

Isambard Brunel Junior School

Wymering Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 7HX

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is improving but the pace of change has not been quick enough.
- Leaders have not monitored the quality of teaching robustly enough. This has slowed the pace of improvement to secure consistently good teaching.
- Leaders' development planning is not precisely targeted. Consequently, it is difficult for leaders to identify how successful their actions have been in improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers' improvement priorities are too broad and have not been focused precisely enough on accelerating pupils' progress.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable. As a result, pupils do not make good progress and do not reach the levels of which they are capable.
- Teachers' questioning does not require pupils to think deeply. Pupils are not expected, or given enough time, to consider their responses, and their answers are not probed to develop their ideas.
- Pupils do not routinely know what to do to improve their work. This prevents them from making more rapid progress.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Pupils spend too much time on activities which lack purpose and challenge. Their progress is not fast enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Governors and the trust have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They hold school leaders to account effectively.
- The support and expertise available in the trust are contributing effectively to improvements in teaching, leadership and governance.
- Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are courteous, respectful and tolerant.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding. As a result, pupils say that they feel safe in school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan work to match the needs and abilities of all learners
 - teachers' questioning develops pupils' thinking and challenges their ideas
 - staff provide pupils with consistently useful feedback about how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders are rigorous in monitoring the quality of teaching and addressing weaknesses
 - leaders set clear targets for pupils' outcomes and evaluate the impact of improvement strategies on pupils' progress
 - plans to improve the performance of teachers are precise and focused on pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Teachers receive feedback about their work and how to improve their effectiveness. However, development points are not focused sufficiently on pupils' outcomes, including for different groups. The headteacher and new leaders are addressing this so that every teacher is clear about what they are expected to achieve.
- While leaders are committed to making improvements, their actions have been too slow. The goals in the school improvement plan are not precise enough or sharply focused on pupils' outcomes. It is therefore difficult for leaders to assess whether action taken to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching has had a positive impact.
- Some senior, middle and subject leaders' roles in improving the quality of teaching and learning are underdeveloped. They do not check on the quality of teaching carefully enough.
- The headteacher has restructured the leadership team. Recent appointments to key positions are sound and the capacity for accelerated improvement is clear. In a short space of time, new leaders have had a positive impact. Changes to leadership are empowering leaders and teachers to use information about pupils' performance more purposefully to bring about improvement across the curriculum.
- The curriculum interests and motivates pupils. It is broad and balanced and there are opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills in different subjects. Pupils enjoy a range of visits to enhance the curriculum, including a Year 4 trip to Fishbourne Roman Palace. Extra-curricular aspects of the wider curriculum are strong and enjoyed by pupils. Pupils benefit from an extensive range of clubs and exciting opportunities to stimulate their physical, social and emotional development.
- Staff benefit from a range of professional development opportunities, closely matched to their own personal needs but also rooted in the school's key priorities. Support from other schools in the trust has had a positive impact on aspects of the school's work. The recent improvement in the school's provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils is one example of this.
- Sports funding is leading to greater participation by pupils in clubs and competitions, as well as helping them lead healthier lives. The impact of this funding is that pupils have an increasing level of fitness and understand the importance of exercise. The funding is also used well to train staff to teach specific sports, by closely observing the specialist teachers.
- Pupils have a good appreciation of diversity and understand about different cultures and beliefs as these aspects are taught well. A values-based ethos, named the 'Brunel way', permeates the school. Pupils talk openly about being respectful and striving for excellence. British values are taught well in lessons and assemblies. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding appropriately. Useful training enables adults to provide increasingly effective support for individuals and groups of disadvantaged

pupils. This meets their social and emotional needs and ensures that they can access the curriculum fully. The school's own evidence shows that this has had a positive impact on the levels of concentration and achievement of individual pupils, and demonstrates leaders' commitment to equality of opportunity.

- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Additional funding is used well to provide precisely targeted teaching. The leader knows pupils well and quickly identifies all barriers to learning. Support is routinely evaluated to check that it continues to be effective. This has led to rapid rates of progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Parents are generally complimentary about the work of the school. They welcome the care that staff give to their children and the way in which staff readily communicate and are available when parents need guidance.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a strong vision for the school as a learning community.
- Governors are very ambitious and have developed an inclusive ethos.
- Governors and representatives from the trust are clear about the main priorities for school improvement. They are effective in monitoring the key measures of progress, and hold school leaders to account robustly.
- Governors know how additional funds are used to support vulnerable pupils, including the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They know the impact of this funding on pupils' achievement and social and emotional needs. They provide appropriate challenge to leaders to ensure that regular reviews are undertaken. This keeps the focus sharp on the quality of the provision for this group of pupils.
- Governors and academy trust board members are trained well, have valuable individual expertise and work closely with the school's leaders. This has enabled them to be incisive in their questioning of school leaders. Their close links with the school mean they regularly follow up issues such as pupils' previous underachievement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all pupils are kept safe from harm by having clear safeguarding procedures and policies in place. Site security is good and pupils are carefully supervised.
- Leaders have developed a culture in which the welfare of all pupils is understood to be of paramount importance. They ensure that members of staff know the issues facing vulnerable families and their children. This includes keeping a watchful eye on protecting pupils from radicalisation. One staff member told inspectors, 'Nothing is too small.'

- Safeguarding policies and procedures are effective. Records of staff checks are managed efficiently. Staff training is up to date and appropriate for the level of responsibility each individual holds. This training equips every member of staff with the knowledge they need to support pupils and parents who are potentially vulnerable, so that appropriate action can be taken.
- There are strong and effective relationships with a wide range of external agencies. Leaders are not afraid to challenge outside agencies should the need arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is too variable across the school. Although the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving, not enough work is pitched at the right level. Consequently, pupils make inconsistent progress across year groups and within different subjects. Pupils' books show that some of the activities set are too easy, as pupils had already mastered more difficult skills earlier in the year.
- Teachers do not ask questions that stretch pupils' thinking. They do not allow pupils enough time to think about their answers or challenge them beyond their initial response to a question. As a result, they miss opportunities to develop pupils' ideas and thinking. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils, as they are not regularly challenged to explain their reasoning.
- The quality of feedback which pupils receive about their work is variable. Teachers do not all follow the school's policy for feedback and marking. Pupils are not consistently supported, as indicated in the policy, to be further challenged or have misunderstandings clearly explained.
- The quality of the teaching of reading and writing varies. In 'guided' reading sessions, pupils explore texts in some detail but questions to test pupils' understanding of what they have read do not present enough challenge. In writing, pupils are not routinely encouraged or supported to pull together their understanding of what is required to achieve good-quality writing.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. This also applies to their expectations of pupils completing well-presented work, particularly in mathematics. Worksheets, for example, sometimes prevent pupils from showing that they can present their working out and what they are capable of because they are not challenging.
- In all classes, relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils respect and trust their teachers. Practical equipment is used well to support pupils' learning. Displays in classrooms celebrate features of pupils' work and provide prompts for pupils during lessons.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers and other support staff receive useful guidance from the leader with responsibility for this group of pupils, which ensures that pupils' different learning and social needs are met well.

- Teachers work hard in lessons. Some check on pupils' understanding to uncover misconceptions and are effective in reframing their explanations to clarify the key learning points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and want to succeed and do well. They are confident due to the secure and nurturing environment created by all staff.
- Pupils are courteous, sensible and polite. They show good levels of respect for each other, visitors and adults. For example, pupils listened carefully to each other in a small-group reading session, taking it in turns to read and answer questions.
- Pupils readily take on different jobs and responsibilities, including being members of the school council and setting out and clearing away chairs in the hall.
- Leaders and staff ensure that pupils' emotional well-being is paramount in their work. They are sensitive to pupils' developmental needs, and ensure that they provide timely, meaningful and effective support to those pupils and their families who most need it.
- Pupils conduct themselves well throughout the school day. They talk very confidently and excitedly about school. Pupils enjoy school and learning, and the activities they experience both in and out of the classroom.
- Pupils' learning about safety is given high priority. Pupils can identify the risks when they are playing or working online and know how to avoid putting themselves in danger. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety and they do this readily.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils respond well to the school's rules. They move about the school in a calm manner. Pupils behave well during assembly and show respect for each other's views. They play happily and safely with each other during less-structured times such as playtimes and lunchtimes.
- All adults manage behaviour well. They have received training to help them support pupils who have social, emotional or mental health difficulties. As a result, they deal with pupils sensitively but firmly whenever the need arises. Pupils are also taught to try to resolve any behaviour issues between themselves before seeking an adult's help.
- Pupils know the various forms that bullying can take. They report that bullying is very rare. They told the inspector that when it does occur, they know how to tackle it and are confident that it will be dealt with swiftly and effectively by adults at the school.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. Overall attendance is in line with the national average. The importance of coming to school regularly is communicated well to pupils.

Leaders track the attendance of groups of pupils effectively and have acted quickly when attendance has dipped.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because too few pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school. Consequently, relatively few pupils exceed expectations for their age across the school.
- Although there are now signs of improvement, attainment at the end of key stage 2 is still not strong enough. As a result, pupils are not always as well prepared for the next stage of their education as they could be. Standards reached by pupils by the time they leave the school have fluctuated.
- In mathematics, work in pupils' books and the school's own tracking information shows that pupils are making progress but it is uneven from their different starting points. Some teachers use resources well to highlight aspects of mathematics such as place value. However, pupils are not stretched sufficiently and it takes too long before they tackle work that challenges their thinking.
- The most able pupils make inconsistent progress. They are sometimes expected to complete tasks which they have already mastered, or are given challenges which do not deepen their learning. This is particularly the case at the start of lessons.
- The pupils' writing is becoming more creative as they gain the confidence to use ambitious vocabulary. They generally write neatly and apply skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling to make their writing more accurate. Some pupils have the stamina to write at length, but typically pupils struggle to write longer pieces of work.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do increasingly well because of the good and improving provision. Their progress is typically good across all year groups and the range of subjects from their different starting points. This is because the help they receive is well planned, regularly checked and targeted well to meet their needs.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils' progress was below that of other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. Leaders use additional funding well to support disadvantaged pupils both to access their work in class and effectively meet their individual social, emotional and personal needs. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school, including the most able disadvantaged, is steadily improving from their different starting points. Consequently, some disadvantaged pupils' attainment is rising rapidly.
- As teaching improves, pupils are making more rapid progress. Pupils' current work demonstrates that their attainment is improving, particularly in writing.

School details

Unique reference number	141530
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10036928

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	300
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Julie Spurgeon
Headteacher	Iain Gilmour
Telephone number	02392 663444
Website	www.isambardbruneljuniorschool.org.uk
Email address	head@isambard.portsmouth.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Isambard Brunel Junior School is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school and converted to an academy in June 2014. The school is part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 2.

- The school meets requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish online.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in each class. Some of these lessons were visited with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors examined a range of pupils' work in mathematics, writing and other subjects.
- Inspectors heard individual pupils read during lessons.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally in a meeting and informally around the school.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 17 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also spoke with parents as they collected their children from school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at playtimes, lunchtimes and when pupils were moving around the school.
- Meetings were held with governors, senior leaders, middle leaders and representatives from the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and its improvement plan. Inspectors looked at attendance and behaviour records.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding documentation and considered how this related to the school's daily practice. They spoke with staff and pupils about keeping safe.

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Cook	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Anderson	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
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