

10 July 2018

Ms Helen Chambers
Headteacher
Abbey Hill Primary & Nursery School
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Dear Ms Chambers

Short inspection of Abbey Hill Primary & Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 28 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You have built a cohesive team, members of which are committed to doing the best they can for all pupils. Staff know that each individual contributes in their own way to the success of the team and, as a result, everyone's work is valued. You and the leadership team maintain a close and detailed overview of the achievement and needs of all pupils. This enables you to identify what is working well and where more support is needed.

Pupils appreciate their teachers, and told me that 'they definitely help you, with almost anything'. Many parents and carers who spoke to me, or responded to the online questionnaire, were full of praise for the staff, saying they are 'positive and friendly' and 'nothing is too much trouble'.

High expectations are seen throughout the school and all members of the school community strive for the best possible outcomes. Relationships are strong and pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, taking a pride in their work and their school. In all areas of the school, there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere. The

school environment is well resourced and care is taken to make it a pleasant and attractive place to learn and work. It is further enhanced by displays which celebrate pupils' work and encourage aspiration. For example, a display of pupils' writing starts with mark-making by two-year-olds and shows how skills are developed as pupils progress through the school, finishing with examples of high-quality writing by the oldest pupils, all beautifully presented.

The curriculum includes many opportunities for pupils to learn in different ways, through interesting themes and topics. Pupils enrich their learning through off-site visits and from visitors who come to the school. You have encouraged a love of books and reading. Pupils say they enjoy reading because 'you can go to different worlds'. By developing their curiosity and imagination, you have ensured that pupils are keen to learn and develop new skills and knowledge.

At the time of the previous inspection, it was recommended you improve the standards reached by the pupils and to develop their reading and numeracy skills in different subjects. Standards have been steadily improving over time and are now at least in line with national averages by the end of key stage 2.

You have recently focused on improving writing and communication skills and your actions have led to improvements in these areas. There has also been an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in their learning, particularly by the end of key stage 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a very strong safeguarding culture in the school. There are clear procedures for raising concerns and these are followed up thoroughly. Staff receive regular training to make sure they are up to date with the most recent guidance. Leaders, staff and governors know the pupils and their families well and provide a range of pastoral support to meet individual needs.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say it is a safe and friendly place. They say behaviour is good and bullying is rare. They have confidence in their teachers to sort out any problems or worries they may have. Pupils learn to recognise and manage risk, for example when online or using social media. They know the importance of using privacy settings to keep personal information secure.

Attendance has improved and is in line with the national average. All absences are followed up quickly to ensure that pupils are safe. Although there are some cases of persistent absence, the school has rigorous systems in place to improve attendance. There are regular communications with parents and the school holds attendance panels to discuss how individual pupils' attendance can be improved.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. You, along with the nurture teacher and family support worker, work effectively as a team and this ensures that all concerns are monitored closely over time. You and a member of the governing body regularly

check documentation to ensure that it meets all requirements.

Inspection findings

- Children joining the school in the early years have skills and knowledge well below those typical for their age. You have rightly identified that you need to start by helping children develop their personal and social skills, their communication and language skills and their physical skills. The homely, relaxed environment and the warm welcome they receive help the youngest children to settle quickly. Activities for two-year-olds are carefully planned to ensure that individuals are fully and happily involved in all areas of learning. Learning journals show what children have been learning and detailed assessment information shows they are making rapid progress over time. Adults help them effectively to learn new skills and build confidence so that, by the end of the year, they have the firm foundations that will help them in their next stage of learning.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children are still catching up, but they are enthusiastic learners and are making excellent progress. They work productively with each other and demonstrate a range of skills and knowledge. For example, a group of children explained to me that they were using modelling dough to make birthday cakes for a favourite book character, Hairy Maclary. They took turns counting the cakes and finding the right number of candles as they put their cakes on the cake stand ready for the 'party'. Activities such as this are helping children to develop good attitudes to learning. Even though many children do not reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year, they are socially ready to move into Year 1.
- Standards in key stage 1 are improving and an increasing proportion of pupils achieve greater depth in their learning. Teaching is tightly focused on ensuring that basic skills are secure. For example, pupils have good knowledge of letters and sounds to help them with their reading and writing. This year, most Year 1 pupils achieved the expected standard in the national phonics screening check. Pupils read confidently and accurately, with a good understanding of the text. They enjoy reading and some told me enthusiastically about their favourite stories.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have improved and are now at least in line with the national averages for pupils reaching the expected standards for their age. The school's assessment information shows that, throughout the key stage, a greater proportion of pupils are working at standards expected for their age. Historically, outcomes in writing have been weaker than outcomes in reading and mathematics. As a result of the recent focus on improving writing, this gap is closing. Pupils write for a range of purposes and for different audiences. They are enjoying using their imagination to describe characters and add interesting elements to their writing. For example, Year 5 pupils, writing about pestilence and plague, made exciting vocabulary choices to bring their writing to life.
- Teaching is consistently effective across the school. Teachers are responsive to pupils' needs and adapt activities accordingly. They provide equipment and

resources to help pupils develop their understanding; for example, Year 6 pupils used different sized rods to represent algebra equations. Extra support is provided to help pupils catch up if they are at risk of falling behind. Skilled teaching assistants provide a range of individual support which is effective in helping pupils to progress quickly.

- The progress made by pupils is equally good in all key stages. From starting points, which are well below expectations for their age, pupils progress through the school, gaining ground at each stage. Their progress through the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 is consistently very strong. By the time they leave the school, they have achieved standards at least in line with national averages.
- There is also an increase in the proportion of pupils who are exceeding the expected standard for their age in reading, mathematics and writing. However, this is not yet consistently at or above the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standards at the end of key stage 2 improves, so that it is consistently at least in line with the national average.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Salt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I carried out a learning walk with you, visiting all year groups. I reviewed pupils' books to consider the standard of work and the progress being made. I talked to a group of pupils and listened to some pupils read.

I held meetings with you and other members of staff. I also met with members of the governing body. I reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including policies, assessment information and your school improvement priorities. I took into account 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with some parents informally at the beginning of the day. Two pupils and 16 members of staff responded to their online questionnaires.