

Abbeys Primary School

Melrose Avenue, Milton Keynes, MK3 6PS,

Inspection dates 17–18 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		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because pupils do not make good progress in all classes in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Although there is some good teaching across the school, teaching does not always provide the right level of challenge for all pupils.
- Teachers miss opportunities to ask questions that will deepen pupils' knowledge and move learning on more quickly, especially for the most able.
- Pupils' progress is slowest in writing. Opportunities are missed for pupils to practise and extend their writing skills by using them in different subjects.
- The management of pupils' performance and the leadership of teaching require improvement.
- Not all leaders have enough involvement in monitoring provision so that they can play a bigger part in driving improvement, especially in teaching. Until recently, teachers have not been set sharp enough targets to help them improve.
- The pupil premium is not used well enough to close the gap between different groups. Extra help given to these and to other pupils is not checked closely to see what is successful and what needs refining.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are taught well and adults work as a team to provide calm and sensitive support to the children.
- Pupils feel safe and behave well. They work hard in most lessons and are polite and courteous.
- The school is improving steadily. Over the last term, the pace of change has picked up significantly, and support to help teachers improve is now more focused than it was in the past.
- The new headteacher and the governing body have identified the main priorities and have clear strategies for tackling weaknesses.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons, of which 10 were joint observations with the headteacher or other staff. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, with members of the governing body, with members of staff and with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the eight responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also talked to some parents and carers at the beginning of the school day.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress, planning and monitoring documents, the school development plan, records relating to behaviour and attendance and safeguarding documents.
- The inspectors analysed 25 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Mike Capper, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Joyce Lydford

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two single-age classes. Other classes are mixed-age, with two year groups in each.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. None of these pupils is educated off-site for any part of the week in alternative provision.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children known to be eligible for free school meals and for those in local authority care, is above average.
- There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection, and the new headteacher started in January 2013, after a term when two interim headteachers shared the role.
- Part of the school building is used by a Sure Start children's centre. This is not managed by the school and was not inspected.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that it is at least good by:
 - ensuring that work is neither too hard nor too easy for all pupils
 - ensuring that teachers make better use of questions to move learning on more quickly, especially for the more able
 - giving teachers more opportunity to see good practice in this and other schools.
- Improve pupils' attainment in writing by giving them more opportunities to practise and improve their skills in different subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that responsibility for monitoring provision is shared more widely so that leaders at all levels can play a greater part in securing improvement, especially in teaching
 - making better use of pupil premium funding to close the gap in attainment between eligible pupils and that of others
 - monitoring the impact of additional support given to pupils to see whether it is working well enough.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average and pupils make the expected progress from their starting points. Their achievement requires improvement because their progress is uneven from class to class across the school.
- Pupils make the slowest progress in writing. Although there has been some improvement in the current academic year following the recent adoption of a new approach to teaching phonics (learning about the sounds that letters make), too many older pupils make errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation when writing. Pupils have too few opportunities to practise and improve their writing skills by using them in different subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same inconsistent progress as their classmates in lessons. There are occasions when work is too difficult for them and they become over reliant on adult help to finish their work.
- Leaders monitor the learning of different groups carefully and from their relative starting points no group makes faster or slower progress than others. However, the gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and others is not closing quickly enough. Until recently, spending was not focused sharply enough on supporting these pupils, and although there have been recent improvements, it is too soon to see their impact.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, recent improvements mean that children's literacy skills are now developing quickly. Children now read and write throughout the day and many in the Reception classes are already attempting to write short sentences and to spell new words. Their improved attainment in literacy is already beginning to filter through to Key Stage 1.
- Across the school, pupils' attainment in mathematics has been rising since the previous inspection. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident about explaining the strategies they use to solve problems or to carry out calculations. For example, in a numeracy lesson in Year 2, pupils used a wide array of strategies to add two-digit numbers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good because work is sometimes too hard or too easy for some pupils.
- In some lessons, teachers do not always adapt work well enough to pupils' responses so that learning moves on more quickly. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Key Stage 1, many pupils struggled to add two-digit numbers but subsequent teaching did not take enough account of this.
- Teaching is improving across the school. This is evident in numeracy lessons, for example, where pupils are grouped by ability for mathematics, making it more straightforward for teachers to provide the right level of challenge to all.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is frequent and helpful. Consequently, pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. Pupils especially like the way that they are given time to reflect on and respond to their teacher's marking before starting their next piece of work.
- The management of behaviour is a strength in teaching because positive relationships and high expectations for personal development successfully encourage the pupils to try hard and cooperate sensibly. For example, in a literacy lesson in Key Stage 2, pupils showed excellent concentration and perseverance as they made suggestions about how to improve a classmate's work before producing their own final, polished piece of writing.
- Teaching is consistently good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Adults work together well as a team and plan a wide range of exciting activities indoors and outside that engage the children's interest and support their learning effectively. Writing and reading are taught well and work is made purposeful because it is based around common themes such as 'dinosaurs'.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults are especially adept at using questions to move learning on. The use of questioning to deepen knowledge is less strong in the rest of the school and this slows the pace at which skills improve in Key Stages 1 and 2.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils typically behave well and they thoroughly enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in the attendance, which has been improving and is now broadly average. Pupils say that 'school is fun' and that 'we all get on well together.'
- In lessons, pupils work hard and are very enthusiastic about their work. They try to do their best, even if they are finding the work difficult. Learning in lessons is rarely disturbed by misbehaviour, although just occasionally, when they get overexcited, pupils call out answers or do not listen well enough, which is why their behaviour is not yet outstanding. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are responsive, well motivated and independent.
- Pupils are very clear about how they are expected to behave. They feel that adults manage behaviour consistently and fairly.
- The school has good systems for helping pupils with particular behavioural needs. Activities such as nurture groups help these pupils to improve their social skills.
- Pupils feel safe at school and are confident that any worries are resolved quickly. There is very little bullying, but when it does occur pupils say that 'the teachers always sort it out for us.' Pupils know that bullying can take many forms. For example, they explain clearly how to use social networking sites safely so that they can avoid cyber-bullying.
- The school successfully promotes equality of opportunity and ensures that there is no discrimination. Pupils from different backgrounds play together happily at playtimes. They support each other well in lessons.
- Pupils take the responsibilities they are given very seriously. School councillors are very proud of the role they play in improving the school and they consult sensibly with their classmates.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the pace of change since the previous inspection has been steady rather than rapid. The greatest improvement since then has been in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where provision is led well and is now good. Pupils' attainment is also rising in the rest of the school, but more slowly, especially in writing.
- The new headteacher knows that pupil premium funding is not being used well enough to support eligible pupils. Funding has been used to provide extra support to families through a partly funded community worker, to ensure that eligible pupils have access to all activities, and to pay for additional staff to work in class or with small groups. However, these initiatives and others are not being checked thoroughly enough to see if they are having the desired effect, and although pupils eligible for the pupil premium do no worse than others, their attainment is not improving quickly enough.
- The headteacher has already identified the right priorities, based on an accurate assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Over the last two terms there has been a sharp focus on improving teaching and this is already reaping dividends. Teachers are now being set sharp targets for improvement. There is a close link between performance and pay rewards and teachers feel that they are now being given better support to help them improve. Opportunities for training are well matched to teachers' needs, but they have too few opportunities to visit other schools so that they can see good practice.
- The curriculum is interesting and engaging and effectively supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils love their lessons and learn important values such as trust and respect. Recent improvements in the way that letters and sounds are taught are already proving

beneficial, but pupils' progress in writing is hindered because they do not get enough opportunities to apply their skills in different subjects.

- The local authority supports the school well. Its help in appointing interim headteachers for a term ensured that the pace of change in the school did not falter and that there was a smooth handover to the new headteacher.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have strengthened their role in supporting and challenging the school since the previous inspection. Recent training has been beneficial in helping them to understand their responsibilities more clearly and they are now beginning to fulfil these effectively. Consequently, they are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and about the school's performance in comparison with others. Governors visit the school regularly to meet with senior staff or to check things for themselves. They ensure that the school's budget is spent wisely but until recently they have been insufficiently involved in deciding how the pupil premium should be spent and checking that it has the desired effect on eligible pupils. Under the new headteacher, steps are already in hand to involve governors more in this aspect of decision making. Governors have begun to set challenging targets to improve the work of the school and they ensure that rewards are only given to staff for improved performance. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
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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	110401
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	405282

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Preston
Headteacher	Sophie Good
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 June 2011
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