

Abbey Hulton Primary School

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

Inspection dates	9–10 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, governors and staff are ambitious for every pupil in the school and have high expectations for their achievement and behaviour.
- The outstanding headteacher and her able senior leadership team have worked tirelessly to improve this school. They check on every pupil's progress rigorously. They have ensured that the quality of teaching is now good, despite the many staff changes since the last inspection.
- Teachers are skilled at probing pupils' knowledge and adjusting the work where necessary. Work is usually set at just the right level to challenge and deepen pupils' understanding.
- Pupils' progress is good from their different starting points. Standards are rising quickly throughout the school and particularly in reading, speaking and listening and in mathematics.
- Children get off to a good start in early years. They make particularly strong progress in their communication skills, in their personal and social development and their sounds and letters work.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and want to do well. Their behaviour is good in and around the school. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and demonstrate high levels of respect for others.
- The way in which the school cares for pupils and works with others to keep vulnerable pupils safe is a strength. Staff are ever-vigilant. An ethos of care and concern for pupils and their families permeates all of the school's work.
- Leaders ensure that any additional help and funds available for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disability are used effectively. Consequently, these pupils too make good, and sometimes better, progress.
- Governors have a highly accurate view of the school's performance and what needs to improve further. They hold school leaders and staff to account well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards of attainment and progress in writing are not as good as for reading and mathematics and particularly for more-able pupils.
- The work of the many new subject leaders in checking on teaching and pupils' learning and progress is not fully developed in all subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment and achievement to outstanding by:
 - continuing to develop the work of subject leaders in checking on standards and teaching and learning in their subjects
 - rapidly implementing the new assessments and monitoring systems so that pupils' progress in all subjects is checked and planned for in consistent ways.

- Further improve pupils' progress and standards of attainment in writing throughout the school and particularly for the more-able pupils by:
 - securing more consistency in teachers' approach as pupils move through early years and Key Stage 1
 - ensuring teachers' expectations of more-able pupils are consistently high enough, particularly in Key Stage 1
 - improving pupils' handwriting in all key stages.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The exceptional leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the school's standards have improved markedly at all key stages since the last inspection. This is because teaching, learning and pupils' progress are rigorously checked and the headteacher and governors have set out an ambitious vision for every pupil.
- The headteacher has built a strong leadership team around her. Senior leaders have responsibilities that are well suited to their strengths and they fulfil these effectively. Together they have improved teaching, learning and assessment, through effective professional development, coaching and mentoring. Staff morale is high and there is a very positive ethos within the school. Pupils make good progress in their learning because of this high quality of the leadership of teaching and learning.
- Leadership is not yet outstanding because not all of the initiatives that leaders have put into place have paid off yet. Middle leaders, such as subject leaders, are not yet all actively engaged in improving their subjects and monitoring standards across the whole school. This is because many are new and the school has been focused on improving teaching and learning in English and mathematics.
- Improvement planning is informed by accurate self-evaluation and focused on just the right things. All areas for improvement identified by inspectors were known and planned for already by governors and school leaders. Subject leaders, for example, are producing new assessments for their subjects to help them to monitor standards and progress. Good examples of these were seen for information and communication technology and for physical education.
- Leaders and teachers meet regularly to check on every pupil's progress. They have a very good understanding of this in English and mathematics. They are swift to put additional help in place if progress is slowing. They check on the progress of different groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, or the progress of girls and boys, very well, including analysing carefully the effectiveness of any additional help put into place.
- All this means that the senior leadership and governors are very clear as to the strengths of the school and what must now be done to improve outcomes further.
- There has been an understandable emphasis on English and mathematics. This has paid off as standards in these subjects have improved throughout the school. However, the leadership team is now rightly focused on checking on the quality of learning and on outcomes in other subjects. Pupils learn a broad range of subjects, which promotes their problem solving and research skills well. Each topic is planned to secure sufficient depth of study in subjects and to allow pupils to link vocabulary and ideas across subjects well, such as between art, literature, history and geography.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils study a good range of literature and topics that promote their understanding of life in modern Britain and of different cultures well. Pupils listen to each other's views and ideas respectfully and show a good awareness of different lifestyles and choices.
- The school places a strong emphasis on equality of opportunity, whether for pupils or staff. It plans carefully so that everyone has equal access to the curriculum; for instance, checking carefully on what pupils might miss if they are withdrawn for smaller group lessons. Staff plan carefully to ensure everyone has an opportunity to catch up and to be involved.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs has also improved. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is in place and has received appropriate training. The system for identifying pupils with special educational needs and for monitoring their progress has been completely revised. Effective training is in place for staff. Staff are now clear as to the distinction between low attainment and special educational need, and have good-quality guidance as to adaptations they should make to support each pupil. The SENCo monitors provision and pupils' outcomes well. She works well with other agencies to ensure continuity of approach or to gain extra insight and expertise, particularly that from speech and language therapists.
- Pupil premium is used effectively to provide additional help, experiences and clubs for disadvantaged pupils; as a result, their achievement and the provision for their well-being is strong. The primary physical education and sport premium is also used well to support pupils' health and their sporting skills. Pupils and staff are proud of the success of the school's football team, for example. Pupils value the different sports they now have access to. A good range of clubs, visits and visitors enrich the curriculum and build pupils' confidence, personal development and skills further. These include sporting skills and police cadets.

- The school has received good support from the local authority to identify potential partner schools with outstanding practice. It has used advice and coaching from a teaching alliance effectively to provide an objective view of its strengths. It now uses its Seven Stars partnership to help it to check on its standards and to share best practice.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is much improved since the last inspection. The local authority has provided training and support for recruitment. New governors have a good range of skills that they have brought to their work, including local authority, business and educational experience. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's work and clear about its strengths and areas for improvement. They check robustly that the school meets its safeguarding responsibilities.
 - Governors use the information they have about pupils' achievements well to provide effective challenge and good support for school leaders. They ask informed and searching questions and have a strong strategic overview of the school's work.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching, how school leaders support this and how staff performance is managed. They are clear as to how good performance is rewarded.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are very effective. They are a strength of the school. An ethos of care and concern surrounds each pupil. The school works extremely well with the local authority and different agencies to ensure every pupil is safe. They establish close links with families and offer much support. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable. All safeguarding policies and practices are up to date and well informed by government guidance; this includes advice as to what to do in cases of suspected radicalisation, extremism or where pupils may be at risk of exploitation or abuse. Case studies show the school to be tenacious in pursuing issues until they are convinced that a pupil is safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Good teaching has improved pupils' outcomes since the last inspection, so that progress is now good and pupils have almost all made up ground lost previously. Teaching has improved because high-quality training has ensured that teachers and teaching assistants understand the features of effective learning and check for these regularly.
- Teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and to develop this further. For example, older pupils in science were challenged to share what they knew about forces. Skilled questioning ensured that more-able pupils were stretched and developed their understanding of different forces further. Excellent modelling and summarising of ideas by the teacher meant that lower-achieving pupils were fully engaged and benefiting from the ideas of the more able.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to read and write both in English lessons and in other lessons, such as their topic work. Reading is well promoted through a good systematic approach to letters and sounds work (phonics) and through guided reading sessions throughout the school. As a result, pupils say they love to read and love the fact that they can now take home books to 'read for pleasure' as well as their reading books.
- The teaching of writing, including handwriting, is rightly a whole-school focus. Some measures, such as systematic support for spelling, grammar and punctuation, have already started to pay off. In Year 6 in 2015 for example, pupils achieved similarly to others nationally in these areas. However, there are some inconsistencies in the ways in which staff help children to write in early years and in the written feedback teachers provide in other years on how pupils might improve their writing, including their handwriting.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved well so that pupils now make progress that is good and sometimes better. Pupils are progressing through the school with an increasingly secure mathematical knowledge and grasp of number facts. Pupils in Key Stage 2 who had a poorer grasp of these because of weaker teaching previously have received well-targeted support that has systematically addressed such issues. There is a good focus on problem solving, which is inspiring pupils to develop their mathematical reasoning and to use mathematical terms well.
- When learning is most effective teachers take excellent account of what pupils already know about a topic or a story and set challenging work that extends each from their different starting points. Occasionally, however, across the school, the more able waste some learning time completing work they can already easily do rather than moving on swiftly to more challenging work. Pupils themselves say that occasionally the work is too easy.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together in teams. Teaching assistants provide well-thought-out support for individual pupils and small groups. Most are well trained to do this and understand the small but significant steps each pupil now needs to make.

- All staff are particularly skilled in supporting and extending pupils' spoken language and listening skills. Some high-quality verbal feedback was observed, whether in Nursery or for older pupils. This means pupils are constantly helped to express their ideas more accurately. This growing confidence and skill in spoken expression supports pupils' confidence and progress in other subjects and in their personal development.
- Teachers assess and check on pupils' progress in English and mathematics well. Their judgements are carefully monitored by leaders and through their partnership working with other schools. Although teaching in other subjects and in topic work inspires pupils' curiosity and interest, teachers have fewer tools to support their assessment and checking on progress in these subjects. The school has not yet fully refined its approach for all the subjects that it teaches. Nonetheless, teachers' careful questioning of pupils and strong explanations mean they are clear as to what pupils in general understand or need more support for in these subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Almost all pupils have good or better attitudes to learning and are keen to learn.
- Pupils have a strong sense of justice and fairness. There are many opportunities for them to work together and share ideas. This develops their social skills well. Charity and community projects as well as their topic work mean that they have a good and developing awareness of others' needs and the ability to empathise with them.
- Pupils have a good grasp of British institutions and values and many opportunities to explore issues relevant to life in modern Britain. They are quick to explain about differences in Chinese life compared with life in this country, for example. They understand that people may live in different ways and that it is important that we respect such differences.
- The small but increasing numbers of pupils from other heritages that join the school are supported well. Their cultural heritages are used by the school to help them settle quickly. Pupils are proud to share Czechoslovakian vocabulary and phrases they learned to welcome one pupil.
- Pupils have a good understanding of e-safety and the dangers of social media and say that they should not exchange mobile phone contacts or emails with anyone without their parents' knowledge. Younger pupils are clearly aware of 'stranger danger'. All say they feel very safe in school because staff look after them and keep them safe.
- A breakfast club, careful break and lunchtime supervision and after-school clubs all support pupils' welfare and well-being and ensure they are kept safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and as they move about the school. They are polite and respectful and listen increasingly well to their teachers' suggestions.
- Early years children settle quickly and behave well because staff have high expectations and are quick to acknowledge good behaviour and acts of kindness.
- Pupils listen to each other and their teachers respectfully. They show a good awareness of each other's needs and are quick to offer help.
- Pupils themselves say that poor behaviour is almost unknown and behaviour is better than at the time of the last inspection. Bullying is rare and they have every confidence that should it happen staff will sort it out.
- Pupils say they 'love' school and this is reflected in their improved attendance. A concerted drive by the school means that attendance is now in line with that expected nationally. Good working with other agencies and with families means that the number of poor attenders has reduced considerably.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because a few pupils do not concentrate well in lessons and are slow to get on with tasks or to finish their work.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' attainment and progress has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Pupils now achieve well in all key stages and their attainment when they leave the school is now similar to others of their age.
- In 2015, the proportion of Year 6 pupils achieving the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly similar to other pupils nationally. These pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 was below that of others of their age and so this represents good progress over time and particularly so in mathematics and reading. Determined action from leaders and staff meant that they made up ground lost because of previously weaker teaching and learning. As a result of these improvements, this group were much better set up for transferring to secondary school.
- The small and varying numbers of pupils in each age group and their differing needs mean that there are fluctuations in levels of attainment. However, pupils are now doing well from their starting points. Observations in lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and the information the school holds on pupils' achievement confirm that pupils throughout Key Stage 2 are making good progress from their starting points. Increasing proportions are on target to exceed the expected rate of progress and achieve at or beyond the levels expected for their age.
- Attainment and progress in Key Stage 1 is improving rapidly because the teaching of key mathematical and reading skills in particular is more consistent and of a high quality. A strong focus on pupils' spoken language skills is also paying off and progress is particularly strong in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics.
- In 2015 in the Year 1 phonics check, pupils achieved as well as others of their age nationally for the first time. These skills are taught well in early years and Key Stage 1 so that pupils apply them skilfully when meeting new words. More-able Year 1 and Year 2 pupils read fluently and with good expression. Others try hard to sound out unfamiliar words, sometimes using other strategies to help. By Year 6, pupils read widely and enjoy a good range of literature. They can talk knowledgeably about their favourite authors and retell accurately and concisely the plot of a book they are reading.
- In Year 6 in 2015, pupils' attainment in writing did not differ significantly from that nationally. However, the gap between their attainment and that of others of their age nationally was larger than for reading and mathematics. A determined focus on writing is paying off for current year groups. Even so, there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations and the ways in which they develop writing skills in early years and Key Stage 1. Consequently, few have reached the higher levels of attainment in Key Stage 1 in the past. Handwriting and spelling have not been well taught previously and, as a result, a few pupils currently in Key Stage 2 still have to make up ground in these areas. Pupils' books do show real improvement recently. More pupils are on line for the higher levels of attainment at both key stages, but there is still more work to do.
- Pupils make good progress in science because teachers excite their curiosity. There is a good balance of practical investigative work and of research activities. Pupils enthuse about the science theme weeks that they have had and how they would like to do even more. Many other subjects are taught through topic work. Topic books show that pupils explore a range of other foundation subjects well. Pupils develop strong research skills when exploring these topics. Their progress in physical education is enhanced through the good use of the sport premium and the ways in which leaders and tutors check on skills.
- Gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are sometimes very large on entry to school but are determinedly and effectively addressed by the school, so that these are very small or do not exist by the end of Year 6. In 2015, disadvantaged pupils made at least as good progress and sometimes better than others in the school in all subjects. Similar proportions attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The school puts the pupil premium money to good use and checks carefully that it is helping to accelerate pupil progress. Pupils indicate how much they value, for example, the one-to-one sessions they can have with staff to help them to improve their work and understanding.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disability also make good progress. The SENCo carefully monitors their progress and checks that the additional help they have is making a difference. The whole-school emphasis on and skill in promoting speaking and listening mean that these pupils and those who have English as an additional language move on quickly in their communication and understanding.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is very well led and has improved well since the previous inspection. All pupils made at least good progress from their starting points in 2015. Some aspects, such as the provision to support children's spoken language development and their personal development, are particularly strong. Detailed regular assessments and ongoing written notes about children's development make sure that every child's progress is carefully checked and built on well.
- In 2014 and 2015 all children started in the Nursery with skills and knowledge that were below those typical for their age, particularly in their speech and language and listening skills. A minority of children start school with skills and knowledge that are much lower than those typical for their age. A few transfer to more specialist provision, including special schools in Key Stage 1. Although all children make good progress in all of the areas of learning, their varied starting points can have a considerable impact on the proportion that achieve a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception class. However, the proportion that achieves this is improving year on year. In 2015, over half achieved a good level of development, representing good and occasionally exceptional progress from their starting points.
- All groups make good progress because staff are so well focused on helping every child to develop and learn. Disadvantaged children in early years make good progress, for example. Gaps between these children and their classmates narrow considerably because of the individual attention they receive and the effective use of extra funds available.
- The early years staff work closely with speech and language therapists to improve children's communication and language skills and to lay firmer foundations for children's achievements as they move through the school. Almost a third currently receive extra support through a specialist language programme. Others benefit from the expert way in which early years staff talk with children and help them to express themselves in more mature ways.
- Early years children make rapid progress in the Nursery because activities are particularly well planned to help children catch up as quickly as possible and to establish very good attitudes to learning. An attractive, welcoming environment captures children's interest each day and entices them to have a go, whether trying new tastes during Chinese New Year celebrations or developing their physical and creative skills in the outdoor learning environment.
- Staff training has led to improvements in the teaching of reading and mathematics. Teaching successfully ensures that strong foundations are established for children's future literacy and mathematical skills. Children are now consistently provided with many opportunities to practise these basic skills in the early years and, as a result, are increasingly well prepared for learning in Year 1. However, there is less consistency in the ways in which children's handwriting and other writing skills are promoted in both the Nursery and Reception Years.
- Children are kept very safe in early years. A keyworker system means children quickly feel safe. Parents know exactly who to go to if they have concerns about their child or want to talk about their child's development and learning. All the welfare requirements for early years are met.

School details

Unique reference number	123989
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10002475

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Buckingham
Headteacher	Linda Williams
Telephone number	01782 235551
Website	www.abbeyhultonprimary.org.uk
Email address	lwilliams@abbeyhultonprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2013

Information about this school

- Abbey Hulton Primary School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has a 26-place full-time Nursery, funded partly by government funding and partly by the school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small but increasing proportion come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.
- A high proportion of pupils, over half, are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority). This is more than twice the national average.
- About a quarter of pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disability. This is well above the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics. It does not use alternative provision.
- At its last standard inspection, the school was judged to require improvement. Two progress monitoring visits took place: in March 2014 and November 2014 respectively.
- There have been significant changes in staff and within the governing body since the last standard inspection, and a restructuring of the school's leadership.
- The school is part of a cooperative trust, TILT, which is part of the Schools Direct programme. This is in the process of being reconstituted, since the lead secondary school has left the trust. It is now part of a partnership of seven primary schools called Seven Stars.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all classrooms, usually accompanied by the headteacher or another member of the senior leadership team. In addition, they observed an assembly and some smaller group work taught by teachers or teaching assistants. They examined pupils' records and workbooks in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils during lessons, as well as with a group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. They heard younger and older pupils read and talked with them about their topic, English and mathematics work. Pupils shared their views of the school with inspectors, including how well the school keeps them safe.
- Not enough parents responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for the results to be analysed. However, a small number left comments and inspectors also considered the school's own parental survey. Inspectors also scrutinised seven questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors held discussions with a range of school staff including the senior leadership team, the school's special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, governors and representatives of the local authority and the teaching alliance.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: information about pupils' progress from their different starting points on entry to the school; the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning; minutes of meetings of the governing body; records of leaders' checks on teaching and learning; the school's safeguarding policies and practice and records relating to first aid, any poor behaviour and pupils' attendance.

Inspection team

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