

Abbey Park Middle School

Abbey Road, , Pershore, WR10 1DF

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2014

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- In this happy and welcoming school, pupils make good progress, achieving well in a range of subjects. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Since the previous inspection leaders, managers and governors have maintained existing strengths in teaching and achievement and improved attendance.
- Teaching is good, with teachers consistently providing interesting activities that stimulate pupils' interest. Teachers question pupils skilfully to check and extend their understanding.
- Behaviour is consistently good in lessons and around school. Pupils have good manners and enjoy their schooling. They say they feel safe and consistently show consideration towards others.
- The headteacher and senior staff lead the school well and the highly motivated staff give them full support. Staff training is carefully chosen to benefit the school.
- Governors draw on a wide range of experiences to hold the school to account well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in the mid-part of the school in Year 6 have been below average for the past three years.
- Sometimes teachers do not use teaching assistants fully to support learning in lessons.
- Marking in mathematics is not always precise enough to show pupils how to improve.
- There is insufficient agreement between the school and its partner schools about how well pupils are achieving when they first enter Year 5.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed nine teachers and nine lessons, including two observed jointly with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. Telephone discussions were held with the headteachers of Abbey Park First School and Cherry Orchard First School.
- The school’s work was observed and the inspectors looked at a range of documents including records of pupils’ progress, documents concerning safeguarding, records of attendance, and records of the school’s observations of teaching. Some 26 responses to staff questionnaires were analysed.
- Inspectors took account of 73 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire) and spoke informally to three parents collecting their children before and after school. Parents’ letters or e-mails to inspectors were also considered.

Inspection team

Michael Farrell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Dennis Brittain

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average school of its type.
- Most pupils are White British.
- Very few pupils indeed speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, who are supported at school action, is higher than average. The proportion of such pupils, who are supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs, is three times the national average. Overall about a third of pupils have a disability or special educational need.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for special educational needs (hereafter 'the base') supporting 11 boys and girls with autism in Years 5, 6 and 7.
- An above average proportion of pupils is entitled to support from the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are cared for by the local authority).
- Last year the school did not meet the government's floor standards for primary schools, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Last year, a fifth of Year 6 pupils joined the school in Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics in the early part of the school by:
 - continuing to make regular checks on the progress of pupils in Years 5 and 6, particularly those who have joined the school late or with low levels of achievement, to ensure they quickly close gaps in their knowledge and skills and catch up with their peers.
- Ensure teachers:
 - make more effective use of teaching assistants across the school
 - consistently give pupils guidance when marking their work in mathematics that shows them clearly and precisely how they should improve.
- Continue to work with other schools and the local authority to ensure closer agreement about pupils' levels of attainment when they first enter the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is generally below average but go on to make good progress in English and mathematics and a range of other subjects. Progress accelerates in Years 6 and 7. Pupils' work including books, displays and things they have made confirm that they achieve well.
- Girls perform slightly better than boys in English and mathematics but the gap is narrowing as boys' progress increases.
- Pupils develop a wide range of skills in reading because they read often, as well as in writing, communication and mathematics.
- The school meticulously checks pupils' progress, intervening as necessary to ensure pupils are achieving well. More-able pupils make good progress because they are consistently given activities that challenge them to think really hard and do better.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make consistently good progress because of the good teaching and extensive individual support the school provides.
- Pupils in the autism base achieve well, particularly in their social skills and communication. The school has identified that these pupils' progress slowed in reading, writing and mathematics in the six months before the inspection, partly as a result of staff changes and partly owing to the circumstances and often acute challenges facing individual pupils. Extra tuition and additional opportunities to develop their skills in the 'Forest School' have been introduced by the school and these are beginning to accelerate the progress of this group of pupils.
- Last year, pupils eligible for pupil premium funding were behind non-eligible pupils by over a year in mathematics, two terms in writing and under a term in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. In reading there was no gap. This year, pupils eligible for pupil premium are making good progress because of extra support and individual tuition.
- Last year, for the first time, the school did not meet floor standards but is back on track to exceed them this year. Pupils who join the school late with low standards tend to leave with lower attainment than their peers. Although they, too, make good progress, it is not quite as strong as that of pupils who enter the school at the usual time in Year 5. The longer pupils are at the school, the stronger their progress.
- The lack of agreement between the school and its partner first schools about some of the assessments made of pupils' prior attainment when they first enter Abbey Park is a source of concern to the school. Leaders recognise the urgent need to secure greater agreement with partner schools and the local authority in this area.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching in English and mathematics ensures pupils make good progress. The school's observations of teaching indicate that teaching is good, and this picture was confirmed by the inspectors' own judgements, which took into account the quality of pupils' work and displays in classrooms and the evidence gained by talking to pupils.

- In a mathematics lesson in Year 7, for example, pupils were encouraged to use number processes to find solutions and using mathematics language accurately. They responded well to the teacher's probing questioning and clear instruction. Similarly, in an English lesson in Year 6, pupils were helped to reach good levels of achievement when writing a newspaper report because they had been taught how to grasp key principles of good journalism and could explain them clearly ('You put the main facts first').
- Staff create a positive climate for learning throughout the school and encourage pupils to try their best and behave well at all times. The school and classrooms are neat and tidy and attractive displays of work enhance classrooms and other settings. Outside, there is no litter and pupils enjoy spacious play areas.
- Teachers prepare interesting and relevant lessons, and convey consistently high expectations; as a result pupils are highly motivated and keen to do well. Teachers' enthusiasm and good knowledge of their subjects help ensure work is pitched at the right level.
- Teachers question pupils closely to check and develop their understanding and knowledge and modify their teaching to take pupils' progress into account. Work is assessed accurately and good use is made of information on pupils' progress to inform planning.
- Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop a range of skills in literacy and numeracy by applying them in different subjects; for example pupils in Year 6 engaged in careful measuring in design and technology.
- Pupils with autism are taught well, both in the base and in lessons with other pupils. In a session in the base, pupils were skilfully taught the meaning of idioms, which they discussed with growing understanding and confidence. In other lessons these pupils participate fully because of well-judged support. Their increasing ability to cope with the often challenging difficulties they face is testament to the sensitive and well-informed teaching they receive.
- Suitable homework is regularly set across the school.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' progress, working well with individuals and small groups. Sometimes teachers do not use these assistants as effectively as they could, for example when the teacher is talking to the whole class.
- Marking is up to date, generally gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve and there are sometimes comments in written work from the pupils to show they have understood and are acting on the guidance they have been given. However, marking in mathematics is not as consistent or as sharp as it is in other subjects in all these respects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' keenness to learn and their positive attitudes to learning contribute significantly to the good progress they make. In a computing lesson in which pupils had to 'filter' out information about certain characteristics of a crime suspect, for example, they were keenly motivated, which contributed to their good behaviour.
- The tidiness and attractiveness of the environment reflect the pride pupils and staff take in the school. Pupils are polite and well-mannered and play outside happily and without friction. At lunch they chat with their friends and enjoy the meal.

- Pupils can readily give examples of lessons that they especially enjoy, for example saying that they appreciate the sports provision and the many school clubs the school offers.
- Attendance is average and has been improved through the use of rewards for good attendance and through the support the school provides for families. The school does all that can be reasonably expected to tackle the attendance of the few pupils who are persistently absent, with the headteacher and others visiting the child's home if necessary, and the school works closely with families where attendance is deemed a problem.
- Exclusions are used only for the most serious reasons. Where this is unavoidable, the school liaises closely with special schools to ensure placements in other schools or settings are appropriate.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils consider that they are safe and parents agree. Pupils can explain about keeping safe near roads and when using the internet and can talk about the risks of social networking sites.
- The development of pupils' moral and social values is promoted assiduously by staff and reinforced by the school's programmes of study, and pupils respond well. Pupils readily say 'All pupils are equal'. They know what bullying is and that it is wrong because the school has conveyed this strongly. They say they are not aware of bullying and school records indicate bullying is very uncommon. Pupils know that they can tell a member of staff if they have concerns about bullying or anything else.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong leadership of the headteacher is reflected in the good leadership of senior staff and the commitment of all staff. Others with responsibilities, such as subject leaders, contribute fully, using assessment information effectively to monitor their areas. Provision for the base is well led.
- Staff and governors have high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour. Parents speak very positively of the school. Examples of staff comments are, 'I am proud to work at Abbey Park Middle School and love my job' and 'Everyone is valued'.
- Senior members of staff carefully assess teaching so that the school has an accurate picture. Any pupils at risk of falling behind are helped and supported. The performance of staff is managed very effectively and in ways that ensure the professional needs of teaching staff and the objectives of the school are both met. Staff members appreciate the wide range of professional development opportunities they are offered. Increases in teachers' pay are always related to their impact on pupils' progress.
- Pupils' learning experiences are enhanced by a wide range of activities. Art, music, design and technology, drama, theatre visits, and faith days provide rich experiences for pupils that develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Primary sports funding is used effectively to enhance tuition in physical education so that pupils enjoy wider opportunities which increase their skills and confidence. Year 7 'catch-up' funding is judiciously used to provide pupils who need additional support with carefully focussed interventions in English and mathematics.
- The local authority provides a range of support, including staff training. The joint work it has

hosted between the school and its partner first schools is helping identify how to improve the accuracy of pupils' assessment levels but difficulties here have not been fully resolved.

■ Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governors know the school well, holding it to account effectively. They have a good understanding of pupils' standards including those of different groups. Governors know the quality of teaching through visiting the school regularly and through focussed meetings with staff. They know that pupil premium funding is being spent effectively and have evaluated its impact. They ensure resources are well used including funding for staff. Pupils' safety is a high priority and governors gather information on this from staff, parents and pupils. They take part in the management of the head teacher's performance and see that that the system for appraising the performance of other staff is effective. Governors keep their training up to date and have conducted an audit of their own effectiveness. They constantly seek to improve their contribution to the school and to the way they discharge their responsibilities as leaders.

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	116774
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	431891

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ross Garrett
Headteacher	Lynn Evans
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2010
Telephone number	01386 552667
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