

Isambard Brunel Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116219
Local Authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	312221
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Stephens

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 on roll	
School (total)	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Michelle Treacher
Headteacher	Mr Iain Gilmour
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
School address	Wymering Road North End Portsmouth PO2 7HX
Telephone number	02392 663 444
Fax number	02392 660 909

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils in this average sized junior school come from a variety of backgrounds. The percentage entitled to school meals is above average. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is above average for a school of this size. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, largely those who find aspects of English and mathematics challenging, is above average. The headteacher was appointed in 2006 and the deputy and other senior managers in September 2008. The school has been awarded the Investors in People Award, the Enhanced Healthy Schools Award and the Sportsmark accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Isambard Brunel Junior is a satisfactory school. Under the clear leadership of the headteacher it is improving and standards are rising. Staff say that the headteacher has had a significant impact on the school by putting into place secure foundations for future improvement. New school initiatives are having a positive impact on pupils' progress, which is satisfactory. Standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average when pupils transfer to secondary education at the end of Year 6. The school has clearly identified the need to improve the standard of boys' writing, the rate of pupils' progress in mathematics and to ensure that more pupils exceed the nationally expected level in science.

'What time, care and energy is put into each individual child!' and 'The school is very family friendly', are comments that reflect the overwhelmingly supportive views of the parents. The school provides a very secure and happy environment where all adults lead by example and the values of mutual support and understanding are paramount. The school has gone through a period of some instability with several staff changes and changes of role. Nevertheless, the headteacher has remained focussed on accelerating progress and raising standards. Monitoring and tracking procedures are being revised and improved. They are beginning to keep teachers better informed of the progress that pupils make and where they need to be either supported or challenged. The percentage of teaching that is good or better is increasing. In order to accelerate progress, the headteacher is working to improve teaching further so that good teaching is reflected consistently throughout the school.

Excellent links exist with external agencies. Links with the neighbouring infant school are good and developing further. As a result, provision for all pupils is enhanced, including those who find aspects of English and mathematics challenging and those for whom English is an additional language. Induction procedures for these pupils are very good and great care is taken to ensure that they settle quickly into school routines and that the right level of support and guidance is provided.

The majority of pupils behave well. They are friendly and welcoming, speaking confidently to adults. They feel safe and secure and talk with enthusiasm about the work that they do. Improving attendance and punctuality reflect their increasingly positive attitudes. Very good systems exist to withdraw and support the very few pupils who are sometimes disruptive and who need time to reflect on the impact of their behaviour. The number supported in this way is declining.

The school has restricted access to green spaces but has used the immediate environment well to provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to exercise and adopt a healthy lifestyle. Teachers also plan many visits, visitors and activities to ensure that pupils have opportunities to apply the skills they are taught. The school is aware that the systematic development and application of skills as pupils move through the school, is an area for development.

The headteacher is determined to involve all staff more effectively in the management process. He has gained their support and understanding, and they are applying themselves to the task with enthusiasm. Half the subject leaders are new to their role and are beginning to audit the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects. The senior management team, comprising the headteacher, his deputy, the inclusion manager, finance officer and English and mathematics subject leaders, is beginning to establish its roles within the school. The leadership team, comprising the headteacher and non-class based deputy have been more proactive and have

established clear priorities for further improvement. They acknowledge the need to establish rigorous procedures, understood and consistently implemented by all staff, that will lead to an improvement in achievement and standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress and raise standards in English, mathematics and science. In particular, improve the quality of boys' writing, the numbers of pupils attaining the higher levels in science and the percentage of pupils making the expected progress in mathematics.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that it is at least good throughout the school.
- Develop systems to monitor overall performance that are rigorous, widely understood and applied consistently, to effect an improvement in achievement and standards.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with standards in English and mathematics that are broadly average. Although pupils make satisfactory progress and standards remain broadly average at the end of Year 6, there remain pockets of underachievement, particularly in boys' writing and among some more able pupils in science. Progress in mathematics is not yet rapid enough. Recently, the school has made the improvement of reading a priority and this is reflected in accelerated progress and an improvement in standards. The few pupils who join the school with a very limited understanding of English are well supported and make good progress. Systems to track and monitor pupils' progress are being reviewed. As a result, teachers are becoming better informed about what individuals and groups need to do in order to improve. Even at this early stage, there is evidence to show that standards are beginning to rise and the rate of learning is increasing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The welcoming and friendly ethos of the school reflects the good personal development of the pupils. They enjoy school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This was evident in the strong sense of empathy shown during an armistice assembly led sensitively by Year 6 pupils. Pupils respect one another and value the school's cultural diversity. Pupils develop a good understanding of the significance and meaning of different cultural traditions. Pupils make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school, willingly taking on responsibilities, such as school councillors and prefects. School councillors attend a governors' meeting each term and feedback relevant information to the other pupils. Effective systems to improve attendance are rigorously applied and attendance is good. Pupils say bullying is extremely rare and have confidence that teachers will sort out any problems. They know what they have to do to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Pupils cooperate well when working in groups and are increasingly able to work independently. These skills, together with pupils' broadly average skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, combine to provide a sound basis for their future learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Monitoring records indicate that the quality of teaching is improving but still inconsistent. Teachers are beginning to build well on what pupils know and can do. This is reflected where work is well matched to pupils' needs and teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support different groups. These groups often include pupils with learning difficulties who find aspects of English and mathematics difficult. Although most of the teaching observed during the inspection was good, the improvements seen are just beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Teachers have established very good relationships with the pupils. They manage their behaviour well and provide many opportunities for pupils to support each other in their learning. Teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn in lessons. They use the interactive whiteboards well to both motivate the pupils and ensure that lessons proceed at a brisk pace. In the most successful lessons, teachers continually assess the progress pupils make and use praise effectively to encourage pupils to greater efforts. Less successful, but nonetheless satisfactory lessons proceed at a slower pace, work is not always sufficiently challenging especially for the more able and tasks are not thoroughly understood by all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Although pupils have opportunities to apply many of the skills they are taught, the school recognizes the need to review planning to ensure that skills are taught more systematically as pupils move through the school. Staff are also aware that boys' interest in writing needs to be further stimulated in order to accelerate their rate of progress. Special events, such as the Victorian Day taking place during the inspection, bring learning to life and successfully reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding. Visits and visitors bring excitement and enthusiasm to learning. The local area is used well to engage pupils and enhance their knowledge and understanding. Visits to the nearby historic dockyard, Southsea Castle, and a Tudor manor house, support work in history, for example. The curriculum effectively promotes pupils' personal and social development. Pupils appreciate and benefit from the good range of extra-curricular activities on offer.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for pastoral care is outstanding. The happiness and well-being of learners are at the heart of school life. Support for each individual's emotional and social needs is carefully planned and implemented. One parent's comment, 'Teachers are always available to listen and help with any problems', reflected the views of the vast majority. Working in close partnership, the inclusion manager and the head of the behaviour team provide first-rate guidance and practical help for colleagues. Links with outside agencies including the Local Authority Behaviour Support Team are excellent and specialists are involved swiftly if the need arises. Many staff, including teaching assistants are skilled at managing disruptive behaviour because they are well trained. Pupils often receive good feedback from teachers' marking and are set clear targets. They are encouraged to evaluate their own work. The progress of every pupil is reviewed every term. However, procedures to monitor the impact of the extra help given to pupils are at an early stage of development. Systems to track and monitor the progress of both individuals and groups

over time are developing but do not yet provide the school with enough information to ensure work is always well-matched to need. This is identified by the school as a priority.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although still establishing themselves in their new roles, managers share a common determination, driven by the good leadership and enthusiasm of the headteacher, to raise standards and accelerate progress. Thoughts and opinions of all staff are valued and consequently they all have a role in strategic planning. The School Development Plan sets out clear objectives for the year ahead. Through well established links, the school ensures that pupils gain a good understanding of both the local and wider community. The senior management team is currently establishing how it can best monitor the progress made in addressing the objectives detailed in the plan. Already, systems are securely in place to ensure that teachers are held to account for the progress that pupils make. It is more difficult for leaders to gain a detailed overview of the progress of classes, groups and individuals over time—because systems for monitoring the impact of interventions for all pupils are at an early stage of development. Several subject leaders are also new to role and are currently establishing strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. The governing body has recently reduced in size and reviewed its committee structure. It recognises that it needs to hold the school more rigorously to account for the progress pupils make and the standards they attain.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Isambard Brunel Junior School, Portsmouth, PO2 7HX

On behalf of your inspectors, thank you for being so welcoming, polite and friendly when we came to visit your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking with you and looking at all your work and the exciting things that you do.

- You go to a satisfactory school, but we think there are many things that happen in your school that are good and here are some of them. Your teachers care for you very well.
- They plan many exciting and interesting things for you to do.
- You play well together and your behaviour is good.
- Your teachers provide many interesting clubs, out of school activities and visitors.
- Most of you listen and follow instructions well.

Every school has things that could be improved. Here are the suggestions we have made.

- Standards in English, mathematics and science need to improve further. Boys need to try even harder to improve their writing; you all need to make faster progress in mathematics and you all need to try really hard to gain the higher levels in science.
- We have asked your teachers to make sure that all your lessons really help you to improve all aspects of your work so that standards continue to improve.
- All the teachers that help manage your school are doing a good job but they need to keep even more rigorous records of how you are progressing with your work so that they can check that your teachers are doing everything they can to help you make even better progress.

Yours sincerely

Graham Stephens

Lead Inspector