

Abbeys Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110401
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	363764
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Moore
Headteacher	Tracy Fielding
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 11 teachers and visited 18 lessons or parts of lessons. They held discussions with groups of pupils, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, parents and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including: monitoring, evaluation and assessment records; policy documents; the school improvement plans; external evaluations of the school; and samples of pupils' work. Documents and records were scrutinised in relation to the safeguarding of pupils, including cases studies of potentially vulnerable pupils. Inspectors examined questionnaires returned by 65 parents and carers, 62 pupils and 8 members of staff.

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

- How quickly is attainment and achievement improving throughout the school?
- How consistent is teaching in the school, how has its quality been affected by many staff changes, and how rigorous is the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' learning?
- Do pupils have a clear understanding of how they are doing, and do they know what they have to do to improve?
- How effective is the new leadership and management structure, especially in driving improvement and sharing responsibilities?

Information about the school

Abbeys is larger than the average sized primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are a small number of minority ethnic groups, the largest being of Indian heritage. There are a few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. A minority of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. There are two Reception classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There have been a number of staff changes in the last twelve months. Other provision on the school site includes a breakfast and after-school club provided by Acorn, the Daisychain Children's Centre and Surestart Children's Centre. None of these are managed by the governing body, and all are inspected separately. The school has gained the Investors in People award and the Lord Grey Schools Partnership Top School award for sport in 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

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Abbeys Primary School offers a satisfactory quality of education. This indicates that the school has made considerable progress in the last fifteen months in addressing significant weaknesses. Progress is continuing and gathering pace because the school has good leadership, which evaluates very accurately its performance, and a staff which shares a strong ambition for improving the education it offers to its pupils. Many new initiatives have been introduced, especially by the decisive and determined headteacher, who has built an increasingly effective leadership team. This has led to clear improvements and developing strengths in the school. Challenging targets are set for the attainment and achievement of pupils, guided by the good use of much improved tracking systems and analysis of pupils' progress. As a result, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is rising consistently throughout the school, and pupils have good knowledge of how they are achieving, and know their next steps for improvement. Pupils and parents alike are fulsome in their praise for the improvements in the school typified by the comment of one parent, 'I am very pleased with the way Abbeys is run; all the staff are friendly and happy to help my child who loves school and is coming on leaps and bounds.' The care, support and guidance of all groups of pupils are good, and parents and carers have confidence in the provision by the school of its quality of care and safety for their children. A combination of marked improvements and effective management indicate that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

This is a happy and welcoming school, and pupils cooperate well with each other, and show respect and friendliness towards their teachers. They enjoy coming to school and talk enthusiastically about their learning. A very small number though have poor attendance. Pupils are provided with a broad curriculum, but the school recognises that this could be more stimulating and exciting, and could enhance literacy and numeracy skills in order to raise attainment. The development of pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) is also essential in order to prepare them for the future. Although this is a very inclusive school, pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their spiritual and cultural development. Pupils' understanding of the range of cultural diversity within this country and beyond is therefore limited.

Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, by the headteacher and her able deputy, are rigorous and detailed. This has led to better and more consistent teaching throughout the school, which itself has been a major factor in raising the attainment and achievement of pupils. This includes the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is another example of improving provision by the school. The governing body has recently appointed several new governors. The Chair and school leaders have recognised that to improve the

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present satisfactory contribution of governors to school management, a programme of training and awareness raising is necessary. This is in order to give governors the confidence to challenge leaders and be more involved in school self-evaluation.

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?

- Develop a more creative and diverse curriculum by:
 - extending the effective use of English, mathematics and especially ICT across the curriculum to help raise attainment and develop basic skills
 - expanding curriculum initiatives so that they fit the particular needs and interests of the pupils.
- Widen the provision for community cohesion by:
 - establishing links with communities in other countries so that pupils develop a better understanding of cultural diversity both here and abroad.
- Develop the improving contribution of the governing body by:
 - ensuring that governors receive regular and specific training to enable them to evaluate and challenge the school's performance

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

The attainment and achievement of pupils until the last year has been low for some time throughout the school. This inspection has provided considerable evidence of improvement in all year groups and very few pupils are now underachieving. Progress is also accelerating so that more pupils are beginning to reach above average levels, although this is not consistent in all classes. Progress has been strongest in reading and mathematics, and the school is rightly concentrating on moving attainment in writing on at a similar pace. After joining Year 1 with skills slightly below average, pupils are making sufficient progress to enable a large majority of them to reach average standards by the end of Year 6. This applies to all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, skills in ICT remain below average, and school leaders have made this an urgent priority for improvement. Better progress is due to improved teaching, and in particular pupils having a clear understanding of their learning goals and challenges.

When teaching is stimulating and matched to their needs, all pupils make good progress. This was seen a number of times during the inspection, notably in Years 5/6 classes, when pupils were constantly encouraged to discuss how they would solve problems in division, or how they could improve their writing of non-chronological reports. Learning is enhanced by the good attitudes and behaviour of pupils, who although lively and participative, are respectful and polite to each other and to adults. Pupils are unfailingly cheerful and often reflective about their learning.

Older pupils understand the need to have good basic skills, one remarking, 'This will help me in my life later on; our teachers encourage us to choose our goals, because that will help us get good jobs.' They feel safe in school, have a good understanding of how to

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keep healthy, and in their questionnaires they unanimously indicated that adults help them to do better. They enjoy taking responsibility, such as the Year 6 pupils who went on a 'learning walk' to all classes and identified especially the positive aspects of other pupils' learning. They contribute satisfactorily to the local community, enjoying for example the chance to join in the local carnival, and interviewing members of the public on how Bletchley could be improved. Attendance is satisfactory, but is adversely affected by the persistent absence of a few pupils, despite the school's commitment to and satisfactory procedures for improving it.

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	2
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	3

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 learning is satisfactory overall, and some teaching is good. The improving attainment in English and mathematics throughout the school point very clearly to a rapidly improving picture of teaching. Teachers receive regular, systematic well-focused support and guidance from the headteacher and her deputy to enhance the development of their teaching skills. This has resulted in a consistency in planning for the needs of all pupils, good encouragement of speaking skills and raised expectations for pupils' achievement. Particularly notable has been the considerable improvement in systems to track pupils' progress and the way that the resultant data is used to guide pupils' improvement. Almost all pupils questioned during the inspection were able to say

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accurately how they were doing and what they have to improve. For example one girl in Year 4 said, 'I have to write more extended sentences using compound words.'

Teacher's marking is also consistent and offers helpful guidance to pupils. A number of parents commented that their children make frequent reference to their 'grades' and progress. Occasionally some activities lack urgency and teachers do not set clear time targets for completion of work. Teachers spend much time guiding and supporting middle and lower attainers, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but sometimes the more-able pupils are left for too long working independently with no adult input. The support and intervention of teaching assistants contribute effectively to pupils' learning and progress.

The school leadership recognises that although a broad curriculum is provided for pupils, at present it lacks the sparkle and stimulation the school wishes to provide for the needs of the pupils. The curriculum is enriched by a range of well attended extra-curricular activities including dance, singing and rounders. Some opportunities are provided for developing English and mathematics across the curriculum, but there needs to be a greater emphasis on these links, in order to help raise pupils' basic skills further. Likewise, although new resources for ICT are being introduced, the school is aware that this aspect of the curriculum is underdeveloped and some pupils do not yet have the skills expected for their age. The curriculum strongly supports the development of pupils' moral and social education but there are fewer opportunities provided for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

The school provides a vibrant and welcoming environment for its pupils, and much pupils' work is displayed and celebrated everywhere, helping their obvious enjoyment of their lives in school. There are good arrangements for the care and support of pupils, especially those in potentially vulnerable circumstances and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities who benefit from a good range of links to outside support agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 headteacher has established a management team which shares her high ambitions for the relentless pursuit of improvement in the school. In particular, the deputy headteacher provides strong support for ensuring the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning through constant rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of pupils' learning. Other leaders are positive and enthusiastic about the increasing expansion of their roles, and recognise their responsibilities for ensuring continued improvement in the achievement of all pupils. This has been especially apparent in the rapid development

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throughout the school of effective and well implemented assessment strategies, which has contributed strongly to the rise in the attainment of most pupils in the last year. All staff are responding positively to this clear-sighted and challenging leadership. The governing body ensures that safeguarding and child protection procedures are firmly in place including helping pupils to understand how to keep safe. There are a number of new governors and there is recognition that the governing body must enable all governors to have suitable training to fulfil their roles. This is in order to remedy past weaknesses in their involvement in school evaluation and offering challenge to school leaders about the school's performance.

The school is making satisfactory and accelerating progress in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. It works very hard to promote good engagement with parents and carers. Recently, for example, a new parent community room for both social and informational gatherings has been provided by the school. A parent acts as a link between school and parents, a parent forum has been established and a 'Parent Champion' has just been appointed. The school has a satisfactory range of partnerships, including with the local high school and the on-site Day Nursery and Children's Centre. The contribution to community cohesion is satisfactorily promoted within the school community and through charity fundraising. However, wider national and global links are less developed, and do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to learn about other communities and cultures.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

On entry, children have skills in language, communication and calculation that are slightly below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress and there is evidence that this is an accelerating trend. Children's achievement and progress is best in their

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personal, social and emotional development. They are happy and polite and enjoy asking visitors questions about what they are doing. They share their learning resources fairly and show good consideration to each other. Relationships between staff and children are positive and consequently children feel safe and secure and are prepared to ask for help when they need it.

Teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers are encouraging and provide some good opportunities to help children develop their basic skills such as recognition of sounds. This was observed in a lesson when children learned to recognise 'ch' words like 'such', and 'chip'. Teachers and their assistants also provide a good balance between children learning for themselves through purposeful play and direct teaching by adults. Occasionally though teachers can talk for too long and shorten children's opportunities for activity. Staff regularly use careful observation to inform future planning although this information is not always used to provide suitable tasks for more-able children. The outdoor area is spacious and stimulating and used well to enrich children's learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving with the regular support and guidance of the headteacher. Safeguarding of children is rigorous, and new arrangements for transition to Year 1 are most helpful in settling children quickly into school routines. Staff work well in partnership with parents and carers, and with other outside support providers.

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

About a quarter of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Most parents have very positive views of the school, which were also expressed to inspectors verbally during the visit. There is strong agreement for many statements, especially regarding the safety and health of pupils and their enjoyment of school. A typical comment from a parent is: 'My child is not only happy at Abbeys, but her progress has been fantastic, and the head and staff are always very approachable.' A minority of parents had a few concerns, especially relating to their child's progress, and the way the school handles unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors looked carefully at these issues, and found that the great majority of pupils are making satisfactory or better progress in their learning. Inspectors also found that the school has clear behaviour management systems which are understood well by pupils. The school leadership has agreed that even more effort should be made so that all parents and carers understand the school's approach to the management of behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abbeys 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 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 258 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	62	21	32	3	5	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	39	60	25	38	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	52	26	40	4	6	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	42	28	43	8	12	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	32	49	27	42	5	8	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	49	25	38	7	11	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	43	35	54	2	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)	27	42	28	43	3	5	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	40	32	49	3	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	45	21	32	10	15	5	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	34	35	54	4	6	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	34	52	25	38	2	3	4	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	52	24	37	4	6	3	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



13 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abbeys Primary School, Milton Keynes MK3 6PS

I want to thank you for being so welcoming and friendly towards us when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed our two days with you and were most impressed to hear how much you like school and how knowledgeable you are about your learning and targets. You go to a satisfactory school which has improved a lot in the last year, and continues to improve. We believe the school will get even better, because you are achieving much more in your learning and reaching higher levels, especially in English and mathematics than you did in the past. Most of you are reaching the standard expected of you by the time you leave at the end of Year 6. We think you can do even better though in ICT, especially now you are having new laptops and other equipment.

We think you behave well, and are very friendly and polite children. I especially liked seeing so much of your work, particularly writing, displayed and celebrated throughout the school. Your parents and carers believe that the staff do a good job, and know that you are well cared for and safe. Your teachers and other staff work well as a team, and we are pleased that you respect and like them. We think that your school leaders, especially your headteacher and her deputy, are doing a really good job in managing the school.

We have suggested ways in which the school can improve even more. We would like the school leaders to give you an exciting new curriculum; you can help by telling teachers what you are interested in learning about. We also think that you can learn more about other people and cultures in both this country and in other parts of the world. We would finally like your school governors to have sufficient training to help them in the difficult job of managing a school, especially so that they can understand what the school leaders are trying to do to improve your learning. We are very confident that your school will go from strength to strength in the future especially with such enthusiastic pupils!

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite

Lead Inspector

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