

The Abbey Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	121916
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	380351
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2012
Lead inspector	Steven Hill

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	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Popely
Headteacher	Renuka Popat
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2008
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	3–4 July 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Steven Hill

Additional Inspector

Matthew Klimcke

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Teaching was observed in 16 lessons taught by 10 teachers. Meetings were held with members of staff, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documentation, particularly that related to keeping pupils safe, and the tracking of their progress. Examples of pupils' work were scrutinised, in their books and on display. Several younger pupils were heard to read. Questionnaires were analysed from staff, pupils and from 100 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This primary school is broadly average in size, but is growing as it now admits two classes into Reception each year. Currently, there are two classes in Reception, two mixed-aged classes, mainly Year 1 with a few pupils from Year 2, and five single-age classes with pupils from Years 2 to 6.

Most pupils are White British, but the proportion who come from a range of other ethnic heritages is greater than in most schools, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, is above average.

The school meets current floor standards, which are minimum levels set by the government for pupils' attainment and progress.

There is a privately-managed pre-school on the same site, and a privately-run breakfast and after-school club that makes use of the school's accommodation. These are inspected separately and reports are available from the Ofsted website.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not outstanding because there is not yet enough excellent teaching to make achievement outstanding, and pupils lack opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) in the classroom. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and their own positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils make good progress at each key stage. All boys and girls do well regardless of their background or starting points. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make particularly good progress. Achievement has risen considerably in the last year. Pupils' ICT skills are good, but unreliable equipment limits the use of ICT to support learning in different subjects.
- Teaching is good. Classes are managed well and pupils are highly motivated by engaging activities. Relationships are good and routines well established, so the pace of learning is usually rapid. In most lessons, teachers give pupils tasks that meet their different needs well, and check how well they are doing so they can quickly help any who are confused. In a few lessons, this is not the case and progress then slows for some pupils. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is of good quality, but pupils do not always respond fully to teachers' questions and suggestions.
- Pupils behave well and feel very safe. Boys and girls from different backgrounds play together happily. They develop excellent collaborative skills and work together very effectively in class. Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to do well.
- Strong leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteacher has increasingly been supported by the effective work of middle leaders across the school. A successful focus on monitoring teaching has made the quality much more consistent, and rigorous monitoring of performance has raised achievement for all groups. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, eliminating satisfactory teaching and promoting more that is outstanding, and so raise achievement further, by:
 - ensuring that tasks are tightly matched to pupils' different needs in all lessons
 - making sure that pupils' learning is monitored in every lesson, so that any misconceptions are quickly identified and addressed
 - ensuring that pupils always respond to their teachers' marking, and are given enough time to do so.
- Give pupils more opportunities to use their ICT skills to support their learning in lessons across the curriculum, by increasing the availability of reliable equipment that can be used in the classroom, in line with current plans.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good. Standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6. There is evidence of good achievement in art, and in pupils' ICT and musical skills. Parents and carers are rightly positive about the progress their children make.

Children start in the Reception classes with attainment which varies from year-to-year but which is, generally, below that expected for their age. Last year, children made good progress to reach average attainment levels by the time they went into Year 1. Children in this year's cohort are making the same good progress. Previous cohorts have not always done so well. Children get on well independently, for example, spreading jam or cheese on bread for their snacks, and play well together indoors and out. They listen intently to the adults, for example, enthusiastically counting in twos to record the progress of a 'bee' along a number line.

Progress across the rest of the school has accelerated in the last two years and is now good at Key Stages 1 and 2. At the end of Year 2, standards in reading have risen to broadly average because of an improved emphasis on phonics (how letters in words are used to represent different sounds). This is a major improvement since the last inspection. Pupils in Year 1 made good progress in identifying patterns in number as they persisted with challenging but manageable work. In Year 4, pupils made good progress in using adverbs in their poetry after responding thoughtfully to their teacher's careful questioning that drew out their thinking. The pupils in the current Year 6 have reached average attainment levels, confirmed by observations during the inspection, the school's own tracking, and the preliminary results of national assessments. This represents good progress for this cohort in the light of their low starting points when they left Year 2. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have done particularly well. All made the nationally expected progress during Key Stage 2, and several exceeded this. In lessons, such pupils make good progress because tasks are matched to their needs and they are challenged to do their best. Their achievement is further boosted by carefully-

judged intervention programmes tailored to their particular needs, both individually and in small groups.

The school has become particularly effective at using its improved tracking of attainment to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Boys and girls, pupils known to be entitled to free school meals, those from different ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language all make the same good progress as their classmates and reach similar standards. A gap in the past between boys' performance and that of girls has been eliminated.

Quality of teaching

Teaching has improved and most is now good, with an increasing proportion of outstanding teaching. The amount of teaching that is only satisfactory has been greatly reduced, although some remains. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of teaching, and inspection evidence backs up their views.

Teachers establish clear routines and have very good relationships with pupils, who try hard to meet their expectations. Teachers consistently use the 'Abbey skills' and 'Five Bees' programmes developed in school to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This contributes to the calm, orderly learning in classes, and has maintained pupils' good personal development since the last inspection. Lessons generally have a good pace that carries learning along well. Occasionally, the pace slows so learning for some pupils is only satisfactory.

A strength of most lessons is the setting of different tasks that are matched to pupils' varying needs. This is a particular feature of the teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Occasionally, however, work is a little too easy or hard for some pupils. Teachers generally monitor ongoing progress in lessons and quickly address any misconceptions, but also challenge those pupils who are succeeding to refine and improve their work. Occasional lapses in this good practice slow progress for some pupils. High-quality marking shows pupils why they have succeeded, and what could have been better. Teachers' comments often include suggestions for further practice, or ask questions requiring further detail, but pupils do not consistently respond to them.

Collaborative work is promoted extremely well. For example, pupils in Year 6 greatly extended their understanding of empathy and their writing skills as they worked together to develop ideas about the feelings of Olympic athletes before a race. Excellent use of video clips on the interactive whiteboard increased pupils' understanding and enthusiasm. Such use of ICT to clarify explanations is a strength in many lessons, and pupils are taught ICT skills well in the computer suite. However, teachers are unable to capitalise on this in the classroom, to support pupils' learning in other subjects and to consolidate their skills in ICT because of the lack of suitable, reliable equipment.

Reading is taught well, with a good emphasis on phonics. This was seen in a session in Reception, when children listened attentively, responded enthusiastically and made good progress in learning about sounds made by combining key letters.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are keen to learn, work hard in lessons and behave well. They take a pride in their accomplishments, and those of their classmates. They greatly value the friendships they make in school and take their responsibilities seriously, for example when selling healthy snacks in the tuck-shop or helping to organise assembly. Around the school they are sensible, thoughtful and considerate of the needs of others. They show a good understanding of the social and moral values promoted by the 'Five Bees' and 'Abbey values' programmes, and say these have improved behaviour. By Year 6, they are able to reflect on and write about important values very well, as shown in the impressive display of their work on 'Philosophy Island', where they considered complex moral scenarios.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their attendance which has gone up steadily for some time to be above average.

Pupils feel safe in school and have all identified several adults they are confident would help them if they were worried about social or academic issues. They have learned how to keep themselves safe, both in and out of school. Pupils have a good understanding of different kinds of bullying, including cyber- and homophobic bullying. Pupils know how to recognise such bullying and what to do if they or their friends have problems. They are positive about behaviour in the school, saying that bullying, as opposed to occasional silly behaviour, is rare, and pupils in Year 6 could not think of any recent examples. Parents and carers share their children's positive views about safety and standards of behaviour, and show similar confidence that the school will deal with any issues quickly.

Leadership and management

Good leadership and management have improved teaching and, consequently, raised achievement since the last inspection. The many improvements made, and the accurate self-evaluation which has identified the school's strengths and weaknesses well, show a good capacity to improve further. The regular monitoring of teaching and the clear guidance to colleagues have helped teachers to improve their practice, as have good opportunities for professional development. A greater involvement of middle leaders in monitoring practice and outcomes has meant they now work as a more effective team in driving improvements. Better tracking of pupils' attainment has identified and addressed individual needs more rapidly and accurately, with consequent improved progress. This has greatly contributed to the school's very good work in ensuring equal opportunities and in combating discrimination. Boys and girls, from different ethnic backgrounds and starting points, are fully involved in all aspects of school life, and make similarly good progress. The governing body provides a good balance of guidance and support to the school, based on effective systems to learn about its strengths and weaknesses. It has worked with staff to ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

An interesting curriculum which links different subjects has made learning more meaningful and enjoyable. It contributes well to cultural development, in particular

in music, where pupils make good use of extensive opportunities, exemplified by their high standards of performance on steel pans. They learn to consider important moral and social issues through a strong and consistent programme. Pupils extend their cultural and spiritual development as they learn about the lives and values of different people around the world. Links abroad, including those with a school in Tunisia, enhance their understanding. The curriculum is broad and balanced, but pupils' use of their good ICT skills to support learning in different subjects is limited by the lack of suitable equipment.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



5 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Abbey Primary School, Northampton, NN4 8AZ

Thank you for your cheerful welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you and we were impressed by how well you all get along together and by your good behaviour. You help to make the school a safe and happy place through your good understanding of the Five Bees, and because you follow the Abbey Values. You told us you enjoy school and learn a lot in lessons. You are right. Your school gives you a good education, and has improved a lot since the last inspection.

You are making good progress because your teachers are good at helping you to learn. You told us that they will always help you if you are puzzled. They give you lots of interesting things to do and try hard to give you work that is just right for you. Occasionally, they give you things that are a bit too easy or too hard, and we have agreed they are going to concentrate on improving this next year, and on always keeping an eye on how everyone is doing in lessons, to make sure no one is confused. They give you really good advice when they mark your books and we are asking them, and you, to make sure you always do what they suggest in their comments. You are good at using computers in the suite but, because the laptops don't work properly, you don't get enough chances to use computers in lessons in the classroom. The school has plans to buy better equipment and we have agreed that this is a good idea.

The adults are good at organising the school and are keen to make it better. We know you will want to help and you can do this by keeping up your hard work and good behaviour, and making sure you always respond carefully to what your teachers write in your books.

We hope you carry on enjoying life at The Abbey, or in your new schools for those of you leaving Year 6.

Yours sincerely

Steven Hill
Lead inspector

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