

Abbey Hulton Primary School

School Road, Abbey Hulton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST2 8BS

Inspection dates 10–11 December 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement is not good. The progress pupils make as they move through the school is uneven, and is sometimes less than good.
- In mathematics, too few pupils reach the standards they are capable of, particularly the most able pupils.
- Teaching is not consistently good across the school. Teachers do not always plan well enough for groups of pupils of differing abilities. As a consequence, some pupils find tasks too easy and do not make good progress in their learning.
- Teachers do not always give pupils precise enough guidance about how to improve their work, particularly in mathematics.
- Senior and middle leaders do not fully contribute to checking and improving the quality of teaching.
- The governing body does not have the expertise to challenge the leadership strongly enough. Governors are not able to hold school leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the performance of the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides clear direction. Since the previous inspection, the teaching of writing and reading has improved at a good rate. It has led to improvements in attainment and progress across the school.
- Behaviour is good and has improved since the previous inspection.
- These improvements show the positive impact of leadership and management.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 11 lessons taught by 10 teachers. This included two lessons observed jointly with the headteacher and one with the acting deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with two groups of school councillors, and read with two groups of pupils. Discussions were held with staff, including senior leaders and those responsible for leading subjects. Meetings were held with the Chair and the vice-chair of the Governing Body, and with a representative from the local authority. A telephone discussion was held with the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors analysed pupils' work in books and looked at a wide range of documents. These included information on the school's own evaluation of its performance, improvement plans, pupils' current progress, teachers' plans, as well as policies and records on safeguarding, risk assessments, and records on behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of parental surveys completed by the school. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to access them. They also took account of 16 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Deana Aldred, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila O'Keeffe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Abbey Hulton Primary School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is more than twice the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in staff.
- The school works in partnership with the local secondary school and other feeder primary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be at least good, especially in mathematics, and so raise pupils' achievement by:
 - making sure that tasks are well planned and matched to the different abilities of pupils
 - enabling the most able pupils to attain the higher levels in reading and mathematics
 - telling pupils consistently how they can improve their work, during lessons and when marking books
 - providing ample opportunities in mathematics and other subjects for pupils to apply skills to real-life situations and to problem solving
 - ensuring that pupils have good opportunities to respond to their teachers' comments.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - making sure that senior and middle leaders work effectively as a team to improve the quality of teaching, and so raise standards
 - ensuring that governors develop their expertise so that they are fully able to hold senior and middle leaders to account.

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

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils requires improvement because the progress pupils make as they move through the school is not consistently good enough. This is particularly so in mathematics. The considerable changes in staffing have contributed to this uneven progress.
- Despite some improvements since the previous inspection, standards by the end of Year 6 are below average in reading. Also, some of the most able pupils do not attain the higher standards they are capable of in both reading and mathematics.
- The school has made writing and reading a high priority, and most pupils now make good progress in these subjects. This good progress is supported by teachers placing a greater emphasis on the teaching of the knowledge of letters and sounds to help pupils to read unfamiliar words. In addition to this, teachers are helping pupils to have a better understanding of the books they read.
- Children start in the Nursery with skills that are below, and some significantly below, those typically expected for their age. Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving, and inspectors observed good teaching. The majority of children make expected progress and enter Year 1 with attainment lower than national expectations.
- Pupils with special educational needs are making the same variable progress as their classmates so that, for them, achievement is sometimes good, and at other times it requires improvement.
- The same is true of other pupil groups throughout the school. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, and those from minority ethnic groups, are making the same uneven progress as their classmates.
- The school demonstrates a partially successful commitment to promoting equality of opportunity through the improved achievement of pupil groups since the previous inspection.
- The school has prioritised raising the achievement of girls as they have previously made slower progress than the boys. The gap in attainment is narrowing as girls' progress has improved to be in line with that of the boys.
- The progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has improved. In the 2013 national tests, at the end of Year 6, there was no gap in the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and that of pupils who are not. Throughout the school, these pupils and their classmates make similar uneven progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good enough since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching over time requires improvement. Although good practice was observed, evidence from the school's records, joint observations made by inspectors and school leaders, and analysis of pupils' work show that the quality of teaching in some lessons, and especially in mathematics, requires improvement.
- In some lessons, pupils' progress is slowed because teachers do not plan activities that are well matched to the needs of groups of pupils of different abilities. The level of challenge is not always great enough to enable pupils to achieve the standards they are capable of. Evidence from lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work show that this is the case for the different groups of pupils within the school.
- In some lessons, including in mathematics, there is an over-reliance on worksheets of limited quality. Consequently, there is insufficient emphasis on teaching for understanding and so concepts are not securely grasped. There are too few opportunities in mathematics and other subjects to apply skills to real-life situations or to problem solving.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and there are instances of good practice within school. However, the quality of marking is variable across classes and subjects. Throughout lessons and

when marking books, teachers do not always explain to pupils how they can improve their work, or give pupils opportunities to do this.

- The teaching of reading and writing has improved. This is having a positive effect on pupils' achievement. Pupils are now encouraged to read more often, and teachers help pupils to choose books that are well matched to their interests and their abilities. A Year 6 pupil told inspectors that teachers 'inspire us to read'.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, teachers make effective use of the indoor and outdoor learning environments. The outdoor environment is particularly well resourced, and successfully engages the children in well-planned and stimulating learning activities. For example, a small group of children worked with a teaching assistant to build a snowman out of sand. They worked with concentration to transfer sand from one sandpit to another, using buckets on a pulley system. Throughout the activity, the children were skilfully supported by the teaching assistant who used every opportunity to encourage them to talk about what they were doing, and so develop their understanding of materials as well as their mathematical and language skills.
- The most effective learning takes place when pupils understand what is expected of them, and are supported throughout their activities. Teachers intervene to support some pupils when they find the work too difficult, and to give extra challenge to those who find it too easy. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher skilfully adjusted her teaching on 'how to tell the time' to meet the learning needs of individual pupils. The learning was simplified for some to telling the time to $\frac{1}{4}$ to the hour, and extended for others, especially for two pupils who showed a good understanding of how to tell the time using a digital clock. During this lesson, pupils made good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good and has improved greatly since the previous inspection. This view is shared by pupils, parents, staff and governors.
- Pupils are welcoming and polite. They look after one another and their school. Pupils are proud of their school and of their work. They try their best in lessons and want to do well.
- Pupils feel safe in school, and they know how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what is meant by bullying and the different types of bullying. Members of the school council are very proud of the work they do throughout the school to make sure that there is no bullying at Abbey Hulton. They told inspectors, 'If there was any bullying, it would get sorted straight away because everyone knows what it looks like.'
- The school works effectively with parents to ensure that pupils attend school regularly.
- A well-attended breakfast club contributes to pupils' enjoyment of school, provides them with a healthy meal, and helps them to have a prompt start to the day.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Although there have been improvements since the previous inspection, leaders have not yet succeeded in improving teaching and pupils' achievement enough. Staffing changes have contributed to this. The school has not fully addressed the issues raised in the previous inspection and more remains to be done for it to be good.
- Senior and middle leaders, some of whom are new to their role, have not yet been fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils are making throughout the school. As a consequence, best practice has not been shared quickly enough to improve teaching – particularly in mathematics – and to raise achievement, especially of the most able pupils. The improvements made demonstrate, however, that the school can improve further.
- The headteacher provides determined leadership, and through regular tracking of pupils' progress she is developing a shared accountability for raising achievement. Some teachers are not yet confident in their use of assessment, so data are not always as reliable as they should

be.

- The curriculum requires improvement as it does not meet the needs of all pupils. There are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their mathematical skills, including in other subjects.
- Senior and middle leaders are playing an increasingly strong part in supporting their colleagues, as well as in contributing to the school's strategic planning and the evaluation of its performance.
- Good progress has been made in improving the teaching of writing. Pupils are eager to share their work, particularly their 'purple books' which contain their extended pieces of writing. Attainment and pupils' progress have improved in this subject.
- The school has successfully improved behaviour, despite considerable disruption to staffing.
- The school is successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of what is right and what is wrong. They know that good behaviour is important, and they demonstrate this throughout the school day. They really do live their motto, 'Hand in hand we learn'.
- The curriculum is enriched with activities, particularly visits, and visitors. During the inspection, two classes went to see the pantomime Aladdin; another class visited the local high school to work in the science laboratories and a Year 2 class enjoyed an introduction to brass instruments from a visiting music teacher. Pupils told inspectors how they enjoy the sport clubs, especially football and cross-country. They are hopeful that they will be more successful in winning competitions. With the new primary school sport funding, the school has joined a local sport partnership with the aim of increasing the range of sporting activities available to pupils.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school. The school improvement partner works closely with the headteacher and the governing body, helping them to improve the quality of assessment and providing training to develop the skills and expertise of staff and governors.
- The school is well placed to build on the improvements it has made, now that staffing is becoming more stable.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive and their involvement in school has significantly improved since the previous inspection. However, they do not challenge sufficiently in order to hold the school to account. They make sure that pupils are safe by securing effective safeguarding arrangements. They ensure that the school goes the extra mile by providing help for families, as they need it. The family liaison worker, appointed by the school, successfully supports parents and pupils. Governors have helped the headteacher to manage a considerable number of staffing changes; they have developed and used an effective performance management policy to tackle underperformance. They receive reports from the headteacher on the performance of the school, and from senior and middle leaders on actions taken to improve achievement within the subjects they lead. Finances are managed with care, and governors ask appropriate questions about how the pupil premium funding is spent. Governors are in a good position to develop the effectiveness of their role; they have planned further training to enable them to be more precise and rigorous in the challenge they bring. This challenge will be around the spending of the pupil premium funding to support the progress of the most able pupils, as well as actions needed to improve the quality of teaching and the quality of assessment information.

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	123989
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	426986

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vicki Cartwright-Davies
Headteacher	Linda Williams
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2012
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