

Abacus Belsize Primary School

Hampstead Town Hall, 213 Haverstock Hill, London, NW3 4QP

Inspection dates 12–13 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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 school community is united in support of the school. This is due to the clear sense of purpose and ambition shared by the headteacher, governing body and the trust.
- The committed and highly effective leadership of the headteacher has galvanised the staff into a cohesive and determined team.
- The headteacher and governors ensure that the school's work is constantly evaluated and improved. Clear guidance leads to the ongoing fine tuning of teaching practice.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. It interests, excites and inspires pupils. An early focus on instilling a love of learning and developing a sense of curiosity supports pupils' achievement well.
- From their starting points, pupils make outstanding progress. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above age-related expectations. A significantly higher proportion of Reception pupils than nationally reached a good level of development in 2014.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is extremely responsive to children's needs. Staff work together closely to track their progress. Children are highly engaged and motivated by the teaching. As a result, they concentrate for extended periods of time.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons, at play and when away from the school site. Their positive attitudes and inquisitive nature support their learning very well.
- The school's arrangements to ensure pupils are safe instil confidence in parents and pupils. Pupils thrive in a safe environment; they learn to assess risk and are not afraid to make mistakes.
- The governing body maintains a clear oversight of the school's performance. It has a well-balanced approach to supporting and challenging the school.
- Despite the uncertainty of the impending move to temporary premises, parents are highly supportive of the school's work. Leaders have developed detailed plans to ensure that the move does not detract from the school's sharp focus on high quality provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning, jointly with the headteacher, in the Reception and Year 1 classes. As well as making six short visits to lessons, the inspector accompanied Reception children and staff on a trip to the nearby Hampstead Heath. The inspector also observed pupils during playtime and lunchtime.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and held discussions with groups of pupils from Year 1 and Reception. As well as looking at pupils' work during visits to lessons, a selection of pupils' workbooks was scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, middle leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, and the Chief Executive of the CfBT Schools Trust. A separate meeting was held with the governor responsible for safeguarding. The inspector met with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- The inspector took account of 15 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, as well as the school's own survey of parental opinion. Eight responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including those about pupils' achievement, teachers' planning, the school's checks on the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jeremy Loukes, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This free school opened in September 2013 as part of the CfBT Schools Trust. The school shares the building with a range of other users. The school will move to a temporary location in September 2015 while the recently acquired permanent site is refurbished. It is anticipated that the permanent site will be ready for occupation in September 2017.
- It is much smaller than the average primary school. In its first year the school admitted Reception-aged children. Currently, in its second year, there are pupils in Reception and Year 1. Pupils in the Reception class attend full time. While the membership of the current Reception class has remained stable, the current Year 1 class has experienced significant change.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is average.
- Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils are challenged throughout lessons so that they make the best possible progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has created a highly motivated team focused sharply on pupils' achievement and well-being. Staff are unanimous in their view that the school is well led and managed. In their response to the questionnaire, one member of staff commented, 'I feel proud to work at a school where children talk openly about their love of learning, their enjoyment of school, their safety and friendships.'
- The desire to evaluate the impact of the school's work constantly and to seek improvement is central to the school's success.
- The headteacher visits classes on a daily basis, giving informal feedback to staff about how to improve their teaching. The clear and practical advice teachers receive results in them adopting a reflective approach, sharply focused on how their work improves pupils' achievement.
- Pupil premium funding is spent effectively. Detailed programmes outline the support each pupil receives. This ranges from well-targeted teaching to the provision of outdoor clothing, ensuring that all pupils are able to engage in the well-designed outdoor curriculum.
- Primary sport funding is used to ensure pupils receive specialist provision in an environment more suited to sports provision than that available on the school site. This contributes to pupils' improved physical development and to a number of pupils engaging in community sports programmes beyond the school day.
- Middle leaders take responsibility for the leadership of English, mathematics and special educational needs. The training they have received enables them to play a significant role in leading the strategic development of their areas of responsibility. Staff have been appointed to ensure sufficient leadership and teaching capacity for September 2015 when the school grows to three classes.
- The school's work to ensure equality of opportunity is outstanding. Arrangements to support pupils who speak English as an additional language enable them to rapidly improve their communication and language skills so they are better able to access the curriculum. Staff provide creative solutions in order to ensure that pupils with more complex needs flourish at school.
- The headteacher and governors take full account of performance indicators when planning for school improvement. Weaker performance in the expressive arts and design and physical development areas of learning last year led to a review of the provision in those areas. Pupils have made good progress in these aspects this year.
- The school follows the National Curriculum and the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Outdoor learning is a particular strength of the school's curriculum and is consistent with its motto, 'I hear, I see, I do and I learn'. The school makes good use of the nearby Hampstead Heath and works in partnership with the Hampstead Heath Education Centre. This provides a wealth of opportunities which enhance pupils' academic and social development. The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. A Year 1 pupil was keen to greet the inspector in Mandarin, applying what she had learnt in her weekly Mandarin lesson. Teachers make the most of opportunities to learn from items in the news. To coincide with the recent polling day, pupils learnt about democracy by voting for their preferred destination for a school trip.
- Staff from the CfBT Schools Trust provide effective support for the headteacher, middle leaders and governors. Regular reviews of the school's performance by the trust's adviser ensure that the school is appropriately challenged and that the trust is kept well informed. Local authority officers, staff from the trust and colleagues from other schools moderate the school's judgements about the pupils' achievement and about the quality of teaching to ensure they are accurate.
- Safeguarding arrangements, including staff recruitment checks, meet requirements. Difficulties presented by the shared nature of the building are very well managed. Procedures to ensure site security are detailed and well known by staff. The school has established effective relationships with the local authority's children's services and is proactive in seeking expert advice and support as required.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective. Members are selected on the basis of their skills and knowledge, ensuring that they are adept at monitoring the school's work and challenging leaders to maintain their focus on constant improvement.
 - The nominated safeguarding governor adopts a thorough approach to her role. Coffee mornings for parents raise awareness of safeguarding issues, make clear that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, explain the school's approach to safer recruitment and ensure parents have access to the support they need.
 - Governors set challenging performance targets for the headteacher and track progress towards them.

Through reports from the headteacher and those received from the trust's adviser, governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They understand the link between teachers' performance and their pay. Governors have high expectations of staff's performance and ensure that probationary periods are completed satisfactorily before offering permanent positions.

- Governors interpret information about pupils' achievement well. They ask searching questions of the headteacher so that they fully understand the data available. As a result, they have a good understanding of the achievement of different groups of pupils and the provision for them. This includes the detailed programmes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Finances are closely overseen by the trust.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare. Pupils get on well with each other and describe their classmates as friends.
- Pupils have overwhelmingly positive attitudes to school. One parent explained that her child spends all weekend looking forward to Monday when they can return to school.
- Despite the limited space available at the current site, pupils let off steam at playtime without incident, showing consideration for the needs of others.
- During lessons and less formal times, pupils' concentration is exceptional. This is due to the combination of well-chosen tasks and activities, and an intrinsic desire to achieve well.
- Those parents who responded to the online survey agree that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved.
- A range of strategies encourages good attendance and punctuality. Classes look forward to looking after Pete, the punctuality bear, as a reward for having the highest proportion of pupils arriving at school on time. Equally, they are delighted to receive the trophy for the best attendance, which is presented on a weekly basis. Detailed analysis of attendance data identifies pupils whose attendance falls below acceptable levels; subsequent meetings with the headteacher highlight the importance of good attendance and result in marked improvement.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils and their parents have great confidence in school staff to keep them safe.
- Pupils are aware of the potential dangers that surround them. They know not to travel beyond the boundaries set by the adults looking after them. They understand the reason for wearing high-visibility jackets during their visits to Hampstead Heath.
- The mutual respect shared by adults and pupils creates an environment in which it is safe to make mistakes. On being asked about the errors the teacher had pointed out in his work, a boy in Year 1 responded confidently saying, 'It's okay to make mistakes, I have just learnt something.'
- Staff have high expectations of pupils, providing opportunities to develop their sense of responsibility. Pupils routinely transport water from the inside tap to the garden area, to water the recently planted seeds, with high levels of care and attention.
- The school adopts a thorough approach to assessing risk, ensuring that pupils are safe while on the school premises and during visits off site. Pupils learn to assess and manage risk for themselves. Staff provide a secure environment, allowing sufficient opportunity for pupils to make their own choices based on sound judgements of pupils' abilities and confidence.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The school acts promptly to identify pupils in need of additional support. Provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is extremely well tailored to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils receiving individual or small group support make good progress.
- Phonics is well taught and, as a result, pupils have a positive attitude to reading. Reading has a high profile in the school. As pupils arrive, teaching assistants ensure that books are accurately matched to pupils' reading ability. More able readers attend book club, where they discuss the plot, predicting what

may happen next, and reflect on the characters' feelings.

- Weekly extended writing lessons provide an opportunity for pupils to develop their confidence and concentration, and to apply their language skills. Teachers constantly review the quality of their teaching and the content of their lessons, taking into account national expectation of pupils' achievement. For example, all pupils in Year 1 are now expected to begin joining their writing. This has resulted in a marked improvement in pupils' presentation and in the pride pupils have in their work.
- Mathematics teaching focuses on ensuring that pupils develop a secure conceptual understanding. Teachers make good use of practical resources and ask questions which challenge pupils to think more deeply. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking and develop their reasoning skills. Pupils are taught to use mathematical vocabulary correctly and precisely. As a result, pupils record their findings accurately, for example, '26 is 10 fewer than 36'.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled. Both during lessons and playtimes, they make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. They make the most of opportunities to develop pupils' vocabulary and grammar. Their engagement with pupils at playtimes reinforces prior learning, as well as introducing new challenges. For example, pupils playing hopscotch were challenged to jump on only the even numbers.
- At its best, the verbal feedback pupils receive during lessons results in prompt correction or improvement of their work. This leads to pupils making rapid progress. However, on rare occasions, pupils wait too long during lessons for further guidance from the teacher, which limits their progress.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children joined the Reception class in 2013 with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the academic year was higher than the national average. The school's information about children's progress suggests that the proportion will be still higher this year. Similarly, the proportion of pupils predicted to meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic check is higher than the 2014 national average.
- Pupils in Year 1 have continued to make rapid progress, with half of them working above the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Performance in expressive arts and design and physical development was weaker than in other areas of learning last year. A focus on provision in these aspects of learning has resulted in a significantly higher proportion of children in Reception being on track to reach the early learning goals in these areas of learning this year.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress in their communication and language skills. This is because staff adopt a comprehensive and skilful approach to providing opportunities for conversation. Parents are delighted at the quick rate of their children's progress.
- More able pupils make good progress because staff have high expectations of them. They use an extensive vocabulary, both in speech and in writing. Their handwriting is fluent, with a broad range of punctuation being used accurately and independently.
- The provision for the few disadvantaged pupils is extremely well targeted and planned. The impact of the support they receive is monitored closely. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points.
- Regular meetings provide opportunities for all staff to critically review pupils' progress and assess the impact of the support for those with special educational needs. Pupils no longer receive intensive support once their barriers to learning have been addressed. Teachers continue to monitor their progress, checking that pupils maintain a good rate of progress.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Thorough induction arrangements ensure that children have a smooth start to school. Teachers make home visits or visit pre-schools or nurseries so that they have a good understanding of what children know and are able to do, before they start school. This, combined with on-going liaison with parents, ensures that children receive a consistent approach to learning both at home and at school. Parents make valuable contributions to children's 'learning journeys', highlighting their own observations of their children's learning at home.
- Children in Reception achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Particularly strong aspects of the provision are in the development of communication and language, and personal, social and emotional skills. Daily opportunities for writing, both independent and those guided by an adult, contribute to children's good progress. During the inspection, children enjoyed creating labels for their garden centre.

- A creative timetable ensures that best use is made of the little space available. The environment, both inside and outside, is inviting and stimulating, providing carefully chosen activities. The children are inspired by the curriculum, making links between different aspects of their learning. Good use is made of role play, both inside and out, with children engaging busily in a range of scenarios.
- Children remain focused and engaged for extended periods of time because activities provide the right level of challenge. Practical resources support children's understanding. They are laid out on tables or are available in the classroom for children to select. Adults ask questions which allow children to develop their understanding through reasoning. For example, having established that 10 was double five, a child was asked, 'How do you know?'
- Children look forward to their regular visits to Hampstead Heath, a highly successful element of the curriculum which makes the most of the opportunity to learn outdoors. They use public transport safely, waiting patiently for a bus to arrive, displaying impeccable manners and behaviour. Staff are thorough in their preparation and vigilant on route and throughout the visit.
- Children are acutely aware of the needs of others, working and playing alongside each other harmoniously. They quickly learn to negotiate with each other, solving disputes without adult intervention. Adults provide a safe environment within which children learn to assess and manage risk for themselves. For example, at the heath, children 'beat the boundary' with sticks to establish the area in which they are allowed to roam. They walk up and down slopes, negotiating trees and raised roots. The few that trip or fall, quickly pick themselves up and continue without fuss.
- As a result of the outstanding leadership and teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children gain the skills and knowledge they need to begin Year 1.

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	139837
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	450300

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Barnes
Headteacher	Vicki Briody
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 7209 7904
Email address	admin@abacus-cfbt.org

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