

Abbey Meadows Primary School

Galfrid Road, Cambridge, CB5 8ND

Inspection dates 19–20 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
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 has serious weaknesses.

- Teaching in Key Stage 1 over time, and currently in some classes, is inadequate. Pupils do not learn the skills necessary to achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, their achievements at the end of Year 2 are too low and have been for the past few years.
- Attainment in writing in Year 2 has remained low because pupils do not have the language skills they need to write accurately and imaginatively. They are not taught to use grammar, punctuation and spelling effectively.
- There is not enough support for pupils who start school at an early stage of learning to speak English. Few staff know the best methods to use to help these pupils learn quickly.
- Lessons are not always planned well enough to meet pupils' needs.
- Marking does not always help pupils to improve their work and they are not regularly asked to correct their mistakes.
- Not all teachers make the most of teaching assistants' skills during lessons or provide sufficient practical resources to aid pupils with their learning.
- In some classes adults talk for too long, giving pupils little time to practise their new knowledge and skills. They do not give pupils the chance to think things out for themselves.
- Leaders, managers and members of the governing body are determined to improve the school, but plans for improvement are not focused sharply enough on Key Stage 1.
- The governing body has not challenged leaders sufficiently about the school's performance in Key Stage 1.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers have successfully improved the teaching in Years 4 to 6, so that it is now good.
- Children in the Reception classes are making a good start with their reading and writing.
- Pupils are kept safe and vulnerable pupils are cared for well. Even when tasks are dull or teaching is inadequate pupils usually maintain their good behaviour.
- The nurture group makes a very positive contribution to the school's happy atmosphere.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 parts of lessons and visited the nurture group. Sometimes they were accompanied by the headteacher or another senior leader.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, break and lunch time, in assemblies and while the pupils were moving around the school.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read to inspectors. In addition, pupils from Year 1 to 6 met with inspectors to share their views of the school. Their earlier work in literacy and numeracy was scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and staff with temporary responsibility for literacy and numeracy. Inspectors also met staff with responsibility for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, the Early Years Foundation Stage, the nurture group, and representatives of the governing body and local authority.
- The responses of 62 parents who completed the on-line survey Parent View were considered. The views of a few parents who spoke to inspectors when they brought their children to school, and the results of the school's own survey of parents' views, were taken into account.
- A number of documents were reviewed. These included the school's development plan, its self-evaluation report, information about pupils' current progress, minutes of governing body meetings, arrangements for safeguarding and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance. Reports from the local authority about the school's effectiveness were also examined.

Inspection team

Kath Beck, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gillian Scobie	Additional Inspector
Paul Bartlett	Additional Inspector
Michael Williams	Additional inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- This school is larger than most primary schools. The number of pupils attending the school is rising. There are three classes in each year group from Reception to Year 2, and two classes in the remaining year groups.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those with a parent in the armed forces) is above that found in schools nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is twice the national average.
- The percentage of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language is higher than normally found. The number of these pupils joining the school in Years 1 and 2 is increasing.
- The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Two members of the senior leadership team have joined the school in the previous three years, and one in the past two years.
- The literacy and numeracy leaders are on extended leave of absence. Staff covering these roles have only recently taken on their responsibilities.
- The school shares a site with The Fields Children's Centre. This is inspected separately and the latest report is available on the Ofsted website.
- The governing body has responsibility for the community wing that is used by local people for meetings and an extensive range of clubs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, especially in Key Stage 1, by making sure that all staff:
 - have high expectations of what pupils know and can do, and plan tasks that are challenging and meet their individual needs
 - reduce the amount of time they spend talking to the class as a whole, giving pupils more time to apply the skills they have been taught
 - move lessons along at a good pace so that pupils do not spend a long time completing simple tasks
 - deploy teaching assistants more effectively throughout lessons to support pupils' learning
 - give pupils more opportunities to make decisions about their work and have sufficient resources so they are not reliant on adults
 - having marked pupils' books, give them time to respond to comments and correct their mistakes.
- Accelerate the progress of pupils who are new to speaking English, especially in Key Stage 1, by:

- improving the expertise of all staff in helping these pupils to communicate clearly
- providing appropriate support that enables them to take part in lessons and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

■ Raise achievement in writing by:

- involving pupils in more activities that help them to develop their spoken language, talk confidently in a range of situations, and think through their creative ideas before writing them down
- showing pupils, in imaginative ways, how to write using the correct grammar, punctuation and spelling
- encouraging pupils to write for a wide range of reasons and at length.

■ Ensure that leaders, managers and members of the governing body:

- draw up and implement an action plan to bring about rapid improvement in Key Stage 1
- check the quality of teaching rigorously with a focus on what the pupils are learning, rather than what the teacher is doing
- offer greater challenge to the school with regard to its performance in all year groups, and in comparison with schools nationally.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- There is a striking difference between the attainment of pupils in Key Stage 1 and those in Key Stage 2. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is significantly lower than that found in most schools and has been for a number of years. Pupils make slow progress in Key Stage 1.
- In the past, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 has been significantly lower than the national average. Improvements to the quality of teaching, together with the positive benefits of small group work, mean that pupils in Key Stage 2 now make good progress. Results of national tests for pupils in this year group in 2012 were in line with the national average and are on track to be similar this year. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels was similar to that found nationally, with a few exceeding this.
- The marked difference in the rate of progress in Key Stage 1 and that in Key Stage 2 means that not all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. The progress of pupils who join the school and are new to speaking English in Key Stage 1 is held back because not enough staff have the skills to help them to communicate and learn effectively. Girls do much better than boys. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals do not succeed as well as others in their age group in this phase of the school.
- Attainment in writing in Key Stage 1 has remained low because pupils' progress is too slow. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the language skills they need to write with fluency and imagination. They are not taught to use the correct spelling, grammar and punctuation well enough. Opportunities to write at length and for a range of purposes are limited when teachers tell pupils what to do rather than encourage them to think up their own ideas.
- In reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is significantly lower than in most schools. While there was some slight improvement in 2012, it was not enough. There is insufficient good teaching in Key Stage 1 for pupils to acquire all the skills that they need to do well.
- The school's records indicate that some disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making good progress, including those who learn slowly because of their particular difficulties. The nurture group offers very good support to those with behavioural and emotional needs. The school draws successfully on the advice of professionals, including speech therapists, to build in different methods to meet the particular needs of these pupils.
- The decision to teach English and mathematics to pupils in Years 5 and 6 in small ability groups or on a one-to-one basis has enabled them to make good progress. Pupils' errors and misconceptions are picked up quickly and corrected immediately while they are working.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to make improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage. The changes have been successful because children make good progress from their varied starting points. Already some pupils can read simple books and write sentences. Some staff speak several different languages and are developing their skills in using signing. These skills are used effectively to help the youngest pupils who speak English as an additional language to communicate quickly.
- All groups of pupils, including those eligible for free school meals who benefit from the pupil

premium make good progress in Key Stage 2. The gap between these pupils and their classmates is closing. These pupils outperformed others of their age group nationally in English and mathematics, as shown by their results at the end of Year 6 in 2012.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Inadequate teaching has contributed to the underachievement of pupils in Key Stage 1. Typically in lessons where pupils are not learning well enough, expectations of what pupils can do are not high. Some staff believe, wrongly, that because pupils' attainment on entry to school is low, it is the reason why they cannot achieve quickly and well in this phase of the school.
- In lessons where the teaching is inadequate:
 - pupils who speak English as an additional language receive too little support to help them speak confidently, understand what they are learning about and what they need to do
 - teachers' lesson plans identify what they are going to do, not what pupils are to learn and how this builds on what they have learned before
 - lessons lack challenge and do not help pupils to make progress because activities are not matched to their needs
 - pupils do not always have the resources they need to support their activities and help them understand
 - the lessons move along too slowly and there is a lack of urgency for pupils to complete their tasks
 - teaching assistants are not used effectively to move pupils' learning on throughout the lesson.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers give pupils a great deal of information and talk for too long before letting them apply the skills they have been taught. This limits the opportunities for pupils to develop their language skills. They are not always asked to talk about or share their ideas before they record them.
- Teachers' marking does not always have the impact on learning that it should. Some teachers mark work and give pupils clear pointers about how to improve it. They do not always give pupils the time to look at their comments, respond to them and learn by correcting their mistakes.
- Good teaching was characterised by:
 - clear explanations about what pupils were to learn and achieve in the lesson, and time was used efficiently to maximise learning
 - good planning that built on pupils' previous learning
 - group work and effective questioning that challenged pupils to think hard about what they were learning
 - the correct use of scientific and mathematical vocabulary
 - the use of different methods to enhance pupils' understanding, such as historical film of workhouses, to help them appreciate our past and their place in history
 - frequent opportunities for pupils to say what they had understood and how the teacher could help them to understand the things they found difficult.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Where teaching of younger pupils is inadequate, they mostly behave well but take too long to complete their work. When teachers take too long to explain what pupils are to do, some 'switch off' and do not listen as well as they should. These shortcomings are not identified and addressed quickly enough, and contribute to pupils' slow progress.
- The school is a harmonious community because discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils collaborate well and make friends with others from a wide range of backgrounds.
- In their responses to the questionnaires, all staff and the majority of the parents and carers consider that behaviour is good. Observations during the inspection found that pupils were polite and well-mannered, especially during lunch time, and no lessons were disrupted by inappropriate behaviour.
- The school's work to encourage pupils to be resilient and persevere when learning gets difficult is showing signs of success. Older pupils are keen to help each other and share their ideas to solve challenging problems in mathematics.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different kinds of bullying and know how to stay safe when using the internet. They feel safe in school and are confident that staff will help them if they are worried.
- Staff work in partnership with a wide range of professionals to ensure that the welfare and safety needs of individuals are managed well. The nurture group gives pupils the skills and confidence to work happily alongside their classmates without disturbing their learning.
- Overall attendance has improved year-on-year and is now average.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not succeeded in raising pupils' achievements sufficiently at Key Stage 1. Their efforts to improve pupils' progress in Key Stage 2, and the Early Years Foundation Stage are proving successful and show they have the capacity to bring about the required changes.
 - Checks on the quality of teaching too often focus on what the teacher is doing. Senior leaders have not always pinpointed the effect of the teaching on pupils' learning, or taken action quickly enough to eradicate inadequate teaching. New senior leaders have been determined in their support for staff to improve their teaching and in many cases they have been successful. During recent checks on teaching, challenging targets have been set for all staff to meet. These allow leaders to hold them to account for pupils' progress and inform future decisions on their pay and promotion.
 - Through its self-evaluation procedures, the school development plan rightly identifies the key priorities for improving the achievement of all pupils across the school. It includes concise success criteria, but it does not focus sufficiently on the developments needed in Key Stage 1 to bring about rapid improvement.
 - Activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are engaging and based on children's interests. Throughout the school, lessons are often linked to pupils' daily lives to make learning purposeful and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural deployment effectively. The
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introduction of 'Bonkers about reading' is enthusing pupils to read good quality children's literature and find pleasure in reading. Visits out of school broaden pupils' experiences and give them interesting things to talk and write about.

- The local authority's recent review of the school's work identified that some pupils' achievement is not good enough. The local authority has provided useful additional support to the school to improve leadership and teaching through links with another school.
- The school is developing its partnerships with parents and carers, seeking their views about what it does well and what can be improved. Through its management of the community wing, the school plays an important role in the locality.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Many of the governors are new and undertaking training to strengthen their skills. They receive a great deal of information from the school about pupils' progress, but they do not ask sufficiently challenging questions to hold the school fully to account. The governors recognise the school's poor performance at Key Stage 1 in comparison to others nationally, but consider the reasons for this have much to do with the context in which the school is situated. A few governors are involved in the school's pay and review procedures to ensure that there is objectivity in the light of an appeal. Governors are aware that the pupil premium money is used effectively and is having a good impact in Key Stage 2. Together with the headteacher and local authority, they are forward-thinking. The new building to accommodate 21 classes is complete. The longer-term plan includes adding a nursery to the school to extend the good opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage to more children. The governing body's monitoring of the budget is meticulous. It has appropriate plans to deal with a forthcoming significant reduction in the budget for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The decision to allow three senior managers to have non class-based roles has helped to improve the quality of teaching in some year groups.
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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	132127
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	406471

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	425
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheryl Williamson
Headteacher	Chris Beddow
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 March 2011
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