

Abingdon Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106074
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	309018
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jackie McKenzie
Headteacher	Mr J Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	14 July 2003
School address	Abingdon Road Reddish Stockport Cheshire SK5 7ET
Telephone number	0161 4804531
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is slightly smaller than average and serves a suburban area to the north of Stockport town centre. Most pupils are White British but a growing number belong to a variety of minority ethnic groups. A small number speak English as an additional language but very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportions of pupils eligible to receive a free school meal and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average but average numbers have statements of special educational need. The headteacher will be retiring at the end of the current term after 24 years in post.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This happy school provides pupils with a satisfactory all-round quality of education. Its greatest strength lies in the way that it helps them to enjoy their time at school and make good progress in their personal development. Parents hold very positive views of Abingdon. Typical comments are that they find staff very helpful, 'The atmosphere is calm and settled,' and 'The school has a lovely village community feel with children of all ages interacting.'

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. Children join the Reception year with skills below those expected for their age. For the past two years results at the end of Year 2 have been significantly below average, with a particular weakness in the standard of writing. Towards the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' progress speeds up leading to results that are broadly average in mathematics and science but below average in English, due to well below average writing standards. The unvalidated results for 2007 show some improvement at the end of Key Stage 1 and in mathematics standards throughout the school.

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy everything that the school has to offer and grow into responsible, confident young people who act safely and have a good understanding of how to live healthily. They are polite, cooperate well and have positive attitudes to learning, all of which stand them in good stead for their future economic well-being. All staff offer pupils good quality care, guidance and support that successfully foster their growing maturity. Warm relationships between adults and pupils build an atmosphere of trust in which pupils are confident to seek help. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers are hard working, organise lessons well and make the point of them clear to pupils. They mark pupils' work diligently and supportively but they seldom provide precise guidance about the next steps to take and do not always follow up on the comments that they do make.

The satisfactory curriculum offers pupils good opportunities to experience a wide range of extra activities and visits. However, the links made between subjects, particularly opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills across a range of subjects, are limited. The headteacher, who is well respected by pupils, parents, staff and the wider community, is at the hub of the supportive family atmosphere that pervades the school. Satisfactory leadership and management have brought about some improvement since the previous inspection, for example provision in the Foundation Stage and for physical education is now satisfactory. However, other areas for development remain. For example, monitoring procedures lack rigour and consistency. The leadership has a broad understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development but this is overly positive because it is not based on sufficiently precise analysis of information. The assessment system records pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics on an annual basis. However, it does not provide a readily accessible overview of those who are moving forward more swiftly or more slowly than expected. This means that leaders and class teachers do not always adapt provision as quickly as they could to help pupils achieve well. Good quality partnerships with a range of outside agencies strengthen the opportunities available for pupils and the support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's capacity to improve and the value for money it provides are satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's all-round skills are below those expected for their age both when they join the Reception year and when they enter Year 1. Progress is satisfactory. Their weakest skills are in communication. By the end of the Reception year children's speaking and counting skills have moved forward more strongly than their reading or writing. The good attention paid to helping children settle confidently in the bright, inviting environment ensures that they are happy in school and interested in learning. Focused and well timed whole-class sessions successfully develop, for example, children's understanding of initial sounds. The outdoor area provides a great space for riding wheeled vehicles or having picnics but is not yet fully exploited to develop all areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Ensure that teachers' marking provides precise guidance for pupils on how to improve their work.
- Develop the assessment system so that leaders and class teachers can identify clearly pupils' progress through the year and use the information to promote good progress for all pupils.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels monitor with rigour the school's practice and its impact on pupils' achievement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' progress is uneven as they move through the school. It is satisfactory overall and generally swifter for older pupils. In mathematics at both key stages the proportion of pupils gaining the expected level for their age has risen for three years and at the end of Year 6 this is now above the national average. Progress in this subject is good, although few pupils achieve the higher levels. Science standards are broadly average, with greater emphasis placed on pupils securing knowledge than developing investigative skills. Progress in English is satisfactory. Pupils achieve well in reading but weak standards of writing at both key stages lead to below average standards in this subject. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress alongside their peers. Those who speak different languages at home or arrive as newcomers to the country quickly become as proficient in English as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident as soon you walk through the doors of the school. Friendly faces, a warm welcome and a desire to include others in their activities create a strong feeling of community. This was vividly demonstrated by the coffee morning held in aid of Cancer Relief organised by Year 6 pupils who confidently offered refreshments to adults, chatted and provided a competition for younger pupils. School council members help to sort out others' problems; their suggestions and fundraising have led to

improvements in the playground and safer playtimes. Pupils respond well to staff's consistent reminders and support so that their behaviour is good in lessons and around school. They are willing to reflect on their actions and, through links with a school in Uganda, are aware of other cultures. Pupils appreciate the after-school clubs and also the weekly 'walking bus' that helps them to reach school healthily and safely. The great majority attend school regularly and arrive on time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good quality relationships, skilful behaviour management and teachers' sound subject knowledge ensure that lessons are orderly, purposeful and pupils make satisfactory progress. Teachers give clear instructions and ask pupils to explain their answers but seldom ask really probing questions to challenge the more able pupils or help deepen their understanding. In some classrooms, teachers make good use of pupils' prior learning and lessons move at a good pace. Elsewhere, pupils are expected to sit for a long time listening and then they take too much time to get down to individual work. Teachers adapt activities for pupils' different abilities and provide them with helpful guidance while they work. Teaching assistants are deployed well to supervise small groups but their time is not always used to best effect during whole-group sessions. Teachers mark pupils' work diligently with supportive comments and are beginning to provide targets for them in English and mathematics. Pupils' progress is hindered, however, because the marking does not provide sufficiently precise guidance about the next steps to take in order to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum places suitable emphasis on promoting pupils' literacy and numeracy skills with a range of extra support sessions for those who find learning difficult. Although some good quality links are made between subjects, for example in Year 6 pupils' work on the Second World War, opportunities for developing pupils' writing skills across the curriculum are limited. Information and communication technology is seldom used other than in lessons specific to the subject. The curriculum successfully broadens pupils' horizons through, for example, visits from theatre groups, two residential stays and the teaching of French from Year 1 upwards. Pupils' personal, social and health education is well promoted throughout the day. Strong links with the neighbouring secondary school and outside agencies enhance the provision across a range of subjects with a particular emphasis on physical activity and sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good quality care, guidance and support mean that, as parents comment, 'Children are confident and relaxed in school.' Pupils are willing to share their troubles, whether through the 'worry box', or directly to staff or older buddies, because they know that they will be helped to overcome them. The learning mentor offers successful individual and group sessions for those with more deep-seated concerns and these sessions help pupils cope with their problems and concentrate on learning. Good quality diagnosis and support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including liaison with outside agencies, enables them to make similar progress

to their peers. Close working between primary and secondary school staff means that pupils are well prepared for transition to the next stage of their education. Procedures are in place to ensure child protection and health and safety. Pupils are beginning to evaluate how well they understand what they are learning and mostly know their targets but because of imprecision in teachers' marking they are not always sufficiently clear about how to reach them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leaders and managers run a school that operates smoothly and in which each individual is well known and valued. Parents appreciate the ready availability of staff at all levels. Staff enjoy working at the school and feel well supported. Pupils say that 'Most people like learning here because it is fun'. They make good progress in their personal development and achieve satisfactorily academically. Governors meet regularly and are supportive of the school. Financial management is sound.

Inconsistent formal monitoring of the school's provision and evaluation of its impact mean that leaders have a generalised rather than sharply analysed view of strengths and areas for development. Subject leaders have little or no time to conduct this important activity, although the headteacher and local authority adviser have in the last year observed lessons and provided useful feedback to teachers. The school development plan for the past year rightly identified the need to improve monitoring but this has not taken place. Along with other areas in the forward plans, it is unclear who has responsibility for ensuring their implementation.

The system for tracking pupils' progress is unwieldy and relates to only three subject areas. It does not highlight sufficiently clearly for leaders and teachers where individuals' strengths and weaknesses lie. The use of targets is inconsistent. Leaders were not able to provide information about the targets set for the percentage of pupils expected to achieve the higher levels in English or mathematics over the past two years. The school failed to reach the targets set for the expected level in English in either year and greatly exceeded those set for mathematics in 2007. However, all staff are clear about priorities, willing to adapt their ways of working and have successfully brought about improvement, for example in the Foundation Stage and standards in mathematics. There is a strong commitment to pupils and determination to move the school forward.

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.

Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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 the warm welcome that you gave to Ms Barker and me when we visited Abingdon recently. We agree with you that it is a very friendly school where everyone helps to make each other feel at home. Particular thanks should go to those of you who spoke to us, especially members of the school council who gave up some of their precious lunchtime. I would now like to share with you what we found out about Abingdon.

Yours is a satisfactory school. It is really good at helping you to grow in confidence and helps you make satisfactory progress in your work. You and your parents were understandably full of praise for the good quality care that staff offer you. You get on well with each other and with adults and are happy to take on responsibilities. You act safely and sensibly, behave well and understand about living healthily. Children in the Reception class and those getting ready to move on to secondary school are given good help to settle as smoothly as possible. You enjoy learning and particularly like the extra activities such as clubs. It was good to hear all about Year 4 pupils' great time at Kingswood and Year 6 pupils' anticipation of their residential visit. Your teachers explain clearly what they want you to do in lessons and help you to think about your work. The senior staff know what needs to improve in the school and we have asked them to concentrate especially on:

- helping you to improve the quality of your writing
- making sure that teachers' marking helps you understand how to improve your work
- clearly recording your progress and using the information to help you achieve well
- checking on how well the school provides for your needs and using the information when making decisions about any changes.

Your job will be to continue to enjoy school and to try especially hard with your writing.