

# The Brunts School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	133266
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	341367
Inspection dates	16-17 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor HMI

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

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Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1620
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mick Ulyatt
Headteacher	Mrs Janice Addison
Date of previous school inspection	14-15 March 2007
School address	The Park Mansfield Nottinghamshire NG18 2AT
Telephone number	01623 623149
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Email address	jaddison@thebrunts.org

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 58 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including minutes of meetings, school records and reports from external partners. They analysed the questionnaires from staff, students and the 342 received from parents.

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

- the progress and standards of attainment of students currently in the school especially that of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and of all students in English
- how well teaching meets the individual needs of students
- the effectiveness and rigour of the systems the school uses to evaluate its performance and the accuracy of its judgements.

## Information about the school

The Brunts School is a large, over-subscribed school with slightly fewer girls than boys. Most students are from White British backgrounds with a small number from a variety of minority ethnic groups. Almost all students speak English as their first language. The school is a specialist college for performing arts and has three times been awarded the Full International Schools Award. Other awards include the Artsmark Gold Award and the Healthy Schools Gold Standard. The school is part of the Mansfield Learning Partnership and has achieved Established Extended School status.

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

2

## Main findings

Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher the school has improved many aspects of its work since the last inspection. New structures for the management of the school and significant improvements to the curriculum have resulted in a steady rise in standards and more effective systems for the care, guidance and support provided for students. This in turn has improved the achievement of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The specialist subjects make a significant contribution to the personal development of the students and to the local community. There is a positive and purposeful atmosphere in the school built on mutual respect and a common purpose. The senior leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development well and have constructed detailed plans for further improvement. They recognise that the quality of teaching needs to be more consistent across all subjects in order to increase the progress that the students make. Carefully planned staff development closely linked to individual and school priorities has been effective in improving teaching and leadership and as a result, the school is well-placed to continue the pattern of improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation undertaken by middle leaders is more incisive and effective in order to raise the quality of all teaching to that of the best, especially in relation to adjusting teaching to meet the learning needs of all students as the lesson proceeds.
- Develop effective systems for ensuring that the school can assure the quality of the provision for sixth form students wherever it is provided.
- Raise attainment in English and standards of literacy through:
  - a consistent focus on literacy across the curriculum
  - developing the use of teaching assistants to support the adjustment of teaching to meet individual needs.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Standards are rising. In 2009 GCSE results improved on those of 2008 at all grade

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levels. Students enjoy their learning and all groups now make satisfactory progress. From broadly average starting points, the students progress well in Key Stage 3, but in some subjects this slows in Years 10 and 11. On entry to the school literacy levels are below average and the school aims to make the improvement of this a focus across the curriculum. Progress in English has been a cause for concern, but here too there is strong evidence of better achievement. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities was below expectations in 2008. Provisional results for 2009 show the gap has closed. The school's tracking data and modular GCSE results for 2010 indicate further rises in standards across the school. Lesson observations endorse the improvement.

Students cooperate well with each other and with adults. They readily take part in activities outside the school day and contribute to the school and to the local community in a variety of ways. Many of these opportunities come through the school's specialism which has had a significant impact on their spiritual and cultural development.

Behaviour has improved steadily in recent years and the number of exclusions has fallen dramatically. Lessons are rarely disrupted and good behaviour often contributes to the successful learning in the lesson. This was particularly evident in dance and drama lessons observed during the inspection, where the students supported each other and offered helpful advice to fellow students on how to improve their performance. Students told inspectors they feel safe at school although they did report a small amount of bullying.

The international links which the school has forged with schools in countries such as Brazil, The Gambia and Sri Lanka have helped them to develop a good understanding of other cultures and created opportunities for a wide range of experiences that increase their self-confidence and raise their self-esteem.

Students develop satisfactory basic skills, including those in information and communication technology which is an improvement since the last inspection when provision for ICT was weak. They are usually punctual and have the ability to work collaboratively which are useful qualities for their future working lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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

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<sup>1</sup> 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 feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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 <sup>1</sup>	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

### How effective is the provision?

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. There is some good or better teaching but also some that is satisfactory or, in a small minority of cases, inadequate. There are good systems now in place to share the best practice and provide support where needed. This is raising the quality across the school but it is still variable across subjects.

Teachers have secure knowledge of their subjects. They use a variety of activities to keep students engaged and there is often a brisk pace to lessons. The purpose of learning is shared with students and in stronger lessons objectives are revisited so that students are clear about the focus of their learning. There is a common format for the planning of lessons which shows the range of activities and resources to be used. However, very rarely does planning show how the needs of the different abilities of students will be met. Consequently, in many lessons, there is not an accurate level of challenge for students, with work being too hard or easy and neither motivating or moving them on quickly in their learning. Expectations of students' work and involvement are not always high enough.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is increasingly offering a wider range of options at all key stages, particularly through the school's areas of strength in the performing and creative arts. Curricular provision for literacy is a weaker but improving aspect. Students are pleased with the curriculum and the greater range of options which allow them to pursue their interests and which, for many pupils, have led to employment opportunities or consolidated choices with regard to further education. The reduction in exclusions, improvements in attendance and increased numbers going into further or higher education show the positive impact of the changes. There is still a below average number of students who choose to study a modern language at Key Stage 4, but the school has put in place plans to tackle this through transition work with the primary schools.

There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities and many special events such as trips and imaginative projects especially through the performing arts. Creativity is emphasised and cross curricular approaches such as a dance and algebra project have increased students' enjoyment and strengthened links across the school and

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with other organisations.

Good practices are in place for the care of all students, backed up by effective use of outside agencies. This includes careers advice and transition arrangements into Year 7. There is good evidence of students' increased confidence, self-esteem and aspirations, brought about by carefully thought out, varied and coordinated intervention work. The school is working on developing the use of teaching assistants so they can focus more clearly on the learning needs of the students they support.

*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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has built a senior team that has the confidence of teaching and non teaching staff to ensure the continuation of the improvements evident in the outcomes for all groups. The rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have been recognised locally as a model of good practice. The school sets realistic yet challenging targets and as a result outcomes are improving strongly. Imaginative use is made of all available resources both within the school and in the wider community to increase the range of options within the curriculum, to strengthen the care and support for students and to build on the good links with parents and the school's growing reputation locally.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and make sure they gather first hand evidence of its work. They challenge well and appreciate the effective training they have received to help them fulfil their roles.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough and ensure the welfare and safety of staff, students and visitors. The school makes a good contribution to the cohesion of the local community. Through the specialism and its work as an international school, The Brunts is contributing effectively to the cohesion of the global community. Students from different cultures mix comfortably in the school and there are very few racist incidents.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

## Sixth form

Students from all backgrounds enter the sixth form and are interested and committed to their studies. They achieve in line with the potential shown by their GCSE results on entry and make satisfactory progress. Students attend regularly and make a substantial contribution to the school community. Students support the learning of younger members of the school and take a lead in many activities. They say they enjoy being members of the sixth form and act in a mature manner. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and much is good or better, but there is inconsistency in quality between subjects. There is an impressive range of courses available for all abilities partly through the close working relationship with local schools and a college in the Mansfield Learning Partnership. Students much appreciate the helpful support given when they plan their futures. Assurance of the quality of educational provision off the school site was weak at the last inspection. A helpful system has been planned to address this, but it is too soon to evaluate its impact.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

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## Views of parents and carers

Parents are generally supportive of the school. In the questionnaires many spoke of the good relationships within the school and of the students' enjoyment in their learning. Particular commendation was given to the process of induction for new students enabling them to settle in quickly and happily. A small minority were concerned about bullying and several wanted better communication when incidents were reported. Indeed, communication was generally felt to be something that could be better especially regarding students' progress and how they as parents might help their children to learn.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Brunts School 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 342 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1620 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	139	41	185	54	14	4	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	115	34	201	59	13	4	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	114	33	195	57	18	5	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	100	29	193	57	25	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	99	29	208	61	13	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	89	26	187	55	37	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	86	25	211	62	25	7	2	1
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)	101	30	189	55	20	6	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	91	27	208	61	18	5	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	86	25	187	55	26	8	11	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	66	19	201	59	30	9	7	2
The school is led and managed effectively	95	28	209	61	13	4	5	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	135	39	135	39	17	5	1	0

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 all 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

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>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.



18 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Brunts School, Mansfield, NG18 2AT

On behalf of all the inspectors who visited your school this week I want to thank you for the way you helped us in this inspection. Your honest and mature comments were most useful in helping us to reach our conclusions about the school.

You told us how you enjoy school, particularly the wide variety of clubs and out-of-school activities that are provided. We were impressed by your good behaviour especially when we saw you working cooperatively in lessons. This contributed significantly to the progress that everyone was making in those lessons. You should be proud of the way you contribute to the school and to the local community. It is particularly pleasing to see that the progress you are making has improved, especially the progress made by those of you who need some extra help with your learning.

We know some of you feel there have been too many changes recently and that you have not always felt able to make your views clear. However, there is real evidence that you are benefiting from most of these changes already. An example of this would be the increased range of subjects you are able to study and the way the headteacher and the other senior staff are monitoring more thoroughly the work of the school which is meaning the quality of the teaching you receive is improving.

We have asked the school to address some key issues in order to increase your achievement further. These include:

- making sure you all have work that is set at the correct level and ensures you continue to make progress throughout the lesson;
- focussing on literacy in all subjects to help you all make better progress in English;
- checking that the quality of the teaching those of you in the sixth form receive is of an equally high standard wherever it occurs.

With my very best wishes for your success in the future

Elaine Taylor  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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