

Abbey Hill Primary & Nursery

Abbey Road, Kirby in Ashfield, Nottingham, NG17 7NZ

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and requires improvement in Years 2 to 6. As a result, the older pupils are not able to make consistently good progress in developing their key skills in English and mathematics.
- Activities in lessons are sometimes too easy or too hard, and are not always stimulating enough to grab pupils' interest.
- The marking of pupils' work does not always give them clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to practise their writing skills in different subjects such as science, geography and history.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and know the difference between right and wrong, but they do not always use this understanding in the playground, where some name-calling and silly behaviour occurs.
- Parents are mainly happy with the school's work and say their children are kept safe. Some said that behaviour in the playground is not good enough and their concerns are not always listened to.
- Actions taken by leaders to improve teaching have not yet addressed all the inconsistencies.

The school has the following strengths

- The teaching of reading is particularly good, and younger pupils benefit from outstanding one-to-one support.
- Children's good progress in Nursery and Reception prepares them well for Year 1, where they also do well.
- As a result of the hard work of the staff attendance has improved, and is now average.
- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's performance, and their work is steadily improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, including three observed jointly with the headteacher. Pupils' work in books was also analysed with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, two governors, middle managers, parents and groups of pupils. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the four responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and talked to groups of parents in the playground at the start of the school day. Responses to the governors' playground survey and responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- A number of documents were analysed including the school development plan, school self-evaluation, the school's data on the current progress of pupils, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Lois Furness, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kelly Stock	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- In this small primary school, most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, and the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low.
- A well-above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average, but the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school had been open for two years and six months and at the time of the inspection. Pupils in Year 3 were being taught by a teacher on a temporary full time contract, and those in Years 4 to 6 by teachers new to these year groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in Years 2 to 6 so pupils make good progress in all year groups, by:
 - making sure teachers use assessment information to plan work that is closely matched to pupils' different ability levels, especially for the more-able pupils
 - making better use of stimulating and creative resources to excite and interest pupils
 - giving pupils consistently clear guidance about how to improve their work, and time for pupils to respond to the advice given
 - providing pupils with regular opportunities to practise their grammar, punctuation and spelling in subjects such as science, history and geography
 - sharing the outstanding elements of existing teaching regularly with all teachers, so they are clear about how to improve their own teaching.
- Develop strategies to make sure that:
 - the pupils' good behaviour in lessons continues at playtimes
 - pupils and parents have regular opportunities to express any concerns they may have, and school leaders follow up and act upon the results.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because although pupils make good progress in their learning in Nursery, Reception and Year 1, this same good progress does not continue consistently throughout the school.
- Children start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are well below the levels expected for their age, especially in language and literacy. Good teaching means that children make good progress and by the end of the Reception Year, attainment has risen but is still below average.
- At the end of Year 2 attainment is improving and more pupils in 2012 reached the expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. However, too few pupils reached the higher levels. Too often, the work given to more-able pupils in lessons is too easy for them, and this weakness is particularly noticeable in the older year groups.
- By Year 6, attainment is average in English and mathematics, and the proportion of pupils making expected progress from the end of Year 2 is similar to that found nationally in both subjects. However, the school's own information shows that progress varies too much between year groups, especially in writing and to some extent mathematics. It accelerates in Year 6, due to pupils having one-to-one support or being taught in small groups.
- Throughout the school the best progress is made in reading. Most pupils show a keen interest in books. Pupils' early reading skills are taught well and by the end of Year 1 most pupils have good knowledge of how to link together letters and the sounds they make to read simple words. At the end of Year 6 in 2012 the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in reading was above average, although the proportion exceeding the expected level was only average.
- Progress in other subjects such as history, geography and science varies according to the quality of teaching. Work in pupils' books show that pupils have too few opportunities to apply their writing skills in these subjects and their basic grammar, punctuation and spelling skills are not secure. For example, even by Year 6 not all pupils use capital letters correctly.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress similar to that of their classmates. This is also the case for pupils who are learning English as an additional language and those supported by pupil premium funding. At times the progress of these groups of pupils accelerates when they receive additional one-to-one support, but more typically the help and guidance provided for them are not focused well enough to promote good progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Some good features of teaching were seen in all year groups, for example sharing the intended learning of the lesson with pupils, and some outstanding teaching was seen. However, too many lessons required improvement and a very small number were inadequate.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, careful planning of interesting activities and skilful questioning ensures children make good progress in all areas of learning. Adults work hard to develop children's spoken language skills and are good at helping children to learn new vocabulary. This was seen when a small group of children considered whether to place objects inside, behind, next to, or in front of the witch's cauldron.

- The teaching of reading is strong. Outstanding practice was observed in a one-to-one session with a less-able Year 1 reader. Sensitive use of praise, insistence in the accuracy of letter sounds and good opportunities to practise new learning in interesting writing activities led to the pupil making excellent progress and thoroughly enjoying the session.
- Staff have been given useful training on how to use assessment information to plan lessons to help all pupils learn as much as they can. However, in practice work is not always matched closely enough to pupils' abilities and some find it too hard or too easy. Opportunities are sometimes missed to change work when some pupils fail to understand. This slows progress, especially in mathematics and to a lesser extent in writing.
- In all lessons pupils get the chance to share their ideas with each other. Pupils enjoy this and mainly listen politely to their friends' suggestions. At times this sharing of ideas lasts too long or the subject to be discussed is uninteresting, then pupils lose concentration. Teachers do not use a wide enough range of resources to bring learning to life. There is little use of films or music, and when pupils were trying to write interesting poems about fireworks, they had no exciting visual resources to help them write more imaginatively.
- Teaching assistants are mainly used to ensure that less-able pupils can take a full part in lessons. They also work well with pupils who sometimes find it difficult to behave well, so they do not interrupt the learning of others.
- Regular marking includes positive comments, especially in writing, but its impact is variable. Although there are some good examples, it does not consistently provide pupils with enough information to improve their progress or focus enough on their basic skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Pupils are not always given enough time to respond to the comments made.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- At playtimes the majority of pupils behave well, but pupils say that some bullying such as name calling or pushing others occurs. They are not confident that adults always respond to their concerns quickly, and some parents also voiced this concern, although the pupils spoken to were able to name someone in school who will listen to them if they have a problem.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons is typically good. On the few occasions where pupils lose concentration, it is usually when they are given work that is too difficult or too easy for them. Sometimes the work set is dull, as seen in an undemanding activity where pupils were sequencing pictures of the life of Guy Fawkes.
- Pupils say they mainly feel safe in school and are aware of most forms of bullying. They know why it is wrong to be unkind to someone because of the way they look, their dress, or their culture. Pupils are also aware of how to stay safe while using the internet and can define various forms of bullying, including racism and cyber-bullying.
- Attendance is broadly average and leaders are working hard to encourage the better attendance and punctuality of the few pupils who do not live up to their expectations. Weekly class attendance awards are proving effective in encouraging these pupils to attend more regularly.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes children behave well. Good relationships with adults help children to settle and feel happy and safe in school. Children follow instructions willingly and are learning the importance of taking turns and sharing their toys.

The leadership and management**requires improvement**

- The headteacher, supported by the governors and local authority, has tackled underperformance in teaching firmly and effectively. As a result more teaching is now good, but leaders are aware that some remaining weaknesses are holding back pupils' progress. They are also aware that planning of the way key skills, particularly writing, are developed through different subjects requires improvement before pupils can make consistently good progress.
- The senior leaders have an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school development plan identifies the right priorities and is appropriately focused on ensuring that all pupils make good progress, whatever their ability or background.
- The management of teachers' performance is closely linked to pay awards and pupils' achievement. The new national 'Teachers' Standards' have been shared with staff, and all staff are due to agree targets that will help them to improve their teaching. Also the existing outstanding practice is being shared so that all teachers can improve their skills, but this has not yet had a significant impact on teaching quality.
- The school teaches an appropriate range of subjects, but does not arrange planning across subjects in a way that consistently sharpens or extends pupils' key skills. For example, pupils have many opportunities to develop their reading skills, but these are not matched by regular practice in writing. Similarly, their personal development is not supported consistently well enough to promote good behaviour in different situations. Staff are trying to make learning more interesting and extend pupils' cultural development through a variety of clubs, visitors and visits to the Black Country Museum or Sherwood Forest.
- The local authority has provided some helpful support, particularly in dealing with staff performance issues to raise the quality of teaching. An adviser visits each term and provides the governing body with useful honest reports about the school's effectiveness.
- Parents and carers have mixed views about the school. Most of those who spoke to inspectors were happy with the quality of teaching and the progress their children make. However, almost all raised concerns about the behaviour of a few pupils in the playground, and said they do not feel leaders take swift enough action in dealing with their concerns.

■ The governance of the school:

The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and how it compares with other similar schools. For example, governors know that more-able pupils are not making enough progress in Years 2 to 6 in writing and mathematics. They also know about the inadequacies in teaching, and have supported the headteacher in her work to overcome them. Governors are knowledgeable about the value of spending decisions and the impact these have had on pupils' learning and progress. This has led to some good decisions about what the school spends the pupil premium funding on. For example, an ECAR (Every Child a Reader) teacher has been employed to work with pupils who are struggling with early reading skills. This has had an outstanding impact on the reading skills of Year 1 pupils. Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures and practices meet the current national requirements. The school's budget is well managed. Governors attend training regularly to ensure that they have the skills to be effective in checking that the school is improving, and they are in a position to hold leaders to account for pupils' achievement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136006
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	406643

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	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Ball
Headteacher	Helen Chambers
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2011
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