

Abbey Meadows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132127
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	360370
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2011
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	352
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheryl Williamson
Headteacher	Chris Beddow
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited an assembly and 20 lessons, observing 16 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan. Inspectors analysed 100 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- Do children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress?
- How well do teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that challenge all groups of pupils?
- Do pupils evaluate their own learning and know how to achieve their targets?
- What is the impact of the school's efforts to improve pupils' attendance?

Information about the school

Abbey Meadows is larger than the average primary school. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. However, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritage and for whom English is not their first language is greater than that found in other primary schools. They come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, the predominant group being of Asian heritage. Only a few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the average for primary schools.

The school shares the site with a children's centre and hosts a privately run breakfast club; additionally the governing body is responsible for and manages the on-site community wing. These elements of the provision did not form part of this inspection. Major building work is currently being undertaken to enlarge the school from a two- to a three-form entry. Since September 2010, the Early Years Foundation Stage has consisted of three full-time Reception classes. Currently there are two classes in all other year groups.

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

This inclusive school provides pupils with a satisfactory education. A noticeable strength is the commitment of the headteacher and staff to ensure that all pupils are made welcome and provided with a good level of care so that they are kept safe at all times. This enables them to settle quickly and enjoy school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds show respect for each other, get on together and behave well. The vast majority of parents and carers appreciate the work of the school. One wrote, 'the school provides a safe exciting place to learn with professionals who obviously care about the children'. This sentiment was echoed by others.

Children get off to a secure start in the Reception classes and make satisfactory progress. Progress is accelerating following the introduction of a third Reception class and the consequent reduction in class sizes. This has enabled staff to provide individual attention and hone discussions to develop the children's speaking and listening skills. The use of the outdoor area is developing well but its potential has not yet been maximised. Assessment procedures are in place but are not always used effectively to record children's progress or to quicken their pace of learning. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' progress is more variable and the academic standards they reach by the end of Year 6 are a little below average. From their starting points, this represents satisfactory achievement. Standards in English are usually higher than those in mathematics because provision for literacy is secure; while pupils' knowledge and use of mathematical terminology is underdeveloped and they have little opportunity to apply and develop their mathematical investigational skills. In neither subject are cross-curricular links sufficiently well established to extend pupils learning.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and there is some good teaching on which the school can build. In the better lessons, pupils of all abilities are challenged and learning proceeds at a quick pace. As a result, pupils make good progress. Where lessons are not as effective, teachers do not consistently make clear their expectations of individuals or groups of pupils and assessment information is not used well enough to plan work that encourages pupils to aim higher. Teachers routinely set literacy and numeracy targets but do not consistently give pupils sufficient guidance as to how these can be achieved.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school development plan is based on a sound self-evaluation of the school's needs and performance and clearly identifies the appropriate priorities for improvement. The governing body makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of the school. For example, the governing body, with senior leaders, actively encourages links with the local community by regularly inviting parents and carers into the school and by promoting the use of the community wing by

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local organisations. Given the systems and structures in place and the clear vision for the development of the school, the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

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?

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their rate of progress in English and particularly in mathematics by:
 - providing more opportunities to undertake mathematical investigations
 - promoting and extending pupils' understanding and use of mathematical vocabulary
 - ensuring pupils apply their linguistic and mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good by:
 - ensuring that work is planned to meet the needs of all groups of pupils
 - monitoring the quality of marking to make sure that it consistently provides pupils with a clear understanding of their next learning steps.
- Enhance the provision and outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making better use of the outdoor area as a natural extension of the classroom
 - improving the use of assessment information to accelerate children's progress and to provide a clearer overview of their progress over time.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children enter the Reception classes with skills and knowledge below the levels expected for their age. Throughout the school pupils are generally well motivated and respond well to challenge, particularly in lessons that capture their interest. They enjoy the opportunities to work together. Their better progress in English than mathematics results from the emphasis placed by staff on promoting and developing pupils' skills in reading and writing. Pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, after watching a video clip of Wallace and Gromit, pupils created a flow chart to plan their own version of how a 'snoozatron' works, using sequential vocabulary and appropriate connectives to build up their explanation. Both strengths and limitations were shown in a Year 6 mathematics lesson where pupils were able to suggest different ways of solving a mathematical problem but did not have a sufficiently broad understanding of mathematical vocabulary to explain the process.

Overall, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because their needs are identified early; good support is offered and tailored to their needs. Pupils from Asian backgrounds generally make slower progress and attain less well than other sizable groups. There are some variations in performance between groups in mathematics. Boys tend to do better than girls and pupils who speak English as an additional language do not do as well as others.

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Pupils feel safe and have a good awareness of safety issues. Several showed their awareness of safety issues linked to the building development, thus helping to keep themselves and others safe as the work progressed. Pupils are increasingly enjoying school and attendance is improving. However, despite the school's best efforts, there are a few pupils with records of persistent absenteeism. Pupils want to take responsibility and undertake voluntary tasks. They contribute well to the school community but have little opportunity to contribute to the wider community. The vast majority of pupils are reflective and have a good understanding of right and wrong. They show respect for and celebrate other faiths, cultures, religions and beliefs. Pupils enjoy contributing to the international week and the focus on the language of the month. Although most pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is marginally below average, their good social skills and increasingly positive attitudes to school ensure they have a sound basis for the next stage in their education.

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	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?

Most pupils know they can turn to staff if they have any concerns and these will be taken seriously. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable receive good support and this enables them to feel included and take an active part in school life. The school monitors attendance carefully and quickly follows up any absences.

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Teaching has a number of good features including good relationships, the use of praise, sharing ideas with a talk partner and the deployment of teaching assistants. In most lessons pupils are given sufficient opportunity to contribute to the lesson through, for example, asking and answering questions and taking initiative for the way they undertake their work. Teachers mostly make clear what pupils will be learning and involve the pupils in identifying broad success criteria so that they have an understanding of what is expected. In some lessons the pace of learning is slow and pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Some teachers are more skilled than others at making sure that pupils reflect on their work to understand its strengths and weaknesses. Marking does not consistently provide pupils with sufficient guidance. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge in English but in mathematics it is more varied. Sometimes their expectations of individuals and groups are not high enough.

Provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory in dedicated lessons, but pupils have insufficient opportunities to consolidate and develop their skills and knowledge in writing and mathematics in other subjects. Provision for information and communication technology is adequate. The school has adopted a well structured theme or topic approach in which pupils' learning in different subjects is linked. Good quality displays throughout the school reflect the commitment of staff to celebrating pupils' work and promoting their artistic skills. Visits, visitors and after-school activities enhance learning and promote pupils' personal development. Good links and partnerships with the local authority, schools and other organisations support pupils' learning and contribute to teachers' professional development. Links with the on-site children's centre are firmly established and this helps children settle quickly into school routines. The on-site privately run breakfast club helps foster links between parents and carers and the school.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The governing body, headteacher and senior staff provide satisfactory drive for the school's development. Staff are aware of and understand the priorities to take the school forward. All are looking forward to the completion of the extension and the opportunities it will provide. Teaching and learning is monitored regularly but there are insufficient opportunities for staff to share and build on good practice. The school has recently updated the electronic system for recording and analysing pupils' attainment and progress. Senior managers are using the information appropriately to challenge teachers if pupils do not make the expected progress.

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The governing body monitors the work of the school satisfactorily. Members have taken a considerable interest in the construction of the extension and, in conjunction with the headteacher, have formulated a sound strategic plan to accommodate the projected increase in the numbers of staff and pupils. Members of the governing body attend parents and carers consultation evenings and seek their views on the school's performance. However, the governing body does not regularly and critically evaluate the school's performance against external measures. As a result, senior leaders are not challenged sufficiently on pupils' attainment and progress and the school has yet to ensure that all pupils reach their potential.

Safeguarding and child protection procedures are met. Checks are undertaken to ensure that the school complies with the latest requirements and that staff receive regular child protection training. Equality of opportunities is monitored satisfactorily and any suggestion of discrimination is investigated. The school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion, especially locally through the use of the community wing and the links with the children's centre. The school has established links with a school in India and is seeking to formalise links with a contrasting school in the United Kingdom. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Relationships with parents and carers and induction procedures are good. Children settle quickly, behave well and enjoy learning in a safe environment. They quickly learn the importance of personal hygiene and how to keep themselves safe. The classrooms are well organised and displays promote learning. Resources are of a good quality and appropriate for the age of the children. The three classes work together well. Good planning ensures that all areas of children's learning are covered. There is a reasonable

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balance between activities led by the adults and those that children choose for themselves. The use of the outdoor area is satisfactory but it is not as well developed as the indoor area to enhance learning. Regular assessments are undertaken and the results used to plan activities that capture the interests and needs of the children. However, the learning journey folders do not fully record the children's successes and their progress towards the early learning goals. Initial assessments are not completed early enough in the autumn term. As a result there is not a secure base line to judge the children's progress. Staff place considerable emphasis on developing the children's ability to communicate and to work together. Good use is made of snack time to encourage children to take responsibility, to consolidate their understanding of number and to engage in conversation. For example, the children chose their preferred drink and counted the numbers having water or lemon squash. Some were able to count correctly up to 14.

The Early Years Foundation Stage team has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development; these are identified in the development plan. Staff have welcomed the opportunities to initiate changes following the introduction of a third Reception class. This is beginning to bring positive results. The end of year assessments for the last four years shows that children's knowledge of numbers, sounds and letters was in line with expectation but their attainment in all other areas of learning was below the expected levels. The children's progress is now accelerating and the majority are on track to reach the expected levels by the end of the year.

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

The return rate of questionnaires from parents and carers was similar to most primary school. Their views were largely positive and supportive. All respondents stated that their children enjoyed school. A few felt that they were not given sufficient help to support their children's learning, that the school is not meeting their children's needs and does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judged that the school is keen to work with parents and carers and is meeting the needs of pupils satisfactorily; and that staff encourage good behaviour and deal appropriately with pupils who do not behave as well as they should.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abbey Meadows 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 100 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 352 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	72	72	28	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	68	68	31	31	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	58	58	35	35	7	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	58	33	33	6	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	59	59	39	39	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	54	37	37	9	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	41	56	56	3	3	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)	51	51	40	40	1	1	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	51	37	37	8	8	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	46	45	45	7	7	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	38	54	54	5	5	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	56	56	38	38	1	1	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	63	32	32	3	3	1	1

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.



14 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abbey Meadows Primary School, Cambridge, CB5 8ND

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and talking to you. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Nearly all of you said you enjoy school and want to learn. The attendance rate is improving but there are still a few of you who do not attend as often as you should. We were pleased to find that you have a good understanding of how to stay safe and behave well. Well done for getting on so well together. We found that you show respect for each other. Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most of you understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle although you are not so keen on adopting it. Staff are working to improve your standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This is starting to happen but there is still more to be done. You get off to a solid start in the Reception classes. Your progress in Years 1 to 6 is more variable but overall it is satisfactory. Your attainment in English is higher than in mathematics but is not quite at the same level as that found in most schools.

We have asked the school to do these things to help it improve further;

- ensure that you make better progress and reach higher standards in English and particularly in mathematics by helping you to have a better understanding of mathematical words and by giving you more opportunities to apply your speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematical skills in other lessons
- set you work that is just right for you and to give you more guidance on how to improve and evaluate your work to reach your targets
- make better use of the outdoor area for children in the Reception classes and to tighten up on the assessments the staff make on the children.

Please remember, to make your school better you must play your part by always trying your best. We hope that all goes to plan with the building developments and you will enjoy working in the new classrooms.

Yours sincerely

David Wynford-Jones

Lead inspector

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