

Isambard Brunel Junior School

Wymering Road, North End, Portsmouth, PO2 7HX

Inspection dates 27–28 March 2014

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		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' achievement in English and mathematics requires improvement as it is not yet good. This is because teaching has not been good enough.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. They do not always provide work that is at the right level of difficulty nor do they help pupils understand ideas more fully through their questioning.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of feedback provided to pupils about their work and a lack of opportunity for pupils to act on comments mean that they do not all benefit from advice on how to improve their work.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to improve their skills in investigating and solving problems in mathematics.
- Senior leaders are not thorough enough in setting clear and measurable targets for whole-school improvement.
- Staff who lead subjects are not yet sufficiently involved in driving improvement by checking pupils' progress or what is happening in classrooms.

The school has the following strengths

- Progress is accelerating across the school, with evidence of good progress in some year groups and subjects, particularly in Year 6 and in reading.
- Determined leadership, including that from governors, and the commitment of all staff have enabled a clear and successful focus on improvement after a period of decline caused by disruption in staffing.
- Very careful checks on pupils' progress ensure that any pupils falling behind are quickly identified and given targeted support to help them catch up.
- Strong relationships and a very caring, supportive learning community ensure pupils feel very safe and behave well. This is reflected in their kind and caring behaviour towards each other and their good attitudes to work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 24 lessons or part lessons, of which several were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the headteacher and other senior staff. Additionally, a meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View survey. However, the lead inspector spoke to several parents when they brought their children to school and looked at the school's own questionnaire to parents undertaken in January 2014. The inspectors took account of the 22 staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, the sports premium action plan and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors listened to pupils from Year 3, Year 4 and Year 6 read.

Inspection team

Janet Sinclair, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Gordon Jackson

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Isambard Brunel is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- There is an average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average; some of these are at an early stage of learning English.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The number of pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils in local authority care, from armed forces families, or known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average. There are no pupils from armed forces families in the school.
- The school has had significant staffing disruption caused by illness, as well as several changes in staff, since the previous inspection. This includes the appointment of a new deputy headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring consistently good or better teaching through:
 - ensuring work is at the right level of difficulty for pupils
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve so that they work to their potential
 - providing work in mathematics that helps pupils to develop their skills in investigating and solving practical problems
 - extending pupils' knowledge and understanding by getting them to think more deeply
 - improving the quality of feedback, so that all pupils are clear about how to improve and are involved in what they need to do to move their learning on.
- Build the capacity of leadership and management to drive improvement by:
 - continuing to develop senior subject leaders so that they play an increasing role in ensuring rapid school improvement
 - ensuring that senior leaders set clear and measurable targets for school improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Attainment over time has been below average and progress has been variable. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 6 is broadly in line with national expectations and their progress in reading, writing and mathematics requires improvement. The school has worked extremely hard and successfully to address the underachievement caused by staffing disruption. Progress requires improvement, but is accelerating in most classes and this is due to regular and thorough checks on pupils' progress, additional support given to those pupils who are not doing well enough, good relations and improved teaching.
- The school has worked well to improve writing, which was a key issue at the previous inspection. Clear expectations for learning in lessons, increased opportunities to write across a range of subjects and regular assessments are raising the standard of writing across the school.
- Achievement in reading is better than in other subjects. Daily guided reading sessions well focused on the development of key skills also promote interest and enjoyment. Additionally, pupils use guided reading booklets well and they provide a good record of the development of reading skills such as comprehension and authors' choices of language.
- Although the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs requires improvement, it is accelerating as a result of clear guidance from the special educational needs coordinator and well-trained teaching assistants who support pupils in class.
- Careful checks on pupils' progress ensure that those falling behind are identified and given additional support. This is helping to ensure that the gaps in the performance of different groups are closing and shows that the school is promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- There is targeted support for more-able pupils who are on track to attain Level 6 in mathematics, reading and writing, which is the expected level for 15-year-olds. Their progress is good because of challenging teaching in Year 6. Support is not always so strong in other year groups.
- Pupils at an early stage of learning English get effective support from a trained teaching assistant. This helps them with their spoken English and enables them to make similar progress to other pupils in the school.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also make similar progress to their peers.
- Pupils who attract the pupil premium because they are eligible for free school meals or are looked after reached above-average standards in the national tests in mathematics, average standards in reading and below-average standards in mathematics. Last summer their results showed that their progress was similar or better than that of other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics. The attainment and progress of pupils in the current Year 6 who attract the pupil premium are broadly average in all three subjects. The school provides well for these pupils and consequently there is very little gap between their performance and that of other groups in the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement as it has not been good enough to ensure effective learning for pupils. Although it is improving, practice is inconsistent and this limits pupils' overall progress.
- In some lessons, pupils do not get enough opportunities to extend their ideas or develop their skills as questioning does not focus on making pupils think more deeply. This was noticeable in some literacy lessons in Years 3 and 4 and has a restricting impact on progress.
- Work is not always at the right level for pupils; it is sometimes not hard enough for more-able pupils and too hard for less able pupils. This was seen in some mental mathematics sessions and a mathematics lesson in Year 5.

- In mathematics, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to solve mathematical problems or extend their ideas in a way that develops their mathematical understanding. Occasionally, such as in a lesson seen in Year 5, pupils had good opportunities to work together to discuss the processes involved in a mathematical investigation. They made good gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- Although teachers usually provide pupils with regular feedback, they do not always give pupils clear guidance on how to improve. Pupils are not typically involved in acting on comments in marked work or being involved in what they need to do to move their learning forward. This limits pupils' involvement in making their work better so that pupils are not always clear about how they can improve.
- Good use of resources, such as video clips and interactive whiteboards, helps to speed up learning.
- Strong teaching in Year 6, additional small group sessions and regular discussions with pupils about how to improve their work, are ensuring good, rapid progress for pupils in this year group.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium through specific support and guidance. Additionally, as seen in a Year 4 lesson, they provide effective well-focused clarification for pupils, where needed, during whole-class introductions.
- Teachers make sound use of homework for spelling and reading. Occasionally, it is used well to support topics such as in the Year 6 work on the Second World War.
- Teachers use topic work well to provide opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects. For example, pupils write about Guru Nanek in religious education, and about Victorian seaside holidays in history.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Behaviour is not outstanding because occasionally, when lessons do not engage them, they become fidgety and lose interest, and there are occasional behavioural incidents at playtime.
- The school has well-established systems in place for managing behaviour, including reward certificates and house points, but mostly pupils are keen to behave well because they enjoy being in school. Behaviour has improved well since the previous inspection when it was raised as an area of concern by parents.
- There is very good support for pupils with identified behavioural difficulties and consequently they rarely disrupt lessons and their confidence, self-esteem and social skills improve very well.
- In most lessons, pupils are motivated to learn and respond well to all learning opportunities. The good presentation of their work and the way they apply themselves in lessons reflect this.
- Pupils enjoy the responsibility of being peer mediators, especially as they have helped to improve behaviour at break times.
- Pupils say that there is very little bullying, but when it does occur the school deals with it quickly. The school carefully records any playground incidents, bullying or racism, and follow-up procedures are fully in place.
- Lunchtimes are well organised with appropriate staffing levels. School meals provide a healthy lunch and parents make healthy packed lunches, which their children enjoy.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and know that adults care about them and would help them if they had any concerns. They say that they know staff care about them.
- The school provides a safe environment for its pupils. Pupils learn about how to stay safe through, for example, bikeability, road safety training, e-safety and talks on cyber-bullying. Policies and procedures for behaviour and safeguarding are fully in place.
- Attendance has improved and is now average. The school carefully monitors attendance and is

thorough in following up any absence to ensure pupils attend regularly.

- Most parents who responded to the school's questionnaire earlier this year agree that their children are safe in school and that behaviour is good, as did those spoken to during the inspection. School staff also agree. Inspection evidence confirms that their views are accurate.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Effective leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is driving the school forward again after staffing issues slowed progress. They have created a staff team who work well together and are keen to provide a good quality education. Standards are rising, teaching is improving and pupils have good attitudes to learning. This demonstrates the school has capacity for further improvement.
- Senior staff and subject leaders have taken on board new initiatives and begun to implement them. However, some are new to their posts and initiatives are not yet embedded across the school, so they are not yet fully effective in holding staff to account.
- Accurate school evaluation and a clear 'raising attainment' plan have helped the school to focus on key improvements. These are set out in the school improvement plan that is shared with governors on a regular basis. However, the success criteria are too general for outcomes to be measured accurately and this lessens the improvement plan's overall impact.
- Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are thorough but supportive. Regular learning walks, direct lesson observations, including joint observations by senior staff, regular checks on work in pupils' books and detailed feedback are gradually bringing about improvement.
- The school sets individual and whole-school targets for all staff, appropriate to their level of responsibility. It sets expectations for staff performance and makes sure that training needs are met. Staff spoken to felt that their training needs were well met and they were held accountable.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is enriched through projects such as that on the Ancient Egyptians and school trips to Portsmouth City Museum. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and as a result they are attentive to the needs of others and are polite and caring. Assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to consider the needs of others and topics such as that on India help to develop cultural awareness.
- The school has used the extra sports funding appropriately to appoint a sports coach to provide more sporting activity and physical education teaching with a focus on training staff so that its impact can be sustained.
- The local authority gives moderate support and clear guidance to the school in its drive for improvement.
- Parents spoken to were happy with the school and what it provides and the school works hard to promote good working relationships that support both pupils and their parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors fulfil their statutory duties well and are increasingly providing effective support and challenge to the school. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning because of the headteacher's termly reports, but they are not yet visiting the school enough to check for themselves. They carry out regular health and safety checks and make sure that all safeguarding policies and procedures are in place so that pupils and staff are kept safe. The bursar keeps them well informed of the state of the school finances, which they carefully check, including the pupil premium and sports funding and how it is spent. They know how well pupils in the school are doing from regular updates from the headteacher, close scrutiny of the data provided and recent whole-governing-body training in this area. Additionally, they attend training to keep them up to date with local and national initiatives. They are involved in setting targets for the headteacher's performance and are aware of the process that is in place for staff.

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	116219
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	431044

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	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Treacher
Headteacher	Iain Gilmour
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 June 2012
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