

# Abington Vale Primary School

Ashford Close, Abington Vale, Northampton, NN3 3NQ

**Inspection dates** 5–6 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The governors and school leadership team are ambitious for the school and, together with the staff, they have built a positive climate for learning, where pupils are able to thrive and learn with confidence. They have ensured that teaching and achievement are good.
- Progress has become more consistent. It is good across the school and is improving.
- Governors ensure that all available resources are used effectively to ensure that pupils achieve well. Effective deployment of pupil premium funding and the primary sports funding ensures that pupils, including the disadvantaged, are able to reach their potential.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. Parents and carers have great confidence in the school to keep their children safe.
- Children in the Reception Year have an outstanding start to their schooling and make excellent progress.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and talk enthusiastically about their lessons. Their behaviour is exemplary. They show respect for each other and are always ready and willing to help each other learn.
- The imaginative curriculum ensures that pupils are able to develop their literacy and numeracy, as well as the skills they need to lead a full life in modern Britain.
- Attainment is above average in writing and mathematics and standards in reading are rising.
- Attendance has improved and is now above national averages.
- Standards in phonics (how sounds in words are represented by different letters) have improved considerably.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in reading, although improving, is not as strong as in mathematics and writing.
- The quality of support offered by some teaching assistants is not consistent. As a result, pupils are not always able to progress as well as they could.
- Teachers' comments in pupils' books are not always sufficiently clear and detailed to help pupils improve their work.
- In some lessons, work is not always at the right level of difficulty for all pupils, so some find tasks too easy or too hard. As a result, they are not always able to make good progress.

### Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons across all the year groups, including 12 seen jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspection team held meetings with school leaders, governors, staff, and representatives from the Academy Trust, and pupils. They attended an assembly, heard groups of pupils read and made brief visits to a range of lessons, including groups learning phonics. They also visited the breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils’ books. They examined a range of documents, including the school’s own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, its improvement plans, records of pupils’ progress, and documents relating to keeping pupils safe.
- The views of 62 parents and carers were analysed through the Parent View website and inspectors spoke informally to groups of parents to seek their views about the school.
- The views of 36 staff who returned questionnaires were also considered.

### Inspection team

Gillian Scobie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Buckingham	Additional Inspector
David West	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Abington Vale Primary School is larger than the average primary school.
- The school is spread across two campuses, Park Campus, which has pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6, and Stirling Campus, which opened in 2012 and currently has pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attend school full-time.
- The school converted to become an academy in November 2012. Its predecessor, also known as Abington Vale Primary School, was last inspected in June 2011, when it was judged to be outstanding.
- A new headteacher was appointed in April 2014.
- As an academy, Abington Vale is part of the Northampton Primary Academy Trust (NPAT), which is a partnership between five local primary schools and includes Headlands, Lings, Ecton Brook, and Weston Favell. The headteacher sits on the board of the Academy Trust.
- The large majority of pupils at Abington Vale Primary School come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is a little above average. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is average. Seven out of a hundred pupils have disabilities or special educational needs which are supported at school action. This is close to the national average. Only three out of a hundred pupils are supported at school action plus, or by a statement of special educational needs, which is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below average, at about one in ten. This is additional government funding for particular groups which, in this school, includes those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school organises a breakfast and after-school club for its pupils, managed by the governing body.
- The school meets the governments' current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils in reading, writing, and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in reading by consolidating the changes already made and building on pupils' much-improved attainment in phonics.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is outstanding by ensuring that
  - work is consistently matched to the needs of pupils at each level of ability
  - teachers and teaching assistants share good practice in the classroom and build on the outstanding teaching that already exists in school, to ensure that all pupils make good progress
  - marking and teachers' comments show pupils clearly how to improve their work.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The newly appointed headteacher has raised standards and, as a result, the progress and attainment of pupils is improving, especially in mathematics for the older pupils. Improved progress in phonics is narrowing the gap between standards in reading and those in mathematics and writing.
- The schools' self evaluation is thorough and informs realistic targets in the school's plan for further development. The practical targets are evaluated regularly by senior managers and the governors and ensure that standards are rising.
- There is a comprehensive range of policies that are clear and well thought out. The policies help guide school procedures effectively, so that leaders, teachers, and pupils all understand what is required. As a result, standards across the school are rising.
- Subject and phase leaders monitor teaching and learning regularly and work closely with other schools within the Academy Trust to moderate their work and ensure consistency in improving learning. They use school records well to ensure that pupils are making good progress and any problems are addressed quickly. As a result, teaching and learning across subjects and ages are good and, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, they are outstanding.
- The headteacher has led her colleagues in the development of a creative and stimulating curriculum that successfully includes aspects of music, dance, and drama across the full range of subjects. There is also an emphasis on linking the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils to their progress in numeracy and literacy.
- Pupils are encouraged to reflect on a wide range of issues that raise their awareness of the need for tolerance and respect for others, so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. All these aspects are supporting good progress and positive attitudes towards each other and reflect the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity, regardless of pupils' backgrounds.
- The use of the pupil premium funding is monitored rigorously and the funding is used effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are able to take full advantage of all the opportunities available in the school. The work of the family support worker has had a very positive effect on pupils' academic progress. Their attendance at team building events at the local study centre run by the town's rugby club has helped to improve and develop pupils' self esteem and confidence and has also had a positive effect on their progress and attainment. As a result, the gap is closing between pupils eligible for the funding and their classmates by the end of Year 2 and has closed fully by the time pupils reach Year 6.
- The specialist sports coach funded by the additional primary schools sports funding has encouraged pupils of all ages to participate widely in a range of sporting activities. As a result, since the school became an academy, there has been a marked increase in the numbers of pupils taking part in after-school clubs and activities. The school also takes a greater part in competitions and sports events organised through the Academy Trust and local school cluster and was awarded national award for sporting excellence in 2014.
- The school communicates effectively with parents and carers and there is an active Friends of Abington Vale Primary Association. Parents and carers speak very highly of the new headteacher and the school's open-door policy. They feel that the school works well to keep their children safe and ensure they make good progress.
- The headteacher has been supported well by the Northampton Primary Academy Trust since her appointment. Together they are working to improve the standards of progress and attainment across all the subjects and this is beginning to show good results, although progress in reading is still slightly below national averages.

**■ The governance of the school:**

- The governing body includes a wide range of skills and experience to support the school. Governors work closely with the headteacher and school leaders to ensure the school's continuing improvement. They know the school well, visit regularly and have excellent relationships with parents and carers, who comment very positively on the school's arrangements for safeguarding. Governors receive regular reports from the headteacher and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and where further improvement is needed. They take an active part in developing the school's improvement plan and regularly challenge the information they receive, to ensure that standards are improving rapidly. Targets for the headteacher and her staff are linked closely to outcomes, so that good results are rewarded appropriately. Governors monitor closely the use of the school budget and extra funding, including pupil premium, primary sports funding, and the school's contribution to the Academy Trust, and ensure that it is used effectively to support pupils' wider education and the training of staff. As a result, there is a positive impact on progress and standards across the school. Governors are proud of the progress the school has made since it became an academy.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils display very positive attitudes to learning consistently. They are extremely enthusiastic, respond well to challenge and are very keen to do well. They arrive in class ready to learn, are always supportive of each other and willingly share their work and help each other to learn. They take a pride in their work and this is reflected in the high level of presentation in their exercise books.
- The conduct of pupils outside the classroom is impeccable. They respond well to the high expectations of good behaviour modelled by their teachers and show respect for adults, their environment, and each other. An inspector happened to see a class walking through the town on their way to the cinema during the inspection and heard passersby remark on the excellent behaviour and attitudes displayed by the children.
- Pupils know the school's behaviour policy on rewards and sanctions well and are always quick to adhere to it. Parents and carers commented very favourably on the new behaviour policy, which has had a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and speak very highly of the range of extra-curricular clubs and activities available to them. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for each other through the buddy system. Pupils in Year 5 value their role as young leaders and take their responsibilities very seriously, organising games at break and lunch time and ensuring that pupils who may be on their own are quickly included into a game or able to join a group of friends. The democratically elected School Council plays an active part in the life of the school.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. There are robust procedures in place to ensure that both sites are secure and visitors' details are checked properly.
- Pupils say they feel very safe at school. They speak enthusiastically about the bicycle training they receive and are confident about how to keep themselves safe from potential dangers outside school, including when using the internet and social media.
- Pupils know about different kinds of bullying and say that incidents of bullying in school are rare, but, should they occur, they and their parents and carers are confident that they will be dealt with quickly and effectively. The school's safeguarding policy is reviewed annually and the school works closely with parents to ensure a harmonious working environment.
- Attendance has improved and is now above national averages. The school employs a family liaison worker and this has had a positive effect on attendance across the school.

**The quality of teaching** is good

- Teachers know their pupils well and there are excellent and supportive relationships between the adults and the pupils in every class. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and are willing to be adventurous in their learning and progress is improving.
- Teachers plan interesting and stimulating lessons that catch their pupils' imaginations and inspire them to try hard and achieve well. Lessons are planned around a theme and include elements of literacy and numeracy which successfully develop pupils' learning. This was particularly effective in a Year 2 history lesson about Saxon huts that successfully linked aspects of literacy, science, and social and cultural development.
- The use of perceptive and probing questions is a strength in the school. Inspectors observed excellent use of careful questioning to deepen pupils' thinking and develop their burgeoning ideas. The school has introduced the study of basic philosophy across the school and this has helped to focus and develop pupils' thinking and reflection. In a year 6 philosophy lesson, pupils were challenged to develop deep and searching questions about a range of issues concerning Kermit the frog and were able to explore them widely and thoroughly.
- Teachers have high expectations and are keen to see pupils do well. Teachers and teaching assistants work and communicate well together. They plan together to ensure that there is seamless and effective support for pupils at all levels. However, the quality of support offered by some teaching assistants is not consistent with others' and, as a result, pupils are not always able to progress as well as they could.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use the school marking policy well to show pupils what they have done well, but comments in pupils' books are not always sufficiently clear and detailed to help pupils improve their work.
- Teachers use 'target cards' to monitor pupils' progress carefully. These are used to inform future planning and identify quickly where pupils may need extra help or further challenge. However, in some lessons, the work is not always matched sufficiently well to the needs of pupils of different abilities and, as a result, they do not always make expected progress.
- Teachers set interesting and appropriate homework consistently that helps pupils to deepen and extend the knowledge and skills they have covered in class and consolidate their learning.

**The achievement of pupils** is good

- Children come into the Reception Year with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age and they make outstanding progress, so that they are ready to continue their education and have developed a very positive attitude and a love of learning.
- There has been rapid progress in pupils' achievement in phonics. The results of the year 1 phonics screening check show that standards have risen well above the national average, due to the improved emphasis in the teaching of phonics in the Reception Year and Year 1. The majority of pupils who sat or retook the test in Year 2 were also successful.
- By the end of year 2, pupils' achievement is well above national averages in writing and above national averages in mathematics, but is only average in reading. Recently improved skills in phonics are enabling pupils to make better progress in reading and the gap in standards is beginning to narrow.
- By the end of year 6, the achievement of pupils remains above national averages in mathematics and writing but, again, is not as strong in reading. Progress has been inconsistent over Key Stage 2 in the past. However, the school's records show that all year groups made good progress last year. Last year's Year 6 made good progress during their final two years in the school, but this was not enough to make up for some weaker progress earlier in the key stage. Their overall progress since Year 2 was still below average. Work in pupils' books confirms that they made good progress during Year 6.

- Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often and the school has recently refurbished its library provision with a wide range of books, some of which were purchased with money raised by the Friends of Abington Vale. Pupils say they read at home often and speak enthusiastically about the books and authors they enjoy. As a result, pupils' attainment in reading is improving and now meets national averages.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding are achieving well and making good progress. This is an improving picture. By the time they reach Year 6, the gap between their achievement and others' has closed completely. In reading, disadvantaged pupils are working more than two terms ahead of their classmates and two terms ahead of pupils nationally. In writing, disadvantaged pupils are working at least a term ahead of their classmates and two terms ahead of pupils nationally. In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils are working broadly in line with their classmates and pupils nationally. This is due to the school's rigorous monitoring and timely support, which ensures that disadvantaged pupils are able to make good progress and achieve well.
- As a result of well-targeted support, the small number of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress and achieve well from their starting points. This is because the school ensures that their needs are identified quickly and class teachers provide consistently high-quality support and guidance.
- The most-able pupils make good progress and their achievement in reading and writing is above national averages, but not in mathematics, although it is improving rapidly. The school is working with a consultant from the Northampton Primary Academy Trust to improve the teaching of mathematics and the level of challenge, especially for more-able girls.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make progress in line with their peers and achieve well.

### **The early years provision** is outstanding

- The Early Years Foundation Stage classrooms on both sites offer a rich and welcoming environment, where children are able to thrive and learn confidently. There is a wide and interesting range of activities to develop basic skills in communication and numeracy and children are encouraged to develop good social skills quickly.
- Children are keen to learn and ready to talk about their activities. Teachers and assistants monitor children's activities closely and ensure that children understand what they are learning and are constantly able to move forward in their learning. Children demonstrate high levels of concentration consistently and curiosity about the world around them.
- Children are given clear routines to follow and behave very well. They play well together and look after their classrooms and each other very well, for instance, they are quick to tidy at the end of an activity, or help each other to put their coats on to go outside.
- The Early Years team is led very well and is a strength of the school. Children's progress is monitored rigorously and information about their progress is used routinely to inform further planning. As a result, children make outstanding progress in all areas of their development.
- Children come from a number of pre-school settings and their starting points on entry are recorded to ensure that judgements about their progress are accurate. Parents are involved closely in their children's early education and are informed regularly about their progress.
- The school carries out home visits for each child entering the Reception Year and parents comment very favourably about the care and support offered by the school. They welcome particularly the sessions run by the school for parents on the teaching of phonics and numeracy in school and feel that they are in a strong position to support their children's learning and skill development at home.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138952
<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	449226

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	328
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Adrian White
<b>Headteacher</b>	Laura Cichuta
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 635071
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<b>Email address</b>	head@avt.northants-ecl.gov.uk

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