

Abbey Park Middle School

Abbey Road, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 1DF

Inspection dates

23–24 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- For the past three years, pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics at the end of Year 6 has been well below national averages. Less than half of pupils have entered Year 7 well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The school's assessment system does not provide clear and accurate information about pupils' progress. As a result, leaders and governors have not identified and addressed important areas of underperformance until very recently.
- Middle leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. They do not have a secure knowledge of the standards pupils should be working at for their age.
- Teachers do not plan learning that matches pupils' abilities closely enough. As a result, middle- and high-attaining pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Too often, work in lessons does not take account of pupils' starting points. Teachers do not use questioning to deepen pupils' learning.
- The curriculum is broad but does not enable pupils to achieve well enough across a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders and governors do not make sure that additional funding is making a positive difference to pupils' outcomes, including those of disadvantaged pupils.
- Absence has been above national averages for the past three years. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is well above national averages.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed executive headteacher and head of school have quickly and accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have already begun to make improvements.
- Systems are now in place to hold staff to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Pupils' behaviour, welfare and personal development is strong and reflects the school's ethos and values.
- The school provides well for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. It is highly regarded in the local community for this aspect of its work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - establishing an assessment system that provides clear and accurate information about pupils' progress and supports teachers in planning for pupils' learning
 - developing middle leaders' knowledge, skills and expertise so that they can support the drive for improvement
 - ensuring that leaders and governors monitor and evaluate closely the impact of pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding on improving pupils' progress
 - reviewing the curriculum so that it enables pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills well across a range of subjects
 - making sure that governors stringently hold leaders to account for the impact of school improvement initiatives, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - teachers having consistently high expectations of what all pupils can achieve
 - increasing teachers' understanding of the standards expected of pupils
 - planning learning that matches middle- and high-attaining pupils' abilities closely
 - assessing accurately what pupils know, understand and can do and using this information to adapt planning and teaching so that all pupils make strong progress
 - asking questions that deepen pupils' understanding.
- Fully embed systems to improve attendance so that rates of absence and persistent absence reduce, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders, including governors, have not maintained the good quality of education seen at the last inspection. However, the newly appointed executive headteacher and head of school have the drive and determination to make the required improvements. Together, they provide the expertise and capacity to improve teaching and raise pupils' outcomes.
- The executive headteacher and head of school have a candid view of the school's current effectiveness. In a short space of time, they have accurately assessed the school's strengths and weaknesses and have identified the right priorities for improvement.
- Senior leaders have been swift to act on their findings. They have already made a notable difference to the culture of the school, insisting on consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. However, because systems and initiatives to improve teaching and learning are so new, their impact cannot yet be seen.
- The executive headteacher and head of school have begun to make checks on teaching. They have given helpful feedback to teachers about what is working well and what needs to be better. As a result, teachers know what they need to do to improve their practice.
- The school's current assessment system does not provide clear and accurate information about pupils' progress from their different starting points. As a result, leaders at all levels, including governors, have not been able to determine where pupils' progress needs to improve or to hold teachers to account effectively. Until very recently, they have had an overgenerous view of how pupils are doing.
- Middle leaders are keen to contribute to school improvement. However, they do not have a secure understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility. They think it is better than it is. This is because these leaders do not make regular checks on teaching. Their evaluative skills are at an early stage of development. As a result, the quality of teaching across year groups and subjects is inconsistent.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding to provide additional adult support in lessons and to enrich pupils' learning. However, they do not target the funding precisely enough. Leaders and governors do not check that the funding is making a difference to pupils' outcomes. As a result, they do not know which strategies work well and which are less effective.
- Similarly, leaders' use of the catch-up funding for pupils in Year 7 is not as effective as it should be in accelerating pupils' progress and addressing previous underachievement, especially in mathematics.
- Leaders make careful use of the additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants provide strong support for pupils' academic, emotional and social needs. Individual plans match pupils needs closely and staff review these regularly for impact. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong

progress.

- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and interesting. However, teaching across the curriculum is not strong enough to ensure that pupils make good progress in a range of subjects. Content is not sufficiently challenging and does not develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in enough depth.
- The curriculum provides effectively for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. As a result, they show tolerance and respect for others.
- Leaders make effective use of the primary physical education (PE) and sports premium to increase pupils' fitness and participation in physical activity. For example, there is a range of after-school sports clubs and a large proportion of pupils take part in 'the daily mile'. Funding has been targeted to provide full access to sports activities for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and to encourage reluctant pupils to get active.
- Leaders have ensured that in a time of change, staff morale remains high. Staff say that they feel well supported and value the opportunities for professional development that leaders are offering. Leaders have conveyed clear messages about the need to improve the school's effectiveness. As a result, staff know what is expected of them and are positive about the changes being made.

Governance of the school

- Governors bring a breadth of experience, expertise and skills to the school. They are fully committed to their roles and make regular visits to meet with leaders about their areas of responsibility. Consequently, governors are knowledgeable about the school's work.
- Governors are reflective and have recently commissioned an external review of governance to support them to further improve their effectiveness. They have the skills to make the required improvements to the overall quality of education.
- The governing body acknowledges that, until recently, their role has been more one of support than of challenge. This is partly because governors did not receive sufficiently detailed information to have a precise understanding of what needed to improve. The executive headteacher has swiftly addressed this by providing the governing body with an exact overview of the school's effectiveness. As a result, the governing body is beginning to provide effective challenge to improve pupils' outcomes.
- The governing body does not have a thorough understanding of how additional funding is spent and its impact on pupils' outcomes. They do not hold leaders to account for the use of pupil premium or the primary PE and sports premium effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff receive regular training in child protection and other safeguarding issues, including the identification of those at risk of radicalisation. As a result, they have a confident understanding of what they to do should they have a concern about a pupil.

- Leaders and staff know pupils and their families well, which means that they are alert to pupils' needs. They respond swiftly and appropriately to any concerns about pupils that staff report. Leaders liaise effectively with other professional agencies to support pupils and families and keep them safe.
- Leaders and governors make the necessary checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children. They have updated the school's safeguarding policies to ensure that they are in line with the most recent guidance and advice.
- Almost all of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree that their children are safe and well looked after at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not have a precise enough understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do. This is because they rely too heavily on assessment information from tests. As a result, some teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what all pupils can achieve.
- In lessons, teachers do not check pupils' learning carefully to find out if work is challenging enough. Consequently, middle- and high-attaining pupils spend too much time completing tasks they can already do before moving on to work that is at the right level.
- Teachers do not have a secure knowledge of the standards that pupils should be working at. This means that work is often not challenging enough for middle-attaining pupils. High-attaining pupils are not encouraged to extend their thinking and demonstrate a higher level of understanding.
- Pupils read fluently, accurately and with age-appropriate understanding. They use taught strategies successfully to read unfamiliar words. Pupils enjoy reading and read regularly at school and home. However, the teaching of reading does not deepen pupils' reading skills consistently well, particularly for the most able pupils. Too often, reading tasks do not build in complexity as pupils' reading improves.
- Work in books shows that pupils can write effectively for different purposes. However, in some classes teachers do not use their assessment of pupils' learning to adapt planning so that it meets pupils' needs closely. Teaching does not develop pupils' vocabulary, grammar and punctuation sufficiently well. As a result, pupils do not make the progress they should in these aspects of writing.
- Teaching in mathematics develops pupils' fluency in number and calculation effectively. Work matches the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, which supports them to make good progress. However, teachers' planning does not take enough account of other pupils' starting points. Overuse of worksheets means that middle- and high-attaining pupils often begin lessons by completing work that is too easy. In some classes, there are not enough opportunities for these pupils to deepen their learning through investigative and problem-solving work.
- Teachers do not target support precisely enough for pupils who have fallen behind in their learning, including disadvantaged pupils. As a result, gaps in these pupils' understanding remain as they move from one year group to the next, particularly in

mathematics.

- Pupils benefit from subject-specialist teaching in subjects such as science, physical education (PE), art and computing. However, teaching does not develop and deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills consistently well across the curriculum. This limits pupils' progress in some subjects such as history.
- Adults ask effective questions to check that pupils understand new concepts. They develop pupils' understanding of subject-specific vocabulary in subjects such as science and computing well. However, adults' use of questions to probe and deepen pupils' understanding is less effective.
- Teaching assistants work well with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They skilfully support pupils from the resource base to access learning in mainstream classes. Consequently, these pupils make good progress in their academic, social and emotional development.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Adults manage pupils' behaviour positively. As a result, there is a calm and purposeful climate for learning. Pupils feel confident to contribute in lessons and concentrate well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Strong relationships support pupils to feel valued. As a result, pupils are keen to do their best. They are polite and courteous to their peers and to adults, including visitors. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the British values of tolerance and respect. They are supportive of one another and are accepting of difference.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They grow in independence as they move through the school and show good self-organisation skills as they enter Year 7.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that there is an adult they can talk to if they have a problem. They know how to stay safe online, for example by not sharing their personal details. Pupils also learn about how to keep themselves physically and emotionally healthy.
- Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. Pupils are proud to be peer mentors, 'huff and puff' PE equipment monitors, house captains and members of the school council. They also enjoy taking part in the 'buzzed and wired' lunchtime computing club.
- Pupils understand what bullying is. They say that bullying has notably reduced and that 'there is none now'. Pupils say that any problems that arise are dealt with quickly, either by staff or peer mentors.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide good support for families at the beginning and end of the school day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour system, which makes expectations of pupils' behaviour clear. Pupils understand how they should behave and the rewards and consequences for their actions. Those who spoke to inspectors were enthusiastic about the rewards on offer for pupils who behave consistently well, particularly the opportunity to enjoy hot chocolate and a cake with the head of school. As a result, pupils and staff say that behaviour has improved this academic year.
- Pupils listen attentively in lessons and apply themselves productively to tasks. They take pride in their work and present it well. Occasionally, a small number of pupils lose concentration when learning does not match their needs.
- Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, they play happily and enthusiastically in the playground. Pupils respond quickly to adults' instructions and enter school sensibly and quietly at the start of the day and after lunch.
- Historically, fixed-term exclusions have been above national averages. However, leaders' records show that the number of exclusions is reducing. This is because staff understand pupils' individual needs well and provide tailored support to help them to learn how to manage their own behaviour. Support for pupils returning from exclusion is strong and helps to prevent repeat exclusions.
- Rates of absence and persistent absence have been above national averages for the past three years, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Absence reduced in 2018 and leaders are maintaining this improvement. They have recently implemented more rigorous systems to ensure that pupils attend regularly. As a result, pupils and parents understand the importance of good attendance and are fully aware that improving attendance is a priority for the school. However, the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils who are frequently absent from school remains high.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress across the curriculum is too variable. Not all pupils make the progress they should from their different starting points.
- In key stage 2, pupils' progress in mathematics has been in the bottom 20% of all schools for at least two years. Attainment has been consistently below national averages. Provisional outcomes in 2018 show that pupils' attainment and progress in the subject continue to be low. Work in books shows that current pupils are not making consistently good progress.
- Pupils' progress in reading by the end of Year 6 has been variable over the past three years. In 2017, it was in line with the national average, but fell slightly in 2018. Middle- and high-attaining pupils do not make consistently good progress from their starting points.
- In writing, pupils' progress in key stage 2 has been in line with national averages for the past two years. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth in writing was above the national average in 2017 and rose further in 2018. However, work in pupils' books shows that these standards are not maintained when pupils move into Year 7.

Pupils' progress in their use of vocabulary, grammar and punctuation is weak across the school.

- Current pupils are not making consistently good progress across the wider curriculum. As a result, too few pupils are well prepared for the next year group or stage in their education.
- Work in books demonstrates that the most able pupils do not make good progress over time. Inconsistencies in teaching, including a lack of challenge and expectation, mean that these pupils are not sufficiently stretched in their learning. As a result, too few achieve the high standards of which they are capable, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving. However, their progress remains below that of other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those in the resource base, make good progress. This is because leaders check and capture pupils' progress carefully. Staff use this information to match work closely to pupils' needs.

School details

Unique reference number	116774
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10053030

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	9 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ross Garratt
Headteacher	Rebecca Scully
Telephone number	01386 552667
Website	www.abbeyparkmiddle.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	office@abbeyparkmiddle.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 March 2014

Information about this school

- Abbey Park Middle School is smaller than the average-sized school.
- The school is part of a federation, which also consists of a pre-school and a first school. There is one governing body that is responsible for all three schools in the federation.
- Abbey Park Middle School caters for pupils in Years 5, 6 and 7. There are three classes in each year group.
- A new executive headteacher and head of school took up post in September 2018.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with the national average.
- The proportion pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. The number of pupils with education, health and care plans is above the national average.
- Almost all pupils are from a White British background.
- There is a resource base at the school that caters for up to 10 pupils with an

education, health and care plan for autism.

- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in parts of 20 lessons. Ten of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at breaktimes and lunchtimes and in the breakfast club.
- An inspector listened to a group of pupils read and talked to them about their reading.
- Inspectors spoke formally with two groups of pupils as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors examined the quality of work in pupils' English, mathematics, science and history books jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with the executive headteacher, head of school and other school leaders. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- An inspector met with a group of school staff to gather their views on safeguarding, professional development and pupils' learning. Inspectors also took into consideration the 22 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- The lead inspector met with the vice-chair of the governing body and six governors.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, information about current pupils' achievement, records relating to safeguarding and attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body and information on the school's website.
- Inspectors took into consideration the 55 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and a further communication from a parent. Two inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Claire Jones, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Yates	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jane Edgerton	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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