

Inspection of Abel Smith School

Churchfields, Greencoates, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 8AE

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
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The quality of education	Outstanding
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Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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Personal development	Outstanding
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Leadership and management	Outstanding
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Early years provision	Outstanding
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Previous inspection grade	Outstanding
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Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since November 2013.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They believe in themselves and are aspirational for their futures. Pupils enthusiastically engage in exciting learning activities that are well designed to develop their knowledge. They work hard to meet their teacher's high expectations. As a result, the writing in their books is exceptionally well crafted and beautifully presented.

Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to teach the well-constructed curriculum. As a result, pupils are highly knowledgeable about the subjects they learn. They can use complex vocabulary to explain their thinking. This means pupils are articulate and ready for the next stage in education and their futures.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They know being well behaved helps everybody to learn. At playtimes, they happily engage in well-organised activities. Pupils know that all staff will help them with problems. They speak highly of all the staff. Pupils are considerate and respectful to others. This creates a positive school environment.

Pupils know they are essential members of the school community. They take on extra responsibilities with enthusiasm. For example, older pupils help younger pupils during playtimes. This helps maintain the happy, positive and inclusive culture everyone enjoys.

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

The school's curriculum plans are meticulously well structured and logically ordered. They provide teachers with detailed guidance on what to teach and when. Effective staff training means teachers have strong subject knowledge. They impart this well to pupils. As a result, pupils show a deep understanding of each subject. Staff break down learning into small steps. This supports pupils to learn new knowledge securely. Teachers skilfully check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions quickly and accurately. This means that pupils do not develop and use errors. The children in the early years are remarkably well prepared for Year 1. Their work shows that they are working above age-expected standards. This continues to be the case as they proceed through the school. Pupils achieve exceptionally well across all subjects.

The school places a high priority on reading. Children in the early years hear and share a wide variety of stories and rhymes. This fosters a joy of books and an understanding of the benefits of reading. A carefully crafted phonics programme is in place. Pupils have numerous opportunities to recap and recall previous learning. This helps them to develop their reading ability well. Pupils read books that match their phonics ability. This gives them the essential practice to read new and unfamiliar words confidently. Staff step in quickly to support pupils who are struggling to keep up. Consequently, pupils develop into confident, fluent readers.

The school provides outstanding support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff know the pupils well. They know how best to provide effective support when pupils need it. The school works closely with parents. This ensures that they know how to meet each pupil's learning needs. Staff support all pupils to achieve their potential regardless of their needs. The staff actively promote the independence of pupils with SEND, for instance providing pupils with word banks relevant to the topic they are studying. This boosts pupils' self-confidence and competence when completing tasks by themselves.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. It ensures that all pupils have access to many opportunities for character development. The school includes experiences that interest and meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Empowering pupils with leadership opportunities is a prominent feature of the school's ethos. Pupils receive specific training for their roles. They learn to support others and develop teamwork skills. The school has an effective mental health support system. This ensures quick support for pupils, such as helping Year 6 pupils prepare for their transition to secondary school.

The school is calm and orderly. This makes a positive setting for learning. Teachers set firm rules and guidelines for pupils. This means that pupils have a clear understanding of how to behave. Staff have high expectations. Their approach to maintaining discipline is unwavering. As a result, pupils show exceptionally settled behaviour. This begins in the early years when children know the expectations. Their transitions are notable; the children move quickly and sensibly from one activity to the next.

The governors and school leaders work in harmony to ensure that all pupils make significant progress. Governors, leaders and all staff consistently uphold the school's vision and values. This results in a cohesive approach. Staff receive high-quality training. Staff well-being is a high priority, which staff appreciate.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	117111
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345165
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	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Maddie Waller
Headteacher	Daniel Hewitt
Website	www.abelsmith.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 November 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and

considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding, including attendance, which puts pupils' interests first.

- The inspectors spoke to pupils in class, in small groups and on the playground.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents provided by the school, including development plans and records of the school's own self-evaluation.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and curriculum leaders. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the governing body.
- The inspectors met with subject leaders and looked at a range of curriculum documentation and pupils' work across other subjects, including writing and personal, social, health and economic education.
- One inspector talked to parents at the school gate before school.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Laura Hewer

Ofsted Inspector

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