

# Abbot's Hall Community Primary School

Danescourt Avenue, Stowmarket, IP14 1QF

**Inspection dates** 18–19 September 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Teaching is good and enables pupils from all groups, including those who find learning harder and more-able pupils, to make good progress. The gap in learning between different groups is being effectively closed.
- Parents are appreciative of the school. They say that their children are happy and safe and they would recommend this school to others.
- The headteacher has a clear and determined vision for school improvement through improving the quality of teaching and learning. She is supported in this by well-informed governors. Staff all share her vision and work together effectively to attain it; as a result, standards are steadily rising.
- Behaviour is good; pupils do what they are told and care for each other well. Older pupils take their role as 'buddies' to younger pupils very seriously. Pupils say that incidents of unpleasant behaviour are very rare because they are 'all friends'.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This contributes to the happy school where pupils from all groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, develop confidence and self-esteem.
- The range of lessons and other activities provided is good. Pupils benefit from good opportunities for physical and social development, such as 'forest school' and physical education and school sport.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not consistently tell them how to improve their writing in subjects other than literacy.
- Older pupils rely too heavily on adults to keep them on task, because they are not encouraged to take enough responsibility for their own learning.
- Opportunities are provided for younger pupils and children in the Reception classes to practise writing letters and numerals, but these are not always taken up with sufficient regularity to swiftly develop writing skills and number formation.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, four of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Samples of pupils' work were examined.
- Inspectors took account of the 66 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 13 staff questionnaire responses. Meetings were held with groups of pupils and some parents spoken to.
- Senior staff and subject leaders were interviewed.
- Governors were spoken to, as well as a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents including the school's self-evaluation and school development plan, data on the progress of pupils, safeguarding policies and procedures and records of exclusions, incidents of behaviour and attendance.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

## Inspection team

Sheelagh Barnes, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Additional Inspector
Robert Greatrex	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is of average size for a primary school. Numbers have risen since the previous inspection.
- The great majority of the pupils come from White British backgrounds with very few from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs requiring school action is below average, as is the proportion requiring external support or with a statement of special educational needs. These pupils have mainly speech and language and/or cognitive and learning difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium – additional government funding for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals – is broadly average.
- There have been a number of changes to staffing since the previous inspection. The headteacher and several other senior staff have been appointed since that time.
- There is a privately run before- and after-school club on site, which is inspected and reported upon separately.
- The headteacher works collaboratively with local schools.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further and accelerate pupils' progress by:
  - ensuring that teachers' marking consistently shows pupils how to improve their written work in all subjects and not just in literacy
  - encourage children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Key Stage 1 to make the most of opportunities to practise writing letters and numbers
  - developing pupils' confidence to take responsibility for their own learning and for moving on when tasks have been completed.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills and knowledge below the levels expected for their age, although there is some fluctuation from year to year. They settle into school quickly in the two Reception classes because of the well-planned communication between the previous settings the children have attended and between home and school. They make a good start to their education and achieve well.
- Throughout the school, pupils from all groups and of all levels of prior attainment, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress in developing skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Proportions of pupils who attained at the higher grades of Level 2a and Level 3 at the end of Year 2 were above national in 2011 and 2012, resulting in overall figures that were about six months ahead of schools nationally. However, in 2012, fewer pupils attained Level 2 or above than in 2011, and so the proportion attaining expected standards was in the lowest forty per cent when compared to other schools in reading and writing. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above those expected at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 in 2013.
- The previous inspection pointed to progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 as being an area for improvement. This has been addressed through setting pupils for lessons according to ability, and developing teachers' skills to include plenty of practical mathematical activities, both indoors and out. As a result, pupils enjoy the subject and have a very positive attitude towards it and standards have been raised.
- Pupils are systematically taught phonics (the relationship between letters and the sounds they make). In the Year 1 national phonic screening last year, results were broadly average. As a result, pupils who did not score as highly as others have been given extra support to help them to catch up with their classmates.
- Currently, the particular focus for improvement is on writing. Pupils from all groups are making good progress, although not yet as consistently or strongly as in mathematics and reading. Younger pupils' formation of letters and numerals is an area recently identified by teachers as requiring improvement.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates, as do pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This funding has been used to ensure that all pupils are supported in class by extra adults when the need arises. The gap in attainment in 2012 between pupils eligible for pupil premium and the rest was around one year. The progress of these pupils has accelerated and, by the end of Year 4, the gap between their attainment and that of other groups has been closed, so that they attain similar standards as other pupils.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection, despite significant staff changes. The school's records and the teaching and learning observed during the inspection indicate that teaching is nearly always at least good and occasionally outstanding.
- Teachers in all year groups plan carefully to make sure that the subject matter of lessons

interests pupils. For example, measuring trees in forest school and using that information to estimate the height of trees in the rainforest. As a result, pupils have a positive approach to learning throughout the school.

- Pupils are given work that matches their needs and abilities well. For example, mathematics lessons are currently taught with great consideration for pupils' prior attainment and ability, as a result of a whole-school focus on this. As a result, the levels of support and challenge are at the right level to enable pupils to make good progress.
- In the classes for younger pupils and children in Reception, teachers provide some good opportunities for practice in forming letters and numbers. However, while some children take up these opportunities willingly and frequently, others do not take part often enough.
- Teachers regularly ask pupils questions that are focused on eliciting their understanding and maintaining their full attention.
- Adults who help in class are well briefed and used well by the teachers. Their work has a positive impact on the progress pupils make in lessons. This is particularly so for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The support provided for these pupils enables them to take a full part in all activities and achieve well, in line with their classmates. There is equality of access to all activities because of the support and care of all adults in the school.
- Behaviour management is effective. Pupils know what is expected of them because of the consistency of approach throughout the school. Pupils listen and pay attention because they know that this is expected of them.
- Pupils are not encouraged to take as much responsibility as possible for their own learning. As a result, they do not always take initiatives, such as moving away from distractions or alerting teachers to the fact that they have completed targets set for them. As a result, their progress is good, rather than outstanding.
- Marking is regular, frequently immediate and includes many positive and encouraging comments. However, when teachers mark work in subjects other than literacy, they sometimes miss opportunities to remind pupils of the particular things that they need to do to improve their writing. As a result of these missed opportunities, pupils' progress in developing writing skills is not as fast as it could be.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. They say that the teachers' and other pupils' friendliness are particular strengths of the school. This is reflected in the improvement to their attendance over the past year to broadly average and their good levels of attendance at clubs.
- Parents say that they know that their children are safe and happy in school and virtually all say that they would recommend this school to other parents.
- Pupils know what is and what is not acceptable and relationships are good. Exclusions or incidents of unpleasant behaviour towards others are very rare.
- Pupils know about the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudiced-based

bullying. They say that it hardly ever happens and they are confident that adults would deal swiftly with any concerns that they had.

- Behaviour at play times and lunchtimes is extremely good and the school is proud of the records of many visitors who have commented on the pleasant and happy atmosphere.
- Boys and girls from all groups including disabled pupils and those new to the school are fully included in all school activities. Pupils take good care of others and take their responsibilities towards others very seriously. They are proud of their ability to 'make sensible choices'.
- Pupils pay good attention when teachers are instructing them in lessons; largely because of the care teachers take in making lessons interesting and exciting. On occasion, however, some pupils lose concentration and go off task during individual work. They swiftly respond when spoken to by an adult.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher, well supported by all staff and governors, has a clear ambition for the school to be as good as it possibly can be. Her leadership and focus have resulted in a maintenance of the good standards in all aspects of school life, as noted by the previous inspection and a steady improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Standards have been steadily improved through the rigorous monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress, combined with training and support. This approach to continuously improving teaching and achievement has resulted in high levels of morale among staff and pupils, and the full support of parents.
- Leaders have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and their improvement plan is focused on the right priorities to improve achievement further. Teachers, including those responsible for leading particular areas such as subjects or key stages, are accountable for their performance.
- Subject leaders monitor teachers' planning and pupils' progress effectively by checking planning, assessment, lessons and work in pupils' books.
- Sports funding is being used effectively to develop teachers' skills. An assessment system has been put in place to help leaders to monitor the impact of the initiative to improve provision for pupils' physical development. School monitoring has already shown a significant raising of standards in the quality of teaching and learning in physical education.
- Links with other local schools are very strong and productive. The schools work together in a mutually beneficial way, sharing training and monitoring each other's work. This has a positive impact on school improvement and standards.
- The local authority has an appropriately light touch approach to this good school. Governors have benefited from training provided by the local authority. This enables them, for example, to be confident in appointing new staff and in financial management and data interpretation. Through training and modelling roles, it has enabled the school to develop supportive partnerships with other local schools. These improvements have helped to maintain the good quality of teaching and learning.

**■ The governance of the school:**

Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, based upon their monitoring. Through good-quality training and personal expertise, they have developed appropriate skills to confidently interpret data. As a consequence, they support and challenge the headteacher about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They receive appropriate information about the management of teachers' performance and see that teachers' pay rises are appropriately linked to pupils' achievements. They manage the school's finances well. They are fully aware of how the pupil premium funding is spent, and the impact this has on the achievement of eligible pupils. Governors ensure that the school meets national requirements for safeguarding children. Policies are regularly reviewed to ensure that children are kept safe and free from harm.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124631
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	425390

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	252
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Everard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Bailey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 December 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01449 612818
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