

Abercrombie Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112670
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	310975
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2008
Reporting inspector	John Foster

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	224
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Ann Denman
Headteacher	Mr Neil Oates
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Victoria Street Chesterfield Derbyshire S41 7LP
Telephone number	01246 232 425
Fax number	01246 555 221

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is average in size, including children in the Nursery and Reception Year of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Currently a new school is being built to replace the present Victorian building. The school is situated in an area of significant social disadvantage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Though most pupils are of White British heritage with English as their first language, approximately 10% are of minority ethnic backgrounds. When they start school, children's attainment is that expected for their age though their language skills are underdeveloped. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a below average though the proportion requiring a statement of special educational needs is average. The school has gained several awards including: Investors in People, Health Promoting School Standard, Quality Mark for Basic Skills, Active Mark, Eco Award and Arts Mark Gold Award. It was the first school to receive the local authority's Quality Mark for Music.

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. This judgement closely matches the school's evaluation of its performance. The headteacher leads the school well and inspires the staff to work effectively so that the pupils make good progress. The senior managers are fully involved in decision making about the school's performance and its future. However, subject coordinators are not empowered to check their subjects as effectively as they could. As a result, they are not all sure about how well their subjects are taught, nor the standards reached across the school. Governors support the headteacher well and have worked together unstintingly on the building plans to secure the school's long-term future. Parents are supportive of the school. As one wrote: 'We travel five miles to the school, and to see the progress children make - it is worth it.'

Children in the Nursery make consistently good progress throughout their time in school. By the end of Year 6 their attainment is above average. However, there was a dip in attainment during the period 2006 to 2007, when pupils' attainment in the Year 6 national tests fell to average levels. Through analysis of the results and effective teaching, this trend has been turned around. Consequently, the school's data show that in 2008 pupils' attainment was above average. Pupils who find learning difficult and some of the more able make satisfactory progress because their needs are not always identified clearly. The major reason for the good progress pupils make overall is the good, and at times exceptional, teaching they receive. Teachers move learning on at a fast pace. Pupils react to the good relationships they have with the teachers by applying themselves well to their work. Whilst some teachers plan well to ensure that the work matches pupils' abilities, this practice is inconsistent across the school.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils have clear understanding about how they should behave towards each other and they support each other well both in class and in the playground. They eat healthily and take an active role in the many sporting activities provided for them. Pupils are fully involved in working in the community, both within the school and in the local area. They are developing their awareness and understanding of diverse cultures within Britain and globally. The school council works to ensure that all children are engaged in activities and because of this, pupils say that they do not feel left out and unhappy.

The pastoral care in the school is exceptional. All systems to ensure that pupils' welfare is foremost are firmly in place and, as a result, pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school. The academic guidance, though good, is less secure. The school is using efficient methods for tracking pupils' progress and is using this to support learning. However, the systems are not yet established well enough into the school's work to help pupils to know how best to improve their work. The school provides a good curriculum with an excellent range of activities to extend learning beyond the normal school day. These activities include many sporting activities and a good range of musical opportunities. Pupils appreciate these and they are a key factor in pupils' evident enjoyment of school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to their education because of the well-planned provision and consistently good teaching. They make good progress ensuring that their attainment at the end of Reception is in line with national expectations in all areas of learning. Staff in both the Reception and Nursery classes provide a secure and interesting environment where children

learn quickly and happily. The children develop good social skills, behave well and help each other. Well structured activities have a significant impact on children's personal development as well as encouraging understanding in number and language skills. As a result, children show interest and curiosity in things around them and show signs of developing independence in their learning. Teachers keep detailed records of how children's skills develop and use this information effectively to match the activities to the children's needs. The good range of indoor resources support children's learning well, though many of these resources require replacement. The Nursery uses the outdoor area successfully to support all areas of learning, although the provision for Reception children to develop their learning through outdoor activity is inadequate. Children are confident with the staff and are independent in the way they access the resources in the classroom. Staff in the Nursery and Reception classes work well as a team under the dedicated guidance of the EYFS co-ordinator. There is regular liaison with parents who speak highly of the care and support their children receive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers consistently plan appropriate work to meet the needs of all groups of pupils.
- Develop the role of the subject coordinators to enable them to check their subjects more effectively.
- Monitor pupils' needs more closely to ensure all pupils make similar progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well from average starting points to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress in the EYFS and Key Stage 1, and this continues through Key Stage 2. A major factor in the good achievement is the good teaching they receive. At Key Stage 1, pupils consistently attain above average levels. The 2007 national tests indicated a fall in standards at Year 6 to average levels. However, the school has analysed the results of these tests and addressed the issues raised. Consequently, results in 2008, though not yet validated against national figures, show a marked increase in pupils' attainment and this is once again above average. The current Year 6 achieve well and inspection evidence supports the school's predictions that the higher attainment levels will be maintained. Pupils who have learning difficulties and those identified as having particular gifts and talents make satisfactory progress in their learning. Their progress is not yet monitored well enough to inform teachers what these groups of pupils need to be taught in order to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and have good attitudes to learning. They are friendly, polite and very proud of their school. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They understand the clear boundaries of right and wrong responding well to the commendations for good behaviour, attendance and work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are sensitive towards the feelings of others and show respect for other cultures and customs within our British society and globally. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, both through eating sensibly and taking exercise. Year 6 pupils relish the opportunity to take on responsibility as school monitors and supporting the younger children. The school council plays an active role in the life of the school including the

redevelopment of the Abercrombie Park and planning for the new school. Pupils regularly raise money for a wide range of charities and make a considerable contribution to the local community. The school choir and brass band are popular performers in town events, residential homes, community centres and places of worship. Pupils gain the basic skills needed for secondary school and acquire a good range of personal skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress throughout the school because they are taught consistently well throughout the school. Teachers enjoy good relationships with their pupils who behave well so that little time is wasted in lessons. As one boy told inspectors, 'We like this school because our teachers make lessons fun and we learn a lot.' Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the pupils react well by settling down to work quickly and confidently. The quality of teachers' planning is variable across the school. At its best, it clearly identifies what pupils are to be taught and takes into account the different abilities of the pupils to enable them to make good progress. Too often, however, the planning fails to identify individual needs and, as a result, all pupils are given similar work irrespective of their needs and learning slows. Teachers work hard to create an attractive environment for learning in their classrooms and the children appreciate this. The quality of teachers' marking is good, identifying for the children what they are doing well and how they can improve their work further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality and range of extra-curricular activities provided is excellent and is reflected in pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils are introduced to the French language as part of their curriculum. The school recognises the value of the arts and much of its work recognises this. Pupils are given opportunities to learn to play a range musical instruments, including the guitar and woodwind instruments, and come together to make music and to sing. The school brass band plays well and accompanies the singing in assemblies. Visits and visitors are used well to help pupils with their learning. The older pupils undertake residential visits to such places as the Isle of Wight and North Yorkshire and they gain much benefit from these visits, both intellectually and socially. The school enjoys close links with the local church and the town's museum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides outstanding pastoral care for its pupils. All staff in the school gives this a high priority resulting in pupils who are safe, secure and happy. Pupils feel valued as individuals and appreciate the family feel of the school. Links with outside agencies are good and provide effective additional support for many pupils. Legal requirements for safeguarding are fully in place and there are strong procedures to protect the most vulnerable pupils. The inclusive nature of the school ensures that all pupils are welcome. There is enhanced provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language. Effective steps are taken to help pupils transfer to their next stage of education. The school has been successful in improving the level of attendance which is now in line with the national average. Assessment information is used to

measure pupil progress. However, the regular checks made to track progress are not sufficiently rigorous to identify and support all pupils who require additional support with their work. All pupils have academic targets which are based on previous attainment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an inspirational and motivational leader. The senior leadership team support him well and are involved in the school's evaluation of its performance and in planning for its future. Challenging targets are set and the school works well to meet them. The quality of subject leadership is variable. This is because leaders do not have the opportunities to observe colleagues at work and as a result are unsure about the standards and the progress pupils make across the school. Governance is good. Governors hold the school to account for its work and support the headteacher well; they have worked continuously to secure the funding for and ensuring that the school's and the community's future needs are met in providing the new school. The school works well to develop community cohesion. An in-depth assessment has been carried out to ascertain the school's current position and appropriate action has been taken to improve pupils' awareness of and involvement within the wider community, nationally and globally. The good progress made by pupils and the strong leadership, particularly by the headteacher, place the school in a good position to improve further.

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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?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

1 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abercrombie Primary School, Chesterfield, S41 7LP

This letter is to thank you for the welcome you gave Mr Walker and I when we came to inspect your school recently. I would like to thank you for helping us with our work and to tell you what we found out about your school.

You are fortunate to go to a good school where Mr Oates and the staff care about you very much. You are taught well and this helps you to make good progress during your time at Abercrombie. You told us that you enjoy school because the teachers make learning fun. We agree! You get on well together and you respect your teachers so that you behave well for them in class and around the school. The school council works well to make sure that none of you is left out of activities in the playground. You know that you should exercise and eat healthy food, and you enjoy the healthy dinners provided for you. The staff provide an excellent range of activities for you outside school time, such as music and sport. The school band is very good.

In order to make the school even better, we have asked Mr Oates, the staff and governors to:

- make sure that you all get just the work you need to help you to make the best progress you can
- allow the teachers to check on what is happening throughout the school in all subjects
- make sure that all groups of children at the school are taught as well as other groups.

You can help too by always trying to be in school.

With all best wishes for the future, especially as you move to your new school.

Yours sincerely

John Foster

Lead inspector