

Abbey Meads Community Primary School

Hugo Drive, Abbey Meads, Swindon, SN25 4GY

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement has improved markedly in recent years. All year groups and all groups of pupils are currently making good progress and achieving well.
- Between 2011 and 2013 pupils' standards rose rapidly. All pupils of all abilities exceeded the performance of their peers nationally by the time they left the school.
- Teaching is good overall with some that is outstanding. When the best learning occurs, teachers use their expert subject knowledge to motivate and inspire pupils.
- High quality, regular written and verbal feedback to pupils is helping them to progress well.
- Children in the Reception classes receive good quality support and care from adults. They get off to a flying start at school.
- Pupils feel safe in school and their behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good. This contributes significantly to their many academic and personal achievements. Pupils are very proud of their school.
- The headteacher shows determined and thoughtful leadership. His tireless dedication to engage parents in their children's learning is a key success of the school's work.
- Middle leaders contribute well to the continual drive for improvement. They conduct their roles by modelling the behaviour expected of all staff and pupils well.
- Parents, pupils and staff are universally positive about the school.
- Leaders, with the full support of governors, have created a culture which promotes fairness, equality and respect. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and provide a good level of support while continually checking its performance.
- The range and quality of activities available for pupils prepares them particularly well for life in modern democratic Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While gaps in achievement between pupils eligible for the pupil premium and all pupils nationally are closing rapidly, some remain for a small number.
- School development plans and checks on their success do not always focus on improvements to pupils' outcomes closely enough.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out without notice.
- Inspectors observed 23 lessons or part lessons. Every teacher was observed. Several observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders at the school.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils to discuss their work and explore their views about behaviour at the school. An inspector heard a variety of Year 3 pupils reading.
- The views of stakeholders were gained from talking to some parents before school, examining 77 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View) and scrutinising 61 responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- A range of documents were looked at, including the school’s plans for improvement, records of lesson observations, information on pupils’ progress, lesson plans, work in pupils’ books and reports of behaviour incidents and attendance.

Inspection team

Richard Light, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Lucy Maughan

Additional Inspector

Patricia Wright

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Abbey Meads is a larger than average-sized primary school in Swindon.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British background. A very small minority of pupils use English as an additional language or are at the early stages of learning English.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in two Reception classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is average. This is additional government funding provided to schools to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or those in local authority care.
- The school manages a breakfast and after-school club. The governing body manages Butterflies Children's Centre, located on the school site. The children's centre was not inspected as part of this inspection.
- A much higher than average number of pupils join or leave the school other than at the normal times.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' standards and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement further by making sure teachers and other adults:
 - improve pupils' ability to solve mathematical problems
 - ensure pupils make effective punctuation, word and sentence choices in their writing and understand what impact these have on the reader, particularly in Years 1 to 4
 - check pupils' understanding precisely by using their responses to questions to progress their achievement rapidly where learning starts to falter
 - continue closing the gaps in achievement between all pupils nationally and a small number of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure the school's monitoring, evaluation and development planning link directly to improving pupil outcomes and can be precisely checked by the governing body.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The ambition and vision of the headteacher are fundamental to pupils' good achievement and the positive ethos created at the school. His dedication and determination to engage families and their children are enabling all to thrive in a culture of high expectations and mutual respect.
- Senior and middle leaders support the headteacher well. They blend their knowledge, skills and expertise well to secure further improvements. This strengthens the overall leadership of the school considerably.
- Parents, staff and pupils are unanimous in their praise for the ongoing developments at the school. The united drive for improvement combined with effective teamwork results in a culture where all want to do the best they can for each other and the pupils in their care.
- All staff and many governors are involved in a range of monitoring and development planning. These provide detailed actions and some helpful analysis from which improvements can be made. However, some actions fail to link directly enough with intended improvements to pupils' achievement. This hampers the ability of the governing body to precisely evaluate the impact of actions taken.
- Performance management procedures are used well to hold staff to account and also to support their training and development. This training is broadening teachers' range and breadth of effective strategies to accelerate pupils' learning well.
- Funding to develop pupils' ability and participation in physical education has had a good impact. Specialist sports coaches deliver high quality teaching for all pupils and model their practice to teachers within the school. This is building teachers' skills and confidence in their own practice quickly.
- The curriculum is impressive. It provides a range of good quality activities that promote a high level of pupils' enjoyment. A wide variety of after-school clubs, school trips, artistic and cultural events enhance the planned activities well. Most noticeably, studying British artists, creating poems to the Unknown Soldier and learning about key texts such as War of the Worlds by H G Wells help pupils develop a strong sense of British identity. Pupils develop their understanding of the concept of democracy well when participating in 'hustings' and writing personal school council manifestoes.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well when, for example, pupils explore moral and social issues about characters during English lessons. Pupils' self-esteem is raised well through the many opportunities to take on positions of responsibility, such as older pupils looking after younger pupils during lunchtimes.
- External support provided by the local authority and school improvement partner is effective. Training provided for governors on how to interpret school data has improved their ability to hold senior leaders to account. Good opportunities to work with the local cluster of schools are enabling teachers to share and learn from best practice. The local authority also draws well on the school's strengths, such as the leadership of special educational needs, to support other schools.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is ambitious for the school. Governors have a good and accurate understanding of the school's performance in relation to other schools nationally through undertaking visits to classes and working alongside leaders. This enables them to gain some understanding of subject leaders' action plans and a view of the quality of teaching. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's performance and oversee the performance management of senior leaders closely. They are aware of the impact of pupil premium funding on pupils' achievements, as well as the link between teachers' performance and pay. Governors receive good quality information and use this to challenge and support senior leaders but recognise a closer link to pupils' outcomes would enhance their role even further. A regular monitoring programme ensures that all statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their positive attitude to learning contributes strongly to their good academic and personal achievements. Year 3 pupils demonstrated considerable determination to concentrate for a long period of time while listening to their teacher explain how to partition two-digit numbers.
- Pupils, staff and all parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school makes sure pupils are well behaved. Pupils told inspectors that learning is rarely interrupted. This typically reflects the behaviour seen on inspection and over time as shown by the small number of serious incidents recorded in the school's logs.

- Pupils enjoy lessons and coming to school. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average. Pupils respond enthusiastically to their teacher's questioning and show resilience when tackling new or challenging activities.
- Behaviour is modelled very well by all adults. Staff are extremely respectful and thoughtful to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met. Consequently, pupils model this behaviour towards each other in lessons and respond well to the school reward system which focuses on manners, politeness and respect.
- Pupils generally move around the school carefully. They play physically and energetically, but sensibly, outdoors. Occasionally, staff do not always intervene with pupils or guide them in their play when they should. This results in some transition times at the beginning and end of breaks being less smooth than they could be.
- The personal, social and health education programme 'Jigsaw' develops pupils' understanding of the difference between bullying and disagreements between friends well. Pupils welcome the opportunity to explore sensitive issues to help them overcome any anxieties they might have.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good grasp of how to stay safe online and the risks of posting their personal details on the internet.
- Pupils act safely in lessons. They understand each other's needs and place a high degree of importance in respecting everyone's view and ensuring all are treated equally.
- Pupils' report with a good degree of knowledge about wider aspects of safety beyond the school. Older pupils understand the risks associated with extreme views. They feel the school is a very safe place and would act upon any concerns they had immediately. All parents agree the school is a very safe place.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Inspection evidence, including joint observations with senior leaders, discussions with pupils, staff and governors and an analysis of the school's monitoring records, confirms this typical picture.
- Policies for lesson planning have been thoughtfully implemented. This is driving up the quality and consistency of teaching at the school. Interesting activities, covering a broad range of topics and themes, motivate and challenge pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to meet the different learning needs of pupils well. Lessons typically move at a brisk pace, are well planned and build carefully on pupils' prior learning. Teachers bring learning alive for pupils when they use their good subject knowledge to link activities in different subjects. Pupils rise to the challenge well when probed to reason, explain and justify their mathematical thinking and to solve complex problems, such as those about Tutankhamun's army.
- The teaching of writing is good. When the best learning occurs, teachers probe pupils' thinking and 'get inside their heads' to generate ideas. Teachers are skilled at helping pupils write technically and accurately. Occasionally, however, pupils in Years 1 to 4 fail to fully understand the impact punctuation, word or sentence choices have on the reader.
- Training on the teaching of mathematical calculations has had a positive impact. For example, Year 5 pupils talk with confidence about the different strategies they can use to multiply and create number sequences. Approaches to teach pupils how to systematically solve mathematical problems are less strong.
- Teachers' marking in books and oral feedback contribute well to pupils' good achievement. Teachers allocate time for pupils to respond to marking, resulting in a mature approach to learning. Pupils have a good notion of their next steps and can identify quickly where marking has helped them improve their work.
- Teachers and other adults use their understanding of pupils' learning to adapt planned activities between lessons. Most adults use effective questioning within lessons to check pupils' understanding and re-shape activities. This results in pupils being challenged throughout lessons and ensures learning progresses at a rapid pace.
- On some occasions, adults do not respond or listen carefully enough when checking pupils' understanding. Consequently, pupils' progress falters as a result.
- Careful planning and checking on pupils' learning during intervention activities or one-to-one sessions are helping pupils quickly acquire the skills that they need in English and mathematics and to be successful learners.
- Staff successfully strive to improve the quality of their teaching by working alongside each other to collectively plan lessons, and then fine tune their delivery. This is demonstrated through the refined way

teachers use information and communication technology to link subjects or research topics. This approach is meeting pupils' ongoing learning needs well.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join Reception with skills and levels of knowledge typically expected for their age, other than in areas of communication, language and literacy including writing, which are lower. As a result of good and sometimes better teaching across the school, pupils' attainment improved dramatically between 2011 and 2013 to above average in all subjects when compared to all schools.
- In 2014 results for pupils at the age of 11 dipped and were average when compared to other schools nationally. This was due to issues that were specific to this year group including the much higher than average number of pupils who joined or left the year other than at the normal times. Inspection evidence supports the school's view that current pupils are making good progress in all year groups and subjects.
- Achievement is also good because pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school, learning new skills, acquiring new knowledge and responding to teaching with enthusiasm and enjoyment. They share their ideas respectfully and thoughtfully in lessons.
- Pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding share in the good progress being made by other pupils. Any pupil in danger of underachieving is quickly identified and given good quality, targeted support. By Year 6 the standards achieved for these pupils, when measured using the average points scores in reading, writing and mathematics, are broadly equal to all other pupils nationally.
- The school is aware that a very small group of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding simply require more time with high quality support, such as at the after-school 'Omega' club, to fully match the achievement of all other pupils nationally.
- The headteacher sets ambitious targets for pupils' progress. Current school information and work in pupils' books shows that in every year group and subject, and for all abilities, progress is much faster than the average for all pupils nationally.
- More able pupils achieve well. Lessons are adapted successfully to extend their thinking. Year 5 pupils were challenged effectively in a science lesson to develop their use of accurate scientific language when hypothesising what creature might be hidden inside a bag.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. The systematic and structured approach to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in Year 1 has successfully raised pupils' achievement to above the national average. Well-crafted discussions during guided reading sessions, using high quality texts, stimulate pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of reading well.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs benefit from well-tailored programmes that meet their individual needs well. Teaching assistants are skilled at delivering specific support and ensuring these pupils do as much as they can for themselves.
- The respectful ethos of the school enables all pupils to develop good personal qualities. They are happy, honest, welcoming and polite, and appreciative of the help and support they receive.
- The overwhelming majority of parents agree that teaching is good. They are highly supportive of the school. In a typical comment one said, 'our daughters are progressing at such a rate, we are thrilled they have developed such a thirst and love for learning, their curriculum is broad and balanced, allowing for opportunities for enrichment and self-review.'

The early years provision

is good

- Relationships between staff and children are established quickly through effective arrangements for the start of the school year. As a result, all children settle quickly and experience a good start to their education.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed effectively. The learning environment is well planned and exciting. Children access a good range of activities. They choose activities which interest them and they co-operate well together. This enables most children to develop their language, communication and social skills at a fast rate.
- Teachers and other adults use expression and variation in tone to enthuse children early when reading stories. This captures their imagination quickly. Ongoing checks on children's learning, combined with developing specific phonic knowledge, help progress their learning rapidly. Actions to improve children's early writing skills have been less effective.
- In 2014, children made good progress from their starting points. They entered Year 1 with above average skills in all areas of learning apart from writing. They are well prepared for their next stage in education.

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

Unique reference number	131573
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	448599

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	393
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Hume
Headteacher	Bob Buckley
Date of previous school inspection	30 June – 1 July 2010
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