

# Abington High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120311
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313583
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mark Phillips HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10–14
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	702
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Geoffrey Hall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alex Green
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 May 2003
<b>School address</b>	Station Road Wigston Magna LE18 2DU
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 2881228
<b>Fax number</b>	0116 2880854

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<b>Age group</b>	10-14
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Abington High School is a larger than average, middle deemed secondary school, situated in the Wigston All Saints ward. Most pupils join the school from three nearby primary schools, although a minority come from schools outside the normal catchment area. Whilst pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, the large majority are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average, as is the number known to be entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these come to the school with emotional, social or behavioural problems or have moderate learning difficulties.

Abington High School holds the Sportsmark and Artsmark Gold awards, along with the National Inclusion Quality Mark, the Basic Skills Mark, and the International Schools Award. In January 2008, the school was awarded Specialist Arts College status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Abington High is a good school with outstanding strengths in the range of curriculum opportunities available to pupils and in their personal development, which prepares them very well for the next stage of their education. Writing to inspectors, a parent said that she was most impressed with the way that Abington High School focuses 'on the whole child, not just the academic side'. There is no doubting the dedication of the headteacher and staff in providing a good education and outstanding care for children at Abington. Pupils' good attendance and outstanding behaviour reflect the pride and enjoyment that they too have in their school.

Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from below average standards when they join Abington to broadly average standards by the end of Year 9. Standards in English are better than in mathematics and science at both Key Stages 2 and 3. Pupils make good progress because good teaching helps them to learn well. Teachers' good subject knowledge and thorough planning complement pupils' outstanding attitudes. There are some notable examples of outstanding teaching that make full use of these excellent conditions for learning, keeping pupils constantly on their toes and challenged to reach the highest standards, whatever their ability. However, pupils do not play such an active part in the minority of lessons where learning objectives are not as demanding.

Abington has recently been granted specialist school status in the performing arts in partnership with two other local high schools and the upper school. This has already brought the benefit of improved resources and additional curriculum opportunities, particularly in media, and information and communication technology (ICT). The partnership work in music with primary schools is particularly noteworthy, sharing specialist teaching to support primary pupils and developing good musical skills and experience before pupils transfer to Abington.

Leadership and management are outstanding, and the school provides outstanding value for money. The highly respected headteacher leads the school with a passionate belief in how the school can increase pupils' life chances. Another parent described this vision as 'the school's biggest asset' and inspectors agree that the school's commitment to social inclusion is exemplary, realised in the good academic progress and outstanding personal development made by all groups of pupils. Partnership work with parents and other outside agencies to promote pupils' well-being is also exemplary, and parents are overwhelmingly positive about every aspect of the school's work. The school's capacity for further improvement is outstanding. Self-evaluation and development planning celebrate the school's many strengths and give a clear focus on further improving provision and raising standards. Governors are well organised and supportive, although their role in challenging the school to reach even higher standards is more limited. Since the last inspection there has been particularly good improvement in the use of ICT across the curriculum. The school has worked hard, taking every opportunity to engage with national strategies and innovations, to ensure that all teachers have a shared understanding about the importance of well-structured lessons. However, the need remains to share more effectively across all staff the very best practice, where outstanding and inspiring teaching enables pupils to make outstanding progress, ensuring greater consistency of learning in all lessons and further raise the standards achieved by pupils by the time they leave the school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- More effectively share the best practice in teaching to further improve pupils' learning in lessons.

- Raise standards at Key Stage 2 and further raise standards at Key Stage 3, particularly in science and mathematics.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Assessments made when pupils join Abington at the start of Year 6 suggest that their standards have declined since the end of Key Stage 1, when they achieved broadly average standards. After two terms at Abington, pupils' Key Stage 2 test results are below average overall, with English performing better than science and mathematics. In 2007, the school did not meet its agreed targets for these tests.

Progress is significantly better in Key Stage 3. By the time they take their Year 9 tests, pupils' overall standards have risen back to being broadly in line with the national average in all core subjects, again with better standards achieved in English than in mathematics and science. Overall, this represents good progress from the standards of their work when they joined the school. Lessons and work seen during the inspection showed that pupils currently in the school are making good progress overall. They make outstanding progress in some individual subjects such as music and humanities.

From their below average starting point at the end of Year 6, the school sets very challenging targets for pupils' achievement by the time they leave Abington. Whilst these targets were missed in 2007, they represent the school's ambition for the even higher standards that pupils could achieve.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils enjoy being at school and getting involved in the wide range of opportunities presented to them. Their attendance is above average, and improving. They quickly form good relationships with each other and with adults in the school. They show a great deal of consideration and support for each other, both in and out of lessons. The vast majority of pupils behave extremely well with just a very small number needing support in meeting the school's high expectations. The frequency of fixed-period exclusions is below average. The school council enables pupils to express their views within school and beyond and they really feel as though they have made a difference through, for example, the refurbishment of the toilets and additional play facilities. Pupils work safely in lessons and treat the school environment with respect. There are very few bullying or racist incidents, and any that do occur are dealt with effectively. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, encouraged by teachers taking every opportunity to discuss these issues in assemblies and lessons. Pupils follow healthy lifestyles through eating properly and taking part in a good range of sporting activities at lunchtime and after school. When they leave the school in Year 9, pupils are confident and mature young people who have made an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and the wider community, particularly through charity fund raising. They have made good progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and have developed excellent social skills, and are therefore very well prepared for their future lives.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress in their learning. Teachers show good subject knowledge and working relationships with pupils are excellent. There is some outstanding teaching where learning comes from an exciting, vibrant dialogue between pupils and teacher and where pupils have every opportunity to work independently. These lessons challenge the highest attaining pupils to the limit of their capacities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, are also supported well. However, there is also a minority of lessons where pupil participation is more restricted, there is not an appropriate range of challenge to stretch all abilities, and pupils make only satisfactory progress. It is, however, to pupils' credit that, whatever the teaching style or activity, behaviour is always very good and this helps them to get the best from each lesson and their teachers' subject expertise. Pupils' work is marked regularly. Most marking includes comments that praise and encourage; the best instances provide detailed, directed advice to promote pupils' rapid improvement.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It goes beyond all statutory requirements and meets the needs of all pupils very well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. From Year 6, pupils benefit from specialist subject provision. Resources and facilities are good in all subject areas. A range of alternative programmes enhances provision for individuals and groups of pupils. For example, a group of Years 8 and 9 pupils attend the local further education college to experience work-based learning in areas such as beauty and travel. There is an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. Instrumental groups, school productions, sports activities and the ICT club broaden pupils' experiences and develop their interests and skills. Pupils say they enjoy these opportunities and participation rates are high. An outstanding programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship includes financial management and supports the acquisition of life skills that prepare pupils well for the next stages of education and the world of work. Pupils are encouraged to be active citizens through participation in a variety of visits and competitions. These include Young Citizen of the Year and the Diana Memorial Award.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The school takes excellent care of its pupils and tailors guidance to their individual needs. Parents are particularly happy with the support offered to their children. All child protection policies and procedures are securely in place and reviewed regularly. The Year 6 induction process ensures that all pupils are helped to settle in quickly. They arrive with a wide range of needs. The school effectively diagnoses their difficulties and responds with appropriate programmes of support, including the personalised learning programmes which have enabled many pupils to make good progress. Comprehensive tracking systems enable teachers to monitor how well pupils are doing and apply appropriate interventions. Links with the nearby upper school and Connexions service are strong so transitions are managed efficiently. The school makes good use of outside agencies to provide specialist help to support pupils' well-being. A

notable strength is the way this support network is managed so that all aspects of a pupil's needs are tackled very effectively. The appointment of two learning mentors is having a positive effect on pupils' behaviour and decreasing the number of incidents that lead to exclusion.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher leads the school with passion and vision, complemented well by the experienced senior management team. Together with teachers and support staff, they make teamwork a real strength of the school and help to create an extremely positive school ethos. Middle managers efficiently translate the school's aims into effective practices, ensuring that no pupil's background is a barrier to good academic progress and outstanding personal progress. The headteacher and staff have actively embraced a range of strategies and innovations that have improved pupils' education and care.

The school systematically monitors all levels of performance. Whilst the school's self-evaluation is more descriptive than evaluative of its many strengths, development plans demonstrate a much clearer understanding of what is needed to improve further. There are excellent plans in all curriculum areas. Governors are supportive and knowledgeable, and all have family roots in the school and the community it serves. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met and that the school is managed efficiently, although they play a more limited role in setting challenging targets to further improve standards. Nevertheless, the school provides outstanding value for money. Resources are deployed well to ensure specialist teaching for all, well-equipped classrooms, excellent support services, and impressively maintained accommodation.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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?	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	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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

4 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abington High School, Wigston Magna, LE18 2DU

You may remember that we visited Abington a few weeks ago. We certainly remember meeting many of you, either in lessons, around the school or in the school council meeting. One of your parents told us that Abington was a school that 'taught manners and respect' and she is absolutely right. You made us extremely welcome and, for that, we are grateful. Thank you!

We were pleased to hear your views about the school, as well as those from your parents who took the time to write to us or returned our questionnaire. We agree that Abington is a good school with some outstanding strengths, including the leadership of your headteacher and senior team, and the care given to you by your teachers. This excellent support helps you to make outstanding progress in your personal development. Your behaviour is particularly outstanding, and I would like to congratulate you particularly for that because it is important in helping your teachers provide good lessons. We were also particularly impressed with the many extra clubs and activities on offer, and with the good work you do to help others through charity fund raising. Well done!

What could the school do to improve even more? Well, although you do well to make good progress by the end of Year 9, when your test results are in line with the results of other pupils around the country, we think that you could do even better – particularly in maths and science. We have asked your teachers to share their ideas about what helps you learn best in lessons and challenge you to reach the highest levels. We know, from your excellent attitudes and the excellent support that your parents give the school, that you will continue to strive for success and work with your teachers so that Abington can continue to go from strength to strength.

Thank you very much again for the part that you played in this inspection, and good luck with your future education at Abington or as you move to college.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips Her Majesty's Inspector



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