

Great Abington Primary School

68 High Street, Great Abington, Cambridge, CB21 6AE

Inspection dates 24–25 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 are usually well-above average. Across the school, pupils' progress is at least good and outstanding in some classes.
- Effective action is improving pupils' understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) and they read with increasing confidence.
- The headteacher's impressive leadership makes sure that current pupils make good progress and achieve well from good teaching – despite major staff changes.
- Overall, leadership and management, including governance, are good. Leaders frequently and thoroughly check the quality of teaching. They are quick to pinpoint areas for improvement and take appropriate action.
- Leaders, well supported by the governing body, are rigorous in making sure that no pupils fall behind. Well-trained staff give pupils good support to help them to catch up.
- The school's emphasis on teaching respect for others helps to give pupils a deep understanding of how to learn and greatly supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour, their understanding of how to keep themselves safe and attendance are outstanding.
- Pupils have many opportunities to experience a range of stimulating activities in school, in the local area, and further afield. These enrich and extend pupils' learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The new marking policy is not used well in all classes.
- Staff do not always insist enough on pupils having neat, well-formed handwriting and overlook some errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling of some simple words

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five lessons, all which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, and representatives from the governing body and from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's raising-attainment plan, termly operational plans, data regarding pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring information on school performance, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspector met with one parent informally during the school day. The inspector took into account the responses to a recent school survey and the 38 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector compared the responses for the current and previous school years.

Inspection team

Heather Weston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion who have English as an additional language is lower than average.
- Few pupils are known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is well-below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school does not use other places where pupils can learn away from school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has five classes, four of which are for pupils of mixed ages. All Year 6 pupils are in one, single-age class.
- The school has undergone significant changes of teaching staff in the last year. Four of the five classes have different teachers arising from promotions or personal circumstances.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, make most teaching outstanding and increase the rate of pupils' progress, particularly in using English accurately, by:
 - making sure that all teachers fully apply the revised marking policy so that pupils always know how to improve their own work
 - improving the quality of pupils' work by making sure that they always produce neat, well-formed handwriting and use correct spelling and punctuation.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children's attainment when they enter school, although variable because of low numbers, is usually typical of children nationally. Until recently, children made satisfactory progress in their Reception year to enter Year 1 with average attainment. Currently, outstanding provision is helping children in their Reception Year to make outstanding progress.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good and, at times, outstanding progress. Due to the small numbers in each year group, standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 fluctuate, but are usually well-above average, showing outstanding progress in both English and mathematics.
- Rates of progress have varied through the different year groups. Previous weak teaching in Years 3 and 4 has been tackled successfully. Evidence from lessons, pupils' work and school data show that current pupils are making good progress in all year groups.
- Pupils' good progress has been maintained despite several changes in staff. This is because leaders have made sure that new teachers apply most key aspects of the school's approach to teaching and learning and the expectation that all pupils should be given work at an appropriately demanding level.
- The new systematic approach to teaching phonics, adopted because standards in pupils' phonic knowledge in Year 1 were, previously, below average, is helping all pupils with their reading, writing and spelling. Pupils are gaining increased confidence to read words new to them and accurately work them out for themselves. In addition, the drive to improve pupils' use of correct grammar is helping to improve the quality of pupils' writing.
- Pupils' spelling and their use of punctuation are not always accurate, and some pupils handwriting is too untidy. The school has not insisted that presentation is always of the best quality, so pupils are not always clear what standards of presentation are expected from them.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good in all classes. This is because of the good support given by teachers and well-trained teaching assistants both in class, in small groups and in one-to-one teaching sessions. Pupils in danger of falling behind also benefit from this support and are able to make better progress to help them catch up.
- Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress. The school ensures that it directs appropriate language support to help each pupil.
- The few pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium make good progress. They attain, at least, above-average standards in English and mathematics by Year 6, close to those of other pupils. Some make outstanding progress and so gain standards well-above average in both subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled at planning lessons which help pupils to achieve well. Teachers and teaching assistants use good questioning techniques to develop pupils' thinking and extend their learning.

- Good teaching, pupils' confidence and their understanding of how to use number, for example when multiplying or dividing, enable them to make good progress in mathematics. Teachers make sure that pupils' writing skills are developed well through a range of subject learning, although inaccuracies in expression are, sometimes, not corrected. Sessions at the start of the morning are used very effectively to practise skills, such as 'non-negotiable spellings' in Year 6. Skilful guided reading, the teaching of phonics, and regular opportunities for pupils to read mean that pupils develop good reading skills.
- Teachers plan interesting and imaginative activities which often involve problem solving or carrying out investigations to encourage pupils' independent learning. For example, class 4 pupils had to devise all sorts of different, and highly challenging, questions about why there were flying frogs in a picture book. Pupils in class 5 had to work out for themselves the answers to a missing number matrix. Similarly, Reception children were encouraged to suggest ways to work out how many children registered in the class were at school, so they could demonstrate a real understanding of different approaches to addition.
- Weak teaching has been eradicated. However, not all teachers apply the new marking policy well enough. Consequently, pupils do not always know how to improve their work and take the next steps in their learning. There are examples of simple spelling and punctuation errors left without correction, slowing pupils' understanding and progress.
- Teacher use material resources well, including electronic whiteboards, to help pupils learn. In the Reception Year, children have access to a wide range of well-planned resources. All these materials are evaluated carefully for difficulty to make sure that they promote the best possible learning for pupils of all levels of ability.
- The school has introduced a new approach to teaching handwriting. However, teachers are not all using this approach effectively to make sure that pupils always produce good, easily readable handwriting and that their books are, habitually, as tidy as possible.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are exceptionally polite and welcoming. They have a deep understanding of the school's 'core values' – such as respect and responsibility towards others – and apply this exceptionally well in school. Pupils say there is no bullying, just some 'falling out'. They are confident that if they have concerns, adults will help them sort them out.
 - Pupils are exceptionally keen to come to school and to learn. Their attitudes make a big contribution to the quality of their learning. In all classes they were quietly attentive or absorbed in discussion with teachers or each other. They feel deeply that learning is important as it helps them to broaden their interests and gives them greater opportunities in life.
 - Pupils say they feel safe at school. They have very mature views towards risk. They know how to manage risks in their lives because of the school's provision of highly effective personal, social and health education.
 - Attendance is high, demonstrating pupils' enjoyment of school. The headteacher is rightly determined to maintain this high level. She has written to those parents whose children's attendance has fallen below 95% to make sure that pupils always come to school and benefit from the education it provides.
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- All the pupils are able to contribute to decision making in the school, through the 'family groups' and the school council. For example, pupils were involved in drawing up the school's behaviour policy, which has resulted in improved, outstanding, behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is passionate about making sure that pupils are always helped to make good progress. She knows – rightly – that 'every lesson counts'. Her view is fully shared by the assistant headteacher. Their committed leadership is making sure that pupils are not held back by changes of teaching staff. Weak teaching in the past has been removed.
- Leaders are vigilant in checking pupils' progress. They hold regular meetings with teachers to check how individual pupils are progressing, what teachers are doing to make sure pupils make sufficient progress, and what further support pupils might need to prevent them falling behind. Staff promotion is closely linked to results – as shown by the progress pupils' make.
- School self-evaluation is accurate and perceptive. Careful checking on pupils' performance gives senior leaders detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. For example, previous weaknesses in pupils' use of phonics were identified and new approaches to teaching this skill have greatly improved pupils' work. Although leaders are aware that not all teachers are using the newly agreed marking policy effectively and that handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work require improvement, action has not yet led to the improvement necessary.
- The range of subjects and topics taught is very helpful to pupils' learning. Pupils develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills across subjects, with frequent opportunities to solve problems and investigate questions. The wide range of visits, visitors and special activities in school such as the 'Greek day' bring learning to life.
- All pupils benefit from the activities on offer. The emphasis on 'core values' helps pupils respect each other and makes sure that discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. Staff are rigorous in overcoming underachievement and ensuring equality of opportunity.
- The school provides good information for parents, for example on its website, and actively tries to keep in touch. Parents have good opportunities to express their concerns and to see the school at work. Celebration assemblies let parents share their children's achievements.
- The local authority has given the school good support over difficulties caused by major changes of staff, including the delay in appointing the assistant headteacher.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors monitor and accurately evaluate the work of the school and understand the data on pupils' progress. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas of relative weakness. They hold senior leaders accountable for the school's performance, particularly the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Governors have made good strategic decisions regarding the appointment of temporary, as well as permanent, staff during the recent period of change. Members of the governing body are well trained and apply their range of different skills to benefit the school. They effectively manage the performance of headteacher and staff. Systems are in place for the approval of pay awards so that these are always tied to how well staff help pupils to achieve. Governors make sure that safeguarding procedures meet requirements and are consistently applied. They know how the school budget

is spent and make sure, for example, that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is used well to support pupils' achievement. This funding has been spent on additional staffing to support pupils in improving their skills in English and mathematics, and on funding extra learning activities for eligible pupils. The school is effective in narrowing any gap between the attainment of individuals eligible for the funding and other pupils.

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	110611
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	403124

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	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Logan
Headteacher	Deborah Nicholas
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2008
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