

Abbey Primary School

Glastonbury Crescent, Mossley Estate, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 2RP

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders' shrewd identification of weaker practice and their provision of effective training have contributed to a marked improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders check carefully on pupils' progress, and act promptly to support those at risk of falling behind.
- Teachers set work that builds on what pupils already know. In their planning, they consider pupils' different starting points. However, work for the most able pupils sometimes does not deepen their understanding sufficiently.
- Phonics is taught very effectively. However, staff do not regularly encourage younger pupils to use their knowledge of phonics to help develop their writing skills.
- Current pupils have a love of reading. They are making strong progress, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils are articulate because teachers expect pupils to explain their ideas fully in class. They learn to explore verbally different approaches to mathematical problems.
- Leaders are committed to a broad curriculum, and pupils generally achieve well across a range of subjects. A few foundation subjects require stronger leadership.
- In recent years, pupils' attainment in national tests at key stage 1 has been below the national average. Published outcomes show that key stage 2 pupils have made strong progress, especially in reading and writing.
- Pupils demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to their learning. They are enthusiastic, conscientious and increasingly confident.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff use their detailed knowledge of the pupils and their circumstances to keep them safe.
- Pupils' attendance has risen sharply over the last year and now exceeds the national average. Leaders have greatly reduced the instances of poor behaviour at social times.
- Although many children start with skills well below those typical for their age, they progress well in the early years. Teaching is good. Sometimes clearer links with what they have already learned would help children to develop their ideas in their play.
- Since the last inspection, a core group of governors have supported the school and held leaders to account for the impact of their actions. Other governors have not proved so effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers:
 - use pupils' phonic knowledge more consistently to support their early writing
 - take every opportunity across the curriculum to extend the thinking of the most able pupils.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that those who coordinate foundation subjects receive the training that they require to lead their subjects confidently and effectively
 - making sure that all governors have the confidence and expertise to make a strong contribution to the oversight of the school.
- Give children in the early years the examples and the prompts that would help them to apply and extend their learning during continuous provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the last inspection, senior leaders have addressed the school's relative weaknesses effectively. Through accurate evaluation followed by relevant actions, they have improved the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and their behaviour and attendance. As one example, they have introduced an approach to reading at key stage 1 that has enabled staff to identify and teach well the different reading skills.
- At the same time, leaders are ambitious to improve the school further. Their current self-evaluation is realistic, and acknowledges what still remains to be done. The school development plan is well structured and sets clear and challenging expectations for what the school can achieve.
- Professional development for teaching and support staff has played an important part in the school's improvement. Staff, including those who are at a relatively early stage of their careers, told inspectors that training is consistently helping them to develop their skills. Leaders make good use of links with local schools to enable teachers to check on their judgements about pupils' work and to observe good practice.
- Leaders check meticulously on pupils' progress, and arrange additional teaching and support for those pupils who are at risk of falling behind. They also monitor the effectiveness of teaching and provide clear guidance to teachers about how they can improve their practice. During the inspection, leaders' views on the teaching that was jointly observed aligned with those of inspectors.
- The school is strongly committed to equality of opportunity. Leaders recognise the barriers to learning that some individual pupils face, and take care to help them overcome such obstacles. They know the importance of providing a broad curriculum that gives all pupils the knowledge they need to thrive in society, as well as core skills in literacy and numeracy. For example, the school has provided specialist music teaching ensuring that pupils learn to play a musical instrument. The majority of pupils make good use of a wide range of after-school clubs.
- The school spends the pupil premium and the physical education (PE) and sports premium effectively. In each case, leaders identify those strategies that are successful and amend provision in the light of their findings.
- Following the last inspection, the headteacher prioritised improving teaching in the core subjects. Those teachers who coordinate the teaching of English, mathematics and science are knowledgeable and experienced in providing guidance for their colleagues and checking on the effectiveness of teaching in their subject. However, senior leaders have not placed the same expectations on the coordinators of other subjects, nor trained them to the same level. The quality of leadership these members of staff currently provide is therefore variable.
- Leaders have taken important steps to improve the teaching of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has introduced arrangements for tracking in detail the progress that these pupils make, and ensuring that staff understand the next steps that pupils need to take. Leaders take specialist advice from other agencies to ensure that pupils' additional needs are identified promptly and

accurately. They involve pupils and their parents and carers well in the review of pupils' progress.

- Leaders have succeeded in creating a happy and united school community. Parents now think highly of the school, placing greater confidence in it now than at the time of the last inspection. Staff believe that leaders have managed their workload effectively. There is a strong sense of teamwork and cooperation.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. A small group of governors have ensured that they have the training and expertise to hold leaders to account. They have a clear view of the values that they expect the school to uphold. Records of governors' meetings show that they scrutinise in detail the headteacher's report. Governors challenge him on the effectiveness of the school's actions to improve outcomes, attendance and behaviour. They check that leaders have followed up any matters that governors have raised.
- Governors understand the need to plan expenditure so as to give the school the best chance of achieving the agreed priorities. They have cut costs when they have considered this to be necessary, and so have been able to set a balanced budget for the school.
- The governing body makes sure that leaders keep pupils safe, including from the risk of radicalisation and extremism. Governors check that leaders follow the correct procedures, and store records carefully. They use their own expertise to ensure that the site is well maintained.
- Some governors have been reluctant to show the commitment necessary for them to make a full contribution to the work of the governing body. Although there have been some recent appointments, there remains one vacancy on the governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The staff know the pupils and their families very well. They are well aware of the risks presented by the locality, including those associated with extremism. The sensitivity and care for individual pupils evident during the inspection is shown in highly effective support for families. In some instances, this extends well beyond what the school is obliged to do.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are thoroughly trained, including in the 'Prevent' duty. As a result, they are vigilant and well aware of how to identify and report any concerns. Leaders work effectively with parents, and other agencies that protect children, to safeguard those pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.
- The school's policies and procedures are up to date and meet all statutory requirements. Leaders store clear and detailed records securely.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. The headteacher has acted to improve teaching in key stage 1, where it had been weaker. Pupils' attitudes to their own learning are conspicuously and consistently positive, and make a significant contribution to how well they learn. Staff use assessment increasingly well to ensure that teaching and teaching arrangements are best suited to pupils' needs.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' conduct, and relationships in the classroom are excellent. Teachers are knowledgeable, use the technical terms associated with each subject accurately and expect pupils to do the same. They question pupils well, and thus check on pupils' understanding of new ideas. Teachers identify and correct any misconceptions effectively.
- Teachers have developed pupils' oral communication very well. From the early years onwards, teachers encourage pupils to provide extended answers in class. As a result, they are able to explain their thinking clearly and eloquently, and carry this through into their talk with their peers. For example, through group discussions in a Year 5 lesson, pupils successfully deepened their understanding of characterisation.
- In the teaching of mathematics, teachers encourage pupils to consider different ways of approaching questions and to explain these approaches, both orally and on paper. They make good use of a variety of practical equipment. Pupils apply their skills to the full range of mathematical problems and have some opportunities to apply them in other subjects.
- The teaching of phonics is consistently strong. Teachers plan reading and writing activities carefully, so that they build up pupils' knowledge and skills progressively. As a result, pupils rapidly and securely acquire the ability to link letters and the sounds they make. However, when younger pupils write in other contexts, staff sometimes do not encourage them to use their phonic knowledge to spell accurately.
- Older pupils write for a range of purposes in the different subjects, for example to show empathy with historical figures or to explain a scientific investigation. Teachers identify errors in spelling and punctuation, so that pupils make good progress in the accuracy of their writing.
- Teaching assistants make an impressive contribution to pupils' learning, both when they lead small groups and when they support learning in the main classrooms. They question pupils skilfully, and present ideas in alternative ways. When they help pupils with SEND, teaching assistants explain to them how they can achieve their individual next steps in accomplishing the tasks that have been set.
- Teachers set work that builds on what pupils already know and understand. They recognise that groups of pupils, including the most able, have different starting points. However, teachers sometimes do not provide the challenging examples, cross-curricular links or thought-provoking questions that would really move the understanding of the most able pupils on further.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. They told inspectors that they had experienced bullying rarely if ever and that they have complete confidence that staff can resolve any disagreements. Pupils were able to recall in good detail how to stay safe online, and how the school had taught them about fire safety and safety on the roads. The school places an appropriate emphasis on learning to swim.
- Pupils' work in religious education is strengthened by visits to places of worship and talks from visitors to the school. Pupils learn well about different cultures and traditions. They are respectful of others, and do not tolerate discrimination.
- Pupils have the opportunity to take up positions of responsibility as classroom ambassadors or school counsellors. Those who spoke with inspectors understood the need to look after the school, and were proud of having raised money for charity.
- Pupils understand the importance of school, and some were able to link their learning to future employment and their lives as adults. Staff have worked hard to increase pupils' confidence in their own abilities and their resilience to setbacks. Pupils recognise that this has been successful, commenting for example on the importance of achievement assemblies. However, there is a little more work to do to consolidate this and to ensure that all pupils have a rounded understanding of the purpose of their studies.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is a distinctly orderly environment. Leaders have taken specific steps to address poor behaviour, especially at social times. Year groups now have breaks at different times, reducing the impact of any boisterous behaviour on younger pupils.
- Pupils consistently behave very well in lessons. They understand and value the school's behaviour policy and learn to follow classroom routines. They work hard, and sustain their concentration, even during detailed explanations. Pupils take the initiative, for example in using dictionaries or consulting wall displays relevant to their work. Across the school, they present their work neatly.
- Pupils wear their uniforms with pride, and treat adults with courtesy and respect. Their conduct outside lessons is orderly and responsible. They play happily together, making good use of a wide range of playground equipment. Inspectors saw no instances of aggression or antisocial behaviour.
- Leaders' records show that there has been a marked decline in more serious behavioural incidents. The school has employed both fixed-term and permanent exclusion on a few occasions within the last year, but there has been a steep reduction in their use.
- In the academic year 2017/18, pupils' attendance fell, so that it was below the national

average. However, leaders have taken firm action to stress the importance of attendance, including taking enforcement action in a small number of instances. As a result, attendance has improved sharply this academic year and is now above the national average. The attendance of vulnerable groups of pupils is in line with that of their peers.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils are good. Observation in lessons, the scrutiny of pupils' work and information supplied by the school show that across the school, pupils are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment at key stage 1, which had been the weaker aspect of the school, is now rising. Pupils are also achieving well in some foundation subjects, including science, history and music.
- Leaders have established a strong reading culture in the school. Those pupils who read to the inspector did so confidently and with evident enjoyment. They showed a good awareness of the listener, for example using appropriate intonation to delineate direct speech. Most pupils read extensively and have favourite authors, such as J K Rowling.
- Published outcomes at the end of key stage 2 improved in 2018. Although attainment was below the national average, pupils' progress across the key stage was significantly above average in reading and writing. Pupils with low starting points had made particularly strong progress.
- Since the last inspection, the proportion of Year 1 pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been in line with the national average, reflecting the strong teaching of phonics. However, attainment at the end of key stage 1 has been below average at the expected standard and at greater depth.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Those in Year 6 in 2018 left the school having made progress that was broadly in line with that of other pupils, and an improvement on the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in 2017. In English, they had largely closed the gap with the attainment of other pupils nationally. Work scrutiny and the school's achievement information showed that current disadvantaged pupils take the same care with their work and make similar progress to their classmates.
- There are now more rigorous arrangements for planning the work of pupils with SEND and more accurate tracking of the knowledge and skills they have attained. These improvements are leading to such pupils making stronger progress. Although some are now making the substantial progress necessary to fulfil their potential, there remains some work to do to ensure greater consistency.
- Rising outcomes at key stage 2 and the school's broad curriculum mean that pupils are generally well prepared for the move to secondary school. Pupils, especially the most able, will be even better served if the school can maintain its current push towards increasing the proportion of pupils who attain the higher standards across the school.

Early years provision

Good

- Most children enter the school in the Nursery or Reception Year with skills that are below, or well below, those typical for their age. Their skills in numeracy and writing are often particularly weak. Although there is some variation between different areas of the curriculum, children make strong progress overall. The proportion who have attained a good level of development in the last couple of years has been approaching the national average.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the early years provision. They ensure that staff assess what children have learned, and plan activities that represent the next steps in their learning. Leaders check the judgements that staff make about children's skills with those judgements made by staff in other settings. They place a high priority on training. For example, following visits from an external adviser, the learning environment has been redesigned to promote all areas of learning more effectively.
- Accurate early assessment ensures that the school identifies those children who have additional needs, such as speech and language difficulties, at the outset. Staff then provide effective additional support, working with specialist staff from other agencies when appropriate. Staff use additional funding to support disadvantaged children well, addressing both their academic and their social needs.
- Staff pay careful attention to all aspects of children's well-being. Children settle quickly, and grow in confidence and security. They behave well, follow routines and treat adults and each other with courtesy and respect. All welfare requirements are met.
- The school involves parents closely with their children's learning. Staff visit each home before a child starts in the early years, and later hold a detailed conversation with parents to discuss the child's progress. Parents contribute evidence of what their child has learned at home to the child's learning journeys.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Teachers plan a broad range of activities that engage children's interest. New experiences create wonder. Staff question children well, so that they probe and challenge their thinking to develop their understanding further.
- Staff plan activities that allow children to explore their previous learning further during continuous provision. However, they sometimes do not provide clear links or prompts that would help children to use and build on what they have learned while they play. For example, during the inspection, staff had taught children some of the important ideas about volume. Children subsequently had the opportunity to play with water, but with little to encourage them to extend or reinforce their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	104168
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10088478

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Steen
Headteacher	Mark Gilbert
Telephone number	01922 710 753
Website	www.abbey.walsall.sch.uk
Email address	postbox@abbey.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 January 2017

Information about this school

- Abbey Primary School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. The school provides a breakfast club.
- Children attend full-time in the Reception class, and part-time in the Nursery class.
- Prior to the previous inspection, provision at the school was extended to include two-year-old children. However, there were no two-year-olds on roll at the time of this inspection.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average.
- Most pupils are from a White British background.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups. Most observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed pupils' conduct at social times.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders, staff and governors. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Two groups of pupils met with inspectors. Inspectors also spoke with many other pupils informally. One inspector listened to pupils in Years 2, 3, 4 and 6 read.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks in lessons, and, working jointly with school leaders, scrutinised a large number of books in greater depth. The lead inspector considered a range of information about current pupils' performance.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included: development plans and evaluations of the school's performance; the minutes of meetings held by governors; policies; a review of the school's expenditure of the pupil premium; and other external reviews of the school. Inspectors scrutinised in detail records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- The inspection team took account of the 33 responses to Parent View, including the 10 free-text responses. One inspector spoke with several parents on the morning of the second day of the inspection. Inspectors also considered the 25 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Devinder Riat

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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