

# Abington Vale Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121923
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314149
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alison Grainger

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	259
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jackie Frampton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Freda Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 November 2002
<b>School address</b>	Ashford Close Abington Vale Northampton NN3 3NQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 635071
<b>Fax number</b>	01604 230703

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<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school serves the surrounding area of mainly owner occupied housing although a few pupils travel from other parts of Northampton. Most pupils are White British and about a fifth of pupils are from other ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average. Attainment on entry to the Reception Year is currently at the level expected although it has been higher than this in the past.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005 HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards are broadly average across the school but these standards are too low for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Pupils in these year groups entered the school with attainment above the level expected for their age and they attained standards that were significantly above average at the end of Year 2. As pupils move up from the start of Year 3 to the end of Year 6, their progress is inconsistent. Many pupils of average and above average ability fail to move on at an acceptable rate. It is not surprising that many parents are concerned about their children's unsatisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6, with some having resorted to employing private tutors.

Teaching is inconsistent and is inadequate overall because it does not ensure that pupils make sufficient progress during their time in the school. While there are instances of satisfactory and even good teaching, generally it is not adequately matched to pupils' needs in Years 3 to 6. Expectations of the standards average and more able pupils should attain are too low. The curriculum does not meet pupils' needs in Years 3 to 6 with thin coverage of subjects such as science.

The picture is better lower down the school. Satisfactory provision in the Reception Year gets children off to a reasonable start. Children settle quickly in school and their parents appreciate this. This adequate start is maintained in Years 1 and 2 although there are some occasions when the average and more able pupils do not have their needs met.

The overall quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is inadequate because of shortcomings in the academic guidance and in monitoring pupils' progress. While there are some examples of pupils being given helpful guidance about how to improve their work, for many pupils such guidance is weak. The result is that many pupils do not know clearly how well they are doing or how they can improve their performance. This is a further area of concern for a significant number of parents who say that they have difficulty in finding out about their children's performance. In contrast, the pastoral care is good. A good number of parents, particularly those of younger children, say how much they appreciate the school's family atmosphere.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall, with many good features. Pupils behave well although they can become fidgety and restless when teaching does not engage their interest. Their understanding of how to keep fit, healthy and safe is good. They contribute well to the school and wider community. While the school has parents who value what it offers, others see it as having lost its way. Inspectors agree with those parents who say that the school is not well led and managed. Leadership and management are inadequate. Roles and responsibilities are insufficiently developed and are not focused on ensuring that pupils do as well as they should. Self-evaluation is weak. There is little analysis of how teaching and the curriculum influence pupils' progress. As a result, the school does not have an accurate awareness of its effectiveness or of what needs improving. The school has made poor progress since the last inspection and lacks the capacity to make the necessary improvements.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Teaching and the curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year) are satisfactory. The range of learning opportunities promotes adequate progress in all areas of learning. The vast majority of children are on course to reach the standards expected for their age at the end of the school year. However, activities are not always finely tuned to all children's needs, particularly when whole-class sessions are long. Children's learning is more effective when adults provide focused teaching for small groups. There is a satisfactory balance of activities that are led by adults and those that children select for themselves from a range provided. Appropriate attention is given to children's personal and social development. Children quickly gain confidence and learn the school routines. They behave well and work and play amicably together. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Some sensible priorities for improvement have been identified, such as development of the outdoor provision.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress and ensure that all pupils reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Ensure that teaching and the curriculum are closely matched to all pupils' needs and that expectations of all pupils are high enough.
- Provide all pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their performance.
- Develop the roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers at all levels and make sure that they are accountable for pupils' progress.
- Rigorously analyse how teaching and the curriculum influence pupils' progress and take swift action for improvement.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Although standards are broadly average, pupils' achievement is inadequate. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 started Year 3 with standards that were significantly above average. Their results in the end of Year 2 tests and assessments were exceptionally high in reading and writing. Pupils in Year 3 had above average attainment at the end of Year 2. However, standards in Years 3 to 6 now are no higher than average. Pupils' progress is too patchy as they move up from the start of Year 3 to the end of Year 6. Too many of average and higher ability fall behind.

Children make adequate progress in the Reception Year and this is sustained in Years 1 and 2. Standards in the end of Year 2 assessments in 2007 were above average, representing satisfactory progress in relation to the year group's starting points on entry to Reception. The overall progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Pupils at an early stage of learning English make reasonable gains in their acquisition of English language.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. There are real strengths in moral and social development, evident in pupils' good behaviour and positive relationships. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community. The fairly active school council is proud of its successes, for example in getting a 'buddy bench' on the playground

to help pupils find a friend at break times. Pupils are aware of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and donate money to charities. They enjoy being with their friends in school and value the good range of clubs and additional activities. Enjoyment is reduced when lessons do not capture pupils' interest. Attendance is above the national average. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and the importance of physical exercise. They know a lot about how to stay safe. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have benefited from first aid training and some pupils are trained as junior road safety officers. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is inadequate, however, because too many do not develop skills of which they are capable in literacy and numeracy.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

Teaching fails to meet all pupils' needs in Years 3 to 6 and this is the main reason for so many average and more able pupils underachieving. Too often there is little variation in the work set for pupils of differing capability and those of average and above average ability are not challenged. Overall, expectations of the standards pupils are capable of attaining are not high enough. Insufficient account is taken of what pupils already know, understand and can do. There is too much use of undemanding and uninspiring worksheets. While teaching promotes satisfactory progress in the Reception Year to Year 2, these weaknesses are sometimes evident in lessons in these years as well.

Although teaching is inadequate, there are examples of satisfactory and even good teaching. This is the case in Year 5 in particular. Pupils responded well in a mathematics lesson in Year 5 in which the teacher made very good use of the interactive whiteboard to support the explanations given. In this lesson, work was challenging. In most classes, teaching assistants are appropriately deployed to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is also adequate support for the few pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 4**

The curriculum does not provide pupils with the level of challenge or the depth of coverage of subjects necessary for them to make adequate progress in Years 3 to 6. Many aspects of mathematics and science, for example, are covered too thinly. The work in one year does not build well enough on that covered in the previous year. For example, the level at which Year 5 pupils are expected to work is often higher than that expected of Year 6 pupils. There are missed opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects, for example, when pupils complete undemanding worksheets in science.

The school recognises the need to make meaningful connections between subjects and to give pupils more opportunities to develop basic skills across the curriculum and is starting to review its provision for this purpose. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and contributes much to pupils' personal development and well-being, as do the opportunities for pupils to go on residential visits. A good range of after school activities is provided and also some lunchtime clubs.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 4

Although pupils' standards are recorded at regular intervals and their attainment of expected levels is checked, information on pupils' progress is not used well enough. In Years 2 and 6, in particular, pupils identified working below the expected levels for their age are given booster support. However, progress information is not used as it should be to check on how well the needs of all pupils are met. Neither is it used to set sufficiently challenging targets for individual pupils. The use of targets and marking to help pupils to improve their performance is inconsistent. There is some good practice, such as in the use of marking in Year 2 and in the use of targets in Year 5, but the overall quality of academic guidance is weak.

Pastoral care is good, including arrangements for settling children into the Reception Year. Pupils say that adults are approachable and that they have an adult to whom they can turn should the need arise. Sensitive care is provided for pupils who are unwell. The school works closely with outside agencies to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are satisfactory. Although pupils' standards are recorded at regular intervals and their attainment of expected levels is checked, information on pupils' progress is not used well enough. In Years 2 and 6, in particular, pupils identified working below the expected levels for their age are given booster support. However, progress information is not used as it should be to check on how well the needs of all pupils are met. Neither is it used to set sufficiently challenging targets for individual pupils. The use of targets and marking to help pupils to improve their performance is inconsistent. There is some good practice, such as in the use of marking in Year 2 and in the use of targets in Year 5, but the overall quality of academic guidance is weak.

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## Leadership and management

### Grade: 4

The school runs smoothly but lacks a clear educational direction. Senior leaders, staff and governors all know that pupils' achievement is not good enough in Years 3 to 6. They have provided additional resources, such as increased teaching assistant support in some classes and additional group teaching for pupils who have fallen behind, but have not looked closely enough at what the school provides to see if it is good enough. As a result of not analysing the influence of teaching and the curriculum on pupils' progress, leaders have not identified where improvements are needed. Hence, the right action has not been taken.

Leadership and management roles are underdeveloped. The headteacher is too tied up with day-by-day management to provide adequate strategic leadership. Other senior leaders and middle managers, such as subject leaders, are not held sufficiently accountable for the quality of education and pupils' progress. Some aspects of the school's work, such as the provision for personal, social and health education, are soundly led. A senior member of staff has created a

computerised system for tracking pupils' progress. This has the potential to become an effective tool to check the school's effectiveness but is not yet used well enough.



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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
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	4

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

<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>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abington Vale Primary School, Northampton, NN3 3NQ

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you. We found out that you know a lot about how to keep fit and healthy and stay safe. Your school council helps you to make a positive contribution to the school. We heard about some of your successes through the school council, such as the 'buddy bench', the snack treats each fortnight and the lunchtime activities.

You are pleasant and friendly young people. You behave well in lessons and about the school. Your attendance is good. You help other people, such as by making donations to charities.

The adults look after you well and we know that you find them approachable. You have lots of opportunities for activities additional to your lessons, such as after school clubs and sports, the choir, and four opportunities in Years 3 to 6 to go away on residential visits!

We found that your school has some big areas that need improving. We have asked the adults to:

- Make sure that you all make enough progress and reach the standards of which you are capable.
- Make sure that teaching and the curriculum are at just the right level for each of you.
- Give each of you clear guidance about how you can improve your work.
- Make sure that all the adults know exactly what their responsibilities are.
- Really carefully check up on how well the school helps you to make progress so that when improvements are needed they are made quickly.

You can help by always working hard and doing your best. Keep up the good behaviour and good attendance. Other inspectors will visit the school to see how it is getting on.

Yours faithfully

Alison Grainger Lead inspector