

Inspection of a good school: Abbots Langley School

Parsonage Close, Abbots Langley, Hertfordshire WD5 0BQ

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 May 2023

Outcome

Abbots Langley School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at 'Abbots' enjoy their work and play. The values of being 'respectful, kind, resilient and ambitious' shine through. Pupils are happy and get along well with their classmates. They rise to the high expectations that are set for them.

Pupils are safe and bullying does not happen often. When it does, they know that adults will sort it out quickly. Pupils know that if they have any worries there are 'safe hands' they can go to. Older pupils enjoy helping younger pupils to behave and play nicely together. Most pupils behave well and respond to the positive and respectful culture of the school.

Right from the early years, children take part in whole-school celebrations and events. Musical talent is celebrated. Regular concerts allow pupils to showcase their skills. Pupils are proud of their achievements and enjoy performing to audiences.

Through storybooks and school trips, pupils learn lots about different people and cultures. Pupils in each year group visit places of worship. This helps them to understand the faiths within and outside the school and local community. Pupils choose books to read that reflect current events and a diverse range of topics, such as gender identity and different family groups.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that has the specific content and vocabulary clearly mapped out across all subjects. Staff are skilled at reminding pupils what they have learned previously and how this links to current learning. Pupils enjoy explaining what they have learned. They are taught to justify their opinions with their knowledge, for example whether they like the tempo in a piece of music, or whether the front cover of a new reading book interests them.

Leaders have developed a reading curriculum that ensures pupils read a wide range of books. Typically, pupils have books that are matched appropriately to their stage of reading. However, some pupils who are still at the early stages of reading, particularly children in the Reception Year and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not achieve as well as they should. Staff do not routinely use assessment information well. Consequently, when this is the case, the curriculum is not matched closely to account for the gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. Leaders have started to review this, but the current provision is not always delivered effectively for these groups of pupils.

Children in the early years experience a curriculum that is linked to key stories, themes and skills throughout the year. When learning about friendship, for example, they give opinions about friendly behaviours and are then encouraged to practise using tiny pincer movements to make a beaded bracelet for a friend. Children can express themselves clearly and re-tell stories using props.

Typically, the support for pupils with SEND is well matched to individual needs, so pupils can access the curriculum alongside their peers and achieve well. Occasionally, some pupils do not have targets linked specifically to their early reading skills, and this limits their progress when learning to read.

Pupils behave well in lessons and during the social times of the school day. Children in the early years learn the rules and routines quickly. They record how they are feeling each day. This ensures that staff know who needs an 'extra check-in'. For pupils who need some nurture support during lunchtime, the 'pullman room' provides a safe space to relax, eat and play traditional board games.

Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibility, for example by being monitors, ambassadors and buddies. Pupils on the school council enjoy debating initiatives such as 'walk to school' week and deciding if it is fair for pupils who do not have an option to walk. Pupils' interests and talents are encouraged by enabling them to benefit from a wide range of opportunities, such as music and sports lessons, that the school offers.

Too many pupils are frequently absent from school. Although leaders have started to monitor attendance and work with families and engage professionals for support, the rate of improvement is not as rapid as it needs to be in ensuring that all pupils attend regularly.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about working at the school. They feel supported and respected by leaders.

The members of the recently formed governing body have a suitable skill set to provide support and challenge to school leaders. They have ensured staff workload and well-being are managed effectively, while having high expectations of leaders and staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure all staff are suitably qualified and up to date with their training. Staff report and record any small details that may be an indicator of a pupil being at risk from harm. Leaders are prompt in their actions to follow up on concerns. External agencies are notified as needed, and help is secured in a timely way.

Pupils learn to keep themselves and others safe through assemblies and the curriculum. They know who to talk to if they have any worries.

Governors ensure that all necessary checks are in place, and these are monitored regularly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The additional sessions for pupils at an early stage of reading, including those with SEND, are not planned and delivered well enough to meet pupils' needs. Consequently, these pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders must ensure that all staff know how to use assessment information to plan and deliver specific reading sessions which improve the outcomes for these pupils. Leaders must then monitor this provision to ensure it is having the impact they expect.
- The number of pupils with persistent absence is too high. As a result, these pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that their systems for monitoring attendance concerns result in swift action that ensures pupils attend school regularly.

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 January 2018.

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	117083
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10284258
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	4635
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kate Bates
Headteacher	Rebecca Negrello
Website	www.abbotslangley.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is a morning and after-school club for pupils attending the school which is run by school staff and managed by school leaders.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

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.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, other leaders, staff, pupils, a representative from the local authority, and the chair and five other members of the governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with 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.

- The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to the special educational needs coordinators, and the leader for personal, social and health education, and relationships and sex education.
- The inspector reviewed a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation form and improvement plan, school policies, and minutes from governing body meetings.
- As part of the evaluation of the school's safeguarding processes, the inspector reviewed the single central record, met with the designated safeguarding lead, reviewed safeguarding files, looked at behaviour and attendance records, and spoke with pupils and staff.
- The inspector reviewed the 207 responses that were submitted by parents to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the 203 free-text responses from parents. The inspector also considered the 41 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils, but the inspector held discussions with several pupils.

Inspection team

Isabel Davis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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