



# The Abbey School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 125476  
**LEA** Surrey LEA  
**Inspection number** 281943  
**Inspection dates** 16 May 2006 to 17 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Greg Sorrell AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Menin Way
<b>School category</b>	Community		Farnham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9 to 16		GU9 8DY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01252 725059
<b>Number on roll</b>	88	<b>Fax number</b>	01252 737300
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr A Melbourne
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr C Gardiner

<b>Age group</b> 9 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 16 May 2006 - 17 May 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281943
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Smaller than most similar special schools, The Abbey School admits pupils from Farnham and the surrounding area all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils have moderate learning difficulties, although there is a wide range of other needs including autistic spectrum; severe learning difficulties and some have behavioural, emotional and social needs. The vast majority of pupils have White British heritage and none have English as an additional language. From September 2007, it is planned that the school will provide only for secondary aged pupils. The current headteacher has been in post since the beginning of the last academic year. The school is due to undergo extensive re-building works. The school has Investors In People status; Sportsmark; Naacemmark; ICTmark and a Becta 'ICT in Practice Award'. It has also been re-accredited for the second time in the Healthy Schools Scheme.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

The Abbey School provides a good education for its pupils and provides good value for money.

The recently appointed headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is well supported by the senior management team. The ethos of the school is extremely positive. It enables the pupils to achieve well and is typified by effective teamwork between staff.

The pupils achieve well in all subjects, irrespective of their special educational needs. The school's identification of some girls doing less well than boys in mathematics has resulted in a prompt review. In Key Stage 4, pupils achieve well in a wide range of academic and vocational courses.

The quality of teaching is good overall and some is outstanding, typified by high expectations, good relationships, rigorous assessment and planning that meet the needs of all pupils. Occasionally, some lesson planning lacks the close precision and clear objectives evident elsewhere in the school. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to ensuring that pupils' needs are met and their well-being is assured. Therapists and visiting specialists make a good contribution to ensuring learning experiences are relevant, irrespective of special educational need.

The curriculum is good. There is a good emphasis on literacy, numeracy and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). A good range of additional activities are provided that make an important contribution to all pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Appropriate improvements are underway and due for completion in the near future.

Care and guidance for pupils are good, although very occasionally some targets set for pupils are imprecise and not particularly useful when measuring progress within individual education plans (IEPs).

Leadership and management are good as is the quality of governance. The school consults widely about its own effectiveness and has an accurate view of this, although not all managers are sufficiently involved. The school makes appropriate plans based on the issues it identifies. However, the criteria which the school sets for measuring its success are sometimes too vague and not easily measured. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

Focus on:

- ensuring that all targets set for pupils and the school are easily checked for success, in lessons, IEPs and the school development plan;
- extending the role of all managers in school review.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The pupils make good progress in relation to their capabilities and prior attainment. The vast majority of pupils achieve the challenging targets set for literacy and numeracy. Progress is good in other subjects, too, notably information and communication technology (ICT). The school has recognised the importance of literacy and numeracy as keys to success in other subjects. All teachers and teaching assistants have ready access to pupils' targets and plan accordingly. The progress that pupils make is also due to effective teaching and appropriate groupings, based on pupils' abilities in literacy and numeracy. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well on work experience and in a range of accredited courses including GCSE and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network courses (ASDAN).

As a result of close analysis of achievement data, the school has identified that some girls achieve less well than boys in mathematics and is already addressing this matter. There are no significant differences in the achievements of any other particular groups, including those with different special educational needs.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The pupils' enjoyment of school is confirmed by their good attendance, which has improved since the last inspection. The vast majority behave well, support each other and respond well to the high expectations held for them. A few pupils experience occasional difficulties and the small number of fixed term exclusions reflects this. Frequently, one pupil will help another and receive encouragement and praise from their peers. By the time they leave the school they are very well prepared for life afterwards and have contributed to the choice of their next destination as fully as possible.

The learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and their awareness of other cultures is an improvement since the last inspection. All classes have a representative on the well established school council where they are able to offer suggestions for improvements. A recent survey confirmed their positive views, which were also expressed in a discussion with inspectors. Pupils feel safe and know that teachers want the best for them. Not all are able to recall targets set for them, but feel that their school is a good place to be, 'although it would be good to have more choice about lessons we do'.

They opt in to lunch-time clubs and know the importance of exercise, healthy lifestyles and avoiding danger. Some pupils hold responsibilities which help the school to run smoothly.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good. The best is outstanding, for example, in ICT. This is underpinned by high quality planning, extremely high expectations, accurate assessment, good subject knowledge and clear explanations to pupils about what they are going to learn. They also make good use of the recently introduced format to keep pupils' targets to the fore. Their individual progress is assessed and monitored carefully. Increasingly, all staff make effective use of interactive whiteboards to support learning, particularly where pupils demonstrate their learning in front of the class.

Relationships with pupils are strong and are strengthened by regular praise and prompt feedback to re-inforce learning. For example, younger pupils are frequently praised for 'good listening' and older pupils receive useful marking of their work. Effective use is also made of visiting specialists, to support music, physical education and mathematics. In some cases, this provision is to meet the needs of higher attaining pupils. On rare occasions, these qualities are not so evident and as a result the pupils' achievement is less effective.

The close working relationship between teachers and teaching assistants is a key feature of successful learning. They are well briefed and have developed appropriate support skills to ensure that opportunities to learn are maximised.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with many strengths. It has a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT, with all other subjects supporting these skills. Many pupils participate in competitive sports with other schools. This aids not only their health and fitness but also their social development.

The school makes very effective use of national strategies and makes tailored adjustments to meet the needs of all pupils, which reflects an excellent commitment to equality of opportunity. For example, some pupils attend local schools and colleges of further education part-time to further their studies. Appropriate emphasis is given to first hand experience, independent study, collaborative working and opportunities to use the local community, including work experience. The school provides good opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 4 to gain national accreditation in a range of academic and vocational subjects.

The provision of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to express choice and has improved since the last inspection, as has the accommodation which will be further improved early next term.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The quality of care, advice and guidance to safeguard pupils is good. Child protection procedures are well known by all staff. Recent training to meet the needs of pupils with additional special education needs helps to ensure good provision as the school changes its role.

Staff remain vigilant at all times to ensure a safe environment and risk assessments are thorough. Any incidents are properly recorded on a database and followed up: the school makes excellent use of this information to identify where and when any incidents take place and to intervene as appropriate to maintain good conditions for learning.

IEPs are frequently reviewed and used effectively. This practice is good overall, although, on occasions, targets which pupils have not met are not replaced with others that are more achievable.

Links with external agencies, such as careers guidance, therapists and social services are well established, so that additional support and guidance is provided as required.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher gives outstanding leadership and is well supported by his senior management team. Collectively, they have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses so that the school's capacity for further improvement is also good. Subject leadership is good overall, with notable strengths in English, mathematics, ICT, design technology and physical education.

Performance management for all staff has been re-established since the headteacher's appointment and is effective in maintaining and improving the school's overall provision. Prompt action is taken to secure improvement. For example, monitoring of teaching resulted in additional support and consequent improvements. Systematic monitoring of pupils' literacy and numeracy achievement, as well as their behaviour, results in appropriate action to address any issues. All staff are aware of the high expectations held for them.

The school has a good range of self-review procedures that seek the views of parents, pupils and staff. The headteacher consults widely when reviewing overall effectiveness and has plans to extend formal review processes to other managers beyond the senior management team. The management of relationships with other agencies is excellent, particularly at this time of change in the school's development. Strong encouragement of parental involvement is also evident in enabling them to support their children. The view of parents included, 'We feel that not only does the school support our son, the staff also support us with guidance and advice through difficult times'. Some expressed concern about homework and this has resulted in a school review of practice.

Current priorities, such as assessment, monitoring and specialist accommodation are relevant and designed to raise the achievement of pupils. Some curricular developments,

however, lack a clear indication of cost and measurable outcomes. The governors ensure resources are intelligently deployed are closely involved in all aspects of development, however, their monitoring role is not sufficiently acknowledged in the school development plan itself.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Pupils

Thank you for helping me to find my way around your school and for making me so welcome.

I agree with the staff and your parents that the Abbey School is a good school. The school is a friendly place to be and you are happy at school. I can see that you enjoy the lessons you have and at break-times you get along with each other very well. The teachers and all other staff help you to do well in lessons. I saw you working hard and many of you offer to help your friends if they have a problem with their work or in the playground. You told me that you feel that you can share problems with the staff and that you feel safe at school. As you get older, it is clear you enjoy taking more responsibility and look forward to going on work experience and attending college. I was very pleased to see the many different things you do during the day. Not just your lessons, but I also know that you have the chance to go on school journeys, visit places of interest and I was really impressed with the display from your trip to London Eye, a very impressive model! The work you do in ICT is also very exciting and not something I see a lot of in other schools, so well done to you and your teachers! I really enjoyed meeting the representatives from your school council and I know that the teachers do listen to your views. It is also good that you can achieve certificates in a wide range of subjects that will help you when you leave school.

I'm asking the school to do a couple of things to improve further. One is to make it easier for the staff to check how well they are doing against the targets they have set. The other thing is to enable all managers to get involved in keeping the school as good as it is now and making it even better.

Yours sincerely

Greg Sorrell

Lead Inspector