



Abbots Ripton Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110850
Local Authority CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number 288795
Inspection dates 22–23 February 2007
Reporting inspector Michael Best

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Wennington Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon
Age range of pupils	4–11		Cambridgeshire PE28 2LT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01487 773318
Number on roll (school)	116	Fax number	01487 773770
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Debbie Coletti
		Headteacher	Miss Helen Wilman
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school that serves Abbots Ripton, surrounding villages and nearby towns. The prosperity of the area is mainly above average but some families live in more challenging circumstances. Numbers in each year group are small and one pupil can have a significant impact on results.

Pupil mobility is average. Nearly all pupils come from a White British background. Although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average, the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is above average. Since the previous inspection there has been a significant turnover in teaching staff, including the head and deputy head teachers, and a major building programme has recently been completed. Currently, very few pupils are in the care of the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that has maintained the successful features identified in the previous inspection and improved standards at the end of Year 6. The school accurately evaluates its effectiveness as good and provides good value for money. The school's capacity for further improvement is good because staff and governors know from their thorough self-evaluation what it needs to do to improve further, the headteacher provides clear direction, and the quality of teaching and learning is good.

The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities and children make good progress. When they start in the Reception class, children's skills and knowledge are usually above those expected for their age. Most reach and many exceed the standards expected by the time they start in Year 1. Standards at the end of Year 6 are exceptionally and consistently high. Achievement is good but staff are right to identify the quality and range of pupils' independent writing as a focus for further improvement, particularly for the boys. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school and are particularly pleased with the new facilities which, through the school council, they have been involved in helping to develop. Their behaviour is good and attendance is above average. Pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles is good. They feel safe in school and say they can always find someone to give them help and support. The school's preparation of its pupils for the next stage of their education and the world of work is good. Pupils' key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are well above average and they work well together.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff manage pupils well and relationships are good. Pupils apply themselves well to their work individually and in groups. The school has recently reviewed and revised its arrangements for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school and for setting challenging targets for them to reach. Procedures are good but teachers do not always make accurate use of their knowledge of what pupils know and can do to secure the individual's next steps in learning. As a result, pupils are not always clear what they have to do when working independently. The curriculum is good and pupils benefit from a good range of visits and after-school activities. The school makes good provision for pupils' care, guidance and support. There are good arrangements to safeguard children and promote good behaviour and attendance. The school works well with its partner schools and other agencies to promote pupils' well-being. Pupils know what they have to do to improve and meet their targets.

The effectiveness of leadership and management is good. The headteacher successfully focuses the school's work on its challenging priorities. Monitoring is good and the school's self-evaluation procedures are developing well. The governing body is closely involved in decision-making and meets all its statutory requirements. In their responses to the questionnaire and in discussion, the majority of parents are pleased with what the school provides. However, a small but significant minority of parents feel that the school does not communicate effectively enough with them. They say they are not

clear about the reasons for, and impact of, recent changes to the school organisation and pupils' learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and range of writing, especially for boys, in order to raise standards.
- Ensure that pupils fully understand what they have to do when working on their own.
- Ensure that parents are kept well informed about changes in school organisation and how they can support their children's learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at the end of Year 2 were average in 2006 in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Overall, pupils made satisfactory progress from when they entered Year 1. Girls' results were higher in reading and writing, and similar to those of the boys in mathematics. These represent an improvement on the 2005 results in which some pupils had not made sufficient progress. Pupils currently in Year 2 are making at least satisfactory progress and some have made good gains since the start of this school year.

Standards at the end of Year 6 were above average in 2004 and exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science in both 2005 and 2006. Pupils achieved well in each of these years and they left well prepared for the future. In the 2006 results, the differences in standards between boys and girls were not significant and, from their starting points boys and girls made similar progress.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they are well supported by staff. More able pupils also make good progress because they are suitably challenged to develop and apply their thinking and reasoning skills in a range of different circumstances. Looked after pupils make similar progress to others because the school provides a good framework for supporting their learning needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils are welcoming, friendly and polite. They are supportive of one another and show a good respect for the opinions of others, even when these differ from their own. Pupils have positive attitudes to work and property, and take on responsibility well. They know their personal targets for improvement and discuss their progress towards these sensibly. Pupils are confident in discussions, when speaking to an audience in assembly and when talking with visitors.

Pupils' behaviour around the school is good. In lessons they are generally attentive although, occasionally, some pupils do not take their turn to speak. In discussion,

pupils say they feel safe and enjoy school. They indicate that bullying is not an issue in the school and that, if it occurs, the staff take prompt and effective action. The newly established school council provides a good vehicle for pupils to gain experience of decision-making, for example, in helping to develop the new courtyard area.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are well managed and lessons proceed at a good pace. Staff make good use of interactive whiteboards to promote pupils' interest and deeper involvement in what they are learning. Pupils respond well to teachers' probing questions and confidently use computers to support their learning. They take a pride in their work and willingly contribute their thoughts and ideas to discussions. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide good support for pupils.

At the start of each lesson, teachers share with pupils what they expect them to learn; they refer to these goals during the lesson and review them in the closing session. Activities and tasks provide appropriately varied challenge for groups of pupils who learn at different rates. In whole class lessons, teachers generally make effective use of the information they have about what pupils already know and can do. They make appropriate adjustments to their plans in the light of questions and answers to extend or support pupils' understanding. However, in preparing pupils to carry out work independently, teachers do not always systematically identify small enough steps in learning or the individual support needed to enable pupils to reach these different goals. When work is too hard, this slows pupils' progress and reduces the value of any homework set on the lesson's work. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is regular, celebrates success and gives clear guidance for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum successfully reflects the latest national strategies and guidance. It encourages pupils to be actively involved in decision-making and to show initiative. Recent reviews of the planning that guides teachers in preparing their lessons have successfully focussed on improving the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding to help raise achievement. Teachers' planning takes appropriate account of mixed aged classes. Termly curriculum newsletters provide parents with information about what pupils are learning. There is good provision for pupils to develop ICT skills, and to learn a modern foreign language. There are, however, some inconsistencies in the frequency and demands of homework.

The school makes good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, and citizenship. The promotion of pupils' social, moral and cultural awareness is good, and a range of lunchtime and after-school activities support pupils' interests and development outside lessons. In addition, pupils benefit from the joint activities

organised through the school's involvement in its local partnership, which include specialist teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have full access to the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff care well for their pupils and the school's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements. The school makes good use of expert advisers and outside agencies to support pupils' welfare and academic progress, and maintains good links with partner schools. Staff provide well for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, recognising that more able pupils may also need support. Appropriate health and safety routines and risk assessments are in place. The school has recently introduced procedures to involve pupils more in improving their work. Most pupils are clear about their personal targets and have a secure understanding of how well they are doing in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Daily routines are well established and the school runs smoothly. The staff team works well together and is well focussed on raising pupils' achievement. Working closely with the local authority, the headteacher has established the school's priorities. A number of subject leaders have recently assumed their responsibilities and are benefiting from good external advice and support. A common approach to the scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and the analysis of results, recently established by the headteacher, helps them maintain and improve provision. Governors are well informed by the headteacher and local authority, and minutes show that they are active in holding the school to account. The school manages its finances well and maintains appropriate reserves.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Abbots Ripton Church of England (Aided) Primary School, Wennington Road, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE28 2LT

Thank you very much for making me welcome when I visited you recently. Abbots Ripton is a good school. I am delighted to hear how much you like school and that you want to do well. I am very impressed by your confidence in asking and answering questions. Congratulations, too, on your good attendance and behaviour. The staff take good care of you and are helping you grow up into interesting and responsible adults. You get on well with each other, live healthily and enjoy what you do. I agree with you that the recent building work has provided you with some super facilities and I am pleased to hear that, through your new school council, you are involved in projects like 'finishing off' the courtyard with shrubs and flowering plants.

You work hard in lessons and make good progress. You all know your personal targets for improvement and appreciate the advice your teachers make, when they mark your work, about making it better. You think carefully about your work, discuss it sensibly with each other and test out your answers. Your teachers have spotted that there is room for improvement in your writing, particularly for the boys. I think they are absolutely right - and I am pleased to see the good start you have already made towards this. At the start of each lesson, your teachers tell you what they want you to learn. You rightly say that this helps you concentrate on what you have to do. I also agree that, occasionally, teachers do not explain clearly enough exactly what they want you to do when you are working on your own. I have asked them to make sure that they improve and check this in lessons and when setting you homework.

There have been a lot of changes in the last eighteen months. The staff know what are the most important things for them to do to improve the school. They are working hard to make these happen. The governors are very interested in how well you are doing and are helping to make important decisions. However, some parents do not feel that they know enough about what is going on in the school. I have therefore asked the staff and governors to make sure that they let all parents know why and when changes are made, and what this means for you.

Keep working hard and enjoying yourselves at school.

Yours sincerely

Mike Best

Lead inspector