

# The Federation of Abbey Schools (Junior)

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114165
<b>Local Authority</b>	Darlington
<b>Inspection number</b>	338308
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Linda Buller

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	360
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Michael King
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr G Ford / Mrs E McCue
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 July 2007
<b>School address</b>	Abbey Road Darlington County Durham DL3 8NN
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons and observed 13 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at samples of pupils' work. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring records, school improvement planning, risk assessments and other documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils. The questionnaires received from pupils and staff and 124 questionnaires from parents and carers were analysed and considered.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The achievement of pupils, particularly in science, to determine whether assessment to support learning is outstanding.
- The impact of the introduction of creative cross-curricular planning on outcomes for pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning to determine the success of leaders and managers in driving improvement.

## Information about the school

This school is larger than average for its type. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils are of White British heritage. In November 2007, the school became part of a hard federation with the infant school, which shares the school site. The schools have a joint governing body and the budgets of the two schools have now been integrated. Those who lead and manage the Federation of Abbey Schools work closely together, the two headteachers assuming joint responsibility for both schools. The Federation has achieved many awards, for example, Healthy School status, the Leading Aspect Award, Eco Schools Green Flag and the International School Award.

**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

The Federation of Abbey Schools (Junior) is a satisfactory school. It has some good and some outstanding features. A strong ethos of care and support helps pupils to develop good personal and social skills. Pupils have positive attitudes towards school and attendance levels are high. They behave well and have an exceptionally well developed understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make healthy eating choices, supported exceptionally well by the knowledge they gain from involvement in the 'Let's get Cooking' initiative. They participate with great enthusiasm in a wide range of sporting activities. High levels of attainment by the time they leave the school, especially in basic literacy and numeracy skills, prepare pupils well for the next stage of education.

Teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good teaching in each year group; however, this is not resulting in consistently good progress in all subjects. This is the key reason why pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. In mathematics and more recently English, teachers have improved their ability to regularly and accurately assess pupils' levels of attainment. This, together with good subject knowledge and clear identification of the next steps in learning, has resulted in pupils' consistently good progress in mathematics. Assessment in science is not as secure and does not provide teachers with the information needed to identify what pupils of different ability need to learn next. Consequently, pupils make satisfactory progress rather than the good progress seen in mathematics. The use of assessment information to support learning in lessons is also less well developed. Although teachers set different work for pupils with varying levels of attainment, tasks do not always require different levels of knowledge or skill and therefore do not result in good progress for all pupils.

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the school which is shared by staff. Regular opportunities for staff training and good partnerships with other providers have led to innovative thinking and radical changes to how the school organises curriculum provision. Pupils appreciate the recent changes, which allow them to explore different aspects of a particular topic and engage in a range of practical activities. Leaders and managers at all levels have made a good start in the planning and monitoring of their areas of responsibility. However, priorities for further improvement are currently more focused on activities and resources than on the impact which teaching and curriculum provision is intended to have on pupils' achievement. As a result, self-evaluation is at times a little overgenerous. Nevertheless, the school has, overall, maintained consistently significantly above average standards since the last inspection and demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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

- Improve pupils' achievement, particularly in English and science, by:

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- implementing regular and accurate assessments of pupils' progress in science
  - consistently using assessment information to plan activities and success criteria which challenge all pupils to take the next step in their learning, whatever their prior attainment
  - making effective use of pupils' targets in lessons and in the marking of pupils' work
  - regularly reviewing pupils' work during lessons to adjust activities and maintain good progress.
- Drive forward improvement in the quality of teaching and learning by:
    - senior leaders using the analysis of pupils' progress more effectively in self-evaluation
    - sharply focusing monitoring activities on the impact which provision has on outcomes for pupils
    - clearly linking the success of priorities for improvement to improved pupil achievement.
  - 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.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Their high levels of attainment on entry to Year 3 are, in the main, maintained until they leave the school in Year 6. However, while pupils' attainment overall is high, their learning and progress, including that of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is satisfactory. Pupils generally make better progress in mathematics where they are effectively encouraged to apply their good basic skills to new learning and to solve problems. At these times pupils are rightly proud of their achievements and are keen to move on to even greater challenge. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and have good levels of vocabulary; however, these good language skills are not always evident in pupils' written work. While pupils are provided with some opportunities to improve their basic skills, in other subjects this is not planned with sufficient precision to improve pupils' progress from satisfactory to good.

Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy school and are enthusiastic about the many responsibilities they hold. School councillors, for example, are passionate about their ability to bring about change. Through their involvement in Eco school projects, pupils' develop a good awareness of the importance of looking after the environment for future generations. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and know how to maintain their own safety and the safety of others. A few parents and pupils indicated that bullying has occurred, mainly through name calling, and that they would like the school to take more actions to make sure this does not reoccur.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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

**How effective is the provision?**

Although teaching is satisfactory overall, there are some consistent strengths in each year group. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge which they use well to pose questions which encourage pupils to think for themselves. Teachers generally set clear objectives for pupils' learning and share these with pupils so that they know what they need to do to be successful. However, too often success criteria are the same for all pupils, whatever their prior ability. In the good lessons, teachers review learning regularly to ensure that pupils understand or remain appropriately challenged by their work. This was not always the case in satisfactory lessons. Teachers' marking of work is conscientious but is not used consistently to influence progress to the next level. Although pupils have targets, these do not regularly feature in lessons or in teachers marking as a means of improving pupils' work.

The curriculum is broad and there are increasing opportunities for pupils to learn across a range of subjects within a general theme. There is a good range of events, trips and activities, including extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to extend their musical ability and knowledge including through partnerships with those who can provide specialist focused provision. This contributes strongly to both pupils' enjoyment of school and their cultural development.

There are good systems to care for pupils, with very effective provision to support those pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable or have specific needs. Case

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studies provided by the school show successful outcomes for pupils as a result of good intervention and particularly effective partnerships between the school inclusion manager and outside agencies. The systems for identifying when pupils are struggling are improving. This is particularly effective for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, with appropriate intervention strategies put in place to help them make at least satisfactory progress.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The positive ethos created by leaders and managers promotes pupils' enjoyment of school and their sense of well-being. Staff say they feel valued and share the leadership's ambition to drive forward improvement in the quality of provision. The school promotes equality successfully and has appropriate systems in place to tackle discrimination. Systems to improve the tracking of pupils' progress have been developed through collaborative work across the Federation of Abbey Schools. These provide the school with the information needed to act quickly to close any gaps in the attainment of different groups, although this is at present less well developed in science than in English and mathematics. The governing body provides good support and has recently introduced new systems to become more closely involved, alongside staff, in reviewing changes made to curriculum provision. There are times, however, when governors are too reliant on others to confirm that the school is meeting statutory requirements rather than implementing systems to enable them to monitor this directly. The school adopts good practice in relation to safeguarding procedures and meets legal requirements. There are appropriate checks made on all adults who work in the school and effective health and safety checks are carried out. The school's approach towards promoting community cohesion is ensuring that the right steps are being taken to broaden the pupils' understanding of life beyond the local area by linking up with schools from differing international communities. The impact of the schools actions are yet to be fully evaluated.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Views of parents and carers

Just over a third of all parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. The majority of parents expressed their satisfaction, with almost all parents and carers agreeing that the school keeps their children safe. A small minority of parents and carers are not happy with the progress their children make. Inspection evidence indicates that most pupils make good progress in mathematics but that progress is no better than satisfactory in English and science. Parents and carers also expressed concern regarding the way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour, including incidents of bullying. During the inspection the behaviour of the vast majority of pupils was found to be good. Discussion with pupils, and school records, indicate that incidents of bullying have occurred in the past. Pupils confirm that this does not impact on their feeling of safety, but would like the school to ensure that these incidents are not repeated. The school has consulted with parents regarding a range of school matters since the last inspection and has introduced further systems to aid effective communication including the use of a web-based learning platform. A small number of parents and carers have indicated that, despite these measures, they still have concerns regarding the way in which the school keeps them informed, including how they are helped to support their children's progress. Inspection evidence indicates that termly letters regarding topics to be covered in each year group are sent to parents. These letters provide satisfactory information, but, other than to encourage parents to regularly read with their children, they do not provide guidance for parents as to how they can support their children's learning.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Federation of Abbey Schools (Junior) 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 124 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 360 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	54	55	44	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	51	57	46	4	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	25	74	60	13	10	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	31	68	55	16	13	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	41	33	77	62	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	30	62	50	22	18	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	35	72	58	8	6	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)	37	30	69	56	9	7	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	29	73	59	10	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	21	71	57	20	16	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	19	70	56	18	15	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	29	23	78	63	11	9	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	39	68	55	8	6	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



26 November 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of The Federation of Abbey Schools (Junior), Darlington, DL3 8NN**

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you in lessons and around the school. We were interested in finding out about what you learn and what you enjoy about school.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. You attain high standards and your attendance is excellent. We know that most of you enjoy learning, feel safe in school and behave well. You have an outstanding knowledge of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. You make mature choices about what you eat and regularly take part in exercise. You enjoy the many activities which the school provides for you, particularly the practical activities which are now available such as cooking. The muffins were delightful!

You make good progress in mathematics and, although you make satisfactory progress in English and science, we would like you to make good progress. To help with this we have asked your school to:

- make regular checks of how well you are doing in science
- provide you with activities and success criteria in all of your lessons which challenge you all to do as well as you can
- remind you of your targets in lessons and when marking your work so that you can continue to improve
- carefully check how well what you are taught helps you to learn.

You can help in this process by continuing to work hard. Thank you again for giving us a happy two days in your school.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector

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