

Inspection of Isambard Brunel Junior School

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

Inspection dates: 3–4 December 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have huge ambitions for pupils. Pupils come to school ready to learn and take responsibility for the choices they make. They increasingly try really hard and keep going when they face challenges. Pupils' relationships with adults and each other are strong.

Pupils behave well in class and feel safe. They listen to teachers and to each other attentively, respecting the views of others. Pupils follow teachers' instructions promptly. The atmosphere in classes is calm and helps pupils to learn. A few pupils who struggle with their behaviour are well supported by adults. Pupils told us that there is not much bullying and that adults deal with it well if it happens. Behaviour has improved significantly since the new leaders joined the school.

Pupils really make the most of all the great opportunities they are given to enrich their learning. For example, pupils talked to us excitedly about the space planetarium that came to school recently. They told us about the interesting places they have visited and when theatre groups have worked with them in school. Teachers build on these experiences in lessons well. They harness pupils' enthusiasm effectively, especially when pupils need to persevere when they find things tricky.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The new headteacher and deputy headteacher are a very strong and effective team. They have raised expectations for all pupils' behaviour and learning. Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that is well matched to pupils' needs. They have thought carefully about how to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. As one pupil told us: 'We live in a democracy. If we think something is wrong, we say so; if we think something should change, we vote on it.'

Leaders have made significant changes since the previous inspection. In addition to making impressive improvements to pupils' behaviour, they have rightly focused on improving reading, writing and mathematics. They have ensured that teachers plan pupils' learning coherently, building on what pupils already know. Consequently, pupils' learning in reading, writing and mathematics has improved rapidly. However, this has not yet been reflected in outcomes at the end of Year 6.

Pupils' reading is particularly strong across the school. Pupils read books that are well matched to their reading abilities. Those pupils who need to catch up are quickly identified and given the right extra help. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils enjoy using the well-resourced library frequently to further develop their reading. One pupil said, representing the views of many, 'I didn't used to like reading but now I love it.'

Teachers know pupils well. They check pupils' understanding often and adapt their lessons to make sure that pupils, including those with SEND, know and remember

more. Teachers understand that they need to further develop pupils' vocabulary across the curriculum. Pupils talked enthusiastically of the 'ninja word' of the day and how that helps them learn the meanings of new words regularly.

Many curriculum leaders are new to these roles. They have high expectations of what pupils should learn. Much of the wider curriculum has recently been revised to ensure that pupils' learning is sequenced well. Leaders acknowledge there is still more work to do before curriculum planning is fully secure in all subjects. Activities designed to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding are not always effective enough. This means that pupils' achievement in some subjects is not as good as it should be.

The trust is ambitious for the school to improve further. Trust leaders challenge and support leaders and support the development of all staff effectively. Trust leaders know how well pupils are doing in all curriculum areas and what needs to be done to improve outcomes, particularly in Year 6. While overall attendance has improved, trust and school leaders acknowledge that they need to improve further the attendance of a minority of pupils. These pupils are missing too much school, which is hampering their achievement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a top priority for leaders. Staff have received the appropriate training and are vigilant. Vulnerable pupils and their families receive timely and appropriate levels of support.

Pupils feel well cared for and safe at school. They learn to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Pupils talked enthusiastically about 'Winter Safety Day'. They told us they learned about road safety, 'stranger danger' and how to keep themselves safe when online. They also said that the adults in school would always help them if they had a problem.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in reading, writing and mathematics is well established. Leaders have rightly prioritised improving these areas first. However, while plans are in place for other subjects, pupils' achievement is not as strong as it is in the core subjects. Curriculum leaders now need to make sure that assessment tasks are designed well to enable teachers to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively across the wider curriculum. However, it is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken that they are in the process of bringing this about.
- Pupils' overall attendance has improved because of leaders' successful strategies. However, persistent absence continues to be high and a minority of pupils miss

too much school. While leaders have convincing plans and new strategies in place, these have yet to have enough impact.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	141530
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10111422
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	288
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Martin
Headteacher	Lucy Carroll
Website	www.isambard.portsmouth.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 September 2017

Information about this school

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team. The current headteacher was appointed by the trust to the permanent post from March 2019. There is a new deputy headteacher along with newly appointed subject leaders.
- The proportion of pupils who qualify for pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school offers a breakfast club which is managed by the school.

Information about this inspection

- As part of this inspection, we held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, writing, personal, social and health education (PHSE), science and history. We spoke to curriculum

leaders, visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work, talked with pupils and met with teachers. I also heard some pupils read and talked to them about their reading.

- We talked to some pupils informally on the playground and at lunchtime.
- I also talked to the chair of the trust, the chief executive officer, the director of education for Portsmouth, the chair of the regional governing body and a governor.
- I scrutinised a range of school documents, including the school's own evaluation, improvement plans, and records about behaviour and attendance.
- We considered the 21 responses made by parents and carers to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 21 responses to Ofsted's free-text system. We also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and at breakfast club. Additionally, we took account of the six responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- We evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding by reviewing records, training and actions. We looked at the single central record and case studies. We spoke to the designated safeguarding lead, pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Becky Greenhalgh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Judith O'Hare	Ofsted Inspector
Charlotte Wilson	Ofsted Inspector

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