

Inspection of a good school: The Abbey CofE VA Primary School, Shaftesbury

St James's Street, St James St, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8HQ

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 December 2022

Outcome

The Abbey CofE VA Primary School, Shaftesbury continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children get off to a great start in Reception. Across the school, pupils usually get along well together and enjoy school. If bullying happens, staff deal with it. Almost every parent and carer would recommend the school.

The vast grounds are set up for exploring. The regular forest school fosters teamwork well. Pupils gain a strong sense of service to the community. For example, they go carol singing at local care homes and undertake charity work with the Rotary Club and local hospital. This helps pupils understand how to be good citizens.

There is something for everyone at lunchtime. For example, the outdoor classroom is a great place to make and do. Pupils learn how to grow plants and vegetables. For those who love climbing, the outdoor play equipment is a priority. Lego club is also a favourite. Pupils say that the peace garden is a special space and when their classmates visit it, they respect that they want time to be still and reflect.

Pupils' mental and physical fitness is a top priority. Sport is high up on the agenda; there are many clubs and sports fixtures to attend. During their time in school, pupils learn well across the curriculum.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders ensure that there is a strong focus on ensuring that pupils can read, write and learn mathematics well. By the time they leave the school, pupils achieve highly in these subjects. This is a highly inclusive school. Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They ensure that staff adapt their teaching to meet these pupils' needs well.

Leaders' work over the last 18 months to improve the curriculum is paying off. In mathematics, the sharp focus on multiplication tables means that pupils can recall number facts quickly. This helps them to solve more complex calculations and mathematical

problems with confidence. The wider curriculum is improving steadily. For example, the physical education (PE) and history curriculums are well sequenced. The content in these subjects is ambitious. Sequences of work across weeks, months and years build up pupils' knowledge effectively. However, in a few subjects, the curriculum is less well refined. This means that pupils do not develop the depth of knowledge they could, for example, in French.

Many skilled staff enable pupils to become confident and self-assured readers. Children in Reception are keeping up with the phonics programme well. They brim with pride as they learn the sounds that letters make and the world of reading opens up for them. In Year 2, teaching places an emphasis on pupils applying their phonics to spell accurately. This ensures that most pupils write with increasing fluency and confidence.

Leaders have ensured that staff have the knowledge and skills to check what pupils know and understand. As a result, teaching usually builds firmly on what pupils, including those with SEND, already know. However, leaders do not consider the implications of some of their decision-making about when staff assess pupils and what action staff take as a result. Notably, too much time is being spent on testing and assessing pupils in Year 6. This lessens the time available for them to build on their prior curriculum knowledge and thrive. Also, leaders accurately identify a small group of pupils in Year 1 who need to become more fluent in reading but extra teaching to resolve this is only just starting.

Governors are holding leaders to account, so that the school continually improves. For example, leaders now have stringent systems in place to ensure that pupils attend well. Governors commission experts to check curriculum quality. They use this information to challenge, support and check the impact of the school's action plans.

The personal, social and health education curriculum includes everything it should. It teaches pupils to become resilient and determined learners. Pupils learn about other cultures. For example, the school has a partnership with a Japanese school. Pupils gain a strong sense of right and wrong.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school completes all the necessary recruitment checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Leaders make sure that staff are well trained in safeguarding practices. Staff identify concerns quickly and confidently. They follow the procedures in place to refer on any concerns in a timely way. Leaders are tenacious in working with external agencies to ensure that any pupils who may be at risk of harm get help and support. Staff have confidence that leaders deal effectively with any concerns they raise.

Pupils say they feel safe. They know how to keep themselves safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few subject curriculums require further refinement. Where these are less developed, the curriculum does not ensure that pupils gain all the information they need to excel. Leaders need to ensure that staff implement a curriculum that enables all pupils to know and remember the depth of knowledge they need to learn well in every subject.
- There are relative weaknesses in how staff assess what pupils know and how they use this information to further secure pupils' understanding of the curriculum. There is too much time spent on testing what Year 6 pupils know. These pupils are not building on all their prior knowledge across the wider curriculum sufficiently well this year. There has been a delay in supporting a small minority of pupils in Year 1 to become fluent readers. Leaders and governors must ensure that all pupils receive a broad curriculum that builds on their prior learning consistently well and that leaders are prompt in ensuring that staff address any gaps they identify in pupils' knowledge swiftly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	113850
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10227945
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Antony Streets
Headteacher	Michael Salisbury
Website	www.abbeyschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school's previous section 48 inspection was in 2017.
- The school uses no alternative providers.
- There is a breakfast club on site. This is not managed by the school and was not inspected as part of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders and other school staff and examined a range of documents, including the school's action plans and curriculum.
- The inspector met with representatives of the governing body. She also met with a representative of Dorset local authority and held a telephone discussion with an independent external adviser.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and considered samples of pupils' work.
- In addition, the inspector held a meeting with two subject leaders to discuss their recent curriculum work and reviewed pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- The inspector considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspector considered responses to the Ofsted staff and pupil surveys alongside responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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