School report

Abbeyfield School

Stanley Lane, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3XB

Inspection dates	15–16 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
Effectiveness of leadership and management	**Outstanding**
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	**Good**
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	**Good**
Outcomes for pupils	**Good**
16 to 19 study programmes	**Good**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Excellent leadership over the last three years has led to significant improvements in the standards pupils achieve. The headteacher has created a culture of success that parents, pupils and staff all support. As a result of this shared vision, improvement is rapid and sustained.
- Leaders have created a school community which welcomes everyone and encourages them to succeed. Provision is made to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are now making good progress from their starting points in a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils achieve good results in 'the basics' of English and mathematics. In 2016, over four out of five attained a GCSE grade C or better in both. This is well above the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points across a broad range of subjects. They achieve results which are similar to other pupils nationally.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form as a result of strong teaching and effective support from staff.
- Teaching is effective because pupils are set appropriate work that allows them to achieve challenging targets. Teachers are careful to ensure that pupils know how to improve their answers. Most pupils respond well and so their work improves.
- Governors are very knowledgeable about the school. They ask searching questions of school leaders and hold them to account well.
- Behaviour is outstanding, both in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils are respectful to each other and to adults. Their relationships with teachers are very strong.
- Pupils are friendly and welcoming and they are tolerant of those who are different from themselves.
- Most pupils have good attitudes to learning. They complete their work diligently and are keen to make progress. However, a minority give up too easily.
- Progress is sometimes slowed in a few subjects because teaching is not sufficiently challenging or engaging. Leaders understand that in order to improve outcomes further, teaching and learning must be consistently strong in every subject.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further by eliminating the remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that it is as good in all subjects as it is in the best.
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning so that all are eager to learn and ambitious to achieve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding

- The headteacher and his senior colleagues are ambitious for the school and they show great drive and determination to continue to improve it. Their singlemindedness has captured the imagination of staff, pupils and parents. As a consequence, the school community is cohesive and staff are very focused on improving outcomes further for pupils.
- The headteacher's appointment three years ago ended a period of turbulence for the school. Previously, there were repeated changes of leadership over a short period. He has brought stability and his leadership has achieved significant improvements in the quality of teaching and hence the progress pupils make. The school is flourishing now as a result.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their plans, which are based on their analysis, are ambitious but pragmatic. They have managed the rate of change well. They have balanced uncompromising ambition with an astute understanding of how much can be achieved at any one time. Consequently, the school's rate of improvement is sustainable over the long term.
- Leaders and governors manage the performance of teachers very effectively. The procedure is rigorous but fair. Teachers are clear about what is expected of them and they are rising to the challenge. When teachers fail to reach the level expected, they are supported well. The school has also recruited wisely. Newly qualified and recently appointed teachers feel well supported by colleagues and leaders as they gain experience. The result is that the teaching force is skilled and is very committed to improving outcomes for pupils.
- Senior leaders have improved teaching significantly by ensuring that teachers focus on setting high expectations of pupils and on making sure pupils know how they can improve their work. Leaders' insistence on the effective implementation of these two key ideas has proved the bedrock of a rise in standards for pupils.
- Governors and senior leaders make a moral commitment to helping every pupil to succeed, including those who struggle to experience success in mainstream classrooms. They invest resources and work with local educational partners to find alternative approaches for these pupils, rather than exclude them. These pupils are, therefore, able to continue with their education and experience success. There have been no recent permanent exclusions.
- Leaders embed respect and tolerance across the school community. Their work in ensuring that lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils, as well as transgender pupils, are welcomed and supported is an excellent example of their commitment in this field.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively. Disadvantaged pupils are given additional support and are able to access additional activities, such as school trips, which enrich the curriculum. The progress that these pupils make has grown enormously over the last three years from a very low base. Current pupils are making progress in line with all pupils nationally. In some subjects, notably English, they achieve significantly more.

- Leaders make good use of the funds the school receives to enable pupils who did not achieve age-related expectations in primary school to make better progress. Most of this small group of Year 7 pupils are catching up with their peers.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced now and meets the needs of students. In previous years, only a relatively small number of pupils undertook the EBacc range of courses seen as appropriate by pupils who have an ambition to go to a prestigious university. However, this has been corrected and a majority of Year 9 will start their EBacc courses in September 2017. There are suitable opportunities for pupils who wish to pursue more practical or vocational courses.
- Middle leaders play a key role in ensuring that the quality of teaching in their departments is at least good. They understand the importance of quality assuring the work of their departments and intervene when they are not satisfied. Along with senior leaders, middle leaders have a relentless focus on teaching and learning and they are proud of the progress pupils make. Pastoral middle leaders are also effective in ensuring that pupils who are slipping behind are given the support they need to get back on track.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to the success of the school and are thoughtful about their role in ensuring that success. For example, when, after the last inspection, it became clear that they did not have the necessary skills to address the increased requirements of governance confidently, they recruited new governors and increased their collective set of skills. As a consequence, governors have a range of skills from special educational needs to finance. They use these skills to challenge school leaders effectively and make more informed decisions.
- Governors hold school leaders to account appropriately. They ask questions of the leadership team and of middle leaders. They visit the school regularly and undertake a range of monitoring activities with staff and pupils. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school, including in the sixth form. Pupils are kept safe and they feel safe. They know who they should go to if they have a concern.
- Arrangements for recruitment and safeguarding training are secure. There are good systems in place for working with the local authority and parents to support vulnerable children. The school acts as a strong advocate for vulnerable children if it believes the response of another agency has been inadequate.
- Governors play an active role in overseeing arrangements for safeguarding. They are well trained and carry out their role well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good

- Teachers expect pupils to work hard and do well. They have high expectations of them. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- The most able pupils are set activities which stretch them and deepen their thinking. Pupils enjoy these challenges and respond enthusiastically. Pupils with lower starting points are set challenging activities as well. They are given good support which enables them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers have made it a priority to show pupils precisely how to improve their work. Where teaching is at its best, pupils are well aware of exactly what it is they need to improve and how to overcome any barriers. Consequently, their depth of understanding grows quickly. Where teaching is weaker, pupils do not know how to improve because teachers have not ensured that pupils have corrected their work.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress in English as a result of the consistently high-quality teaching they receive. The teaching is planned carefully to meet pupils' needs. Pupils are encouraged to think hard about their work. Pupils are enthusiastic about their English lessons. Teachers try hard to ensure that pupils correct and redraft their work in the light of the advice they have received.
- However, some pupils do not always correct their work. They lack the resilience to go back and address their errors and so their progress slows.
- Generally, pupils enjoy their mathematics too. Teachers know their subject well and explain concepts clearly. The most able and middle-ability pupils are making very good progress. Lower attainers make progress but sometimes struggle to understand some of the more abstract concepts they are taught.
- Pupils are making strong progress in most of the subjects they take. Teachers model carefully how questions should be answered and use questioning effectively to tease out pupils' understanding. However, pupils make less progress in some subjects because teaching is not consistently challenging them. Pupils make less progress in science and religious education in key stage 3, for example, because pupils are not always set the same high level of challenge and teachers do not always ensure that pupils complete tasks.
- Teachers develop reading, writing and communication well. Year 7 pupils value the time given to reading in English lessons and tutor time. Consequently, pupils read with confidence and understanding. Writing is taught well across the school. In many subjects, not just English, there is a focus on using appropriate vocabulary and correcting spellings and grammar.
- Homework is set regularly and teachers expect it to be completed. Often, they ask pupils to do some research at home which will be used in future learning. Therefore, pupils see additional value in completing the task.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well known as individuals by staff and there has been a positive change in their pride and commitment to learning over the last few years. They are proud of their appearance and come to school looking smart.
- Pupils value the careers advice they receive and the opportunities afforded by the programme of careers fairs and contact with higher education institutions.
- Teachers ensure that pupils know how to stay safe in the real and virtual worlds through a programme of assemblies and personal, social and health education sessions. Recent topics have included cyber bullying, sexting and trafficking.
- Pupils and parents feel that bullying is rare and that when it does occur it is dealt with well by staff. Pupils have contributed to designing and implementing anti-bullying strategies. The whole school community is resolute in its rejection of anti-social activity.
- There is an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding of groups across the school. Pupils are very supportive of the schools' work to recognise the value of diversity and its personal and social education programme.
- Most pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They are self-motivating and are keen to do well. However, a minority give up too easily when they find a task challenging or they are not inspired by the teaching.
- School leaders have ensured that there is very strong range of support for those pupils who have emotional health issues or suffer from anxiety-related conditions. As a result, these pupils are able to flourish in spite of the difficulties they face.
- A small number of pupils attend a range of alternative provision. School leaders monitor these placements carefully to ensure that the pupils who attend are able to develop their social skills alongside the formal curriculum they study.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils display very high standards of conduct around the site at lunchtimes and between lessons. They are friendly and polite to each other. They are punctual to lessons.
- Behaviour in lessons is very good. Disruption is very rare. Exclusion rates have fallen dramatically over the last three years and the school's records show disruptive behaviour has become rare. Pupils confirm this. They are very proud of their good behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance is higher than the national average and continuing to rise. Although disadvantaged pupils do not attend as well, their attendance is improving and few miss many lessons.

- The behaviour of pupils who attend alternative provision improves while they are there.

Outcomes for pupils — Good

- Pupils across the school, in both key stage 3 and key stage 4, are making good progress across a broad range of subjects. This is a continuation of a trend which has seen levels of progress rise substantially since the last inspection. In 2016, pupils made at least broadly average progress overall.
- Pupils are doing particularly well in English and mathematics. Standards are high in these subjects. Standards have been rising in English and mathematics for a number of years and they have reached a level significantly above the national average. Last year, the number achieving at least a GCSE grade C in both was well above the national average and a substantial rise on the previous year.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making progress in line with other pupils nationally. This is a very rapid and sustained improvement from the position in the last inspection where progress was poor. It is the result of the emphasis that school leaders have placed on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils receive consistently high-quality teaching and receive the support they need to progress.
- The most able pupils are making increasing rates of progress as a result of the school's focus on asking deep and probing questions. This encourages these pupils to think carefully and respond at a high level. Expectations of these pupils are high and pupils are encouraged to stretch themselves. For example, the most able in mathematics are given the opportunity to undertake a further mathematics qualification which acts as a good stepping stone for A level.
- In 2016, boys made significantly better progress than boys across the country, whereas girls achieved broadly in line with their peers. Inspectors did not detect a similar imbalance amongst pupils currently in the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve in line with those without additional needs nationally. This is another area where the school has seen an improvement over the last few years. Pupils are experiencing success because their needs are understood and appropriate support is used effectively.
- Standards of literacy are high across the school as a result of the emphasis the school places on it and the effectiveness of the English department. Pupils read fluently and most read with good levels of understanding.

16 to 19 study programmes — Good

- Students in the sixth form are making better progress with their A level and applied courses than their peers in other schools across the country. Disadvantaged students are achieving broadly in line with all students nationally. Students get off to a good start with their courses because teachers spend time developing students' study skills to equip them for the demands of post-16 courses.
- Pupils who need to retake their GCSE English and mathematics are generally successful because of the high-quality teaching they receive in these subjects.

- The leadership of the sixth form is strong. There is a determination to improve and expand the provision. Students report that leaders' plans are having an effect already.
- Teaching in most subjects is good. Students work studiously and relationships with their teachers are strong. Students feel particularly well supported by teachers who are keen to provide extra help when necessary.
- Teachers monitor students' progress closely and they intervene when they feel students are slipping below their best. Consequently, underachievement is picked up quickly and students are helped back on track.
- Although students make good progress overall, there is some inconsistency and one or two subjects do not do as well as others. Leaders are keenly aware of these pockets of underachievement and are taking effective action to raise standards in these areas.
- The personal development of students in the sixth form is a strength. Students are considerate and mature around the school and act as strong role models for pupils in the main school. As a result, the numbers of pupils applying to stay on into the sixth form is increasing significantly.
- Students are kept safe. The strong systems and culture which are a feature of the main school continue to protect students in the sixth form.
- Students receive good careers advice and guidance throughout their time in the sixth form. School leaders pay particular attention to times of transition across the school and work hard to ensure that students enrol on the most appropriate courses from the start. Consequently, retention rates are high and the proportion of students making a successful progression to university is good.

School details

Unique reference number	131969
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10025053

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	800
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Harris
Headteacher	Ian Tucker
Telephone number	01249 464500
Website	www.abbeyfield.wilts.sch.uk
Email address	contact@abbeyfield.wilts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	September 2012

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is well below average.
- Nine out of 10 pupils are of white British heritage. There are few from minority ethnic groups and a few speak English as an additional language.

- Abbeyfield uses several providers to deliver an alternative curriculum for a small number of pupils who find mainstream school life challenging.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects and age groups, and scrutinised a wide range of pupils' and students' written work. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including minutes of governors' meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour data, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with governors, the principal, senior and middle leaders, and groups of pupils and students.
- An inspector listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of 94 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took into account the 67 responses to the staff questionnaire and 222 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Colledge	Ofsted Inspector
Judith Mee	Ofsted Inspector
Malcolm Willis	Ofsted Inspector
Will Morgan	Ofsted Inspector

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