beginning of the school day.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for its pupils.
- In September 2013, as part of the restructuring of education within the local authority, the school will become a junior school, losing its Year 7 pupils and gaining Year 3 pupils.
- The school is the first primary-aged school to receive the National Shakespeare award and holds several awards for sporting successes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that it is typically good, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve so that they make good progress in all lessons
 - improving the consistency of marking and make more use of pupils' targets in lessons, so that pupils have a clearer understanding of how exactly they can improve their work, and have opportunities to respond to teachers' feedback
 - giving pupils the chance to strengthen the skill of learning independently by giving them more opportunities to work away from the teacher's direct supervision.
- Raise attainment and improve progress in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that pupils, especially the more able, always do work which is not too easy for them and matches their needs more closely
 - giving pupils more time and opportunity to write longer pieces of work in all subjects in the curriculum.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that teachers focus not just on activities but also on the quality of learning of different groups of pupils in lessons
 - giving teachers more opportunities to develop their skills by observing skilled colleagues in the classroom and working with them more closely.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and the small number from minority ethnic backgrounds, make good progress from the time they start school, as reflected in Year 6 national test results. Progress in Year 7 has improved considerably recently.
- Pupils' attainment on joining the school is broadly in line with expectations for their age. Improved progress means that more pupils, especially girls, are now on track to reach average or above average standards by the time they leave school, as evident from improved average points scores. However, boys' progress still requires improvement, especially in writing.
- More able pupils sometimes underachieve in lessons, usually when teachers do not give them work suited to their ability. There are too few opportunities for pupils of all abilities to work away from the teacher on appropriate tasks.
- Progress in writing is improving, but not at a fast enough pace, despite the school's efforts to encourage writing in a range of subjects. Pupils spend too long planning and not enough time on the actual writing of longer pieces of work in a range of subjects.
- Pupils eligible for free school meals benefit from funding available through the pupil premium. It is used, for example, to provide more in-class support and creating focus groups for these pupils to work on improving key skills. This has resulted in higher average points scores than before, although the rate of progress still varies in line with the quality of teaching.
- There are still too many lessons in which learning is restricted by low-level repetitive tasks, seen, for example, in some mathematics lessons. Pupils are keen to learn, but they comment that some of the work is 'too easy'. This results in all pupils, but especially the more able, not making as much progress as they should.
- Inspectors saw good learning where teachers had high expectations of all pupils. It was observed in a lesson in which younger pupils were preparing to write imaginative accounts of scenes for 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', and when older pupils with special educational needs were writing about 'Narnia'. In both instances, teachers' high expectations, the relentless pace and the imaginative use of resources captured pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment, whatever their abilities. However, the resulting high-quality learning is not typical of many lessons.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it does not promote enough good achievement in lessons. Typically, over time, teachers have not expected enough from their pupils, have spent large parts of the lessons going over work already understood, and not given pupils enough opportunities to work away from the teacher. Pupils are not given enough guidance on how to improve their work.
- School leaders have worked hard to improve teaching, partly through giving more training opportunities to staff. As a result, there is now very little inadequate teaching and several examples of good and occasionally outstanding teaching. However, there are still too many inconsistencies.
- Some teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and make pupils respond directly to their comments on how to improve. This does not happen in all classes. Teachers do not use pupils' targets sufficiently in their everyday teaching to help pupils reach the next level.
- Teachers plan activities for groups of pupils, but the tasks are not consistently matched to need. For example, able pupils were observed doing low-level repetitive exercises in mathematics. Opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to create their own problems and possible solutions.
- Teachers make good use of support staff, particularly in helping disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to learn more effectively. Many of these pupils now make better

progress than before.

- Most parents believe that teaching is good and that pupils make good progress, but the inspection found that teaching overall needs to be more responsive to the learning needs of pupils and ensure a faster rate of learning. This is also confirmed by the school's own assessment data and the evidence of recent national assessments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Not all staff manage behaviour in the classroom effectively. However, whilst not outstanding, behaviour overall is good both in lessons and around the school, and records confirm this view.
- The school is an orderly community in which pupils feel very safe and well cared for. They are keen to learn and respond enthusiastically to good teaching. They are very tolerant even when the work is not very imaginative or exciting.
- Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. The number of exclusions has fallen, and attendance has consistently risen over several years.
- Although there are occasional incidents of bullying and racist name-calling, they are rare and dealt with appropriately. Pupils do not regard bullying as a significant issue, and are aware of the various types of bullying such as cyber-bullying and how to deal with it responsibly.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibility, for example running their own school council and managing its funds. They make money for charity through setting up businesses. Pupils train to be peer mediators. Pupils have been commended for achievements such as performing Shakespeare in the local professional theatre.
- The breakfast club, catering for pupils alongside younger children from the nearby infant school, promotes pupils' social development and provides them with a healthy and enjoyable start to the school day.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic in talking about the wide range of out-of-school trips and activities, such as the residential visits for all year groups.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leaders have not yet ensured that there is enough good teaching or achievement.
- Leaders now check teaching more systematically than at the time of the previous inspection, which has brought about an improvement in teaching. However, the emphasis in the checking has been very focused on the strategies teachers use, for example in setting lesson objectives, and not focused enough on the quality of learning for different groups of pupils.
- Some teachers have limited opportunities to observe and share good teaching practice as a means of improving their own expertise.
- Leaders have put in place several measures to improve weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. Staff now have more training opportunities and there are links with schools where there are examples of good practice. The local authority has supported the school well in moving these initiatives forwards.
- As a result, the school is now on track to meet more challenging targets. Although in the past there has not been enough urgency in tackling underachievement, the school now clearly shows the capacity for further improvement.
- The school has partnerships which provide additional opportunities for pupils. For example, pupils use some of the facilities in the local secondary school. The partnerships also ensure that pupils new to the school fit in smoothly, whilst Year 7 pupils are well prepared for the move to their next school.
- The leadership's commitment to improvement is shared by staff, as shown in the overwhelmingly positive responses in staff questionnaires.

- The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies the school's strengths and weaknesses. School improvement planning has appropriate priorities.
 - In the past, staff have not been held accountable for pupils' progress. This is currently being addressed, as performance management arrangements now ensure that pay and career progression are more closely linked to pupil progress.
 - School leaders use pupil premium funding appropriately to support eligible pupils, for example in paying for additional staff support.
 - The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Cultural enrichment through music, sport and art is a particular strength, and the school is rightly proud of its National Shakespeare award and its several sporting successes. The school has several links with schools in different parts of the world. Pupils show a good understanding of different beliefs and value systems around the world.
 - Safeguarding procedures and policies meet government requirements. Staff are well trained and ensure a safe environment for pupils. The school is very inclusive, not tolerating discrimination in any form, as recognised by pupils and parents.
 - The leadership has modified the curriculum, for example to encourage more writing and frequent reading. It recognises that more needs to be done to improve attainment and progress, and the curriculum is under review to be ready for the radical restructuring of the school in eight months' time.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved considerably since the previous inspection. There have been several changes in personnel. Governors now recognise that they have not been sufficiently challenging of past underperformance. They now ask more searching questions about pupil progress and performance generally. They have a very clear understanding of what needs to be addressed to bring about sustained improvement. Governors are very active in the school, for example conducting their own surveys of parents' views. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the rate of achievement, and how pupil premium funding is being used to improve progress. They are more confident in managing the performance of senior staff. Governors are also now more expert in fulfilling their responsibilities.
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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	113703
Local authority	Poole
Inspection number	401383

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	8–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	478
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Olive
Headteacher	Stuart Fox
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 March 2010
Telephone number	01202 747966
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