

Abbey Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104168
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	366588
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Des Pitt
Headteacher	Lynn Smith
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2007
School address	Glastonbury Crescent Walsall WS3 2RP
Telephone number	01922 710753
Fax number	01922 404365
Email address	postbox@abbey.walsall.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2011
Inspection number	366588

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons taught by 9 teachers. They also held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding, minutes of governing body meetings, planning documents, pupils' work and questionnaires returned from 70 pupils, 11 staff and 81 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The success of the school's work to accelerate progress and raise achievement in writing.
- Whether the quality of teaching and learning and the rigour and accuracy of assessment are good enough to ensure that all pupils are challenged at the right level and make good progress.
- The effectiveness of leaders at all levels in raising achievement and sustaining improvement.

Information about the school

This is a small school. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. One third of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, this is higher than average. A smaller than average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs mainly relate to learning difficulties. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into a Nursery and a Reception class. There is a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009, the deputy headteacher was appointed in April 2008 and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader was appointed in September 2010.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Abbey Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is successfully emerging from a period of decline and enjoys the support of an overwhelming majority of its parents. The good leadership, resolve and determination of the new headteacher, ably assisted by her deputy headteacher, have enabled the school to make significant strides in improving progress and raising attainment. Together with staff and members of the governing body, she has undertaken a thorough and accurate process of self-evaluation. This has been highly effective in motivating the whole school in a relentless focus on improvement. They have quickly got to grips with what needs to be done. The successful actions taken to address deficiencies which have halted the decline, accelerated pupils' progress and instilled an enjoyment of learning, confirm the school's satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are good and the school's programme for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. As a consequence, pupils behave well, have good relationships with adults and other pupils, and respect each others' achievements. This cohesive community provides a warm, welcoming, stimulating environment where pupils feel cared for, safe, secure and ready to learn.

Significant improvements to the way that the curriculum is planned and organised are giving pupils a love of learning because it matches their needs and interest so well. However, it is also tightly structured to ensure that pupils build securely on what they already know and can do. All pupils, including reluctant learners, are captivated by the new 'irresistible learning'. One boy said, 'I like writing, it's better than a snack!' This means that pupils are now motivated and making great strides in their learning. However, much of this is new and has yet to have a full impact on pupils' outcomes. As a result pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make satisfactory progress overall to reach broadly average levels of attainment at the end of Year 6, with writing as the weakest area of learning. Staff do not always provide good models in use of standard English and pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to design their own methods of recording and to undertake sustained pieces of writing. Handwriting is not always correctly formed or joined.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching and a few examples of outstanding teaching, but not enough to ensure that all pupils make good rather than satisfactory progress. Teachers do not always have a common understanding of pupils' levels of attainment. This often results in a dip in pupil progress as teachers get to know and understand their new class. Teachers who talk for too long limit opportunities for pupils to work independently and use their initiative. Pupils' work is marked conscientiously and teachers give the next steps in their learning. However, they do not always give pupils time to make those improvements in order to secure good learning.

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

Teaching and learning are regularly monitored and evaluated by senior leaders, but the process is not always as rigorous as it could be in order to ensure full accountability and that initiatives are implemented.

Up to 40% of the 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 need to do to improve further?

- By January 2012, accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment in writing by ensuring that:
 - all staff model correct standard English
 - pupils' handwriting skills are developed
 - there are more opportunities for pupils to design their own methods of recording and to undertake sustained pieces of writing.
- By January 2012, improve the overall quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers do not talk for too long in lessons and that there are increased opportunities for pupils to work independently and use their initiative
 - teachers establish a common understanding of pupils' level of attainment at the end of the school year so that pupils have a faster rate of progress at the beginning of the next year
 - pupils are given time to respond to teachers' marking in order to improve and secure their learning
 - leaders at all levels monitor the impact of initiatives, particularly through the observation of lessons, to ensure accountability throughout the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enjoy learning and the overwhelming majority make satisfactory progress. Progress often slows at the beginning of a new school year as teachers take time to get to know their class. In the lessons seen and from assessment information, too few of the more able pupils have been reaching the higher Levels 3 and 5. However, the school is now carefully grouping pupils by ability in English and mathematics and this is beginning to improve. This allows a few of the more able pupils to work in the class above to ensure that they are challenged whilst also allowing other pupils the opportunity to consolidate their learning at their own level. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 were seen to benefit from this organisation and made good progress in their guided reading lesson. The teachers taking each group worked hard to engender a very positive attitude to learning and a desire to succeed. There are good opportunities for pupils to rehearse their answers with their 'talk partners'. This gives them the confidence to try things out and they are pleased when they are successful in learning the things that the teacher expected.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 was broadly average in 2010, with girls performing better than boys and writing the weakest subject. The introduction of 'irresistible learning' has given pupils an excitement about learning, the experiences of the world that they lack and

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

enriched their language. As a result all pupils, but particularly boys, are more motivated. Pupils are beginning to accumulate a bank of experiences and related vocabulary that they can use in their writing. However, this is all very new and has yet to have a sizeable impact on raising attainment. Pupils' skills in handwriting are not well developed and insufficient opportunities for extended writing affect the quality of pupils' work. Where staff set high standards and model the correct use of English at all times pupils' learning is secure. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. This is a result of the support that they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants.

A positive ethos results from the good care that pupils receive. This contributes effectively to the development of the pupils' personal qualities. Pupils work and play harmoniously, come to school regularly and their behaviour is good. They say there is very little bullying and know that there will always be someone who will listen to them. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay safe and know what they must do to lead healthy lifestyles, although not all of them readily adopt the practice in their own lives. They enjoy a healthy choice at lunchtime and fruit for their break. They are proud to be members of the school council and undertaking important tasks such as a health and safety review with the headteacher. They have enjoyed making an important contribution to their local community in designing Abbey Square and planting trees in St George's Park.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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

How effective is the provision?

Good relationships, enthusiastic teachers and an exciting curriculum based on pupils' interests ensure that pupils enjoy their learning. The curriculum is carefully planned to give a clear structure for progression. Although this is all very new, the love of learning it has engendered throughout the school is palpable as pupils get caught up in, and intrigued by, tasks designed to make learning meaningful. For example, the 'stunning starter' in Year 2 mystified pupils when they found some of their books had been singed. They turned detective and found that a dragon, who had escaped from Tamworth Castle, had found refuge in their classroom and sneezed, singeing their books! Since then more dragons have appeared. Even reluctant writers are inspired to write at length. They practise their diary writing skills as they record what happens when they take the dragon home for the night and write letters to arrange the dragon's safe return when they visit Tamworth Castle for their 'fabulous finish'.

Where teaching is good or better, pupils play an active part in their learning and build securely on previous skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, in an outstanding Year 1 religious education lesson, pupils talked knowledgeably about the parts they played in the Christian 'wedding' the previous week. The use of real artefacts, role play and music, together with the teacher's well framed questions, enabled them to draw comparisons with the Hindu wedding they were enacting. However, on the few occasions when pupils have to listen to the teacher for long periods and learning consists of responding to the teacher's direction rather than taking responsibility for their own learning, attention wanes and progress slows. Teaching assistants are well deployed and support learning well. Pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable receive good support which enables them to make good progress in developing social and life skills.

Pupils feel happy and secure because they know that there is a good level of care, guidance and support and that there is always someone there to listen, help or advise. Vulnerable pupils benefit from this nurturing environment, which provides them with effective support well tailored to their needs. The well-attended breakfast club is a good and valuable resource enjoyed and appreciated by pupils and parents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has brought new thinking, instilled confidence and motivated staff. Members of the governing body, senior leaders and staff share her vision and her

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

enthusiasm. Although there has been insufficient time to see the full impact on the school's priorities, a love of learning is already apparent throughout the school and, as a result, behaviour is good and pupils want to do well. Teaching is regularly monitored and staff are given helpful feedback. However, the process is not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure that teaching moves quickly from satisfactory to good by holding all staff accountable and ensuring that initiatives are successfully implemented. Good relationships with parents and carers support pupils' learning in a positive way. Provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination is satisfactory. The school's accurate tracking system highlights any underperformance. Consequently, the school recognises that progress is not consistently good across the school and too few more able pupils have been reaching the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6.

The headteacher makes sure that members of the governing body are well informed. Some have worked hard for the school for many years and are experienced, but many are new and, although they are keen to train and shoulder responsibility, this limits their impact. Procedures for safeguarding are good and ensure that all pupils feel safe and that their emotional and social needs are met. The site is secure, entry is restricted and visitors monitored. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and records are kept meticulously.

The school's strategy to promote community cohesion has ensured that pupils work together as a cohesive community. Leaders are working to widen pupils' appreciation of those who live in other parts of the United Kingdom and the wider world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress throughout their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but the majority do not reach expected levels by the time they leave Reception, with calculation being the weakest area.

Children are very settled in the safe, secure and caring learning environment. They make choices confidently and enjoy the wide variety of activities available for them in and out of doors. However, outdoor activities do not always fully reflect the opportunities available in the classroom. Nursery children enjoy pedalling their 'moon-buggies' and adults interact well with their play, encouraging turn taking and enhancing their language skills. Children in the Reception class enjoy discovering what is in the teacher's 'wonder box' as they learn a new initial letter sound. However, they find it difficult to sit and listen for a length of time and their attention wanders. Partnerships with parents are good. Leadership and management are currently satisfactory because the leader has only been in post for a short period and there has not been sufficient time to see the full impact of her work.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

In the above average return, the overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about all aspects of school life.

Evidence from the inspection supports parents' views that children enjoy school, and that care for their health and safety is good. Parents are very happy with the teaching that their children receive and the way that the school is led and managed. All say they are happy with their child's experience at the school. One or two commented that lunchtime is too short or that their children do not like the choices of lunch on offer. Evidence from the inspection shows that, although pupils like the lunches provided and their breaks at lunch and playtime, they enjoy their work so much they look forward to getting back to class.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abbey Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 81 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 183 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	68	24	30	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	57	70	24	30	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	40	49	40	49	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	47	42	52	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	54	37	46	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	46	41	51	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	46	40	49	3	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	39	48	33	41	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	47	41	51	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	37	47	58	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	38	44	54	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	53	37	46	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	58	33	41	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



28 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abbey Primary School, Walsall WS3 2RP

Thank you for being so friendly when we came to your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. You really helped us with our work. Your school gives you a satisfactory standard of education and there are a lot of things your school does well. You told us that you enjoy school and that you find learning exciting. We were very interested in all the work that you have been doing in your 'irresistible learning' and pleased that it has made you want to work even harder. We found that everybody in school looks after you very well, especially those of you who have difficulties from time to time. We were impressed with your understanding and knowledge of how to keep safe. We could see that you behave very well, get on well with each other and help the school to run smoothly.

Your headteacher and other staff know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better. We have asked the school to do two things.

- It should help you to do better in writing by making sure that teachers give you good examples of how to write properly and help you to improve your handwriting. It should also give you more opportunity to write at length and to decide how you would like to record your work.
- It should ensure that all teaching is good by making sure that teachers do not talk for too long and you have more time to do your work and to work out how to do things for yourself. It should ensure that teachers give you time to make the improvements they suggest. It should also ensure that teachers agree on the level that you are at the end of the year so that you can get off to a flying start in your next class. Senior leaders should check to see that all these things are done.

We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and try your hardest so that you are successful in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Atcheson

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.