

Abbeymead Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115601
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	290270
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Wiola Hola HMI

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 on roll	
School	401
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Dobson
Headteacher	Julian Pass
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2002
School address	Mead Road Abbeymead Gloucester GL4 5YS
Telephone number	01452 371710
Fax number	01452 371710

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than average. Roughly nine in ten pupils are White British and others are mainly from Black or mixed Caribbean backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is below average; three pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is below average but the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Abbeymead is a good school with some outstanding features, most notably in the excellent leadership of the headteacher. Staff and pupils show excitement in and a love of learning. The 'Great Learning Journey' is a reality for all; pupils' academic achievements by the end of Year 6 are good, and staff work with enthusiasm in their desire to develop and enrich the already good curriculum and further hone their own skills in teaching. Parents are pleased with what the school provides and many mention the hard-working and supportive staff in their tributes. They praise the way in which the school cares for their children and enables them to flourish. Care, guidance and support are indeed good with many strengths.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils behave well and show mature attitudes and considerable enjoyment in most lessons. They make an excellent contribution to the school community in many ways and are extremely well prepared for their next steps in life and learning.

Children make a satisfactory start in the Foundation Stage. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also make satisfactory progress overall. The rate of pupils' progress Years 3 to 6 has been increased significantly through a concerted effort by the school; it is good and standards by the end of Year 6 are clearly above average. The school's excellent processes for keeping pupils' progress under review, and speeding it up, have borne fruit in Years 3 to 6 in particular and have been extended to Years 1 and 2 with a view to increasing progress in those years as well.

Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding features; the extent to which good and outstanding features exist in lessons is, however, variable. Teaching generally establishes clearly exactly what pupils have grasped but occasionally this is not done well. Most lessons are fully engaging for pupils, and pupils work confidently in pairs or groups often on very interesting tasks. Sometimes, the pace of lessons slips. Teaching assistants work very effectively to support teachers and pupils.

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features in the many enrichment activities provided, in lessons and beyond, and in the clubs, trips and focus weeks, for example. Curriculum planning is of a very high quality, and subject coordinators know exactly what the strengths of their subjects are and how they can be improved further to raise standards.

The headteacher has been in post for two years and has made a huge impact. He is an outstanding leader and has added tremendous impetus to the school's drive to raise standards. He is supported by an able team of senior staff. Leadership and management are good overall. The rate of improvement, however, has not been consistently good in all parts of the school, as yet. Governance is good. Staff and governors have put into place many high quality systems through which to run and review the school's work. The school's self-evaluation is excellent, accurate and detailed even though some pieces of review work focus more on provision than on outcomes for pupils. The school is clearly focused on excellence, and staff have pointed themselves in entirely the right direction to achieve it. The school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 by employing the same successful approaches that raised standards in Years 3 to 6.
- Ensure that the quality of all teaching and learning more consistently matches the high quality of the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress over their time at the school. The school's successful efforts to improve educational provision are showing a positive impact on both the rates of pupils' progress and on standards in Years 3 to 6. Results in the national Year 6 tests in 2007 show a marked improvement on those in 2006, which were average overall. In particular, the proportions of pupils reaching above expected levels in English, mathematics and science increased to well above the national figures of 2006.

Children in the Foundation Stage join the school with very varied skills and make satisfactory progress overall. In some areas progress is good, particularly with phonic skills where children link sounds to letters effectively. They also make good progress with their physical development. By the start of Year 1, pupils have generally acquired the skills expected of their ages. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and standards are average. In these years, progress has not yet been speeded up as in Years 3 to 6 although strategies are in place to do this.

Some particularly good work exists in art where pupils' skills develop in a clear and systematic way showing good progress. Pupils have many opportunities to develop well their thinking and reasoning skills. They also develop well their speaking and listening skills because many lessons include discussion and debate. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good behaviour, attendance and punctuality reflect pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with particular strengths in social and moral development. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They have been involved in establishing the 10 core values of the school that underpin its ethos. Pupils work and play well together and feel safe from bullying. Some act as much valued peer mediators. Pupils particularly enjoy their residential visits in Years 4 and 6 which develop well their self-confidence, independence and team building skills. They are extremely well prepared for their next stages in life and learning.

The school council is very effective in representing the views of pupils. It has been involved in establishing the school's anti-bullying policy and the award system, both of which have contributed to creating the friendly and orderly atmosphere that exists. Pupils enjoy showing initiative and taking responsibility. They are highly involved in the wider community, supporting a wide range of charities, conducting a Christmas service in Gloucester Cathedral, and supporting the homeless at Harvest Festival, for example. Pupils participate in and enjoy regular physical education lessons and a range of after-school sports clubs. Their knowledge and understanding of why a balanced diet and regular exercise are important are good overall, but patchy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with examples of outstanding practice. There are, however, some inconsistencies. In the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best

lessons are well paced with teachers devising very interesting tasks and posing challenging questions that make pupils think hard. The less successful lessons lack this pace or incisive questioning, and work is sometimes insufficiently demanding or not matched well to pupils' needs. Pupils say that they most enjoy those lessons where teachers give a short introduction and then quickly move on to the main activity; some introductions are indeed on the long side. They also appreciate teachers' marking of their work. This marking is generally of a very high standard and aids pupils' progress. Pupils often mark their own and others' work to good effect. Most teachers use data and assessment techniques well to make sure that no pupil gets left behind.

Many lessons provide opportunities for pupils to express their views and ideas. Pupils are prepared to listen courteously to each other whilst not necessarily agreeing. Visual resources, including information and communication technology, are well used to generate ideas and add interest to learning. Teaching assistants are very effective and play a large part in the success of the school. They actively look for opportunities to help and support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Topics are especially well enriched to make them interesting, relevant and exciting. Subjects are often linked in very meaningful ways and supported very well with a wide range of trips and visits. The school is rightly proud of its 'Great Learning Journey' that contributes greatly to pupils' enjoyment of school and allows staff and pupils to show their creativity. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development very well through the personal, social and health education programme and in other ways.

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. It includes some good activities that encourage children to make choices and take responsibility. Many of the tasks are child initiated in order to avoid restricting the child and to encourage the children's natural love of play. In some instances, however, the activities are not sufficiently structured to optimise their potential for learning.

Curriculum guidance documents are thorough, presented clearly and guide teachers' planning very well. For most subjects, they provide a comprehensive set of key questions from which pupils' attainments can be clearly established. In a few places, subject coordinators have correctly identified the need to devise further tasks or questions through which pupils can fully demonstrate their learning gains.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff know the pupils well and build up excellent, warm and caring relationships. All health and safety issues are addressed and appropriate risk assessments undertaken. Child protection procedures are in place and those chiefly responsible have received appropriate training. Other staff have not yet received training on how to identify children who may be at risk. Pupils feel safe in school and they have someone to confide in if they have a problem or concern. Attendance has improved, mainly due to good liaison with parents and a very effective system of rewards for good attendance and punctuality.

Academic support for pupils is good and there are some examples of excellent marking. Pupils know their learning targets. In most lessons they are given good advice about how to improve because teachers have correctly identified the pupils who need that extra bit of help or challenge.

There are well managed and efficient systems in place to support pupils with learning difficulties. Induction procedures for new pupils are excellent and help them settle in quickly. The system for transfer to secondary education is equally good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The outstanding headteacher has inspired staff to aim high and work creatively. He has strengthened management structures in order to share the task of leading this large primary school effectively. The way that staff share a vision for improvement across all areas of the school is impressive. Governance is supportive and thorough. Reviews are regular and comprehensive and generally focused on outcomes for pupils. On occasion, the focus is too much on provision and not enough on evaluating pupils' achievement.

Leaders and managers at all levels have risen to the challenge of raising standards and have been successful in doing so in Years 3 to 6 but not yet in Years 1 and 2. They gather and share information effectively and challenge each other professionally in their bid to speed up pupils' progress. Subject coordinators have employed thorough evaluation procedures to determine the strengths and relative weaknesses in curriculum planning and teaching and learning. They have a good understanding of what could be improved and how. The school has developed very effective systems for tracking pupils' progress, identifying pupils who might be underachieving and swiftly putting in remedial action, particularly for the older pupils.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
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	2
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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.

Annex A

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

6 July 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Abbeymead Primary School, Gloucester GL4 5YS

I write to thank you for making inspectors feel so welcome when we visited your school recently and also to tell you about what we found out about it. We valued talking with many of you during lessons and at break times, especially members of the school council. I was glad to have the chance of seeing part of the school production, 'We will rock you'. There is a lot of talent in the school.

Abbeymead is a good school that does some things extremely well. Your headteacher is excellent. He, the staff and governors lead and manage the school well so that you make good progress. The progress of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is slightly faster than in other years, where it is satisfactory overall. The test results of pupils in Year 6 arrived when we were in your school and teachers were delighted to see how much they had improved from last year. Standards are above average.

The school helps you to grow into confident young people who are courteous, friendly and happy to share your views. You are considerate and listen respectfully to each other when having debates and discussions in class. The staff are very creative in their planning of lessons. They often think of interesting ways to present topics as part of 'The Great Learning Journey' the school provides. Most of your lessons are good and some of them are excellent. You work hard in them and find most of them very enjoyable. Teachers and teaching assistants are constantly on the look out for ways of making lessons even better. You told us that you enjoy the many trips and visits that the school organises. The school takes good care of you in many ways so that you feel safe and secure. It keeps a close check on how well you work.

The school knows exactly how well it is doing and what needs to improve further because there are so many extremely good systems for checking things. Inspectors have highlighted the two most important things that the school should do to become even better. These are:

- Help pupils in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 to make faster progress in the same way that progress has been improved in Years 3 to 6.
- Make even more lessons as good as the best so that you always enjoy them and learn well.

I wish you all the very best for the future. Yours sincerely,

Wiola Hola Her Majesty's Inspector