

Abbotsfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102449
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	355194
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Samantha Morgan-Price

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	636
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Jones
Headteacher	Mark Bland
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2008
School address	Clifton Gardens Hillingdon, Uxbridge UB10 0EX
Telephone number	01895 237350
Fax number	01895 271995
Email address	mbland@Hillingdongrid.org

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

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Thirty-four lessons were observed and a similar number of teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher, senior staff, heads of departments and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents, which included achievement and attainment data, the whole-school and departmental development plans, the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding information and governing body minutes, as well as questionnaires completed by 41 parents and carers.

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

- the achievement of students with a statement of special educational needs and Indian and Black African students at both key stages, to determine whether teaching is addressing their needs sufficiently
- the effectiveness of the use of assessment to support learning throughout the school
- the effectiveness of support for more vulnerable students, particularly those students with a statement of special educational needs
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in driving and sustaining improvement.

Information about the school

Abbotsfield is a smaller-than-average boys' secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of students who start and leave the school other than at traditional times is above the national average. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds although students from Indian and Black African heritages make up over 13% of the school's roll. A higher proportion of students than average have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The percentage of students who speak English as an additional language is also higher than that seen nationally. Abbotsfield became a specialist school in mathematics and computing with applied learning in September 2009. The school shares a site and a sixth form centre with a neighbouring girls' school.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main 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 special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

In 2009, the school reported a significant rise in students' attainment. However, this good improvement has not been sustained. Students' attainment in 2010 fell significantly, with GCSE examination results falling back to similar levels prior to 2008, which were below average. Actions are being taken to address the poor performance in some subjects but the impact of these actions has yet to be realised. Overall, the pace of improvement has been too slow to stem students' underachievement.

Students enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are broadly average. They make inadequate progress because the quality of teaching and assessment is inadequate. Students of Indian and Black African heritage make less progress than their peers. The proportion of inadequate and satisfactory teaching is too high, and this does not enable students to make the necessary progress to achieve well and reach higher standards. Not enough has been done to ensure that the teaching helps students to make faster progress and become independent learners. Teachers' assessment of students' learning is of varying quality across the school. Students' attainment targets, which are set by staff, have not been appropriately challenging. In the small number of examples where marking is undertaken well, teachers give students a clear indication of what their next steps in learning should be. However, in some lessons observed, there was little evidence that teachers had marked work. Teachers do not routinely use effective questioning techniques to assess students' learning. Few examples of students assessing their own performance and that of others were seen.

Some sound improvements have occurred in the curriculum, especially at Key Stage 4. A growing range of optional academic and vocational courses is meeting the needs and interests of students. Measures implemented to improve students' levels of literacy, which was one of the areas for improvement following the last inspection, have not yet had sufficient impact.

Students, including those in the sixth form, consider that the school keeps them very safe. They feel that bullying is dealt with well by staff. They have the confidence to approach staff if they have a problem. The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support, especially for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. There are good examples of how the school has worked with students at risk of refusing to come to school and has supported them well. The impact has been seen in improvements in their behaviour, attitudes to others, attendance at school, as well as their increased levels of

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confidence. Overall, students' behaviour is satisfactory and their levels of attendance are average. Students have developed a good awareness of being part of a multicultural school community and they take advantage of the wealth of opportunities available to them to attend talks given by guest speakers and visiting artists. They also participate well in theatre trips.

Leaders and managers have not focused sufficiently on improving the quality of teaching across the school. There are some examples where leaders have tried to disseminate good practice, but they have not been effective. The monitoring and evaluation of actions taken by leaders and managers lack rigour in all areas of the school's work. Self-evaluation is not sharp enough to bring about the swift improvements required to raise attainment significantly. With the exception of the closer scrutiny on expenditure that has led to a reduction in the budget deficit, leaders have not addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. As a result, the school's capacity to improve is inadequate. The governing body has failed to challenge or monitor school leaders' actions effectively; therefore, governance of the school is inadequate. The school does not provide value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in all subjects across all key stages, but especially in English, by July 2011, through:
 - ensuring all staff use realistic but challenging targets to secure improvements
 - developing students' literacy skills in all subjects across the curriculum
 - marking students' work systematically and rigorously to help them improve it and make faster progress in their learning
 - using a range of activities in lessons to challenge, motivate and engage all students and meet their needs more effectively.
- Improve the quality and the impact of the monitoring and evaluation approaches and improvement planning of all leaders, managers and the governing body

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Students' attainment is below average overall, but fluctuates considerably because teaching does not promote high enough expectations for all students. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C fell in 2010. Between 2007 and 2009, students attained standards in mathematics that were significantly above the national average. However, in 2010, results fell in both mathematics and English, with the sharpest fall seen in English. No student attained a pass at grade A* to C in history, and the pass rates in design and technology were also extremely low.

Too many students do not make enough progress in their learning and, as a result, underachieve in relation to their starting points. Students of Indian and Black African heritage make less progress than their peers. In the better lessons, students learn at a fast pace because teachers challenge them to do well. Students enjoy the variety of learning activities used in these lessons. Some instances of good learning by students occurred in practical lessons. In these lessons, students assessed their own work well and enjoyed working in pairs. In less effective lessons, students' attention drifts when they are

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not motivated or engaged in their activities. In these lessons, students sometimes sit for long periods of time making relatively few contributions. Very few examples were seen of students being encouraged to develop their skills of independent study.

Students' behaviour is satisfactory in lessons and around the school and their attendance is in line with national averages. Students take on responsibilities within the school appropriately and the developing student council is enabling them to make a better contribution to the school's development. They have a sound understanding of the world of work and are developing a range of basic skills, although their oracy and literacy skills are not yet well developed. Students' appreciation of other cultures and the way in which they work together harmoniously are good. They have good opportunities to develop an improved cultural awareness, including trips abroad, and they use these opportunities well. Students use the school's prayer room well.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and assessment varies too much within subjects and across the school. In some subjects, inaccurate assessment by teachers meant that the school had an imprecise understanding of how well students were predicted to attain in 2010. No outstanding lessons were seen during the inspection and too many were inadequate. In less effective lessons, poor lesson planning, the pedestrian pace of learning and a lack of challenge in the work prevent students from making good enough progress. When

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students are not challenged to do well, there are occasional instances of poor behaviour, which affect the learning of others in the class. Teachers do not routinely plan to address the needs of all students in their lessons. For example, more-able students are not given extended tasks to stretch them further. In addition, teachers' planning does not always take into account students' starting points so that appropriately challenging work can be provided for them. In good lessons, teachers use effective questioning techniques to move students along quickly in their learning. In these lessons, students speak confidently about their National Curriculum levels of attainment and know what they need to do to improve.

The specialist subjects of mathematics and computing have had a positive impact on the curriculum by, for example, increasing the course options available to students and developing students' skills in mathematics. The increase in vocational subjects is starting to widen students' career options, encouraging them to progress onto apprenticeships, for example in motor vehicles. Partnerships with work-based learning providers are growing in number and in the quality of provision offered. The school is now focusing its efforts on improving the curriculum at Key Stage 3.

Students and parents are in agreement that the school provides effective care, guidance and support, especially for more vulnerable students. More vulnerable pupils in Year 6 are also supported well to enable them to make a smooth transition to secondary school. Support for students who start the school outside of the traditional start time enables them to settle in quickly. There is a dedicated room for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities where they can relax but also be supported to improve their homework. Many good initiatives are in place to support those students who need help to manage their behaviour including effective conflict resolution teams.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, leadership at all levels has been characterised by a lack of pace and rigour. The drive to raise attainment and secure improvement across all aspects of the school's work lacks focus and ambition. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is generally inaccurate. Targets set by the school are not reviewed rigorously enough. The ineffective monitoring of teachers' assessments means that leaders do not have an accurate view of students' attainment. Leaders and managers, aided by the local authority, have closely scrutinised the school's financial position. The prudent budget currently set is being adhered to well.

However, the school cannot be said to be providing satisfactory value for money because both the quality of education provided and students' outcomes are inadequate. Procedures

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for safeguarding students' well-being are sound. There are effective processes for securing the well-being of potentially more vulnerable students. Leaders have worked hard and effectively to remove barriers to learning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily; well-chosen actions to support pupils who refuse to come to school have brought about improvement in behaviour and attendance. The school community is harmonious. Leaders and managers work hard to ensure that students work well together. However, actions to develop wider community partnerships, both locally and more widely are less well developed.

Members of the governing body have not had suitable training to be effective in challenging managers to address weaknesses and bring about necessary improvements. There is insufficient scrutiny of key areas of the school's work, including teaching and achievement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with attainment levels that are broadly average. They make satisfactory progress in their learning to achieve standards that are in line with those seen nationally. The proportion of higher grades achieved by students in their A-level examinations has improved, but it remains low in the AS examinations. Not all students attain well in the all qualifications they undertake. For example, a large proportion of boys only attain well in two thirds of their qualifications at A-level.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall although it does not provide a good platform for students to do their best. In the better lessons, students work well in pairs and are given good opportunities to contribute to lessons. In these lessons, students demonstrate good independent study skills. The good curriculum has been designed in collaboration

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with the local girls' school and is changing well to reflect the needs of learners. Vocational courses, such as sport and media, have been introduced and numbers on these programmes are increasing. There are strengths in the care and support students receive. However, the quality of guidance provided before they enter the sixth form and in the first year of their programmes of study, while generally satisfactory, is not enabling students to make the best informed choices about what subjects or combination of subjects they should study next.

The numbers of students who stay on into Year 13 are growing. Up until 2009, just under half of the Year 12 cohort left the sixth form. Leadership and management are satisfactory; however, data are not used as effectively as they might be to identify how well Abbotsfield boys are doing in relation to the girls. In some underperforming subjects, planning for improvement has been relatively slow.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires received by the inspection team was low. Parents and carers are firmly of the opinion that their children enjoy school and that school staff keeps their children safe. A few parents do not feel that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. During the inspection, inspectors found the school has many effective initiatives to encourage positive behaviour. However, the inspection team noted that where lessons do not engage students' interests fully, low-level disruption does occasionally occur.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abbotsfield 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 636 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	44	20	49	2	5	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	16	39	20	49	3	7	2	5
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	41	19	46	2	5	2	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	34	22	53	2	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	18	44	20	49	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	39	21	51	2	5	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	22	28	68	1	2	1	2
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)	11	27	24	59	2	5	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	27	27	66	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	39	16	39	6	15	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	24	23	56	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	12	29	23	56	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	41	21	51	1	2	2	5

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	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). 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">■ 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.



15 October 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Abbotsfield School, Uxbridge, UB10 0EX

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you. We know that you enjoy school and judge that your behaviour is satisfactory. We found that your school has some strengths but also some shortcomings.

The school cares for you well and the majority of you feel that it is a very safe environment. It enables you to develop your social, moral, spiritual and cultural skills well. You have many opportunities to participate in cultural events such as theatre trips. Those of you in the sixth form generally make satisfactory progress. However, teaching and assessment are not effective enough to enable you all to make the progress you should, or to attain the results you are capable of in your GCSE examinations. We have, therefore, placed the school in 'special measures' as it needs more external help to improve. Other inspectors will be making regular visits to see how well the school is improving.

We have asked senior leaders and other managers to do a number of things to help you all to achieve as well as you should:

- raise standards in all subjects across all key stages, but especially in English, by July 2011, through:
- ensuring all staff use realistic but challenging targets to secure improvements
- developing your literacy skills in all subjects across the curriculum
- marking your work systematically and rigorously to help you improve it and make faster progress in your learning
- using a range of activities in lessons to challenge, motivate and engage you and meet your needs more effectively.
- Improve the way leaders, managers and governors plan for improvements and check on actions taken to ensure they work.

I hope you all play your part in raising standards by attending and behaving well and taking an active part in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price
Her Majesty's Inspector

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