

Abbotswood Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116482
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312333
Inspection date	15 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	611
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Stevens
Headteacher	Mrs Tina Bunting
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Ringwood Road Totton Southampton SO40 8EB
Telephone number	02380 863159
Fax number	02380 660134

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the quality of teaching and learning, how well pupils make progress in mathematics, how well pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve. The inspector gathered evidence from an analysis of information and data about pupils' achievement provided by the school, observations of parts of lessons, parents' questionnaires and discussions with the headteacher, three deputy head teachers, a group of governors and the school's mathematics and inclusion managers. The inspector did not investigate other aspects of the school's work in detail, but found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These judgements have been included in the report.

Description of the school

Abbotswood is a very large junior school in Totton on the outskirts of Southampton. The local community comprises of a mixture of both privately owned and housing association properties, although over half the pupils live outside the immediate catchment area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and pupils' social circumstances are typical of those found nationally. The school holds the following awards: Investors in People, Healthy Schools - Enhanced, Sports Activemark, Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Abbotswood is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive, and pupils are very proud of their school. One parent summed up the views of many when writing, 'Abbotswood provides a safe and friendly atmosphere where pupils are given opportunity to explore, enjoy and experience a wide range of subjects and activities.' Another commented, 'It has a wonderful team of staff who are very friendly and approachable.'

The trigger for the school's success is the positive atmosphere and the importance placed on developing the pupils to become confident and caring and to have a love of learning. From average starting points, pupils make good progress overall and by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in science and English though at the national average in mathematics. Achievement is good overall because it is strong in science and English and it is satisfactory, though improving in mathematics. Senior staff are aware of the need to speed pupils' progress and to raise standards in mathematics. For this reason, they are rightly focusing on strengthening teachers' planning in mathematics and increasing the proportion of pupils that gain the higher level in national tests. For example, focus groups have been established to boost the progress of pupils. In the past, progress for pupils that have learning difficulties or disabilities has been slower than other pupils. This is not now the case because senior leaders have changed the support provided for these pupils. Early identification of needs backed up by rigorous and thorough assessments of their current position, enables the high quality support provided by learning support staff to meet the pupils' current needs. This has accelerated these pupils' achievement to match others.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are articulate, have highly developed social skills, and thoroughly enjoy taking a full part in the life of the school. Their behaviour is excellent both in lessons and around the school. Their social awareness extends well beyond the school and is evident, for example, in the wide range of charity fundraising activities selected and supported by the pupils and their links with other schools, particularly in sporting activities. Gifted and talented pupils have relished the responsibility to create maths activities using information and communication technology (ICT) for other pupils to use. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and are keen to point out with pride the healthy tuckshop that is available and the wide range of physical activities they enjoy.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Classrooms are calm and have a positive atmosphere of industry and enjoyment. Pupils generally concentrate well and provide thoughtful responses to the teachers' questions. This is because in most instances, teachers make lessons interesting with good quality activities that are matched well to pupils' abilities. However, this is not always the case and, on occasion, work is sometimes too easy or too hard for pupils particularly in mathematics. Learning support staff support pupils well both in lessons and in small group sessions. Teachers mark pupils' work well and are skilled at helping pupils to understand what they need to do to improve. The school makes good use of specialist teaching in for example, ICT, games, and Spanish. In addition, teachers make good use of ICT to support learning and the school's own virtual learning environment the 'Moodle' enables teachers to provide focussed activities, including homework, for their pupils. Many pupils commented favourably about how this facility has helped their learning.

The curriculum is excellent. Teachers take great care to bring learning to life. During the inspection, for example, Year 5 pupils were enjoying a residential visit to a Tudor mansion and were involved in a wide range of history based activities. There is a strong musical tradition in the school with pupils having the opportunity to learn to play a wide range of instruments. The school helps celebrate achievements by providing regular opportunities for public performances. In addition, there is a very strong focus on sporting activities and there is an exceptionally wide range of opportunities for sports and games as extra activities. The richness of the curriculum is greatly appreciated by the pupils. School councillors commented, 'we enjoy going on trips and we have lots of things to look forward to.'

The high quality of care, guidance and support is another of the school's excellent features. This brings positive benefits and is an important key in the nurturing environment that the school provides. Many pupils and parents commented on how friendly and supportive all the staff are and this helps them to feel safe and valued. Even though the school is large, each pupil is treated as an individual. There has been a significant improvement in the use of data since the previous inspection. Staff use assessment information exceptionally well to check on pupils' individual progress and to set challenging targets for improvement. The procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are rigorous and meet current regulations.

Leadership and management are excellent. The new headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She is ably assisted by the senior leadership team and the well-informed and effective subject and year group leaders. She has maintained the very strong aspects of leadership and management identified at the time of the previous inspection. She has built on these successes and has brought considerable rigour to the school's evaluations of its provision and pupils' achievements. These are accurate and has enabled the very well-targeted improvement projects that have been introduced to impact positively on pupils' progress and raising standards. This is particularly marked in the achievement of pupils that find learning hard. Governance is good and improving. Governors are committed to supporting the school and a recent re-evaluation of their role means that they are now in a stronger position to question the school's effectiveness and to look for ways to improve. The good improvement made since the previous inspection and the excellence of the school's senior leadership and management demonstrates excellent capacity for future improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by increasing the proportion of pupils who gain the higher level at the end of Year 6.
- Strengthen the consistency in teaching and learning to bring all lessons up to the quality of the best.

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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	1

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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

24 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abbotswood Junior School, Southampton, SO40 8EB

Thank you for welcoming me to your school when I visited you recently. I enjoyed meeting you and watching you learn and play. I was pleased to hear that you really enjoy school and learning. Your parents also told me that you like school.

Your school is good and getting better. You told me that you feel really safe in school and I can see that this is because the staff take excellent care of you. The adults work hard for you and the teaching is good. I was impressed with your levels of concentration and your good learning in lessons and how well you know your targets and how to improve your work. As a result you achieve well and reach high standards in English and science. Your progress overall is good.

I have asked your headteacher and teachers to do two things. First to make sure that standards in mathematics are improved by more of you gaining the higher level by the time that you leave. I have also asked that all lessons should be as good as the best and in particular to make sure that your teachers plan lessons that give challenging activities for you all whether you find learning hard or easier.

Best wishes for the future.

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector.