

Abbotswood Junior School

Ringwood road, Totton, Southampton, SO40 8EB

Inspection dates 10–11 January 2013

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		Good	2
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

- Not enough pupils make good progress and achieve the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 6, especially in writing.
- In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and pupils do not get enough time to work by themselves or move on quickly to tasks that are closely matched to their abilities.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to carry out investigations and apply what they know to solve problems in mathematics, or to write at length in all areas of the curriculum.
- Questioning is not always used effectively to deepen pupils' learning.
- The school's self-evaluation is overgenerous and some aspects of its performance are not evaluated by all leaders, including governors, with enough rigour. Consequently, the progress of different groups within the school is not checked as carefully as it should be.
- Leaders do not always follow up the outcomes of improvements to ensure that enough progress has been made.
- Some middle leaders lack sufficient expertise and experience in order to secure good achievement across all areas of their work.

The school has the following strengths

- The school provides a caring and nurturing environment and enables pupils to behave well and feel safe.
- Arrangements for checking the performance of teachers have been strengthened.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted.
- Leaders and managers are taking positive action to raise achievement and improve teaching.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons or part-lessons.
- They held discussions with the headteacher, staff, a representative from the local authority, governors and groups of pupils.
- The inspectors took account of the 66 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own parental survey and other correspondence from parents and carers.
- They examined school policies, information about pupils' attainment and progress, teachers' plans, pupils' work and the school's planning for improvement.

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Diane Rochford	Additional inspector
David Westall	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils come from a White British background; a small number come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- An average proportion of the pupils are 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 disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- A high number of staff have left or joined the school, particularly in the last year.
- The current headteacher is retiring in July 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of good or better teaching by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of the more-able pupils
 - reducing the amount of time teachers talk, to allow pupils more opportunities to work actively on tasks
 - ensuring work is at the right level for different groups of pupils, particularly the more able, so it is not too easy or too hard for them
 - making sure that teachers ask searching questions that develop pupils' understanding and encourage them to think.
- Improve achievement in English and mathematics by:
 - providing frequent, planned opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems through more open-ended investigation
 - ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to write at length and produce more high-quality work in all subjects.
- Strengthen leadership and management, including governors, by:
 - ensuring the school's self-evaluation provides a more accurate picture of how well the school is doing
 - supporting some newly appointed middle leaders to develop their skills and experience in checking the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of work and tackling any weaknesses
 - improving the way all leaders check and evaluate how well teachers help pupils to make good progress in lessons
 - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching is rigorous and regular enough to identify shortcomings and resolve them
 - ensuring that the governing body more effectively holds the school to account over the progress of the different groups of pupils.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2012, despite accelerated progress in their final year at school, some pupils in Year 6 did not make the progress expected of them over the three years. Attainment and progress in English, particularly in writing, were well below those in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' attainment when they join Year 3 is average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, their attainment remains broadly average. Standards have not improved fast enough because weaker teaching in previous years and staffing instability slowed down the rate of improvement in pupils' achievement. Although this is now being firmly tackled by current leaders, some inconsistencies in progress remain across all year groups.
- Many pupils make less than good progress because teachers do not routinely provide work that closely matches pupils' differing abilities. Consequently, work is either too hard or too easy for some pupils and this slows progress, particularly for the more able.
- Although standards in writing still lag behind those in reading and mathematics, current school data and checks on pupils' work show that writing is steadily improving as a result of specific targeted individual and small-group teaching programmes. However, not enough pupils reach the higher levels of attainment in writing, mainly because they are given work that is not hard enough: they are not provided with enough opportunities to write long pieces of work in all subjects.
- Progress in mathematics is not yet fast enough to ensure all, especially the more able, make good progress. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and apply mathematical skills and develop the ability to solve problems.
- The attainment of those pupils supported by the pupil premium at the end of Year 6 is improving. This is because pupil premium funding has been used to provide specialist staff to develop pupils' social and emotional well-being through one-to-one support and in a small nurture class that successfully promotes the quality of their learning. Current school data show this has resulted in their average points scores being broadly in line with those of their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are also making similar progress to their peers. This is due to the effective actions being taken by the school, such as the reading, writing and spelling programme and additional support in lessons and in small groups.
- Pupils make the most progress in reading which is steadily improving year on year. Pupils read regularly and enjoy a range of texts, using their phonic skills (linking letters and sounds) well. This is helping many pupils to make faster progress in this aspect of learning.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching has improved, it is not yet consistently good enough to enable all pupils to make rapid progress.
- Where teaching is weaker, the pace of pupils' learning is hampered by overlong introductions from teachers and pupils not being moved on to the main task soon enough, particularly the more-able pupils. On these occasions, some pupils become inattentive which hinders progress. By contrast, where teaching is better, teachers make sure that lessons are well structured and that learning moves on quickly.
- Pupils are not always set work at the right level for their abilities. Consequently, pupils do not make the progress that they should. Where teaching is effective, they make best progress when tasks are neither too hard nor too easy.
- In mathematics, there is not enough focus on open-ended investigation and problem solving where pupils have to work things out for themselves in order to gain confidence in handling numbers. In literacy, there are too few opportunities to write at length with a clear purpose across all subjects.
- Where teaching is effective, teachers use questions well to make pupils think and to build skilfully on pupils' previous knowledge in a well-structured way. This was shown well in a Year 6 mathematics

lesson where pupils were asked to think logically to solve a series of problems, using their calculation skills. The teacher used focused questions to check pupils' understanding and then extended their learning by asking pupils to explain and justify their thinking. This effective questioning to move learning on at a fast rate is not typical in all lessons.

- Teaching assistants are used well to support less able pupils and those with special educational needs, helping them to make similar progress to their classmates. Staff are well briefed about what the pupils need to learn and do. They work enthusiastically with the pupils to raise their self-esteem by providing work that challenges them but is achievable.
- Most teachers effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They establish positive relationships with the pupils. Pupils are encouraged to work together and show consideration for others.
- The marking of pupils' work has improved recently. Teachers make use of a clear system to identify why pupils' work is good and where they need to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils play well together and organised games, such as football, are played at lunchtimes without arguments. At break times and while eating lunch, behaviour is always good and attentive supervision from adults means that pupils feel safe.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and how to protect themselves or get help. They say that there is very little bullying and that staff deal with it well when it does occur. As one pupil commented, 'I was bullied before, but here I am accepted.'
- Pupils want to learn and support each other in most classes well. They work collaboratively in groups and engage with activities such as 'talk partners' to discuss their work. They listen carefully and comment helpfully on each other's work when given the opportunity. At times, when work is too easy or activities take too long in lessons, their attention wanders.
- Some parents and carers expressed concern over pupils' behaviour. However, school records and observations of lessons show there are few incidents of poor behaviour and that these are managed well so they do not recur. The school promotes equality of opportunity well, develops good relations and ensures discrimination is not tolerated.
- The school supports children who have behavioural and emotional difficulties effectively, for instance, through the nurture class and through the use of emotional learning support assistants who support pupils to understand themselves and others better.
- Attendance has been above average for the last three years and this has been maintained this year.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The drive and determination of the headteacher, who is well supported by the two deputy headteachers, are leading to improvements. However, the large turnover of staff, particularly in the last year, has meant that developments have not been as fast as the headteacher wanted. The school has tackled inadequate teaching vigorously and suitable training has been provided for teachers, which has considerably reduced the proportion of inadequate teaching. The proportion of good teaching is also beginning to increase. These successes show the school's capacity to improve.
- The school's self-evaluation is overgenerous and some aspects of its performance are not evaluated with enough rigour. Not all leaders focus enough on pupils' learning when judging lessons, which means that sometimes judgements are too positive. Weaknesses in teaching are not always explicit enough or followed up in subsequent observations to check they have been eradicated so that pupils' progress might be maximised.
- Some middle leaders are new to role and are not yet closely checking the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of work and using this information to ensure that pupils make at least good progress.
- The management of the performance of teachers has been strengthened and linked to the national

Teachers' Standards. Teachers now only receive pay awards if they regularly teach well and their pupils make good progress.

- The curriculum requires improvement. There are too few instances for pupils to write at length and to solve problems in other subjects in order to make better progress. There is, however, a wide range of well-attended extra-curricular clubs which enrich the curriculum and promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements.
- The funding provided to support pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is used adequately and there is evidence that progress for these pupils is now starting to accelerate.
- The local authority has provided an appropriate level of support, including support for training and moderation of the assessment of pupils' work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is strongly committed to supporting the school and giving the very best care and nurture to its pupils. Through its curriculum and standards team, it is asking increasingly searching questions of the school's leaders with regard to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. However, as with senior leaders, the governing body's evaluation of how well the school is doing is overgenerous and as a result governors have not held the school sufficiently to account for pupils' progress and the standards they reach. Governors recognise that weaknesses in the school's self-evaluation have meant that there has not been adequate information to fulfil this responsibility. The governing body ensures that the performance management of teachers is linked to increases in teachers' salaries. Teachers are only financially rewarded if they demonstrate that pupils are doing well. Governors bring a good range of expertise to the school, for example, with regard to safeguarding which fully meets current requirements. They have been appropriately trained, and are fully aware of their responsibilities to ensure equality of opportunity. The governing body maintains tight financial control and has been involved in decisions relating to the use of pupil premium funding.

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	116482
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	405652

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	597
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julie Brown
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Bunting
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 June 2011
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