

Inspection of a good school: Abacus Primary School

Tresco Way, The Wick, Wickford, Essex SS12 9GJ

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 March 2023

Outcome

Abacus Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy learning. They are polite and well mannered. They become increasingly confident and resilient. Pupils celebrate the differences between themselves and others at Abacus Primary and see these as a real strength.

Pupils have frequent opportunities to develop their interests and character. There are many ways in which they can develop leadership skills, such as being well-being ambassadors. They take part in visits to meet famous authors, they raise funds for local charities and read to members of the local community suffering with dementia. These experiences prepare pupils to be good citizens.

Although bullying is rare, pupils know how to turn to adults for help. Adults keep pupils safe in school and support them if they have worries or issues. There are well-being clubs in the morning for pupils to attend. Visitors speak to pupils about how to keep themselves safe online.

Pupils work hard in class and do their best. They achieve well and enjoy their time in school.

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

Leaders have put in place a well-designed and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum is well ordered to take account of what pupils need to learn. It is broken down into small steps that build on pupils' knowledge. Opportunities for pupils to use what they learn and make links between topics and across subjects help pupils remember more. Additionally, it deepens their understanding of what they know and can apply to new learning.

Children make a strong start to learning in early years because leaders understand the importance of this stage in providing a secure base for future learning. Leaders plan learning carefully, especially in core aspects such as communication, language and

number. This ensures that children are developing basic skills on which to base more complex learning in other areas of the curriculum.

Leaders value reading very highly. They understand that pupils need to be able to read to successfully access the rest of the curriculum. The reading curriculum is well planned. As a result, pupils become increasingly enthusiastic, fluent and accurate readers. Leaders have chosen a broad and relevant range of texts that pupils find interesting. Leaders plan additional support for weaker readers carefully. Pupils' needs are identified accurately. Well-trained staff support them to read confidently. This ensures that pupils achieve well both in reading and, subsequently, in other areas of the curriculum.

In some subjects, staff are not fully confident and secure in their subject knowledge and their understanding of how the curriculum can be implemented effectively. The checking of what pupils know is not routinely carried out well enough to accurately identify gaps in knowledge. This means teachers are not able to plan teaching that ensures that gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are addressed before pupils move on to new learning. Leaders have prioritised improving the curriculum and focusing on the achievement of pupils in English and mathematics. Other subject leaders do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the knowledge of staff. As a result, in some subjects, pupils do not learn as well as they do in English and mathematics.

At Abacus, leaders and staff value all pupils highly and are determined that all are cared for, have a full range of opportunities, and are given the specific support they need to do well. Leaders have trained staff to make adaptations to activities so pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as others. Pupils with SEND enjoy school, achieve well and become more confident. Leaders are working hard to involve parents more fully in making and reviewing plans.

Pupils behave well in lessons and in their social time. Leaders have worked closely with staff to ensure that any issues are dealt with quickly and consistently. Staff reward good behaviour and when pupils behave less well, they work closely with pupils on ways to improve their behaviour. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them, and they rarely disrupt learning.

Leaders are determined that pupils become tolerant and active citizens. The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to learn about democracy both in lessons and through elections for the school council. There are many clubs before, during and after the school day. Pupils of all abilities take part in sporting competitions and festivals.

Staff at Abacus feel valued and supported. Leaders care about their well-being.

Governors are active in providing support and challenge to leaders. They are ambitious for the school to succeed and carry out checks on teaching, learning and safeguarding in school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding team swiftly identifies pupils who are at risk. They work with local services to ensure that they are safe. Issues in the local community and school are identified and monitored. Safeguarding leaders know the needs of pupils and provide them with advice and support.

Leaders ensure that checks are made on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with pupils. Staff are well trained and know how to keep pupils safe in school.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe and about healthy relationships. As a result, they know how to identify dangers and where to seek help.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have given priority to developing English and mathematics in the curriculum. Subject leaders in other subjects are not always given enough opportunity to develop teachers' subject knowledge and skills. As a result, the curriculum in these areas is not as well developed. Leaders need to ensure that opportunities to improve teachers' knowledge and skills through training and monitoring are identified, planned and provided.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2016.

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	133312
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10211030
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	415
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	N/A
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Wood
Headteacher	Heidi Blakeley
Website	www.abacusprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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 school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- Deep dives were carried out in three subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. He visited the library and heard pupils read.

- Members of the school governing body and a representative of the local authority met with the inspector.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. He met with groups of pupils. The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for parents, pupils and staff.
- The inspector met with leaders and reviewed school documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector held a series of meetings with leaders and pupils to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. He scrutinised a range of records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The views of staff, pupils, parents and carers were considered through discussions during the inspection and responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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