

# Abbey Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	103930
<b>Local authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	376991
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	David Shears

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	339
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger Prior
<b>Headteacher</b>	Pauline Smart (Executive Head)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Maurice Road Smethwick B67 5LR
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4291689
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 429 1689
<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@abbey-inf.sandwell.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	3–7
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	11–12 January 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	376991



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## Introduction

### Inspection team

David Shears	Additional inspector
David Westall	Additional inspector
Anna Smith	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 23 lessons taught by 12 different teachers, and held meetings with representative members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at policies, planning documents, assessment data and pupils' work. They analysed the questionnaires returned by 140 parents and carers and 31 members of staff.

## Information about the school

Abbey Infant is a larger than average primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British origin. A minority is from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, the largest group comprising those of Asian heritage. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. In September 2010 the school federated with the local junior school under the leadership of the junior school's headteacher who was appointed as the executive headteacher. She has established a new senior leadership team. One governing body oversees both schools. Infant school pupils may attend before- and after-school care which is provided on the junior site. This care provision will be inspected when the next junior school inspection takes place.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>

## Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the capacity of leaders and managers to bring about rapid change to teaching and learning in order to accelerate pupils’ progress.
- The school provides an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. Children begin school with skills that meet national expectations. They make satisfactory progress and leave with attainment that is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Most pupils enjoy their lessons and have good attitudes towards their learning. Relationships are good. However the pupils do not learn more quickly because they are not always thoroughly challenged. Teaching assistants are not always used effectively and sometimes pupils are not actively involved enough in their learning.
- While pupils make sound progress in their reading, the systematic teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is at an early stage of development and the school has rightly identified that staff need training to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They behave well most of the time but sometimes can be restless when lessons do not sufficiently engage them.
- The recently appointed senior leadership team has made some improvements to the school. They have made a positive start on improving the premises and tackling the weakest teaching. Relationships with parents and carers are improving.
- The school’s improvements are fragile. There are significant weaknesses in the way the school plans its development. There has not been enough improvement since the last inspection, and improvement strategies are not checked carefully enough by senior leaders, including the governing body, to be sure they have been successful in improving learning. Middle leaders are not

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making enough of a contribution to improvement and most teachers do not get enough clear guidance on how to improve their teaching skills.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by ensuring that:
  - school improvement planning focuses more precisely on key areas, and strategies are rigorously implemented, monitored and evaluated to determine the impact on pupils' learning
  - the governing body focuses its challenge more incisively on the school's priorities for improvement
  - the roles of middle leaders are developed so they make a significant impact on school improvement.
  
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics so that pupils make good progress, by ensuring that:
  - information gained from assessments is used to plan work that consistently meets pupils' learning needs
  - teaching assistants are always well deployed and make an effective contribution to pupils' learning
  - teachers check pupils' progress during lessons and make necessary adjustments to meet their needs
  - teachers use targeted questions effectively to check pupils' understanding and provide greater challenge
  - pupils are more actively involved in lessons, including through practical tasks, discussions and opportunities to use their initiative
  - teachers are provided with clear guidance about their strengths and areas for development and improvements needed are addressed tenaciously in further monitoring.
  
- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading by ensuring that all staff who teach phonics are fully trained and confident.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although this is stronger in the Nursery than in the Reception classes. As a result they enter Year 1 with broadly average attainment. They continue to make sound progress in Years 1 and 2. In particular, their reading skills are broadly in line with national averages at the end of Key Stage 1, as is their attainment overall. The progress of groups of pupils, such as those who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is satisfactory. Progress of pupils whose attainment is lower than expected for their age are keeping pace with

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their peers rather than narrowing the gap.

There are early signs that rate of progress is beginning to increase in some areas. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching assistants worked effectively with the teacher to support children's mathematical development, ensuring that groups of children were appropriately challenged. In Year 2 a clear focus on skills in writing has enabled pupils to make accelerated progress in recent months. However, improvements are recent and there is no evidence that they are firmly established across the school. Sometimes groups of pupils do not make as much progress as their classmates. For example, in one lesson pupils of higher ability were challenged well and less-able pupils were given appropriate support. However, the middle-attaining pupils were left to work independently and did not make as much progress. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children were making good progress. However, while this was observed in a few classes, inspectors found that in the large majority of lessons, pupils made satisfactory progress.

### **Quality of teaching**

Lessons are characterised by positive relationships between staff and pupils and this results in a calm, orderly environment in which to learn. Teachers often think of interesting activities to stimulate pupils' enjoyment. For example, in one class a group of pupils was given an envelope that contained a secret challenge. They enthusiastically worked to create clues in the form of a riddle about what was in the envelope. The work given to pupils enables them to make sound progress, but generally information from assessments is not used well enough to ensure that they are challenged to learn more rapidly. Teaching assistants are not deployed effectively enough to accelerate the learning of groups of pupils through highly focussed support, and teachers do not check frequently enough to ensure pupils are making good progress in lessons. Consequently, errors, such as in the use of capital letters, are sometimes not identified and rectified quickly enough to move learning on. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards well to enhance teaching. They tell pupils what they are going to learn and explain tasks clearly, although questions are not always targeted well enough to check pupils' understanding and provide further challenge. In some classes pupils do not have enough opportunities to accelerate their learning by discussing it with others or working in groups on practical tasks.

The curriculum provides a satisfactory framework to guide teachers' planning, though opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects. The school is beginning to focus on reading and pupils are now grouped by ability for the teaching of phonics. However, not all staff are fully confident in their knowledge of methods of teaching phonics in a systematic way. There are opportunities in some lessons for pupils to explore their understanding of other cultures and develop their social skills. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children are taught well. Inspectors found that teaching helps pupils to make sound progress, but is not consistently effective enough to enable them to make good

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progress.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils behave well around the school. In the playground they co-operate well in games and enjoy spending time together. This was summed up well by one pupil who said that 'children are not unkind'. In lessons, when pupils are fully engaged, their behaviour contributes to good learning. However, where there are weaknesses in teaching, pupils find it harder to concentrate and can become restless, limiting the progress that they make. A very few pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school supports these pupils well in helping them to manage their behaviour so that it has minimal impact on others and does not hinder their own learning. Pupils say that behaviour is generally positive and they know that there are adults that they can talk to if they have any particular concerns. There are no recorded incidents of bullying and pupils say that any issues are dealt with 'straight away'. This helps pupils to feel safe both in the playground and the classroom. While they feel safe, there are few opportunities for them to explore how they can keep themselves safe. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that there is a good standard of behaviour in the school and all agreed that their children are kept safe. Only four percent of parents and carers who responded had concerns about how bullying was dealt with.

The attendance of pupils has been below the national average. However, it has improved over the past year so that it is now broadly average. Leaders and managers have monitored this aspect of the school well. They ensure that absence is effectively dealt with in a number of ways, including telephoning parents and carers on the first day of absence if there is no explanation and rewarding good attendance with vouchers and certificates.

## **Leadership and management**

The school has been through a difficult period in recent years, including issues related to staffing. As a result, the executive headteacher and recently established senior management team have had to address a number of important challenges. In the limited time available senior leaders have begun to tackle issues for improvement, particularly the weakest areas of teaching and learning. However, there have been significant weaknesses in the school's leadership over time. There has been insufficient improvement in the school as a whole since the last inspection. There is insufficient evidence that the school has the capacity to improve because the school's development plan is inadequate, and the current leaders cannot yet demonstrate the impact of the actions they have taken on the progress of pupils. The development plan is not precisely focused on key areas and lacks details about how these are to be improved. There is little detail about how actions are to be monitored and the impact evaluated to ensure they are improving pupils' learning. The governing body is very supportive but due to the lack of clear focus in the development plan is unable to sufficiently challenge the school in these areas. While the amount of inadequate teaching is reducing, the monitoring of teaching more

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generally is not robust enough. Systems have been established to support teachers' professional development, including the support of some teachers from the federated junior school and external specialist support for the Early Years Foundation Stage, although it is too early to assess the impact of this. The school has begun to develop the role of middle leaders, although this is also at an early stage.

Leaders and managers are increasingly working more closely with parents and carers and as a result the very large majority who responded to the questionnaire have positive views about the school. In particular, they have noticed the improvements that have been made since the appointment of the executive headteacher. The curriculum is satisfactory because it generally meets the needs of pupils, although there are still weaknesses in the teaching of reading. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning, for example through school outings. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. In particular assemblies are used to promote pupils' spiritual development through opportunities for prayer and praise. Leaders give due attention to ensuring that personal skills are promoted within the curriculum and ensure that any discrimination is tackled. The school takes care that all pupils have equal opportunities in their learning. The safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



13 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Abbey Infant School, Smethwick, B67 5LR**

Thank you for the welcome that we received when we visited your school recently. It was lovely to meet you all and find out about your school.

You told us how much you liked your teachers and that they are kind to you. This helps you to feel safe and secure in the school. You also told us how much you enjoy school, especially now that you are able to go out on more trips.

We found that you make satisfactory progress in your learning but we think that you could learn even faster. In order to do that your school has been given a 'notice to improve' which means that they everyone will help you to make even better progress very quickly.

In order to do this we have asked your headteacher, the governing body and senior leaders to:

- make sure work is just right, not too hard or easy, and you are always actively learning in lessons
- make sure you all learn phonics well, to help your reading and writing
- tell each teacher clearly how their lessons can become even better
- keep checking that any new ideas are working well and helping you to achieve more.

You can all help by telling your teacher politely if you think the work is too hard or too easy.

Thank you again for looking after us so well.

Yours sincerely

David Shears  
Lead inspector

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