

Inspection of a good school: Abbey Infant School

Maurice Road, Smethwick, West Midlands B67 5LR

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2023

Outcome

Abbey Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are highly ambitious for all pupils at Abbey Infant School. They do all they can to make sure pupils attend school regularly and on time. Reading is well taught. As a result, pupils enjoy learning to read independently. Leaders have prioritised handwriting due to a decline in dexterity skills following the pandemic. Consequently, pupils take great pride in their written work.

Leaders set high expectations for how all pupils should behave. Pupils are highly motivated and engage well in their learning. The 'Abbey Promise' helps pupils to learn to take responsibility for their actions by saying sorry meaningfully. Leaders make sure that pupils know what bullying is. They teach pupils to act on bullying concerns using the school's approach: 'STOP! I don't like it. START telling other people'. As a result, Abbey Infant School is a calm, orderly environment where pupils are happy and safe.

A 'bucket list' of activities offers pupils the opportunity to broaden their horizons. This includes a beach trip, a theatre visit, learning to play a musical instrument and visiting places of worship such as a Gurdwara. Parents are very positive about the quality of education their children receive. They are particularly positive about the school's approach to reading and ensuring all pupils learn to read well.

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

Leaders have set out an ambitious, clearly sequenced curriculum. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They present new learning clearly and check on pupils' learning in lessons. Any misconceptions are quickly addressed. Teachers recap on prior learning so that pupils know and remember more. Pupils learn the curriculum well.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are swiftly identified. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND get the support they need to be successful at school. Parents are very positive about the help and support their children receive.

Reading is prioritised. All staff receive regular training and support so that they have the knowledge and skills to teach phonics effectively. Pupils who fall behind in their reading, including pupils with SEND, are quickly identified. They receive effective support to catch up with their peers. Leaders ensure that pupils have high-quality reading books. This includes books that match the sounds that pupils are learning. As a result, pupils read confidently and fluently.

Leaders set high expectations of what the youngest children will achieve. They carefully organise learning so that three- and four-year-olds can work collaboratively and independently. Children enjoy learning indoors and outdoors. They are well supported to access the curriculum. For example, children count aloud numbers up to 10. They recognise numbers in the environment and use their fingers to represent them. Focused learning activities led by adults help pupils to learn and apply key knowledge and skills. For instance, children collect pom-poms with a pincer to match a given numeral. Adults support them to check their work and use the correct vocabulary. Children enjoy listening to and joining in with stories, songs and rhymes. They explore sounds in the environment and develop their early reading skills in a range of ways. By the end of the early years, children are able to read and write simple sentences well.

Leaders provide a broad and balanced offer for pupils, with a wide range of experiences to promote pupils' personal development. Leaders make sure that pupils learn 'life skills'. These include folding clothes, tying shoelaces, cleaning shoes and making beds, in preparation for the Year Two residential. Pupils learn about different religions such as Sikhism, Islam and Christianity. They explore a variety of cultures and customs through music, dance and story. This helps them to recognise and respect difference. Pupils learn to voice their opinions through the 'pose, pause, pounce, bounce' approach. This helps them to disagree respectfully. Pupils develop an understanding of democracy through the work of the school council and the weekly 'picture news'. Opportunities such as playground buddies and classroom 'meeters and greeters' help pupils to take on responsibilities. All this means that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders, including governors, know the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They carry out rigorous checks on how the school is performing. Leaders are highly effective in implementing improvements swiftly. Subject leaders make checks on how well pupils learn the curriculum. In a few subjects, there are some inconsistencies in the sequencing and content of the curriculum. Leaders know this. Staff are positive about the support from leaders to manage their workload and well-being, such as reductions in assessment and paperwork burdens.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff are highly skilled in identifying concerns about pupil welfare. Leaders rigorously pursue any concerns that staff raise. Pupils in need of help get the support they need.

Pupils learn about fire safety and the 'stop, drop, roll' technique. Leaders make sure that pupils learn how to make an emergency telephone call. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, for example through workshops on stranger danger and by developing an age-appropriate understanding of healthy, safe relationships.

Leaders ensure that all staff undertake rigorous vetting checks before starting work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few subjects are not planned and sequenced as well as they could be. This means that pupils do not learn the curriculum in these subjects as deeply as they could. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is embedded consistently across the school by supporting subject leaders to strengthen the sequence of learning and review content so that more pupils learn the curriculum in depth.

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 May 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	103930
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10256898
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Philip Jones
Headteacher	Richard Kentish
Website	www.abbeyfederation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school is part of a federation with Abbey Junior School.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

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 leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum 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.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult. The inspector reviewed reading resources.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents on the school's website.

- The inspector scrutinised the school’s safeguarding arrangements. This included examining the record of employment checks on school staff.
- The inspector observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons and at other times during the day.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead, curriculum leaders, representatives of the governing body and a local authority representative.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View and to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Lorraine Lord, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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