

Abram CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106469
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	377405
Inspection dates	13–14 February 2012
Lead inspector	Yvonne Mills-Clare

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Carol Close
Headteacher	Peter Freeman
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Yvonne Mills-Clare
Doreen Davenport

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed the teaching of nine teachers in nine lessons or part lessons. In addition, meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, and school staff including senior and middle managers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's improvement plan, safeguarding and child protection policies, attainment data and assessment information and minutes of governing body meetings. They listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 46 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff. There were no responses for inspectors to consider from the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) when preparing for the inspection.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage, with very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average overall. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The school meets the government's current floor standards. The school has achieved Healthy School status and the Activemark Bronze award. The school has undergone extensive building work and has had numerous staff changes in recent years.

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

Overall Effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Although improving, the provision including teaching, is not yet leading to pupils' good achievement and monitoring and evaluation by leaders are not focused well enough on outcomes for pupils. Senior leaders have successfully steered the school through a period of building disruption and staffing turbulence. As a result, it is now well placed to build on its emerging improvements.
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with disabilities, achieve satisfactorily. They make good progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage from below expected starting points, particularly in communication, language and literacy and mathematics. They reach typically expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Attainment in communication, reading and mathematics by the age of 11 is broadly average. Attainment in writing, although still broadly average, is not as strong as other subjects. Overall, pupils' progress is satisfactory in relation to their starting points.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Although most teaching seen during the inspection was good or better, over time the quality of teaching has been more variable. The leadership has taken action to improve inconsistent elements within the teaching. This is successfully addressing the pockets of slower progress seen previously in some year groups. Some inconsistencies remain. The timing and pace of some lessons, for example, limit the opportunity for pupils to work independently and practise their skills. The marking of pupils' work is also variable in quality.
- Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall. They typically behave well in lessons and say they enjoy school. They have positive attitudes towards learning, and are generally courteous and polite to visitors. They know the importance of a healthy lifestyle and say they feel safe in school.

- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders, along with the governing body, are committed to improving pupils' outcomes. They have strengthened the teaching profile since the time of the last inspection. However, their monitoring of lessons and intervention activities are not robustly enough focused on pupil outcomes.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching in order to secure good progress throughout the school and raise attainment, particularly in writing, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to work independently and practise the skills they have learnt by increasing the timing and pace of learning
 - improving marking so that it consistently shows pupils how to improve their work
 - ensuring that teaching and the planned curriculum provide pupils with increased opportunities to apply their reading, writing, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across all subjects.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation activities by leaders at all levels, impact as fully as possible on provision and pupils' outcomes by:
 - monitoring and evaluating improvement initiatives more regularly and with more rigour by embedding monitoring activities in day-to-day practice
 - using the information gained to measure whole-school improvement more closely
 - increasing the focus on how well pupils learn in lessons when monitoring the quality of teaching.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and as a result start Year 1 with skills that are typical for their age. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics is broadly average, with reading a particular strength in 2010. Pupils' attainment overall in English and mathematics is broadly average by the end of Year 6, improving skills among the younger children having yet to impact on the school's final national test results. The predicted dip in 2011 reflected the staffing disruption, which has now been resolved. Unvalidated data for 2011 and pupils' current work show that, within the improving picture, pupils' attainment in writing is still lower than in mathematics and reading. However, a school focus on literacy, particularly writing, is successfully closing this gap.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire say that their children make good progress whatever their individual needs. Inspection findings show that although pupils now usually learn well in

lessons, over time their progress is satisfactory. This is because the many changes in staffing have resulted in activities and expectations of teachers being variable at times, in terms of the levels of challenge they present. In around two thirds of the lessons observed, pupils made good or better progress. The majority of pupils enjoy learning, particularly when tasks are engaging. They have good attitudes and work well collaboratively. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, pupils avidly discussed the changes they saw when they watched ice melting in different settings. In some other lessons pupils' interest wavered when teachers talked for too long.

Attainment in reading by Year 2 and Year 6 is average. Pupils enjoy their reading and are encouraged to read with parents and carers at home through the use of home-school record books. Inspectors found that the majority of pupils in Key Stage 1 are working within age-related expectations. They are developing strategies to move their reading forward and are developing a secure knowledge of phonics. This continues across Key Stage 2 with most pupils being confident, fluent readers in Year 6. They have a good knowledge of different genres and authors and enjoy discussing the characters from their favourite books. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with disabilities learn as well as their peers. Their individual needs are quickly identified and appropriate intervention programmes and support put in place.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers feel that teaching in the school is good. However, inspectors found teaching over time to be satisfactory. During the inspection, a range of teaching was observed, from satisfactory to good. In the best lessons, the curriculum is well planned, exciting activities are designed that motivate and involve pupils fully in their learning, and expectations are high. For instance, in a Reception class children had great fun taking on the roles of the main characters from Red Riding Hood and answering questions from their peers. This was effective in developing their speaking, listening and thinking skills. Good lessons such as these also focus on, and evaluate, learning outcomes to adapt future tasks so that pupils' skills and knowledge are built upon well. Questions are targeted to probe pupils' abilities and effectively develop their learning. Pupils are involved in their learning through self- and peer-assessment and group and paired discussion. They are encouraged to check their work against their 'steps to success', and extra steps are added to take account of pupils' abilities and what is needed to take learning forward. These approaches also have a positive influence on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

When teaching is less successful, inconsistencies creep in. For instance, occasionally teachers talk for too long and the pace of learning slows, limiting the opportunities pupils have to work independently and practise their skills. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is regular and is supportive of their achievements. However, only the best provides sufficient guidance to inform a pupil how they can improve each piece of work and move forward in their learning. Pupils often track their own progress in English and mathematics through printed targets in their books, so that they know how they are getting on, but they are not always certain what their next steps should be.

Teachers have a clear focus on developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills, while providing appropriate opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. This was evident in a number of lessons where pupils worked together in pairs and groups and were encouraged to collaborate, share and discuss their findings. For example in a Key Stage 2 class where pupils were working together to take turns to roll dice to create a frequency table. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together and provide positive role models: they encourage pupils to work cooperatively and to respect the views of others.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that bullying of any type rarely occurs. Although a significant minority feel that behaviour in lessons is not always as good as it could be, most are confident that any bullying or poor behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed some concern about behaviour and how effectively the school deals with poor behaviour. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour in lessons is generally good and around school pupils present themselves as open, friendly and polite to visitors. Observations confirm that when lessons are exciting and motivate pupils, behaviour is good and pupils engage well in their learning. Self discipline, however, appears less secure. Discussions with pupils and school documentation reveal that when lessons and activities are led by temporary teachers or lack pace, pupils' attention can waver. As a result, the subsequent disruption can very occasionally lead to minor interruptions in learning.

Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the risks to which they may be exposed, both within and outside school, and they know how to stay safe and healthy. They understand what constitutes bullying and understand why homophobic or racist name-calling is not acceptable. They are aware of what they should do to keep themselves safe when working on personal computers at home. Attendance is average. The school has recently appointed a learning mentor who is working rigorously to improve attendance further. School attendance figures show a marked improvement since her involvement with pupils and their families. In school, the flourishing breakfast club provides a healthy, nourishing start for pupils.

Pupils respond positively to the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils understand the 'right thing to do' and older pupils happily undertake a number of responsibilities as school councillors, tuck shop monitors and by helping out in the gardening club. Fundraising, links with the Church and the local community, together with increasing activities with a school whose pupils come from different cultural experiences, raise awareness and empathy for cultural diversity.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body provide clear direction for the school. They have a largely accurate picture of the quality of teaching throughout the school. Performance management and appropriate professional development are leading to a stronger teaching profile, although there is sometimes too little emphasis on pupils' learning outcomes when lessons are monitored. The 'monitoring calendar', although comprehensive, does not always allow for rigorous monitoring of

initiatives on a sufficiently regular basis. Good partnership work with other organisations ensures that staff gain knowledge and refresh their skills through professional development sessions and their observation of practice elsewhere. Many of the subject leaders are relatively new to their roles. They monitor and evaluate their subjects and are beginning to use data more widely to ensure a better overview of the impact of improvements on outcomes for pupils across the school. Assessment data is robust and regularly updated for each pupil. Regular meetings and systems to track pupils' progress are contributing to an improvement in the consistency and quality of teaching and an increasingly accurate picture of pupils' improving attainment and progress. In these respects the school shows that it has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The governing body offers challenge and support to the school in equal measure. Governors are well informed through representations from staff during the year, but few outside of those employed by the school are involved in systematic, 'hands-on' monitoring of the school's performance. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Leaders satisfactorily promote equality of opportunity and celebrate diversity. The school is developing a more creative and relevant curriculum. It provides effective opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through programmes to promote their emotional well-being. After-school activities, residential visits and trips out are valued by the pupils, particularly sporting activities and the gardening club. It does not yet offer enough opportunities for pupils to use and further develop their numeracy and literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum.

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).

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.
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.



15 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abram CofE Primary School, Wigan, WN2 5QE

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed reading your questionnaire replies, listening to your views and looking at your work. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

You told us that you feel safe and happy at school and enjoy your lessons. We saw all those things too. We judge that your school is a satisfactory school. This means that the headteacher, staff and governing body do some things well but other things can improve. All the adults help children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to get off to a good start with their learning. Those of you in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress through the school.

Part of our job is to see what your school could do better. We have asked all the staff, leaders and governing body to help you reach higher levels in your work and make faster progress. To help you do this we have asked the teachers to make sure they leave you enough time to practise what you are learning in lessons, by keeping explanations and instructions brief. We found that marking does not always tell you how to improve your work so we have asked your teachers to make sure you get good advice.

You told us you enjoy the different lessons like history and science, so we have asked that teachers plan more ways for you to use what you are learning in numeracy and literacy, particularly writing, in all the other subjects you learn. We have also asked the senior leaders to keep make sure everyone is using the agreed plans to improve the school and check how well these plans are working, and to always concentrate on how well you are learning, rather than on the way teachers teach, when watching your lessons. You can all help by taking notice of all the comments your teachers write about your work and trying hard to always do your best. We send you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Yvonne Mills-Clare
Lead Inspector

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