

Inspection of a good school: Great Abington Primary School

High Street, Abington, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB21 6AE

Inspection date: 14 December 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Great Abington Primary School. They praise the wide range of exciting opportunities they get. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their outdoor learning in the woods. They connect this well to what they learn in class, such as about sustainability in science. Pupils describe how trips, for example to London, help them understand more of the wider world. They develop responsibility through charity work and organising their own clubs. These experiences foster character traits such as curiosity and resilience.

Behaviour is orderly and purposeful. Pupils cooperate well, such as taking turns maturely in group conversations. They take pride in their learning, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Children in early years quickly learn to self-regulate. Clear routines in all aspects of school life create a calm atmosphere.

Pupils learn to embody the school's values, such as respect. They have positive relationships with staff. Parents are grateful for the 'nurturing' approach. The caring ethos helps pupils feel safe. There is little bullying and where incidents occur pupils trust leaders to resolve them.

Pupils do not always benefit from high expectations of what they can learn. This is particularly the case in early reading.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that draws on the school's local context. For example, they create links with local agriculture when pupils study crop rotation. In most areas, leaders identify the knowledge pupils should gain so they are ready for their next stage of education. This includes the early years, where the curriculum builds up knowledge that prepares children for key stage 1. Leaders ensure that new content builds on pupils' prior

knowledge. This means that pupils develop a body of knowledge, such as about concepts in history, that they apply in new contexts and situations. However, in a few areas, the curriculum is less precisely planned. Where this is the case, the delivery depends on the knowledge of individual teachers. Consequently, because of this inconsistency, pupils sometimes do not achieve as well as they could.

Leaders have not planned the curriculum for early reading well enough. There is unhelpful variation in the way they train staff. This does not create a consistent approach that supports pupils who are learning to read. Moreover, pupils sometimes read books that do not match precisely the sounds they learn in class. Because of this, some pupils struggle to blend the sounds they learn into words. Pupils who fall behind get a lot of support to catch up, including those with SEND. While this is the case, they do not learn quickly enough to read fluently. The weaknesses in the early reading provision also affect other parts of their learning, such as pupils' confidence in writing. There is a positive reading culture as pupils get older.

In most cases, teachers implement the curriculum well. Where the curriculum is less well designed, it does not support new or replacement teachers to plan effective learning activities. That said, teachers model learning well so that pupils understand tasks. They ensure that pupils have opportunities to practise what they learn. Teachers know how to adapt tasks for pupils who need it. Pupils with SEND get the help they need to learn the same content as others. In the early years, staff help children develop their knowledge of areas such as number. As a result, pupils understand their learning, and are motivated to do their best.

Leaders have high expectations for behaviour. Staff understand these. For instance, teachers quickly address any off-task behaviour in class. The clear processes help pupils know what is appropriate. Therefore, they learn to manage their own behaviour well. This means pupils maintain good conduct throughout the day. This includes children in early years.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development effectively. Pupils learn what they need to be ready for life in the modern world. They are taught about different types of communities and how to respect everyone's differences. Pupils explain articulately and with understanding why tolerance is important. This creates a kind and supportive ethos among peers.

Staff value the support they get. They say that leaders and governors helpfully consider their professional development and their workload. Staff appreciate the way leaders seek and respond to their views.

Governors have the skills they need for their role. They check closely on the effectiveness of safeguarding processes. Governors challenge leaders on areas such as health and safety. Governors know they need to continue to develop their monitoring of leaders' work to improve the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a vigilant culture of safeguarding. They ensure that there is frequent training so that staff know their responsibilities. Leaders employ a range of means, such as using technology innovatively, to ensure that information is clear and can be easily shared. As a result, they make sure the right actions are in place and regularly review them. Records show that leaders liaise with agencies appropriately.

Pupils learn how to stay safe. For instance, leaders have identified that online risks increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. They educate pupils, parents and carers about these. Consequently, pupils have a wide knowledge of online safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not developed an effective curriculum for early reading. As a result, some pupils do not learn to read with fluency as quickly as they should. Leaders must ensure that they put in place an effective early reading curriculum. Leaders must train all staff to understand and deliver this consistently well, which then results in pupils learning to read quickly and with confidence.
- Leaders have not planned the learning precisely enough in all areas of the curriculum. This means that in a few areas, teachers deliver the curriculum less effectively, and pupils do not develop what they know as well as they might. Leaders should identify and sequence the key knowledge that pupils must learn in all areas of the curriculum so that pupils build up a richer body of knowledge.

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 January 2013.

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	110611
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10255241
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	137
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mark Carter
Headteacher	Guy Underwood
Website	www.greatabington.school
Date of previous inspection	8 December 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The role of chair of governors is shared between two people. The 'co-chair' positions were appointed in September 2022. By agreement, one of the co-chairs is named chair on official forms.
- Leaders do not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with governors, including the co-chairs, the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. In early reading, this took the form of listening to pupils read to a familiar adult.

- As part of the evaluation of the school’s safeguarding processes, inspectors reviewed the school’s single central record, met with the designated safeguarding lead and looked at the recording of safeguarding information.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school self-evaluation form and improvement plan, curriculum plans and school policies.
- Inspectors reviewed the 66 responses that were submitted by parents to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the 17 free-text responses from parents. Inspectors also considered 13 responses to the Ofsted staff survey, and the 46 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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