



Pershore, Abbey Park First and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 116716
Local Authority Worcestershire
Inspection number 290610
Inspection dates 13–14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Carole Skinner

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

Type of school	First	School address	Abbey Road
School category	Community		Pershore
Age range of pupils	3–9		WR10 1DF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01386 552722
Number on roll (school)	163	Fax number	01386 555 975
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Pat Graham
		Headteacher	Angela Beddow
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–9	13–14 November 2006	290610

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Abbey Park is smaller than average and, in common with other local schools, has a falling roll. Children attend the Nursery part-time from the age of three. It is currently undersubscribed, with only 14 children on roll. There is significant variation between the numbers in each year group, ranging from 44 in Year 4 to 18 in Year 1. This has led to the re-organisation of teaching groups. There has been a relatively high turnover of staff, including headteachers. Almost all of the pupils are White British and none is at an early stage of learning English. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average and has declined in the past few years.

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 which has a number of outstanding qualities. As soon as you walk through the entrance foyer into 'The Gallery', where the pupils' excellent artwork is displayed, you sense that Abbey Park is a school that encourages pupils to take pride in their achievements. A walk around the school reveals classrooms where there is a real buzz of excitement about learning. Pupils say they enjoy school because 'there are lots of exciting things to do'. They work hard in lessons and their behaviour is exemplary. Parents have very positive views of the school and say that it helps their children to make good progress.

So what makes Abbey Park a good school? First and foremost, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, and in a few lessons, outstanding. The teachers' infectious enthusiasm and imaginative teaching methods make learning fun for the pupils. Children get off to a really good start in the Foundation Stage, especially in developing social, language and mathematical skills, which are very limited when they start. Pupils' personal development is good because it is high amongst the school's priorities. All pupils are given good support and guidance, which helps to build their confidence and self-esteem. The only area where this is not fully effective is in ensuring good attendance rates for all pupils. Attendance has declined from above average to just below average in recent years. Pupils enjoy school so much because the curriculum is excellent. It provides a rich diet of experiences and is very well planned to meet pupils' widely differing needs.

As a result of this high quality provision, pupils make good progress throughout the school and achieve well. Standards in Years 2 and 4 are similar to national averages but there are signs that these are improving. The school is successfully tackling achievement in Years 3 and 4 in mathematics and science. Rigorous new systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress have been introduced, but they have not been in place long enough to have had a marked impact on standards at the upper end of the school.

The school is making great strides under the current leadership team. Leadership and management are good and there are effective systems, which involve all staff, for evaluating how well the school is doing. Governors are very supportive of the school and play a key role in managing the premises and ensuring the school's continuing financial viability. However, their role in evaluating its effectiveness is relatively recent and has some way to go before it is fully established.

The ultimate aim of the leadership team is to create an outstanding school. Their vision and determination and the pace of improvement they have already set in motion show that they are well equipped to take the school forward on the next stage of its journey.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make rigorous use of the growing bank of assessment information to track individual pupils' progress from Nursery through to Year 4 and help them to reach suitably challenging targets.

- Increase the involvement of governors in evaluating the school's performance.
- Introduce effective measures to restore attendance rates to their previous high levels.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

There has been a notable upturn in standards and achievement as improvements in teaching, assessment and the curriculum have begun to take effect. Robust new assessment and tracking systems show that many start school with very limited skills. Despite making good progress, many children do not reach the levels expected by the time they start Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and reach average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science.

The new assessment and tracking procedures revealed pockets of underachievement in mathematics and science in Years 3 and 4. Prompt action to plug the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills has resulted in marked improvements, especially in science, where standards are now above average in Year 4. Records show that pupils with learning difficulties are making good progress. The more able pupils also achieve well because teachers give them suitably challenging work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Securing pupils' personal development and well-being is central to the school's aims and vision. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and their exemplary behaviour contribute significantly to their good achievement. There are, however, a few pupils whose poor attendance rate hinders their progress. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils often show a sense of wonder and excitement in learning. They make choices and decisions based on respect and consideration for others. Pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is enhanced by close links with a school in Birmingham and many opportunities to enjoy art, drama, music and dance. They have taken on board the need to exercise and eat healthy meals and are enthusiastic about 'Huff and Puff' and 'Walk and Talk' activities. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Nursery and reception children settle quickly into routines and soon develop confidence. Pupils enjoy all aspects of school life and relish the chance to take on responsibilities for different tasks. They learn how the democratic process works through electing the school council and making suggestions about how the school could be improved. Pupils develop good financial awareness by running fundraising activities such as 'Bring and Buy' sales.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve because teachers and teaching assistants are receptive to new ideas and are always looking for ways to make learning more interesting for the pupils. They share good practice and work closely together to ensure consistency throughout the school. Teachers use an imaginative range of methods and approaches that takes good account of the different ways pupils learn. They make particularly good use of the interactive whiteboards and computers in classes to enhance learning. Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils and high expectations of behaviour create a productive environment for learning in every classroom. Teachers take time to mark pupils' work in a way that shows them clearly what they need to do to improve it. Robust assessment systems are in place but are still being refined and embedded as teachers become more familiar with them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it is innovative, creative and very well planned to ensure progression in learning across all subjects. It takes good account of the fluctuations in the size of year groups which sometimes result in mixed-age classes. Well-thought-out themes encompass many different subjects and make learning relevant and meaningful for the pupils. The Foundation Stage curriculum provides an exciting mix of play and more structured learning. Art enjoys a high profile and information and communication technology (ICT) is used to very good effect to enhance learning. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of well-attended clubs and additional activities, including themed weeks and a residential weekend at Malvern Outdoor Centre. 'Forest School' provides opportunities for younger children to learn a variety of skills outdoors. The impact of recent improvements and initiatives is now beginning to show in rising standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality care, guidance and support for all pupils help to ensure that they feel safe and happy in school and that they make good progress. Adults have the pupils' best interests at heart and pupils know that their concerns will be listened to. Rigorous arrangements for safeguarding pupils are constantly under review. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good support through additional learning programmes. Close links with parents ensure they are kept well informed and that their views are taken into account. In the recent past, the absence of effective procedures for checking pupils' progress contributed to a dip in standards. The relatively new tracking systems are providing a clear picture of how well pupils are doing. They are being used well to inform planning, but have not been in place long enough for their full impact to be

felt. Although the school checks on why pupils are absent, it has not been successful in halting the recent decline in attendance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The new leadership team acted quickly to tackle the weaknesses they identified in the school's provision. The team has implemented a fast-paced but realistic programme of improvement over the past 18 months with a clear focus on raising standards. The success of these initiatives is evident in the exciting curriculum, the creative approaches to teaching and the progress pupils are now making. Huge strides have been made in the provision for ICT and the way it is used to enhance learning. Rigorous assessment procedures are helping teachers to meet pupils' needs more effectively, though these are still developing. Good training for subject leaders has enabled them to become increasingly effective in monitoring teaching and learning in their subjects. Rigorous data analysis has helped leaders to focus clearly on eradicating underachievement. Governors have played a key role in steering the school through recent challenges with staffing and the financial implications of a falling roll. Their procedures for evaluating the school's performance and guiding its academic development are not sufficiently rigorous.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

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	3
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	1
The attendance of learners	3
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?	1
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	3
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

Thank you very much for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our two days with you, particularly when we came into your lessons and talked to you about your work. Here are some of the things we discovered:

- Abbey Park is a good school which is helping you to make good progress
- your teachers make lessons fun and help you to learn in lots of interesting ways
- you are very good at art and you use computers very well to help you learn
- your behaviour is excellent and you really enjoy learning
- you try hard to eat healthy meals and snacks and take plenty of exercise
- there are lots of exciting activities to do, such as Arts Week, trips, Forest School and meeting children from other schools
- adults take good care of you and help you if you are having difficulties
- the teachers who run the school are doing a good job and keep looking for ways to make it even better.

Here are a few things that we have asked the school to do:

- check your progress very carefully from Nursery to Year 4 to make sure you do as well as you possibly can every year
- ask the governors to look carefully at how well the school is doing so that they can help decide what needs improving
- keep a close eye on a few children who don't come to school as often as they should and make sure that they attend regularly.

You can help by making sure that you come to school every day to set a good example.

I hope you enjoy the rest of your time at Abbey Park.