

Abram CofE Primary School

Simpkin Street, Abram, Wigan, Lancashire, WN2 5QE

Inspection dates 22–23 October 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		Requires improvement	3
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

- Progress in reading, writing and mathematics has not been good enough over time in Key Stage 1 and for pupils with special educational needs.
- The proportion of teaching that is good or better has not been as high as it should be because teachers do not always provide work precisely matched to pupils' individual needs and so sometimes work is too difficult or too easy.
- Behaviour at break times needs improving. It is sometimes too boisterous and some parents feel it could be improved. Supervision in and around the school is inconsistent.
- Not all teachers make full reference to the individual education plans of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs when planning their lessons.
- Leaders have not sufficiently refined their systems that track pupils' progress, and so they are not in a secure position to identify when groups or individuals are falling behind.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and his new leadership team have set out a clear vision for the school with the strong support of new governors. They are making good headway in implementing improvements.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress as do pupils in reading and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school's new marking system is having a positive impact, especially in how it involves pupils in their learning and progress.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is invariably good.
- A new system for checking on the quality of teaching is leading to improvements.
- The curriculum encourages pupils to practise and improve their literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a total of 15 lessons or part lessons during the inspection. All class teachers, one higher-level teaching assistant and a visiting sports coach were observed – some more than once. One lesson was jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and his senior leadership team, other teachers, pupils, four members of the governing body (three of which are parents of pupils at the school or that have recently left), the Assistant Director of Education along with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors took account of seven responses to the staff questionnaire and 26 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). An inspector met with a group of four parents. An inspector had telephone calls with two parents and referred to an email from another.
- Inspectors listened to individual pupils read, both in and out of lessons. They observed pupils on the corridors, in assembly, in the dining room and out on the playground at breaktimes.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and considered a range of documents such as the school development plan, its report on how the school is performing, governing body documents, curriculum policy documents and policies relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

John Ashley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Baljinder Khela

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a below average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average, while the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after.
- There is a nursery on site which is separately managed and was not part of this inspection.
- There have been a number of staff changes over the past two years, including the retirement of the deputy headteacher, recruitment of new staff and the establishment of a new leadership team as well as the appointment of several new governors.
- The school is part of the Hindley and Ashton partnership of schools and has gone out to consultation about becoming a member of The Keys Federation by the end of the autumn term, 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all groups of pupils make good or better progress in their learning and improve the quality of teaching by using information from assessments to provide work that is precisely matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Develop clear learning plans for those who are disabled or those who have special educational needs by:
 - using information about pupils' learning needs from their individual education plans
 - making good use of teaching assistants, visual and other resources to support learning
 - sharing information with all parties about pupils' learning and progress by the regular checking of learning plans.
- Improve pupils' behaviour around the school and the effectiveness of leadership by:
 - ensuring that leaders check and provide clear feedback to staff about how well different groups and individuals are learning in class and making progress towards meeting their targets
 - gathering information from the school's incident records to keep regular checks on behaviour outside the classroom so that pupils are supported to behave better
 - reviewing day-to-day supervision arrangements in around school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils in Key Stage 1 and those with special educational needs or who are disabled have not made good enough progress in the past. These pupils have not always reached expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their progress has slowed in Key Stage 1 but by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils gain ground and are broadly in line with national averages in mathematics, reading and writing. More than half of last year's cohort reached above the national averages.
- Children enter the Reception class generally below typical levels for their age. Pupils learn routines quickly, for example, turn-taking and listening to instructions. They demonstrate good fine motor skills when using the touchpad on a computer or when practising their writing. They leave the Reception class well prepared for entry into the Year 1 class.
- Although progress in Key Stage 1 is improving as seen in some lessons and in pupils' work, in one lesson progress slowed when less-able pupils struggled to keep up with an activity on sequencing numbers as it was not pitched at their level, while more-able pupils in the group found the task quite easy.
- Pupils at the end of Year 1 achieved below the national average in the annual check on knowledge of letters and the sounds they make and also in their re-test in Year 2. The school has taken good steps to improve the teaching of letters and sounds in Year 1, and are now providing good support in Year 3 for the pupils who fell behind in the test in previous years.
- The pupils currently in Year 2 are making better progress. They read 'tricky' words and understand that they contain irregular spelling patterns. Pupils identify why certain words start with a capital letter and the more-able pupils are challenged well to read more complex words.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils read regularly and they practise their skills both in school and at home. Homework diaries are used in which brief notes are made to indicate when pupils have read and how much. However, not enough guidance is given in these diaries for parents to support their children's reading as effectively as possible. Pupils in Key Stage 1 do not always make use of visual clues for reading or to help them understand a sentence.
- Older pupils use their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make to read unfamiliar words. They answer questions about what they have read and know what they need to do to improve their reading.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils are making good progress, including the most-able pupils. For example, they responded well when asked to complete a mental arithmetic test within a certain time. Because the tasks were planned with pupils' ability levels in mind, the large majority of pupils excitedly rose to the challenge.
- Outcomes for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have not kept pace with other pupils because achievement and progress at Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics have been below expectations over some time. As a result, by the end of Year 6, pupils with special educational needs are up to six and a half terms behind their peers despite more recent evidence that they are now making quicker progress in writing and mathematics in Year 3. A new leader for this area of work is now taking decisive action to improve the rate of progress for these pupils.
- Pupils who are supported through the pupil premium funding remain about two and a half terms behind their peers in reading, writing and mathematics but this gap is closing from last year and is now almost in line with the national average.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- While the quality of teaching is showing good signs of improvement, the proportion of good or better teaching has not been high enough over time.
- Teaching requires improvement because not enough attention has been paid in the past to the precise learning needs of those pupils with special educational needs or those who are disabled. As a result some lesson plans have not included the right level of support, resources or activities to fully meet all pupils' needs. This has been particularly the case in Key Stage 1.
- Although teaching is generally good in Key Stage 2, pupils in all classes do not make expected or better progress when planning fails to focus upon their precise needs, for example, when tasks for all pupils are the same
- In the Reception class, planning is based upon accurate knowledge of children's developmental needs and early teaching of appropriate routines and social skills. As a result children learn to concentrate and to practise their skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In Key Stage 1, lessons are effective when planning takes account of how pupils enjoy exploring and handling, for example, as seen in a lesson on identifying different shapes. Opportunities are missed when these activities do not include the use of mathematical terms. The less-able pupils do not learn as well when the task is too long or not matched to their needs, as happened in a lesson when they found counting and sequencing numbers up to 20 too difficult.
- In Key Stage 2, good relationships and good questioning skills ensure pupils enjoy their learning. Pupils make good progress in well-planned guided reading sessions. Teachers generally provide tasks at the right level but on occasions this slips, for example, in a lesson when secure knowledge of mathematical terms left one group struggling with completing the task.
- In a good Key Stage 2 English lesson, the less-able pupils were well supported by a skilled teaching assistant who had worked with the teacher to focus precisely on the writing levels of her group. Clear targets had been agreed with the pupils and good use of resources meant that small steps of progress were quickly being made.
- Targets are used effectively and appreciated by pupils. For example, a group of more-able pupils said how helpful the teachers' marking had been to help them move towards agreed targets.
- There is increasing evidence that a consistent marking scheme that encourages full pupil involvement with written comments is helping pupils to make progress.
- Teaching was outstanding in a Year 5 dance lesson because every pupil was included in the session. They responded with enthusiasm to the lively and skilled teacher and her assistant when building upon prior learning to enact a dance about transforming from a deep sleep to become robots. This was a good example of developing spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and of providing equal opportunities to pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- While behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning in class are invariably good, some behaviour on the corridors and outside at breaktimes requires improvement.
- Occasionally, during unstructured times in the school day, pupils are not always fully supervised when moving from one area to another. This can lead to some boisterous behaviour on school corridors or on the playground.
- The school has recorded several incidents that have included boys arguing and sometimes fighting. There have been four recent fixed term exclusions, although this is unusual.
- One or two parents said that behaviour could be better, although the large majority of parents feel that the school deals with behaviour well and would recommend the school to other parents. They say that communications are good through texting and the web-site.
- Attendance compares with the national average and has shown improvements over this past term.
- Behaviour in lessons and in well-supervised assemblies is invariably good. Pupils are polite and respectful. They display good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development when celebrating

each other's achievements, singing a song together with great gusto and saying a communal prayer.

- Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for. They state that any problems, like name-calling, are quickly dealt with by staff and that there is no bullying.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Pupils in Key Stage 1 and those who are disabled and those with special educational needs have not made enough progress in the past. Together with the occasional misbehaviour of some pupils in unstructured times, leadership and management, therefore, require improvement.
- Teaching over time has not always taken full account of the learning or special educational needs of some pupils, especially those in Key Stage 1. The headteacher and governors identified the need for robust improvements to the teaching of this group of pupils. A new leader for this area is now ensuring that work is planned much more effectively to meet their needs. There has not been enough time, however, for this to impact on outcomes.
- Behaviour outside class is not as good as it is in lessons or assemblies. While the school records incidents at breaktimes, not enough checks are made as to which pupils have been involved and why, or whether supervision levels might be linked in some way.
- The headteacher, his new leadership team and a strengthened governing body with local authority support have now established an agreed direction for the school. A strong partnership with a local school has enabled the school to increase the proportion of good and better teaching. There are now good signs of improved achievement, for example in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at the end of Key Stage 2. Also, pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs are starting to make greater progress in their reading and writing because of improved planning.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching on a regular basis providing feedback on strengths and areas to develop. Staff have benefited from attending courses on improving teaching. However, more work needs to be done to check fully on how well lesson plans meet the needs of every pupil so that they make expected or better progress.
- Leaders also understand that more needs to be done to ensure that behaviour in all contexts is as good as it is in lessons.
- The school-improvement plan is clearly written and agreed with all staff and governors. Leaders have planned clear action points based upon a diagnostic report. The majority of these actions have been either partly or fully addressed, for example, improvements now noted in the quality of teaching and the creative curriculum which encourages pupils to practise and improve their reading and writing skills.
- Partnerships with local schools are strong as they are with parents, who say that the school keeps them well-informed.
- Safeguarding policies and practice at the school meet with requirements and staff receive the updated training in safeguarding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body have benefited from the appointment of a number of new governors. Governors are very well informed about the work of the school. They have received support and training from the local authority so that they understand about the achievements of different groups and are informed about the quality of teaching through their link roles (for example, where the focus is on special educational needs). They hold the headteacher and staff to account through effective performance management. Pupil premium money is allocated in a detailed way to benefit all eligible pupils through additional speech therapy, guided reading or counselling, for example. Governors are regularly informed about the progress being made by these pupils and are so able to judge the impact of the funding. Additional funding for physical education and sport is well-used to buy in additional sports coaches and to provide training for staff.

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	106469
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	426111

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev. Ann Stein
Headteacher	Mr Peter Freeman
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2012
Telephone number	01942 703465
Fax number	01942 863264
Email address	enquiries@admin.abram.wigan.sch.uk

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