

Benfield Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114412
Local Authority	Brighton And Hove
Inspection number	338354
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Chris Grove

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	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Martin
Headteacher	Lisa Perrins
Date of previous school inspection	4 April 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent about two thirds of the inspection time looking at learning. They visited 16 lessons, observed 15 teachers, and looked at a small sample of pupils' work. Meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils, including some members of the school council. Inspectors looked at analyses of pupils' attainment and progress, records of governors' meetings, the school's development planning and documents relating to monitoring, safeguarding and the curriculum. Inspectors analysed inspection questionnaires returned by 91 parents and a sample of pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness with which the school's leaders identify weaknesses in provision and pupils' outcomes, and focus on the priorities for improvement
- the extent to which teaching offers the challenge to ensure at least satisfactory achievement by all groups of pupils, especially in writing and mathematics
- the extent to which the school's care, guidance and support lead to good personal outcomes for pupils
- how well the school promotes cohesion at all levels between different socio-economic, ethnic and religious groups.

Information about the school

Benfield is an average-sized junior school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are below average. Of these, few are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, principally speech, language and communication, or specific learning or profound and multiple learning difficulties, is well above average. The school has formed partnerships with two local secondary schools, one a sports college and the other a languages college. There is a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body. Among the range of awards which the school holds are the International School (Intermediate) and the Healthy School (Silver) awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Benfield Junior is a satisfactory school. It has some good features. The headteacher, in cooperation with the senior and middle leaders, has developed a strong sense of team spirit among staff. This results in the school's warm and welcoming tone and its positive ethos. Consequently, pupils are happy and enjoy what the school has to offer. One grateful parent judged the school to be 'a nurturing, caring and very supportive environment'. Another parent wrote of the 'lovely ethos' and felt that 'the staff are approachable and helpful and fulfil the needs of my child'. The pupils also feel warmly about the school. One pupil showed good insight when she wrote, 'The teachers respect us. They always try to improve the school and the children's learning.'

The school's inclusive atmosphere and the high quality of care lead to personal outcomes for pupils which are good in several respects. There is a strong relationship of trust between staff and pupils, which is increasingly reflected in pupils' good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Almost all the pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that they feel safe at school. Pupils readily adopt healthy lifestyles, and understand the importance of a healthy diet and keeping fit.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress through the school. By the end of Year 6, their attainment in English, mathematics and science has mostly been around the national average in recent years. In reading and science, standards are higher and progress is better than in writing and mathematics. The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation is also sometimes not high enough. Inspection observations showed inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Although a majority of teaching is good or better, some is only satisfactory and lacks challenge, particularly for the more able. This detracts from pupils' opportunities to make consistently good progress so that teaching is satisfactory overall. The curriculum is satisfactory and is enhanced by an impressive range of visits, visitors, themed events and extra-curricular provision that add purpose and interest to pupils' learning

Teachers' use of assessment information to support and guide pupils' learning is satisfactory. This is because marking does not consistently indicate the ways in which pupils could improve their work. Although there are good examples of the use of target setting for pupils, the impact across the school on pupils' learning and progress is not consistent. Pupils say that they do not always know how well they are doing.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher share a confident vision for the future, which is well supported by other staff who are ambitious for the school. The school has developed a range of good partnerships, which effectively support the curriculum, especially the provision for sport and languages, and for pupils' learning and personal

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well-being. The school has established good links with parents and carers, and relationships with the great majority of them are very positive.

Both senior and middle leaders are involved in a range of activities to monitor and evaluate the outcomes for pupils, to track progress and to judge the quality of the school's provision. They have applied considerable effort, particularly in recent times, to analysing accurately any weaker aspects of provision. However, the school's self-evaluation has not yet resulted in fully effective actions to improve the consistency and quality of teaching or the use of assessment information in planning, support and guidance, so as to improve the progress made by pupils. Since the last inspection, the quality of care for pupils has improved, and effective management has resulted in improved behaviour by pupils. Given these improvements and the school's record of sustaining broadly average attainment, its capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils, particularly boys and those who are more able, make more consistently good progress, especially in writing and mathematics, by:
 - increasing the proportion of teaching which is good or better
 - setting appropriately challenging tasks for all groups of pupils
 - paying more attention to pupils' handwriting and presentation.
- Improve the consistency of the academic guidance for pupils through:
 - marking which better indicates the next steps in their learning
 - involving pupils more in setting and assessing their learning targets.
 - Improve the monitoring and evaluation activities undertaken by school leaders in order to ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and the use of assessment information in planning, support and guidance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

When pupils enter the school, their attainment is broadly average. In Years 3 and 4, pupils make satisfactory progress, although learning seen during the inspection shows signs of improvement, particularly in Year 3. In a good lesson in mathematics in Year 3, the teacher provided a good level of challenge by posing an appropriate range of questions for pupils of different abilities, so that all were well engaged and making good progress.

Progress is generally better in Years 5 and 6 because teaching is more consistently challenging. For example, very good progress was made in a well-paced lesson in Year 5, where pupils were challenged to apply their knowledge of arithmetic to solve word problems. Pupils in Year 6 made good progress in learning how to argue a particular point of view because the teacher had high expectations and made the criteria for successful learning explicit. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are

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well supported by teachers and teaching assistants and make similar progress to others. Although achievement is satisfactory, groups such as boys and more able pupils do not always make as much progress as they could.

Most pupils say that they enjoy school. They are certain that the adults look after them very well, so that all feel safe. Pupils believe that there is some bullying but adults deal with this quickly and fairly. Pupils show a good understanding of personal safety, including awareness of internet dangers. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although there have been limited opportunities to develop their understanding of the diverse nature of Britain. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. The good take-up of the well-balanced school meals and the popular, well-attended after-school sports clubs contribute to pupils' eagerness to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Although pupils influence aspects of school life through the school council, opportunities for decision-making and wider contact with the local community are limited. Attendance has improved as a result of actions taken by the school and is now broadly average. Pupils have opportunities to develop workplace skills through activities such as 'talk partners' and learning to adopt problem-solving approaches. Together with their satisfactory levels of skills in literacy and numeracy, and improving skills in information and communication technology (ICT), this means that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' good management of pupils' behaviour ensures that the prevailing atmosphere in classrooms is conducive to learning. Much teaching promotes pupils' involvement and provides suitable levels of challenge for them. However, the quality of teaching is not consistent. In less successful lessons, expectations are not high enough and the pace of learning is too slow. Assessment is not used well enough to plan activities for pupils of different abilities, so that some, especially the more able, find the work too easy.

The school offers a broad curriculum, firmly based on literacy and numeracy. This has led to higher standards in reading, but not yet to comparably high standards in writing and mathematics. Information and communication technology provision has improved considerably and is satisfactory. The programme of personal, social and health education supports pupils' personal development well. Pupils have opportunities to learn French and German, and benefit from high-quality, specialist music tuition. Provision for those who are identified as gifted and talented is less well developed and is satisfactory. Teachers make purposeful links between subjects to enhance pupils' enjoyment. For instance, as part of their study of Tudor times, pupils in Year 5 designed and made their own coats of arms using different sewing techniques.

Staff are very committed to the school's caring ethos. The school has good links with a wide range of services to support the well-being of vulnerable pupils and those with particular learning difficulties, such as speech, language and communication. The recently appointed learning mentor provides effective support for those with emotional and behavioural needs. The good support that is given to those who are at an early stage of learning English enables them to access learning opportunities quickly. The breakfast club is much appreciated by those who attend it, especially the good range of healthy eating options that is available.

As a result of the steps taken by the school, attendance has improved.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

The good team spirit is leading to a positive drive for improvement, although this is yet to have a full impact on the quality of teaching and the use of assessment. Governors are committed to the school and are closely involved in its work. They understand the role of critical friend, but have not challenged the school about academic outcomes as strongly as they could. They ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements fully meet requirements and that procedures for child protection are robust. The school is an inclusive community. Leaders have a clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities, and in practice this is satisfactory since there is underperformance by some groups, including boys and more able pupils. The school has good links with the local area and is developing global links after gaining the International School award. Although the school has yet to evaluate fully its promotion of community cohesion, it recognises that more needs to be done to make pupils aware of the nature and range of cultures throughout Britain today.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents have positive views about Benfield Junior and are happy with their child's experience of school. They feel well informed about their child's progress, think that the school keeps their child safe, and believe that the school supports healthy lifestyles. A few are concerned about behaviour, but the inspection finds this to be good and well managed. Most think that the school is well led and managed and that the quality of

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teaching is good. Inspectors agree that some aspects of the school's leadership and management are good, but judge that others are satisfactory. Although some of the teaching is good, inspectors judge the overall quality of teaching to be satisfactory.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Benfield Junior to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 247 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	52	39	43	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	53	58	36	40	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	40	46	51	6	7	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	41	42	46	9	10	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	44	48	39	43	4	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	44	42	46	6	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	32	59	65	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	33	50	55	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	35	49	54	7	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	27	49	54	11	12	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	26	52	57	10	11	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	39	43	40	44	6	7	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	53	34	37	6	7	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



10 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Benfield Junior School, Portslade BN41 1XS

We would like to thank all of you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking to you at breaktimes and lunchtimes. We especially thank those of you who filled in the pupils' questionnaire.

We think that Benfield Junior is a satisfactory school with some good features.

These are the positive things about your school.

- Your school has a very welcoming feel and a positive climate for learning.
- You enjoy school, behave well and show positive attitudes.
- All the adults take very good care of you.
- You have a good understanding of healthy living, and feel really safe in school.
- You participate well in the wide range of extra-curricular clubs.
- Most of your parents are pleased with your experience at the school.
- Your school has good partnerships with other schools and specialists that support your learning and well-being.

We have asked the school to work on the following things.

- You need to do better in writing and mathematics, especially the boys and those of you who are more able. The school should ensure that all lessons are of high quality, and provide each of you with suitably challenging work. Teachers should expect your best handwriting and presentation.
- Teachers should show you better how to improve your work through their marking and the targets that are set for you. You should help to set these targets and check for yourselves how well you are doing.
- Leaders should check how well the school is doing so that all teaching is of the highest quality, and that the fullest use is made of teachers' assessments of how well you are doing when planning what you need to learn next.

You can help too by continuing to work hard. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Grove

Lead inspector

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