

# Abbey School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	880/6000
Unique Reference Number	113566
Inspection number	316962
Inspection dates	10-11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Abbey School is an independent co-educational school for children aged from birth to eleven years old. It was founded in 1951. The current proprietor has run the school since 1979. It is held in a large building, which has had additional facilities added, in St Marychurch, Torquay. There are 185 children on roll, of whom 124 are of school age; 45 of these children are aged three or four years and receive government funding. The school is also registered with Ofsted Children's Services to provide day care for up to 82 children from birth to under 8 years. Nursery and day care provision was last inspected in 2004. This is the first inspection of the school under s162A of the Education Act 2005.

*The school aims to 'ensure that our pupils reach their full potential in every area of their life, by providing an ever improving environment.'*

## Evaluation of the school

Abbey School is a well-established school, which makes good provision for the education and care of its pupils. The school achieves high standards and pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. Pupils are happy, love coming to school and are proud of their good progress and achievements. Parents are pleased with the efforts the school makes on their children's behalf and many pupils go on to attend the local grammar schools. The school meets all the regulations.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the pupils. French augments the subjects of the National Curriculum. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of physical education (PE) activities and learn to swim in the attractive indoor heated pool, which was added in 2003. In PE lessons, including swimming, there is an insistence not only on the highest standards of behaviour and safety but also on the standard of performance; the school is very successful in this area. The curriculum is well planned and ensures the clear progression of pupils' learning through each subject. Pupils are encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills. The older pupils become confident and are ready for the next stage of their education. Personal, social, and health education is taught effectively to pupils of all ages. The Foundation Stage guidance is implemented very effectively for the

younger children in the Nursery, but pupils in the Reception class have a limited range of appropriate activities, especially for their creative development. The Foundation Stage guidance is used well as the basis for teachers' planning and for assessing and recording the children's development. By the end of the Reception year the pupils have made good overall progress towards the early learning goals.

The curriculum is enriched with many visits, which are linked well to the topics being studied. The older pupils also have the opportunity to participate in a residential visit. After-school clubs, such as football, swimming and chess further enhance pupils' learning but some parents feel that the choice is limited if their child does not enjoy sport.

The teaching is good and has some outstanding features, such as the effective use of the well-planned curriculum and schemes of work. These underline the pupils' progress, which is good, and secures the progression in their learning both within and between classes. The teachers are positive role models; they motivate the pupils to learn and help them to develop independence and self-reliance. In the best lessons, teachers use effective questioning with the good use of open-ended questions which pupils find challenging; this helps extend their knowledge and understanding. The most effective teachers help pupils to develop their own ideas and then articulate them accurately and some teachers are especially skilled at giving pupils time to respond and they value their responses. The better lessons also have a more effective start with a good review of previous work, and finish with a good plenary or assessment, but this is not a common feature. In some lessons the teachers do not allow sufficient time for an effective assessment or summing up of the lesson and these lessons finish abruptly. The most effective tasks that the pupils are given are those where the staff know when the pupils are ready to be taught a new skill, based on their knowledge of what the pupils already know and can do. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 4 lesson when pupils analysed a newspaper article and then wrote their own very successfully. There is good reference to homework in some lessons, which makes it purposeful and a helpful means of assessment, although some pupils and parents feel that there is sometimes too much homework. In the less effective lessons, pupils were not fully engaged in the activity, the teacher did not make it clear what the pupils were going to learn, valuable time was wasted on unnecessary recording, and lessons lacked pace. The resources at the school, with the addition of the small non-fiction library, are generally good and are used well.

Year 4 is a large class and is taught as one group for two days each week and is split for the rest of the week, this is due to staffing availability. The classroom currently used for the whole class is too small to accommodate this number of pupils. The resulting cramped conditions limit the range of teaching methods which can be used. Some parents feel strongly that this class is too large and consider that it would be better to relocate this class and possibly divide them permanently; inspectors agree.

There are some pupils who need additional support, for whom individual educational plans (IEP) have been devised. However, these IEPs are not sufficiently detailed or are not used effectively to provide these pupils with appropriate support, given their current format and content.

The assessment of pupils' learning is good. A planned programme of assessment ensures that the pupils' progress is recorded effectively. The pupils take national tests and achieve very good results. Parents are given two written reports each year and have regular opportunities to meet the teacher to discuss their children's progress. The reports are sufficiently detailed to tell parents what their children have learnt but not what they could do to improve.

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with some outstanding features in personal development. Pupils report that they are happy at school and say, '*I like my school...and many say 'I love swimming'.* They understand the simple rules and their behaviour is good in the orderly school community. Pupils are polite and friendly to each other and at work and play show that they enjoy being together. They understand right from wrong and are clear that poor behaviour is not acceptable. The older pupils take their responsibilities seriously and help the younger pupils, for example when they come in after playtime. From an early age the school places a strong emphasis on valuing each pupil and building self-esteem; it achieves this well. Daily assemblies mark a range of personal achievements and contributions to the school and give pupils time for spiritual reflection. Pupils are aware of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves and participate in supporting a range of charities. Attendance is good; it is regular and punctual and the majority of parents are positive that their children like school. Pupils participate in some local community activities, have sung to local elderly people and taken part in Torbay community events. The opportunities for cultural enrichment are good with lessons in religious education and visits to places of worship. All pupils are valued and their individual racial and cultural differences celebrated.

### Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Provision to ensure the safety of pupils is outstanding. It is a very safe place in which to work and learn. It encourages pupils to be aware of their own safety and well being. A comprehensive range of health and safety policies is implemented effectively. The school is aware of the latest guidance for safeguarding children and staff have received up-to-date training in safeguarding matters. All pupils are encouraged to eat healthily at breaktime by bringing fruit and the school provides a cooked lunch. The school is aware of individual pupils' medical or dietary needs and takes steps to ensure that these are met. However, some parents have concerns that insufficient fresh and non-processed food is offered to the pupils. There is an option

to choose more healthy food but this is not always attractive to the pupils. All pupils are encouraged to take regular exercise and many report that they love swimming. The school is vigilant with regard to fire safety. All areas of the school have been risk assessed and detailed risk assessments are carried out before each visit outside school. Most staff are trained in first aid, well-stocked first aid boxes are located where needed, and accidents are diligently recorded. Pupils are very well supervised at all times. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children meet all current requirements. A central staff register is kept as required.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school is accommodated in a large building which has had several classroom additions, the latest of which is an excellent sports hall and heated indoor swimming pool. There are two acres of grounds and the pupils have access to a large play area. This includes a dedicated play area for the nursery children. The classrooms are attractive learning environments, although one is small for the number of pupils in the class. There is an information and communication technology suite, which is used well, and an interactive whiteboard has just been acquired but is not yet in use. Most of the school is in good decorative repair but some areas are in need of redecorating and there is a planned programme of refurbishment. There are basic facilities for pupils who may be ill.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a good range of information for parents, carers and others. There is an informative prospectus, a parents' information file, a home-school book and regular newsletters. Parents were positive about the school in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire. However, some were concerned about the large size of some classes and other expressed the wish for the opportunity to become more involved with the school and develop better means of communication.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has an appropriate set of procedures, which parents have recently been informed about, and which meet the regulations.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure that there is sufficient time for a plenary at the end of each lesson
- either relocate Year 4 when they are taught as one group or divide them permanently
- consider the effectiveness of the IEP's in their current format and content
- ensure that reports keep parents informed about what their child needs to do to improve.

## Inspection of day care registered by Ofsted

### Effectiveness of the registered day care

The quality of care is good. Children in the Nursery and Reception class are usually very well occupied throughout the day and show high levels of interest and concentration in what they do. They are able to choose from stimulating and challenging activities, although the oldest children sometimes lack choice and are limited in their access to creative activities. Staff interact very effectively with children, challenging their thinking and promoting their development. Children are confident and secure, due to the very positive atmosphere of calm and purpose which helps the children to thrive, especially in the Nursery. Children at out-of-school provision enjoy a good variety of activities, including exciting themes in the holiday club.

Children are cared for in bright and attractive surroundings. They are exceptionally safe and secure, due to the staff's clear understanding of all safety issues and the school's excellent security systems. Space is generally used very well, although older children receiving after-school care do not always use appropriately-sized furniture.

Staff work closely with parents. Parents of children in the Nursery and Reception class meet regularly with key workers and share comprehensive records of their child's development. Newsletters, displays and planning documents provide good information about current activities. The Nursery is mainly well organised. All the required documentation is in place and effectively supports children's care. The Nursery has shown good improvement since the last inspection. Arrangements for hand washing and ensuring that babies sleep in clean bedding now fully protect children from infection. Risk assessments and fire drills successfully ensure that

children are kept from harm. The setting meets the needs of the range of children who attend. Overall the outcomes for being healthy, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and for organisation are good. Standards of safety are outstanding.

There have been no complaints about the day care made to Ofsted since the last inspection. The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

## Recommendations or actions to improve the registered day care

To improve the quality and standards of the care the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- further promote children's good health by offering consistently nutritious lunches for all children and healthy snacks in the after-school provision. Encourage older children to maintain high fluid levels by providing fresh drinking water in all rooms
- improve the organisation of after-school care, so that all children are able to sit comfortably at appropriate furniture.

## Inspection of funded nursery education

### Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Nursery staff promote all aspects of children's learning and development very successfully. They are very well-informed about the children's individual learning needs and they plan an excellent range of play-based activities to meet these needs. Children in the Nursery become confident, well-motivated and independent learners, with excellent concentration skills. Older children make good progress in most areas of learning, but have fewer opportunities to choose activities freely or to develop their creativity. Staff are secure in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are competent in their use of questions and discussion to successfully promote children's understanding and skills. The comprehensive records of children's progress are used very effectively in planning, so that individual needs are usually met, especially in the Nursery. There are no children with learning difficulties on roll, but those with possible additional needs are well-supported.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff place strong emphasis on helping children to become aware of the needs of others. Consequently, children behave very well and learn to share and take turns with resources. Younger children enjoy opportunities to experience wonder, through an excellent range of creative and sensory play. All children learn about differences,



as they celebrate a range of festivals and access multi-cultural resources.

Leadership and management of the nursery education are good. Staff are very reflective in their practice and regularly review all aspects of provision. This has ensured good progress since the last inspection, especially in the Nursery. Assessment systems are now used effectively to support learning. Planning ensures that all areas of learning are fully addressed in the Nursery and that older children have good access to most areas of learning. Partnership with parents and carers is good. The school is strongly committed to working with parents, and to providing them with clear information about the curriculum, which enables them to fully support their child's progress. Children's records are regularly shared at parents' evening. Newsletters and displays of planning and current work also effectively inform carers about the curriculum.

### Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of the nursery education the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- extend the range of resources, activities and opportunities for choice offered to older children, especially those which promote their creative development.

## School details

Name of school	Abbey School		
DCSF number	880/6000		
Unique reference number	113566		
Unique reference number (day care)	EY 234164		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY 234164		
Type of school	Nursery care and primary school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1951		
Age range of pupils	Birth-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 64	Girls: 61	Total: 125
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 22	Girls: 38	Total: 60
Number of children receiving day care	Boys: 22	Girls: 39	Total: 61
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 28	Girls: 17	Total: 45
Annual fees	£280-£6,000		
Address of school	Hampton Court Fore Street St Marychurch Torquay Devon TQ1 4PR		
Telephone number	01803 327868		
Fax number	01803 327868		
Email address	<a href="mailto:Headteacher@abbeyschool.co.uk">Headteacher@abbeyschool.co.uk</a>		
Headteacher	Mrs S Greinig		
Proprietor	Mrs S Greinig		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Childcare inspector	Anne Legge CCI		
Dates of inspection	10-11 October 2007		