

# Abbotsfield School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 102449       |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Hillingdon   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 319394       |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 6–7 May 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Lynn Bappa   |

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>                     | Comprehensive   |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Foundation  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–18   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Boys  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |   |
| School                                    | 560   |
| 6th form                                  | 76  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                    |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr David Jones  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mr David Henderson                                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 27 March 2007   |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Clifton Gardens<br>Hillingdon<br>Uxbridge<br>UB10 0EX |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01895 237350  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01895 271995  |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Abbotsfield is a relatively small school for boys which takes its students largely from the Hayes and Harlington areas of west London. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is higher than average, as are the percentages of students from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language. The school shares a site and the sixth-form centre with a neighbouring girls' school. When Abbotsfield was inspected in 2002, it went into special measures. The current headteacher took up post in April 2005. In December 2005, the school was inspected again and removed from special measures but given a Notice to Improve. In March 2007 the school was given another Notice to Improve. In December 2007, the school received a monitoring visit and was judged to be making good progress in all the key issues.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Abbotsfield is now providing a good standard of education and care for its students. Managers, teachers and support staff, with strong support from the local authority, have worked extremely hard and with considerable success to improve those areas considered weak at the last inspection. The school is now on a much firmer footing and well placed to continue to improve.

The headteacher, with the support of a talented senior team, has set a very clear direction for the school, with a determination to raise achievement and do the best for all students. They have insisted on raising expectations of what can be achieved and staff and students have risen to meet this challenge.

Achievement is now good. National test results for 14 year-olds in 2007 rose considerably, although they are still below average overall. There are particular strengths in mathematics where standards are above average. Attainment in English is also beginning to rise, although standards remain low and more remains to be done to ensure that students achieve their potential. Although below the national average, the percentage of students achieving five or more GCSE A\*-C grades increased from 28% in 2006 to 58% in 2007. When English and mathematics are included, the proportion also rose significantly from 21% to 40%. Most students make good progress during their time in the school.

Students develop good personal qualities because of the good pastoral care and support they receive. They are very enthusiastic about the school and the positive impact that it has on helping them to achieve their potential. Relationships are warm and underpin the good attitudes to learning shown by the vast majority of students in lessons and around the school. They have good attitudes towards healthy eating and sports and their behaviour is consistently good. Whilst students' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) and numeracy prepare them well for the world of work, their weaker standards in English hold them back. Preparation for the next stage in their lives is therefore satisfactory overall. A good curriculum and the growing range of enrichment activities on offer underpin students' enjoyment of school. Senior leaders have rightly identified, however, that the development of literacy across the curriculum could be better.

In recent years, the school has worked very hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, standards have risen significantly. An effective programme of lesson observations, improved use of data, effective use of external support and a developing system of coaching have all contributed to ensuring that teaching is good overall. Now the school is at a point where teachers can give students more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, as this aspect is under-developed. There is some variability in the quality of teachers' marking. The best comments show students what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. This does not yet happen consistently throughout the school, however.

The school continues to operate with a large deficit budget. Budget management was identified as a concern in the last inspection. The local authority subsequently withdrew financial delegation from the governors and, since then, has helped to put a recovery plan into place. Long-term plans to reduce the deficit are becoming clearer, although more work remains to be done to show how this will be achieved without compromising educational provision.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

This is a good sixth form. Pass rates at GCE A level are above national averages but standards are below average overall because there are relatively few higher grades. Students make consistently good progress from their starting points and standards show a rising trend. This progress results from good teaching. Lessons have clear learning objectives, careful structuring of activities and good pace. Teachers know their students well and good relationships underpin achievements. Preparation for sixth form life has improved and retention and completion rates are beginning to increase. Overall numbers in the sixth form are rising. The curriculum benefits from a good and expanding choice of subjects, both academic and vocational, although take-up rates for some subjects are low. There is an excellent enrichment programme that is both imaginative and varied. Fundraising activities have a particularly high profile. There are many opportunities to get involved in the life of the school and community and these contribute positively to students' personal development and well-being. The sixth form is well led and managed. The school has successfully tackled organisational difficulties arising from the shared status of the sixth form.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, particularly in Key Stage 3, and improve the development of literacy across the curriculum.
- Work with the local authority to remove the budget deficit whilst ensuring that the school continues to provide a good standard of education.
- Support students to become more independent and responsible for their own learning.
- Improve the quality of marking so that students have a more consistent understanding of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 2

Students achieve well overall. The school has implemented an effective range of strategies to improve learning and, as a result, standards have risen significantly. By the end of Year 9, standards in national tests remain below average overall but show a significant improvement over 2006. Standards in English, however, remain low. The school's GCSE results rose substantially in 2007 and are now just below average for five or more A\*-C passes. This represents a major improvement from 2006. The proportion of students who achieve at least five A\*-G passes is above average and last year no-one left the school without either a job or a course to go to. Results in mathematics are particularly good. The school's tracking data indicate that these substantial gains will be sustained, with further improvements expected in 2008. Teachers provide good support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with emotional and behavioural problems, and they achieve well. Students with English as an additional language, as well as those who are vulnerable, make good progress with their learning. Senior leaders have rightly identified that the provision for higher attaining students is less consistent. The school is on track to meet this year's challenging targets.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy coming to school, as reflected in their greatly improved attendance, which is now above average. A small number of parents expressed concerns about behaviour but inspectors found that the great majority of students appreciate the clear boundaries that are now set for them and behave well in lessons and around the school. Exclusion rates have declined. Students say that they feel safe in school and know that there are adults who they can turn to if they have a problem. The school council provides students with an effective voice and has been good at making changes in the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students have a good understanding of cultural diversity issues and show high levels of tolerance towards those from different backgrounds or beliefs. They willingly take on responsibilities around the school and work very hard to support others through events such as charity fund-raising. They enjoy assemblies and reflect well on matters of right and wrong. High numbers participate in a wide range of activities outside lessons, especially in sport, the arts and music.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Senior leaders and local authority advisors have worked very closely with teachers to improve teaching and learning, which are now good, enabling students to achieve well during their time in the school. Teachers plan lessons well to meet the range of abilities within groups. The provision of a variety of activities sustains students' interest throughout lessons. Students appreciate teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects and their willingness to provide extra support outside lessons. Relationships are good and based on mutual respect and humour. Students enjoy their lessons and respond positively to the variety of activities provided. As one student commented, 'Teachers really help us and explain things well when we have problems.' In many lessons, teachers generate a lively pace that keeps students on their toes. In a very small minority of lessons, however, where teachers over-direct boys' learning rather than giving them opportunities to develop their own problem-solving skills, there can be some low-level disruption. Teaching assistants provide good support so that all students, including those who are gifted and talented or who have learning difficulties, achieve well.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum meets the needs of individual boys effectively and offers them good opportunities to make choices and decisions with confidence and flexibility. Provision for ICT has improved significantly. A good range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 is having a positive impact on students' motivation and commitment. Students show great enthusiasm for subjects such as Motor Vehicle Studies. As one boy said, 'There is a lot of choice now and usually something interesting.' A good personal and social education programme helps students to become

thoughtful members of their community. Provision for the teaching of literacy across the curriculum has improved, although more work remains to be done in this area. The formal curriculum is enriched well through a good variety of clubs and out-of-school learning which greatly benefit students.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pastoral support is very good. The school provides a very caring and supportive environment in which students prosper, feel safe and gain good personal skills. Students feel listened to and show pride in their school. Arrangements to ensure the safety and welfare of students are robust and meet requirements. The school has good links with primary schools, helping students to settle quickly into Year 7. Careers advice is good and all students leave school with clear pathways into the sixth form, college or jobs. Support for students who are vulnerable or who have learning difficulties, including those with dyslexia or emotional and behavioural difficulties, is good. Systems to reduce absence rate and exclusions are effective. Attendance rates have improved significantly and exclusions are declining to the extent that they are now rare.

The quality of academic guidance continues to improve. Teachers are now able to draw on a wealth of individual student data to assess progress. Increasingly, they are using this to match teaching to learners' needs, plan earlier interventions and help students know what steps they need to take to improve. Feedback to students, however, does not consistently provide them with sufficient help about how to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management have successfully brought about significant improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher sets high expectations and is very well supported by a talented leadership team. They maintain a high profile presence in the school's daily life and parents, students and staff appreciate their open and communicative style. The school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is realistic and honest. Senior leaders have made a strong impact on the issues raised in the last inspection. Standards at GCSE, for example, have improved considerably and significant levels of underachievement have been eradicated. Behaviour and attendance have improved. Some of the actions taken to improve standards are at an early stage so that their impact has not yet been felt. English results, for example, remain low, particularly in Key Stage 3. Teamwork is a strong feature of the school and everyone plays a part in moving things forward. Middle managers have become more accountable and responsible for standards and achievement in their areas. They have a clear determination to succeed. Governors are beginning to provide an effective balance of support and challenge to the headteacher and senior managers and cooperate closely with the local authority on financial matters. There are good partnerships with local schools, colleges and external agencies, which extend the support and opportunities available to students.

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## Inspection judgements

|   |                |       |
|---|----------------|-------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall | 16-19 |
|---|----------------|-------|

### 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   | 2   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection  | Yes | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?   | 2   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 2   | 2   |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 2 | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 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?                                  | 2 | 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 |   |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 |   |
| 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 | 3 |   |

### The quality of provision

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?          | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 2 | 2 |

<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>                                       | 2   | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   |     |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 2   |     |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   | 2   |
| 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  | 3   |     |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 3   |     |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | Yes | 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**

19 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Abbotsfield School, Uxbridge, UB10 0EX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We very much appreciate the help that you gave us. Now that we have finished the inspection, I am writing to tell you of our findings. We have decided that your school no longer needs a 'notice to improve' because it is now a good school that provides you with the education that you deserve. Congratulations to all of you for your part in helping the school to improve! Your headteacher is a very good leader who wants the best for all of you and he is supported well by the senior leadership team and by the other staff. You are taught well and most of you are therefore now making good progress. Your teachers take good care of you. Your behaviour has improved and is now good. More of you are now attending school regularly - your attendance is now above the national average. This is a reflection of how much you enjoy your learning and your determination to do well. You told us that teachers listen to you and take your views seriously.

Although you go to a good school, it could become even better and we have asked your headteacher to do several things to help it improve further. Although standards have improved a great deal, results in the Key Stage 3 tests in English could be better. In recent years, your school has overspent and it needs to continue to work closely with the local authority to keep within its budget without damaging the good quality of education that you now get. We have also asked teachers to give you more opportunities to learn things for yourselves so that you become more independent and confident. Finally, we think that teachers need to look at how your work is marked so that comments show you exactly what you need to do to improve even further. You can play your part in this by continuing to work hard and by asking if you do not understand.

We wish you every success in the future.

Lynn Bappa

Lead Inspector