

Abbey Hulton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123989
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	380770
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Judith Straw

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vicki Cartwright-Davies
Headteacher	Linda Williams
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2006
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Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Straw
Kirsteen Rigby

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 15 lessons taught by nine teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, governors, staff, a representative from the local authority and the school improvement partner. They had informal conversations with parents and carers bringing their children to school. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement planning, safeguarding arrangements, data on pupils' progress, records of the school's monitoring of teaching and learning and the work in pupils' books. They scrutinised questionnaire responses from 67 parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

The school is a little smaller than the average-sized primary school. Well over half of all pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. The number of pupils who join and leave the school other than at the normal times is high. The school meets the current government floor standard for pupils' attainment and progress.

There have been several changes of leadership since the last inspection. The present headteacher took up her post in January 2010.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Abbey Hulton is a satisfactory school. The school is rapidly improving after a period of declining attainment and inconsistency in leadership and teaching. This is not yet a good school because, although many pupils make good progress, attainment is too low so that the achievement of pupils overall is satisfactory rather than good. Teaching is improving but there is a need for further refinement.
- Most pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress because of the hard work of skilled teaching assistants and the many interventions used by the school to accelerate their learning. The many pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals also make good progress.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall with much that is good. This is why many pupils are making better than expected progress. The school is working to overcome a long legacy of underachievement. In the past the school’s assessment data have been inaccurate so that there was limited understanding of how well pupils were achieving. The school is working hard to overcome the remaining inconsistencies in teaching.
- Pupils’ behaviour is satisfactory in class, around the school and in the playground. Teachers manage pupils’ behaviour consistently well and create a purposeful atmosphere for learning. Pupils know about risks and how to keep themselves safe. Attendance is average.
- The headteacher’s and the deputy headteacher’s drive and determination have been key factors in the school’s rapid improvement. Teachers’ work is well managed by senior staff. All staff and members of the governing body share the vision to improve the school so that teaching is improving, attainment is rising and the emphasis on improving outcomes for all pupils is at the forefront of all planning. The curriculum is good. It has been completely rewritten to provide exciting and positive learning experiences for all pupils and contributes significantly to pupils’ good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - raising attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 to at least the national average
 - developing clear strategies to support the higher-attaining pupils and those with specific gifts and talents
 - ensuring pupils have regular opportunities for extended writing.
- Consolidate and build upon recent improvements to teaching by:
 - sharpening learning objectives so that pupils know precisely what they are to do
 - making sure that introductions do not go on too long so that pupils are learning throughout the lesson
 - supporting teachers to become even more accurate in their assessments.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are well below those typical for their age. They settle quickly in the bright and stimulating environment and begin to learn at once. During the inspection the theme was about doctors and nurses and children were happily engaged in activities such as finding rhymes, early counting, making 'get well soon' cards and enjoying role play. Children behave well in this lively and attractive setting and, encouraged by plenty of praise from adults, they make good progress. Even so, they are still below the expected level by the time they enter Key Stage 1.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 all groups of pupils were seen to make at least satisfactory progress and for many it was good. Most pupils are keen to learn and answer questions readily, although a few lack confidence and are less willing to contribute. In a particularly successful English lesson in Year 6 pupils were writing enticing travel brochures showing how well they understood the language devices used to tempt people into purchasing. Leaders have identified that, in the past, girls have achieved less well than boys but, as a result of a good range of strategies, the gap is narrowing rapidly. Pupils have consistently achieved better in mathematics than in English, particularly in writing, so this has become a focus in current improvement planning.

Regular, well structured guided reading and phonics lessons help all pupils to make at least satisfactory progress in reading and the linking of letters and sounds, although attainment is below the national average for pupils in both key stages. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs respond well in the smaller teaching groups provided for them so that they make the same progress as other pupils. Because the school is still working to eradicate a long legacy of underachievement, despite evident good progress, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 remains below average but is rapidly rising. Higher-attaining pupils and those with specific gifts and talents do not always make as much progress as they could. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were confident that their children make good progress and inspection evidence confirms this.

Quality of teaching

Teachers are enthusiastic and create a positive climate for learning. All adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage play a significant role in asking open-ended questions and supporting the learning of children in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Teachers are knowledgeable and in most lessons offer clear explanations of what pupils are to learn. However, occasionally the aims of the lesson are too complex so that pupils are not sure how they will be assessed. Some of the best teaching offers pupils the opportunity to research and find out for themselves. For example, in mathematics lessons Year 2 pupils enjoyed finding lines of symmetry in many different activities and Year 6 pupils were engaged in solving different problems in finding the perimeters of simple and complex shapes. However, just occasionally, the pace slows when teachers talk for too long at the start of lessons, leaving less time for active learning. Higher-attaining pupils are not always provided with sufficient challenge. Teaching assistants are deployed well and support the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils make especially good progress in the nurture group where small groups of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are taught life-skills as well as academic topics so that they develop self-confidence and self-esteem. Attainment in English is improving but there are currently too few opportunities for pupils to produce extended pieces of writing.

The diverse and rich curriculum has accelerated learning in all classes. Teachers have injected creativity and excitement into the curriculum to fire the imagination of their pupils. For example, a 'chocolate theft' at break one day led to a scene of crime investigation, questioning of suspects, visits from the community police to assist and follow up work in science and English. The example set by adults and the new curriculum have a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good.

Teachers' marking is helpful and their assessments of the levels at which pupils are working, which in the past have been too generous, are now becoming more accurate. The great majority of parents and carers agree that their children are well taught and are pleased with their progress. Inspectors agree that teaching is improving rapidly.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most pupils say that they feel safe in school and are able to talk to an adult if they have any worries. Pupils understand about different forms of bullying but said there were few instances of it and were confident that the school sorts out any issues quickly. Pupils' typical behaviour is satisfactory overall and for many pupils it is good. A very small minority of pupils occasionally cause disruption to lessons, in one year group in particular. The school has responded to this by deploying extra teaching assistants so that pupils say that most lessons proceed enjoyably and without interruption. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other and treat adults and visitors with courtesy and respect. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about lessons being disrupted by poor behaviour. Inspectors investigated this concern and found that, although a very few pupils do sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour, teachers manage such incidents well and consistently apply the school's behaviour code. Rewards and sanctions are used appropriately, although the school accepts that, in the past, teachers and teaching assistants have sometimes been too generous in their praise of pupils whose behaviour is not good enough. Parents and carers were pleased with the way in which the school nurtures their children. Speaking for many, one wrote, 'My child has behaviour problems and

they have gone out of their way to help him...more than I ever hoped.' The school works hard to promote attendance so that it is consistently average.

Leadership and management

After a period of staffing turbulence and changes in leadership the new senior leadership team have brought stability and a vision for improvement in every aspect of the school's work. Significant improvements to teaching have ensured that inadequate teaching has been eradicated and all teaching is at least satisfactory with much that is good. This has been achieved by a vigorous approach to professional development from which all staff benefit so that good practice is recognised and shared. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. It was quickly accepted by staff and school leaders that some assessments in the past have been too generous. This has been rigorously challenged so that staff are now increasingly accurate in their assessments and know that they are accountable for the progress pupils make in their care. All teachers share the vision and ambition of the head teacher. Middle leaders have eagerly grasped the opportunity to be involved in school improvement and their work in developing the curriculum and improving literacy across the school has already had a positive impact on attainment and progress. Strategies to narrow the gap in achievement between girls and boys are already proving effective. Members of the governing body know the school well and are very supportive of it while challenging it to do even better.

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures, and arrangements for child protection fully meet requirements and, in some aspects such as the single central record, are exemplary. The great majority of parents and carers agree that their children are kept safe. The school ensures that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed and that their views are valued. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

The rich and diverse curriculum raises pupils' awareness of their own culture and that of others. Pupils develop an appreciation of the wider spiritual values through topic work, art, music, drama and dance and are keen to help others. Pupils gained the 'Stoke Children Say Yes' award which recognises the valuable contribution they make to their school. Their spiritual moral, social and cultural development is good.

The school works hard to promote a good relationship with parents and carers with considerable success. Most parents and carers agreed that the school helps them to support their children's learning. The significant improvements to teaching, the narrowing of the gap in achievement and the improving climate for learning demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abbey Hulton Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST2 8BS

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school this week. I would particularly like to thank those of you who gave up your free time to talk about school. This is what we have said about your school in our report.

- Yours is a satisfactory school which is rapidly improving.
- Your achievement is satisfactory because, although many of you make good progress, your attainment is below the national average.
- The youngest children get a good start in Nursery and Reception.
- The teaching you receive is at least satisfactory and often good.
- The new curriculum is adding enjoyment to your learning and helping you to learn more quickly.
- Most of you behave well and behaviour overall is satisfactory.
- Your school is well led and managed and that is why it is rapidly improving.

This is what we have asked your school to do to help it improve.

- Improve your achievement by making sure that you reach the national average in English and mathematics, making sure that everyone has sufficient challenge in lessons to do well, and improving your English by giving you regular chances to write longer pieces of work.
- Make your lessons even better by making sure you know exactly what you are going to do in each lesson and how you can check that you have done it, planning lessons so that you are working in each lesson right from the start and making sure that assessments about how well you are doing are accurate.

All of you can help your school to improve by attending regularly, behaving well and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw
Lead Inspector

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