

James Bateman Junior High School

Park Lane, Knypersley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST8 7AT

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Since the previous inspection, strong leadership and governance have rapidly improved the quality of teaching and are raising pupils' achievement.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 have risen year on year and are now in line with those found nationally.
- Pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. This includes disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils.
- The most-able pupils are making rapid progress, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Many pupils enter the school as weak readers. They quickly develop a love of books and this has led to marked improvements in their reading.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy being at school and have a very positive attitude to their learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils, parents and staff all say that this is a safe school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers regularly set challenging homework.
- Teachers do not always check pupils' progress in other subjects as rigorously as they do in English and mathematics.
- Pupils in Key Stage 3 do not have enough opportunities to practise their mathematics skills in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in 24 lessons across the school. Of these, 10 were observed jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. The inspection team also looked at pupils’ work in their books and folders.
- As well as conversations in lessons and at social times during the inspection, discussions were held with two groups of pupils about the quality of their educational experiences and the standard of behaviour in the school.
- The school was closed to pupils on the second day of the inspection due to a heavy and sudden fall of snow. The inspectors conducted a further scrutiny of work in pupils’ books. The inspectors also held meetings with senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the 23 responses to a staff questionnaire. Inspectors also considered responses by parents and pupils to recent questionnaires from the school.
- The inspection team examined: the school’s own information on pupils’ recent and current progress; the school’s evaluation of how well it is doing and its records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching; records relating to behaviour and attendance; documents resulting from monitoring visits to the school following its previous inspection; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Richard Boswell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Wilson	Additional Inspector
Mandy Wilding	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- James Bateman Junior High School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils in care and those known to be eligible for free school meals), at around one third, is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, at around one fifth, is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision at the Centre for the Education of Adolescents Requiring Support, Newcastle under Lyme.
- The school is a member of the Biddulph Schools Partnership Trust.
- Since the previous inspection: the school has received support from a National Leader of Education at Hempstalls Primary School; a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed; there have been a considerable number of changes in staffing, including among the school's leadership team.
- In the last two years, the school has taken part in a regional Secondary School Literacy Pilot focused on the development of a whole-school reading culture.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and so further raise achievement by ensuring that teachers:
 - regularly give pupils homework which enables them to explore and research deeper into topics and ideas
 - are always as rigorous in checking their pupils' progress and moving them on in other subjects as they are in English and mathematics.
- Leaders should ensure that pupils in Key Stage 3 have more opportunities to practise their skills in mathematics in a wide range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, action taken by the new headteacher has created a growing culture of academic excellence brought about by good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to learning. She has been well supported in making the necessary changes by a new Chair of the Governing Body. As a result, the school has improved rapidly and is continuing to improve at a fast rate because there are high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The school has appointed effective new subject leaders in English, mathematics and science, and an assistant headteacher responsible for disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. These leaders have driven improvements in the quality of education for all pupils in their areas of responsibility. Consequently, progress has accelerated and standards are higher.
- In the last two years, the school has worked closely with one of Her Majesty's Inspectors on an Ofsted pilot project to develop a whole-school reading culture. This involves competitions and additional time for reading and is highly successful. After one year, there are considerably more pupils reading at a level at least in line with and often above that expected for their age, and a marked improvement in the number of pupils achieving national standards in reading.
- Pupils of all ages speak enthusiastically about their reading and their positive response has contributed to their improved attitudes to all their learning. For example, in the same period there has also been a rapid improvement in pupils' standards in mathematics.
- School leaders and governors have quickly identified any weaknesses in the quality of teaching. These are swiftly addressed and staff receive well-targeted training and support. Careful and considered recruitment has supported the good quality of teaching throughout the school – with 13 new staff appointed in the last two years. Teachers have high expectations for the progress of their pupils, including the most able, and, as a result, pupils achieve more.
- The school has accurate and reliable systems for checking the progress that pupils are making in their reading, writing and mathematics. This information is regularly shared with pupils and parents so that any areas in need of improvement can be supported at home as well as at school. In line with national changes, school leaders are working with local schools and have developed better assessment of pupils' progress in English and mathematics. However, systems for checking how well pupils are achieving in other subjects are not yet as rigorous. Consequently, their progress is, sometimes, not as rapid in other subjects as it could be.
- Immediately following the previous inspection, pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 6, while improved on the year before, were still below the national average. The headteacher and other leaders identified that the curriculum and teaching in Years 5 and 6 were not having the impact intended on pupils' progress and attainment. They made swift changes that in the last school year have led to better standards and more rapid progress in Key Stage 2.
- In Years 7 and 8, improved teaching and learning opportunities stretch all pupils, including the most and least able, and help all reach their full potential as learners. The promotion of reading is as strong in Key Stage 3 as it is in Key Stage 2. However, pupils in Key Stage 3 have fewer opportunities to practise their numeracy skills by applying them in other subjects and, consequently, their mathematical skills and subject understanding are not fully reinforced.
- The school is committed to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, ensuring there are no barriers to achievement. For example, the pupil premium funding is well used to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are successful learners. Actions taken involve a learning mentor to work with disadvantaged pupils and enable them to participate in educational visits and activities. As a result of the school's actions, there are marked improvements in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

- Other additional funding is used well. For example, physical education and sports funding gives teachers high-quality, professional training and increases the participation of pupils in physical activities. These opportunities are contributing well to improving pupils' health and physical well-being. Funding for Year 7 pupils to catch-up when they are below the standards expected in literacy and numeracy at the end of Key Stage 2 is used effectively – including additional resources for them in the library. As a result, their skills improve, especially in reading.
- The local authority has made a strong contribution to the school's improvement. It recognises and supports the impact the headteacher and leadership team are having on raising achievement. Leaders make very good use of the Biddulph Schools Partnership Trust and a National Leader of Education at a local school, who have provided advice, guidance and training for staff. The success of these partnerships means that pupils are able to move smoothly from their first schools, and are well prepared to enter the senior high school with confidence.
- Older pupils receive helpful advice and guidance about future careers and choices of educational courses. The impact of this guidance is evident in the pupils' knowledge and understanding about their future choices. They comment enthusiastically about their plans and aspirations.
- The range of learning opportunities provide well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including their knowledge and understanding of British values. Respect for the rule of law is encouraged through regular visits by community police officers and a 'police cadets' course for Year 5 pupils to experience immediate responsibility for upholding the law.
- Pupils learn responsibilities within the democratic process in choosing an active school council and house and vice captains, and voting for 'pupil of the week' – to celebrate worthwhile achievement. Residential visits to London include a tour of the Houses of Parliament. These many learning opportunities help to prepare them well for life in modern British society.
- Tolerance and understanding of others' cultures and beliefs are actively promoted through religious education covering a variety of faiths. There are specific 'culture days' with a focus on Islam, for example. The Year 8 residential visit to Berlin included visits to the site of the Berlin Wall and the Anne Frank Museum. These many worthwhile learning experiences effectively enhance pupils' moral and social development and sense of responsibility as a citizen.
- The school meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding. All relevant policies are regularly reviewed and there is a rolling programme of staff training in child protection, including the induction of new teachers. Consequently, pupils feel safe at school – and say so openly.
- It is not possible to report on the achievement of pupils attending alternative provision because they are very small in number and would be at risk of being identified. The school ensures, however, that their attendance and behaviour are closely monitored.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the previous inspection, the new Chair of the Governing Body and other governors have reacted swiftly and positively to the report's recommendations. They know the school well and are clear about its strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, governance is effective.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. They understand how the management of teachers' performance is supporting better practice. They apply the link between pay and teachers' performance; they are keen to reward good teaching and have tackled any underperformance directly.
 - They receive training in the analysis and interpretation of information about pupils' progress and attainment and, consequently, are well informed about the school's success in enabling pupils to achieve well.
 - Governors meet their statutory duties with regard to safeguarding.
 - School records show that the governing body has offered increased levels of both support and challenge to the headteacher and senior leaders in the last two years. Governors have helped to forge new partnerships to provide external help in the best interests of current and future pupils.

- Governors insist that the school promotes tolerance and equality of opportunity and that all pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Governors keep a careful check on finances and know how the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is spent and the impact on eligible pupils' achievement.
- They have assessed their own skills and have a good mix of expertise and experience. Governors are fully familiar with the school's current systems for assessment.
- Governors work closely with parents and make themselves available to parents at school meetings and through the school website. The Chair of the Governing Body, in her role as a volunteer librarian, has directly contributed to the success of the school's reading project.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their positive attitudes to learning help them to make good progress in lessons.
- There is good behaviour around the school and low-level disruption in lessons is very rare. This is because of the school's successful promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and pupils' growing sense of personal responsibility.
- Pupils' show respect for their teachers, for each other and for the school environment. They wear their uniform with pride and take care over the presentation of work in their books. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as acting as monitors at break and lunch times, and being captains and vice-captains of their school houses.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is in line with that in most schools. This improvement is because the school works hard to engage with and support parents. Although the rate of persistent absences from school among a small group of pupils was high in the past, it has reduced considerably. This improvement is a result of the work of learning mentors, who identify, listen to and support vulnerable pupils to attend and make the most of school.
- Behaviour is rigorously tracked and any incidents are logged. A variety of strategies are used to manage behaviour and the impact is carefully recorded. Pupils, parents, staff and governors say, and case studies show, that improvement in behaviour leads to raised achievement. Exclusions from school are rare. The very few pupils who attend alternative provision show improvements in their behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school site is safe and any visitors to the school are appropriately checked. All staff are rigorously checked prior to appointment.
- The school meets all statutory requirements with regard to safety, and pupils increasingly learn to look after themselves. For example, on an educational visit to London, pupils gain confidence in coping with city life by planning routes on the underground for themselves. Pupils also know about safety relating to the roads, the railways, cycling and fire.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and homophobic bullying. They say that bullying is not a concern at their school, but they are confident that staff would deal with any incidents that arose. Pupils are clear that they do not hear discriminatory or derogatory language in the school, such as homophobic or racist comments, and that they would immediately report it.
- Pupils show a good awareness of the potential dangers of the internet and the need to protect their identity and personal information.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and they also teach pupils to have high expectations of themselves. Good teaching has led to a consistent and sustained improvement in standards and rapid improvements in the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers know the pupils well and carefully plan learning that challenges all abilities and groups, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Experienced and well-qualified support staff ably assist teachers by working with pupils in the classroom, with individuals and with small groups to enable all to achieve well.
- Teachers ask questions in class that help pupils to think deeply about their learning and that identify any misunderstanding. The most-able pupils are making good progress, particularly in Key Stage 2, where, for example, smaller 'express groups' allow them to move on more rapidly.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and accurately, and helps pupils to identify what they need to do to improve. Pupils are given the time in class to check their own and each other's work and they talk with confidence and enthusiasm about how well they are doing and how they can do better. However, teachers' checking of pupils' work and progress are not as thorough in other subjects as they are in reading, writing and mathematics. The result is that pupils' progress in other subjects is less secure than it is in English and mathematics.
- The success of the school's drive to improve pupils' reading is supported by the participation of every teacher in each subject. Teachers and school leaders share their own current reading with pupils and help to create the strong culture of reading that is evident throughout the school. Pupils' improved reading skills have a positive impact on other subjects. For example, pupils are making better progress in science because they are able to make use of higher-level textbooks and answer more complex questions.
- While pupils' literacy skills are developed across the curriculum and throughout the school, pupils have fewer opportunities in Key Stage 3 to apply in other subjects what they have learnt in mathematics. Consequently, their numerical skills are not practised as well as their literacy skills, and this slows their progress in mathematics.
- Parents say that their children regularly read at home and teachers ensure that pupils always have a book 'on the go'. However challenging and stimulating homework is not set regularly enough in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics and, as a result, pupils do not advance their learning as well as they could.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is below that typical for their age, particularly in reading. As a result of improved teaching, they make good progress in Key Stage 2 and achieve standards at the end of Year 6 that are in line with those found nationally. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are making increasingly good progress. However, current pupils' attainment in Year 8 is lower than in other year groups because of weaker teaching in the past.
- Pupils' standards and progress by the end of Year 6 have improved each year since 2012. The progress of all pupils in Key Stage 2, including disadvantaged pupils, was good in 2014 and in the first term of the current school year. Inspection findings endorsed current progress as good. This level of performance means that pupils are well prepared for moving on to high school and the work expected of them there.
- In previous years, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs were not sufficiently challenged in their work because expectations of their progress were not high enough. In the last two years, these pupils have made much improved progress because they have received, and continue to receive, good support and guidance to enable them to do well.
- The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and the attainment of others in the school is

narrowing. This is because the support disadvantaged pupils receive is well targeted to their needs. In Year 6 in 2014, the gaps in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics narrowed between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school. The gap also narrowed between disadvantaged pupils and the performance of all pupils nationally. Eligible pupils were around three terms behind all pupils nationally in mathematics and around one-and-a-half terms behind in reading and writing. Within the school, the gaps in attainment were broadly similar to the national difference.

- The school has high expectations for the achievement of the most-able pupils. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 is in line with national performance. The recent progress of the most-able pupils throughout the school is rapid and sustained. Any weaknesses in the work of the most able are directly addressed. For example, when the school identified spelling as an area of weakness among these pupils, teachers checked spelling more rigorously and evidence in pupils' books shows that spelling has improved.
- The considerable improvement in pupils' reading has been rapid over the last school year. School data show that in September 2013 only two fifths of the pupils were reading at a level typical for their age, but by July 2014 this proportion had risen to nearly four fifths. The improvement is largely a result of the Secondary School Reading Pilot project. The school's success in improving reading is recognised widely, and leaders recently addressed a regional conference in order to share strategies and successes in improving reading with other schools.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to their work contribute to the good progress they make, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. The extent of their progress is not so clear in other subjects because teachers are less rigorous in their assessment and their marking in those areas.

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	124428
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	453498

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	373
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Shelley
Headteacher	Tracy Price
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2013
Telephone number	01782 297912
Fax number	N/A
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