

Abbey Park Academy

Keighley Close, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX2 9DG

Inspection dates 23–24 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 do not achieve well enough. Pupils have not acquired the skills or the confidence they need to become fluent readers and writers.
- The impact of teaching is not consistently good across Key Stages 1 and 2. This has led to pupils not achieving as well as they should in reading and writing.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils about their work is not always precise enough to help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve.
- Learning support, including the use of additional adults, has not been fully evaluated to make sure that pupils make the best possible progress in the classroom.
- The acting assistant Principals do not currently have the depth of experience needed to support the acting Principal to closely monitor the quality of teaching and to take swift action to address emerging weaknesses.
- The role of the subject leader is underdeveloped. The acting Principal is therefore unable to delegate responsibilities to colleagues to improve the quality and impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning.
- The transitional governing body is still in the process of creating a high profile, skilful team of governors to support the school's work and hold it fully to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Actions taken by the acting Principal have already led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching in all subjects.
- Pupils are friendly and polite. They behave well. They respect each other and understand the importance of fairness and equality. They show good attitudes to their learning and want to succeed. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are good.
- Good quality provision in the early years enables children to learn well, particularly in the Nursery. As a result, they make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- There is a real buzz of enthusiasm around school because all pupils have equal opportunities and are encouraged to participate in a broad range of sports and after school clubs and activities. Sporting opportunities are a strength in the school.
- The Northern Education Trust has provided appropriate and effective professional advice to the school. This has helped the new acting Principal and other colleagues to raise standards.
- The Chair of the Governing Body is working very effectively with the acting Principal to appoint new governors with the skills and attributes needed to take the school forward.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons, three of which were observed jointly with the acting Principal and an acting assistant Principal.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and reviewed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors observed pupils in the playground and during lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in their books and in the learning journals of children in the early years.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting Principal, the two acting assistant Principals, the subject leader for mathematics and the special educational needs coordinator. An inspector met with five members of the transitional governing body which included the Chair of Governors, the Primary Director of the Northern Education Trust and the school's achievement partner.
- Two groups of pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with inspectors. The inspectors listened to several pupils read.
- The inspection took account of nine staff questionnaires. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online parent survey (Parent View) to be considered. Inspectors held discussions with parents during the school's sport's day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including minutes from meetings of the governing body, pupil achievement data, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Pauline Pitman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Prydwen Elfed-Owens

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Provision is full time in both the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is above the national average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding which supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club, funded by the school, and a range of after-school clubs.
- The school opened in December 2013 and is an Academy working within the Northern Education Trust. In January 2015, the deputy headteacher became the acting Principal with support from two acting assistant Principals. There are currently no middle or subject leaders in the school.
- There is a transitional governing body which is supported by the Trust.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by:
 - supporting all pupils to develop their literacy skills, for a range of purposes, so that they become confident and fluent readers and writers of English
 - fine tuning teachers' feedback so that all pupils, particularly the least able, can improve their work
 - developing a curriculum which not only stimulates the love of learning but supports all pupils, in every classroom, to acquire the basic skills they need to deepen their understanding so that they can make at least good progress
 - targeting support and intervention, including the deployment of additional adults, more precisely so that it has maximum impact on pupils' learning within the classroom.
- Further develop leadership and management in the school by:
 - establishing an effective senior leadership team who can work closely with the Principal to closely monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and take swift action to address any emerging weaknesses
 - developing the role of subject leaders to ensure that the curriculum is dynamic, interesting and engaging and fully promotes the achievement of all pupils
 - continuing to restructure and secure expertise within the governing body so that each governor can support key areas of the school's work and successfully hold the school to account.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The skills of some senior leaders are underdeveloped. The two recently appointed acting assistant Principals have not had enough time to develop their skills and expertise to enable them to monitor the quality of teaching closely enough in order to take swift action to address any emerging weaknesses.
- The role of the subject leader is being developed. The acting Principal has not always been able to delegate responsibilities fully to subject leaders to ensure that the curriculum is dynamic and engaging, allowing pupils to master their learning so that they can make better progress.
- The acting Principal has made significant and effective changes to improve the quality of teaching and learning, since her appointment in January 2015. She has built some strong relationships with her colleagues and with parents. She is clear about her vision for the school and wants every pupil to have an equal opportunity to succeed and to be free from any form of discrimination. The school is successful in promoting these aims and in fostering good relations.
- Following the previous year's national test results there has been a much stronger focus on improving the quality of teaching. The school's achievement partner has provided additional expertise to support the school to improve provision. Staff are much clearer about what they need to do to become more effective practitioners. As a result, teaching has improved and there are higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Work in pupils' books suggests that standards are rising this year, but some pupils are still not achieving as well as they should.
- The Northern Education Trust has offered appropriate and effective support and advice. This has helped the school to offer pertinent staff development and to use information about its pupils to prioritise actions. The school is now in a much stronger position to more accurately evaluate its strengths and areas for development.
- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural curriculum is effective. The emphasis on sport also encourages pupils to develop a sense of fair play and to work as a team. Pupils respect each other and understand the importance of taking turns. They are encouraged to understand their place within their wider community through participation in school elections and in exploring other countries and cultures. Trips out of school, including visits to London and Manchester, encourage pupils to look outside their own environment to help them prepare well for life in modern Britain.
- The acting Principal has put in place strategies to help some pupils to make more progress. However, this provision, including support from additional adults, has not been fully evaluated to make sure that pupils' learning in the classroom is further enhanced so that they make better progress.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and are effective in protecting children. The designated members of staff actively promote this aspect of the school's work. The governing body recently undertook an audit to ensure there were no gaps in governors' understanding so that they could ensure that statutory duties are met. The local authority recognises the school's good practice in this area.
- The school makes good use of its pupil premium funding to maximise learning for disadvantaged pupils. For example, additional staffing is provided in Years 5 and 6 and monies are used to offer incentives for pupils to come to school regularly. A teaching programme to develop pupils' self-esteem is being developed to help more pupils to achieve well. This has led to improvements in the attendance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium is used extremely well to promote participation in sports. Sporting activities are well led and are a strong feature of the school. Pupils are proud to wear their school PE kit or school colours during competitions. There are numerous after school activities, tournaments and sporting occasions led or hosted by the school. The role of sports coach and the appointment of a sports apprentice has enhanced lunchtime and curricular provision and supported teachers to develop their confidence and expertise in teaching PE.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Excellence in governance is a Trust priority. Governance is becoming increasingly effective in achieving this aim. However, the current governing body is still in transition and therefore requires further improvement. It is actively seeking to appoint high calibre governors who are able to support and challenge the school in the five key areas of: leadership, teaching and learning, behaviour and safety, finance and achievement
 - The Chair of the Governing Body is a well organised and skilful lead who is working closely with the acting Principal and the Trust to develop the governing body.
 - The transitional governing body now has a much deeper understanding of school performance and the

quality of teaching because governors visit the school regularly, ask questions and analyse the school's data.

- The Chair of Governors fully understands the systems to manage teacher performance and how this relates to teachers' pay. He has worked closely with the Trust and the school to ensure that underperformance has been tackled and teaching is improving.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It has improved significantly since the school opened. This is because the school has set out a well thought out policy to help pupils understand that it is important to respect each other and to treat each other fairly. Pupils are polite, friendly and considerate to staff and to each other and now see the importance of learning.
- Attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils take pride in their work and want to achieve. This has helped them to make more progress this year. However, some pupils lack confidence in their own ability because they have not always had the basic skills they have needed to help them to read fluently and to write accurately for different reasons.
- Low level disruption in classrooms is rare. Pupils understand that some pupils find it harder to learn than others and generally accept that some will need more support. The majority of pupils respond quickly to instructions and listen carefully to teachers. This helps them to develop the skills they need to help them with the next stage of their learning.
- Pupils manage their behaviour well outside the classroom. Lunchtimes are pleasant because pupils have plenty of space to play. The sports apprentice encourages them to play sports such as football and rounders. The strong emphasis on sport, coupled with the promotion of pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness, helps them to play collaboratively and to take turns. Lunchtime supervisors are on hand to support a small minority of pupils who have not learnt to socialise properly with others.
- During the inspection pupils were very excited about the sports day event. However, they did not let their enthusiasm overtake their learning. During the sporting events they behaved well, enjoyed the activities and required minimum supervision. This was because the school helped the pupils to understand the importance of cooperation, fair play and participation.
- Parents and staff within school are confident that the school deals with behaviour appropriately and that behaviour is good in school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils come to school more regularly now and the incidence of persistent absence has decreased. Pupils are able to identify what keeps them safe and even the younger children understand how to keep themselves safe and to look after each other. Parents agree that their children are learning within a safe environment.
- Bullying, of any sort, is rare. Racism is extremely rare because pupils are helped to understand and respect differences in assemblies and during lessons, where every opportunity is taken to look at the wider world and to help them to understand their place within it.
- Pupils are taught to keep safe on the internet and are encouraged to understand the benefits and the risks of social media. They are given lessons about road safety and keeping safe in their wider community.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has been inconsistent since the school opened in December 2013. Since the appointment of the acting Principal, there has been an imperative to improve teaching. Significant energy has gone into improving the skills and confidence of teachers. They now plan together, share ideas and moderate each other's assessments.
- Teaching is improving and standards are rising, particularly in mathematics, because teachers have developed better skills and knowledge in this subject. However, the school leadership recognises there is more to be done to ensure teaching is consistently good or better across Key Stages 1 and 2 and hence to further improve achievement, particularly in reading and writing.
- The acting Principal has very high expectations for all pupils and most teachers mirror the desire to make sure every pupil reaches their potential. Most teachers now understand the importance of setting the highest challenges and to mark pupils' work. Teachers' feedback in pupils' workbooks has improved but

sometimes it does not provide advice which is easily understood, especially by pupils who find it harder to learn. As a result, pupils do not always respond to their teacher's suggestions and amend their work in order to learn from their mistakes.

- The teaching of reading and writing requires improvement because not enough pupils have acquired the basic skills they need to read with confidence or to enjoy writing for a range of purposes. This year there is a more systematic approach to developing literacy skills and there has been a significant investment in acquiring new and inspiring reading books. These are easily accessible to all pupils and cover a range of genres, suitable for boys and girls. Pupils each have a reading record and now enjoy reading more often.
- The teaching of phonics (the linking of letters and sounds) has improved this year because the school has invested in new resources and provides dedicated, daily lessons delivered by staff with growing expertise. Although there is more still to be done to improve these skills, younger pupils are now better able to use their new knowledge of the sounds letters make to help them to read and write more effectively
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning when the curriculum is exciting and meaningful. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 discovered links between history, art, culture and literature during a topic on the Tudors. During the inspection they were very excited because they were going to present their learning, in the form of a play, to the rest of the school. In a mathematics lesson, the most able pupils had great fun exploring a mathematical problem and in another, pupils were keen to practise their understanding of figurative language and to use their spoken English to explore a multicultural poem. However, sometimes the curriculum does not support pupils to fully develop their learning because it does not interest or engage them sufficiently well to ensure that they consistently make good progress.
- The use of information about pupils' progress has improved and is now used to evaluate the achievement of individuals and groups of pupils during regular pupil progress meetings. This helps the school to determine the best plan of action to address underachievement.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 do not achieve as well as others nationally, especially in reading and writing.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics check is below the national average. However, the school is successfully improving the quality of phonics teaching in Year 1 and Year 2 following the introduction of daily focussed teaching and the purchase of new resources. Evidence in children's books and the school's robust tracking information suggests that pupils are now making better progress and more are on track to reach the required standard this year.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 achieve less well than others nationally in reading and writing. However, the drive to improve teaching of these subjects is having an impact. Pupils' workbooks show they are making more rapid progress this year. All pupils are now on track to achieve the expected standard for their age in reading and writing, with pupils doing better than this in mathematics.
- The school has inherited a legacy of underachievement in Key Stage 2 which has meant that pupils have not acquired the necessary skills to achieve well in all subjects. Too few pupils reached the required standard last year, particularly in reading and writing and in their ability to use grammar, punctuation and spelling effectively.
- The new acting Principal has put in place decisive actions which are turning the school around. Improvements in teaching have led to accelerated progress. Pupils are more eager to learn and workbooks show that they are achieving well. Tracking data shows that Key Stage 2 pupils are making the progress expected of them and more are on track to reach the levels expected of them by the end of Year 6. This will help them to be better prepared for the next stage of their learning.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is not as good as it should be, particularly in Key Stage 1. However, it is improving because there is better teaching and more challenge for this group. For example, a group of Key Stage 2 pupils now benefit from a Level 6 mathematics class and open ended investigations. They have attended science and mathematics workshops at a local secondary academy. Pupil workbooks and internal data shows that more pupils are currently working at the higher Level 5.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils is below that of others in the school and other pupils nationally but these gaps are closing. The most recent data shows the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 is approximately nine months behind other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics. It was approximately 12 months behind other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics and six months behind in writing. Rates of progress have improved this year and many pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are making similar and sometimes better progress than others.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is not consistently good

but it is improving. The school has more effective systems to promote early identification and provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

- Parents feel more confident about the school's educational provision. Pupils' progress is monitored more closely now through regular pupil progress meetings.

The early years provision

is good

- When children start in the Nursery, approximately half of them have skills in some areas of their learning that are typical for their age. Others have more difficulties especially in forming relationships, in literacy, in mathematics and in their understanding of the world. They make good progress during both Nursery and Reception so that when they leave Reception the proportion of children who reach a good level of development is above the national average. This means they are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes enjoy coming to school and quickly develop the personal skills they need to make relationships, to play cooperatively and to have fun while they are learning. Behaviour is good because children are taught from when they start in school to take turns, to participate in school events and to respect one another.
- The quality of teaching in the early years is good. Teachers, with support from their team, plan exciting activities in all areas of learning. They make use of some interesting resources to promote a blend of activities led by teachers and activities that children choose for themselves. Staff keep notes on children's development so that they can be recorded electronically to share with parents.
- There are many opportunities for children to learn both inside the classroom and outside because there is so much space, particularly in the Nursery. All children are fully involved in purposeful and exciting learning activities. For example, Nursery children chatted animatedly about a giant, letting their imagination develop, while others looked for insects in the garden or let their paintbrush go on a journey in a splash of colour. Reception children enjoyed a story book called 'Handa's Surprise' which triggered a host of activities. They wrote sentences, using correct finger spacing and made jungle birds. Some sat outside and discussed the properties of different fruits, pretended they were jungle animals or practised their drawing skills.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. The leader works well with her colleagues to promote the best possible experiences for the children. She closely monitors their progress and in conjunction with her experienced Nursery teacher, plans systematically for improvement.
- Staff work as a close team, are well trained and share teaching ideas and information about the children. This helps them to plan for progression and to ensure that all children are safe and looked after. Procedures to keep pupils safe are a priority and are effective. Parents acknowledge this.
- Parents are fully involved in their children's learning through 'parental contribution sheets,' home-school books and 'stay and play' opportunities. They are very happy with early years provision. During the sport's day, in which many of the younger children participated, parents said that their children had made 'incredible' strides in their development since starting school. Their children want to come to school every day.

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	140172
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	450317

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Collings
Headteacher	Emmeline Ford
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01422 246610
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