

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



31 January 2019

Mr Kevin Martin
Acting Headteacher
Abbotskerswell Primary School
Slade Lane
Abbotskerswell
Newton Abbot
Devon
TQ12 5NS

Dear Mr Martin

Short inspection of Abbotskerswell Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 January 2019, 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 May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders, governors and all staff at the school are successful in making sure that pupils achieve well and are prepared well for the next phase of their education. Their actions have ensured that pupils' results have improved so that high numbers of pupils reach the expected standards for their age by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. At the end of their Reception Year proportionally more children reach a good level of development for their age than children nationally.

Although you have joined the school only recently, you have quickly gained an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff are enthused by your ideas for further improving the quality of teaching and learning. They are already implementing new strategies, particularly to develop pupils' writing further, such as the word ninja initiative to improve pupils' spelling and use of vocabulary.

Pupils thrive at Abbotskerswell. This is because the adults around them are focused on enabling pupils to make good progress. The school's core values of 'honesty, respect, responsibility and success' underpin pupils' experiences. Provision for pupils' personal development is strong. Pupils know they will be listened to. They have an involvement in school life, for example in helping to decide the school's core values. Parents are very clear that their children are safe, happy and make good progress in their learning. An overwhelming majority would recommend the

school to another parent. Pupils' enjoyment of school is demonstrated by their good attendance and by the continuing growth in the size of the school.

The curriculum is rich and informative and enthuses pupils with a love of learning. Pupils spoke with great interest about the different topics they have studied such as the Vikings and Romans. Teachers plan an engaging curriculum which includes a wide provision for trips to places of interest and a range of visitors to school. This prepares pupils well for their life in modern Britain. For example, pupils have visited a local mosque and they discuss news items of national interest, such as the Scottish referendum and Brexit.

At its last inspection, the school was asked to improve pupils' handwriting and presentation. Scrutiny during this inspection showed that, while some older pupils do have a more fluent handwriting style, there is still too much variation in the quality of pupils' handwriting, and sometimes spelling, across the school. You have been quick to note this on your arrival and have discussed changes to the school's policies and expectations with the English leader and governors.

The school was also asked to increase pupils' writing independence. Pupils, especially those of lower ability or with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are well supported to structure their writing. Scrutiny of pupils' curriculum work, however, demonstrates that some pupils of all abilities still find it difficult to transfer the skills they learn in their English lessons into their more independent curriculum writing. The curriculum, while it is well planned, does not consistently draw out the links between what pupils learn in English by providing enough opportunities to practise those skills in other curriculum subjects.

Governors play a strong role in the development of the school. Their knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development are very clear. The climate of challenge to school leaders is evident and governors carefully triangulate the evidence they receive from school leaders on their own visits to the school. As a part of these activities they talk with pupils and look at their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school sends a clear message on the homepage of the school's website about the importance of safeguarding. Leaders and governors have ensured that policies and procedures, including those for the safe recruitment of staff, are up to date. All staff and governors receive regular training. As a result, staff and governors are clear what to do if they have a concern about a child. The safeguarding governor monitors closely the school's work, including through spot checks and regular discussions with both staff and pupils.

Pupils feel safe and happy at school, and they behave well. They say that incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare. Pupils are clear that adults will sort out their concerns and could clearly tell me, by name, who they would speak to if they had a worry. Pupils value the support given to them by adults, including the play leaders

at break and lunchtimes and the support of staff in the 'Hub' to help them talk through their feelings.

Inspection findings

- A high number of pupils reach the expected standard for their age in writing by the end of Year 6. However, the proportion of pupils writing at a greater depth for their age, while at the national level, is lower than the proportion reaching a deeper level in their learning in reading and mathematics.
- Evidence gathered during this inspection showed that, while teachers tell pupils the immediate targets that they need to work on through the 'target flap' system, pupils do not have access to information which gives them a clear, unequivocal, picture of what they need to do to become greater-depth writers overall. This means that it is sometimes difficult for aspiring greater-depth writers to continue that standard across their writing in other subject areas.
- Over time, boys have achieved slightly less well than girls in writing. Pupils' work shows that current pupils, both boys and girls, are making good progress in writing. This is because leaders and teachers have developed a curriculum with content and activities that spark interest in both boys and girls to want to write well. For example, an interactive role-play session on the rainforest has motivated Year 5 and Year 6 pupils in their information writing. Innovative approaches in Year 3 and Year 4, such as using interlocking plastic bricks to build a three-dimensional story map of the journey of a river, help both boys and girls, and pupils of all abilities, to write effectively.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent), reading and early writing skills is effective. This means that children in Reception make a good start in recording simple words, such as 'pig' and 'mop', correctly. In Year 1 and Year 2 pupils use their imagination to inform their writing well. Pupils read to me from their writing about superheroes, including a superhero whose special 'fire' superpower can be used to make his morning toast. Skilfully led interventions help pupils who need to consolidate their phonic skills to catch up quickly.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their different starting points. This is because learning is closely matched to their needs. Good use is made of a range of strategies, such as a computer program which converts pupils' speech into text, to help pupils learn well. Pupils who use these strategies report that they find them very helpful in improving their reading and writing skills quickly.
- Disadvantaged pupils are few in number. Over time they make good progress from their different starting points. Expectations of them are high and there is a clear focus on their needs and progress in teaching and pupil progress meetings. Those who are most able achieve highly by the end of Year 6.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that more pupils can write at a greater depth, by:

- further improving pupils' handwriting and spelling
- making sure that pupils, particularly the most able of them, know clearly what they need to do to improve their writing
- ensuring that teachers' planning of the curriculum closely identifies ways that pupils can practise and consolidate the skills they learn in their English learning in other subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah O'Donnell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and other leaders, the chair of the governing board and five other governors. I spoke with the school's external adviser for school improvement. With you I visited all the classes in the school. We talked with pupils about their learning and looked at their work with them. Together with other leaders, we looked at pupils' books. I also listened to pupils read.

I spoke with pupils at breaktime and met a group of pupils at lunchtime. I considered the 50 responses to the pupil online questionnaire. I evaluated the 23 responses to the online staff questionnaire and spoke with staff around the school. I spoke with parents informally at the start of the day and considered the 42 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire.

I talked with staff and governors about their understanding of safeguarding. I looked at a range of school documents relating to school improvement, safeguarding and the safer recruitment of staff.