

Abbeyfields First School

Abbot's Way, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2LZ

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher has successfully created a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement. She is both ambitious and compassionate. Parents hold her in high regard.
- Other leaders and governors are also relentless in their approach to raising standards. Pupils' progress is checked extremely carefully and rapid action taken to ensure that every pupil makes the best possible progress. As a result of this outstanding leadership, the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- Pupils thrive in a warm, friendly atmosphere where high levels of tolerance and respect are the norm. Pupils are confident, articulate, polite and friendly. They behave exceptionally well, particularly in lessons, where they are extremely eager to learn.
- The extent to which the school keeps pupils safe is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe, particularly from bullying or harassment. Pupils say bullying is extremely rare and they know what to do if it does happen.
- The provision in early years has improved dramatically since the previous inspection so that it is now outstanding. There is a wide range of stimulating learning activities that interest and motivate children so that they make rapid progress from their starting points.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection so that it is now outstanding. Teachers plan work for pupils that is sufficiently challenging for the different ability groups within each class. Pupils are eager to answer questions and to share their ideas. They work hard in lessons, and are expected to complete their work to a high standard.
- While pupils' work is marked regularly and there are some opportunities for them to improve or correct their work, this is not consistently the case. Sometimes teachers tell pupils to improve in the future, and on other occasions they do not give them opportunities to correct their work for themselves.
- Achievement is outstanding. Standards at the end of Year 2 are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The highest-ability pupils achieve particularly well.
- Pupils continue to make excellent progress in Key Stage 2. By the time they leave at the end of Year 4 they have reached very high standards for their age.
- The curriculum is rich, varied and exciting. Pupils achieve well in a range of subjects, for example, art, science and physical education. The 'Forest School' is a wonderful and exciting resource which makes learning real. For example, pupils increased their knowledge of British mammals by using diagrams of the paws of different animals to check for fox prints in the snow.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons and checked the quality of pupils' work. Some of these activities were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to pupils at break and dinner times, and heard others in Years 1, 2 and 4 read.
- The views of 98 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as those spoken to during the inspection were taken into account.
- The inspector met with senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The school's improvement plan and records of pupils' achievement, as well as records of the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and safeguarding were examined.
- Twenty three staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors took these into account.

Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Pattinson	Additional Inspector
Jane Beckett	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Abbeyfields First is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, is lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than that found nationally.
- The school has anti-bullying accreditation, is a 'Forest School', and has won local awards for its allotment.
- Early years provision is part time in the Nursery and full time in Reception.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure consistency in the quality of marking and feedback so pupils make even more rapid progress by:
 - making sure pupils are told precisely what they must do in order to improve their work
 - giving pupils timely opportunities to make those improvements and checking that they have done so.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is resolute in her ambition to create a climate where all pupils, regardless of their background or ability, achieve the very best they can, within an atmosphere that is nurturing, tolerant and caring. She works with a team of leaders who share her ambition and who have worked together effectively to address weaknesses from the previous inspection. During the five years of her headship, standards have risen so that they are well-above average and provision in the early years has improved so that it is now outstanding.
- The headteacher is ably supported by a team of highly effective senior and middle leaders. The leadership team collect a wide range of information including pupil progress data, analysis of pupils' work in books and lesson observations in order to know how well the school is performing. They use all of this information to improve the quality of teaching and reward good and better performance. Where teaching falls below par, then action is taken to provide additional support. As a result the quality of teaching has improved and is now outstanding.
- Leaders also use this information to plan future developments. In this way the school is constantly seeking to improve and never complacent.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Senior leaders provide appropriate coaching and training in order to develop the skills of middle leaders so that they participate effectively in checking achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The curriculum is excellent. While outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are outstanding, a stunning breadth and creativity in the rest of the curriculum captures the imagination of pupils so that they are curious and enthusiastic learners. The 'Forest School' and 'Allotment' projects play a huge part in making the curriculum both imaginative and real.
- The curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain, in particular in the way it promotes tolerance, good relations and respect.
- The school is a caring, safe environment where safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding well to ensure all pupils make the best possible progress. There is a governor responsible for ensuring the impact of spending against this grant. This is just one example of the school's relentless approach to equality of opportunity.
- The primary school sport funding has been used effectively to increase the expertise of teachers and widen the range of sports that are on offer. Teachers are now more confident in physical education lessons and more pupils are taking part in a wider range of sports.
- The headteacher's skills have been recognised by the local authority who has recently appointed her to work as a consultant in a number of schools to help raise standards more widely.
- Parents have high levels of confidence in the headteacher and other staff. They say that their children enjoy school, behave well and are safe. The vast majority strongly agree that the school is well led and managed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a wide range of skills, which are used well to support and challenge school leaders. For example, the chair of finance meets regularly with the school business manager to make sure there is good value for money in spending decisions. This is helping the school to stay within budget.
 - Governors rigorously hold the headteacher and other leaders to account. They visit the school regularly and take part in activities to check the quality of teaching alongside school leaders. Middle leaders attend meetings to share their evaluations and plans with governors.
 - Governors have an excellent knowledge of assessment information so that they know how well the school is performing when compared to other schools. Governors spend quality time together, such as an annual 'Away Day', when they determine their vision for the future of the school.
 - Governors have a secure understanding of the quality of teaching and check that teachers are paid according to their performance and their responsibilities. All pay awards are scrutinised carefully so that only those teachers who are performing well are rewarded.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils thrive in an extremely positive and caring atmosphere. They develop excellent attitudes to their work and behave exceptionally well in lessons. Disruptions to learning and exclusions from school are almost non-existent.
- Pupils behave well for all staff. For example, behaviour is never less than good and often excellent in small groups taught by teaching assistants.
- Pupils' behaviour at break times and around the school is very good. They are supervised well, know the routines and play harmoniously together.
- Pupils' behaviour was exemplary in a whole-school assembly led by Year 3 pupils where moral values were highlighted. Pupils had made a short film about telling lies and boasting. All pupils were riveted throughout and were heard repeating the messages of the story throughout the day.
- Pupils enjoy learning and are immensely proud of their school. From a young age pupils are expected to share their learning with other pupils. This helps them to develop their social skills so that they are able to work together well. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson, pupils were able to talk to one another articulately about their insulation experiments and listen to each other respectfully.
- Where pupils have moved to this school because they have previously experienced difficulties with their behaviour or self-confidence, they make exceptional progress. This is because staff ensure the needs of every pupil are met, whatever their difficulty or disability. As one parent said, 'This school has changed my son's life. He loves school.'
- Attendance has improved and is above average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, especially on the internet. They know what to do if it should happen. They are secure in the knowledge that adults work hard to keep them safe.
- When asked about racist name calling, some pupils said, 'We just don't do that here.'
- Parents are also confident that the school keeps their children safe. They say that bullying is rare and that when it does happen it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- A recent audit by the local authority identified excellent health and safety systems were in place.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers and their assistants have high expectations of all pupils. All staff expect pupils to listen attentively and complete their work to a high standard. As a result pupils have positive attitudes and make rapid progress.
- Teachers make excellent use of assessment information to plan learning activities that are matched to the different ability groups in each class. As a result those who are the most able are regularly challenged with more difficult work, while those who are struggling are given additional support to help them achieve.
- Teaching assistants make a very positive contribution to the achievement of groups of pupils. They sometimes teach a small group of the least able pupils to help them catch up. On other occasions they work with the most able, for example in mathematics, so that these pupils are challenged to work at a higher level.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught consistently well throughout the school. That is because teachers have excellent subject knowledge, particularly in the core areas of English and mathematics.
- Teachers often use practical approaches that help pupils to understand. For example, Year 3 pupils were solving a mathematical problem by combining different quantities of liquids to make a 500ml magic potion. This 'real-life' situation engaged their enthusiasm and gave them a reason for persevering to find five different numbers that totalled 500.
- A range of teachers from outside the school are used exceptionally well to provide expertise in some subjects. For example, a singing teacher from the local authority music service is teaching pupils to sing difficult songs and harmonies from the musical 'Joseph'. Her enthusiasm and expertise are securing rapid progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and accurately. Sometimes they make sure that pupils understand exactly how to be successful, for example by giving good feedback that helps pupils to know how to improve. There are also good examples of pupils having opportunities to improve or correct their work for

themselves. However, this is not yet consistently the case. For example, sometimes teachers tell pupils to improve next time, and on other occasions they correct pupils' work for them instead of getting them to do so for themselves.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children enter school in Nursery with skills and abilities that are typical for their age, although this can be lower in some year groups where there is a much higher than average proportion of children with special educational needs or disabilities. Pupils make rapid progress throughout the school so that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well-above average by the time they leave at the end of Year 4.
- The standards reached in assessments at the end of Year 2 are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Although there was a dip in standards in 2014, pupils had made rapid progress from lower than average starting points and still managed to reach above-average standards.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard for their age in the phonics test at the end of Year 1. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read accurately. By the end of Year 2 the majority of pupils are gaining greater fluency and read with expression. They read regularly and often because there is an excellent system to encourage reading at home and at school. Pupils in Year 4 have developed a love of reading for enjoyment and most have a favourite author.
- Pupils are given extensive opportunities to develop their writing skills in English lessons and in other subjects. They take equal care with presentation, punctuation and spelling across all subjects. Pupils' writing is detailed, well organised and beautifully presented.
- Pupils' mathematical skills are excellent. Pupils are able to calculate using a range of methods which help them to develop their understanding. There are some good examples of pupils applying their mathematical skills in other subjects, for example measuring in science.
- Pupils also achieve well in subjects other than English and mathematics. For example, pupils have excellent drawing and painting skills as shown by their portraits of staff and by labelled diagrams of the parts of plants they have studied. They achieve particularly well in art, science, music and physical education.
- The most able pupils make excellent progress to reach standards that are well-above average for their age. This is because they are regularly set work that is at a challenging level for their ability. A far higher proportion of pupils reach above-average levels in the end of Year 2 assessments than is usually found, particularly in reading and writing.
- The number of pupils who are disadvantaged is small and ranges from two in one year group to thirteen in another. This makes year-by-year comparisons statistically unreliable. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils is lower than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally at the end of Year 2 although the gap in the current Year 2 is much smaller. This is because the school has used the pupil-premium grant effectively to tackle underachievement.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress. The school provides exceptional support for the most vulnerable pupils so that they make the same outstanding progress as their peers.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children make rapid progress in the early years so that the vast majority have reached a good level of development by the end of Reception Year and a growing proportion are exceeding the skills and abilities typically found so that they are ready to make a good start in Year 1. Achievement is outstanding across all areas of the curriculum, including in speaking, reading, writing and number.
- Adults have high expectations of children. They challenge children's thinking constantly by asking relevant questions that direct children's attention without telling them the answers. They know individual children well and this helps them to challenge at the right level to ensure excellent progress. Staff are flexible in their approach but intent on the learning outcomes they are seeking to achieve.
- Both the Nursery and Reception learning areas are extremely well resourced with activities that stimulate the interests of children so that they are keen to play and learn. As a result children are able to concentrate for prolonged periods of time.
- All of this happens within a nurturing environment where children are encouraged and their contributions are valued. Children thrive and grow in confidence in this safe and supportive atmosphere. As a result they make excellent progress in their speaking, listening and social skills so that they have very mature

attitudes to learning for their age.

- The 'Forest School' is an excellent resource that fires the imagination of children. This enhances children's access to outdoor learning and develops a wide range of skills. For example, this term children are investigating homes for creatures. One activity was to build a house for themselves out of natural materials. This involved them in creative thinking, speaking, listening and other social skills such as sharing and collaborating.
- Adults use the information they gain from assessing children's progress to plan appropriate activities that improve the skills children most need to develop. While there is a wide range of activities available for children to choose from, adults expertly encourage and guide children to work in areas that they need to.
- The early years leader was new in post just over a year ago and her leadership is outstanding. She has forged strong partnerships both within the staff team and with parents. Staff have a secure understanding of the tracking system and assessments of children's progress are rigorous and accurate. The results of these assessments have been used well to plan appropriate provision to tackle any relative weaknesses in achievements.

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	122245
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	449641

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	352
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Pearson
Headteacher	Sandra Ford
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2009
Telephone number	01670 513582
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@abbeyfields.northumberland.sch.uk

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