

Abbots Hall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109308
Local Authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	319432
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	George Falconer HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rita Garner
Headteacher	Mrs Nicola Everett
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 1997
School address	Abbotts Drive Stanford-Le-Hope Essex SS17 7BW
Telephone number	01375 673188
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Abbots Hall Primary School is a recent school, having been formed from two separate schools in 2005. The area it serves is stable, with very low mobility. Approximately half the children in the school are housed in local authority, housing association or private rental homes. Currently there are fewer pupils taking free school meals than found nationally and there is a much lower percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is low compared to national figures. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but is now broadly average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than the national average. The school attained the Basic Skills award in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Pupils really like this school and so do parents. The overall effectiveness is satisfactory in a school that has made considerable ground in the past two years. As a result of hard work, there are now strengths to the school, not least the cohesiveness of the senior management team, the overall good quality of teaching and learning and the enthusiasm of pupils to want to progress in learning. The planned strategic developments to increase pupils' progress further are in place and are having a positive impact.

The acting headteacher is working industriously to carry the school forward and is succeeding in leading the school towards better standards for pupils at the end Key Stages 1 and 2. There is recognition, however, that more work remains to be done for standards to be at least in line with the national averages at Key Stage 2. The senior management team and other senior staff play a sound role in sustaining the momentum. The governing body provides appropriate levels of support and is now ready to challenge the school's actions and decisions more robustly. The middle management systems are not yet fully developed.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall with children making satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. The majority are working well, within their early learning goals. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress where the levels of attainment are broadly in line with the national averages. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are attaining below the national average but the school's test scores have improved since the previous year. The legacy of underachievement before amalgamation in 2005 plays a big part in the discrepancy between results at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Nevertheless, the school knows there is room for more improvement in increasing achievement and raising standards in all core subjects, particularly at Key Stage 2, and especially for the potential higher attainers.

Personal development and well-being are good because the school puts a lot of thought into developing pupils' positive attitudes. Their spiritual moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. They know the difference between right and wrong and are generally kind and courteous. The school does a good job in this area.

The level of care is good. Pupils are well looked after from their first contact with the school. The school has an extended services manager who ensures that the pupils' emotional, physical and social welfare are well supported. Academic guidance and support is satisfactory but is not yet fully developed across the school.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some very good practice observed during the course of the inspection. Pupils respond well to enthusiastic approaches to teaching which engage their interests.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall but there are occasions when the planned curriculum does not meet the needs of some learners. Science, as a core subject, is not given enough emphasis in the curriculum. The school is missing opportunities to develop enough practical, investigational work that would help develop independence, increasing pupils' observational skills and their ability to raise questions as a result. Good work was observed where pupils were engaged in being creative in mathematics, using speaking and listening as a key tool. The level of curriculum enrichment is very good and provides good levels of fun and enjoyment, as well as keeping pupils healthy.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children join the Reception class from a variety of settings. The home visit programme helps build liaison and trust with parents and promotes better integration for the children. Children feel safe and secure, and they are supported and nurtured. Children behave well and make satisfactory progress overall and the majority are ready for their work in Year 1. Learning in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good, but the school realises there is a need to use more accurate data collection and analysis to more accurately inform the next steps for all of the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Make sure that pupil progress data is collected systematically, analysed accurately and used precisely by senior staff so that all pupils achieve as well as they can from the point of entry.
- Make sure that the whole management team is strategically deployed at all levels in the drive to raise standards.
- Make sure that the new approaches to the curriculum are developed to meet the different needs of all pupils, including the potential higher attainers.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall with a marked improvement in progress this year as a result of a concerted effort to operate a strategic approach to leadership and management. The results are clearly evident in the quality of teaching and learning which is good overall.

Achievement and standards in the 2007 published results showed the pupils to be broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1. However, progress measures from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 were lower than the previous year with Key Stage 2 tests showing lower levels of attainment than those found nationally.

The school's 2008 data rightly shows that pupils in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals and in relation to their abilities and starting points. Key Stage 1 data shows an increase for reading, writing and mathematics but with some underachievement at the higher levels for the more able pupils. The school's data for 2008 Key Stage 2 results demonstrate improvement with standards in English, mathematics and science being better than the previous year and with an increase in levels of attainment for the more able pupils in mathematics and science. However, the school recognises that this is still not high enough and that there is more work to be done to accurately pinpoint pupils' next steps in learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' have a good understanding of right and wrong. They cooperate well with each other and are aware of the needs of others. They are polite to visitors, like the vicar, who gets a warm welcome. Learners are confident that any rare incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and fairly. The school works hard to encourage pupils to attend regularly and attendance remains similar to the national average. Pupils enjoy school and know how to keep safe and stay healthy. They particularly like being with their friends and teachers. Taking part in visits and exciting projects like the recent film making experience contribute successfully to their cultural development. Most pupils behave well and want to learn. Their contribution to the community is good. Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their next stage of development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good in the majority of lessons. The best lessons are brisk, interactive and relevant to the children's stage of development, resulting in good learning taking place. Teachers relate well to the pupils and there is a positive ethos in classes that enhances children's confidence and self-esteem. The majority of pupils enjoy their lessons. The effective use of praise motivates pupils. There is often good use of the electronic whiteboard to focus pupils' attention. Teaching assistants work well with staff to support pupils who have disabilities or find learning difficult but in some lessons more able children lack sufficient challenge. In some instances, teachers do not always give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work and sometimes lessons can lack pace. Thinking skills and self-assessment are well developed in some classes where pupils enjoy responsibility for their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The plans for the delivery of the National Curriculum are satisfactory. The school recognises that although there are some good opportunities for learning, the curriculum is not yet seizing opportunities to make important links and therefore to be relevant and meaningful for all groups of pupils, at all levels. Teachers are encouraged to ensure the curriculum motivates and enthuses all pupils. The school has rightly focused on improving standards in mathematics and English but the science curriculum has suffered from a lack of rigour. Investigative science is not as developed as it should be. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory but the Foundation Stage teacher recognises the need for further development in provision, particularly for child initiated activities. A strength of the curriculum is the number of enrichment activities that inspire and motivate the children such as the visiting dance and theatre companies, the Creative Partnership scheme and the teaching of French.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

'This is a safe and happy school that looks after its pupils well' - this is one parent's comment that sums up the views of the vast majority of others. The pastoral care of pupils is good and

contributes well to their good personal development. Help for pupils who find learning difficult is satisfactory. The school makes effective use of a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the kind of support and advice they need. Systems for checking and tracking pupils' progress are not yet being used consistently well by all teachers to ensure that work is matched carefully to the needs of all groups of pupils. Older pupils in particular understand their targets and say that they are helping them to improve. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding pupils are thorough and clearly understood and implemented by all staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. Abbots Hall is a relatively new establishment, being the result of two schools combining in 2005 under new leadership at that time. Consequently, much energy has been spent developing a cohesive approach to school improvement. The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation and monitoring is satisfactory. The current acting headteacher is working very well to provide appropriate leadership and management and is continuing to give strategic direction and support through the hard working senior management team and the governing body.

Attention rightly focuses on raising standards and the school's own self-evaluation indicates that there are still areas for improvement, including more accurate data collection and analysis, and a better developed curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. The inspection agrees with this. The leadership and management team is developing satisfactorily. The school realises that more work needs to be done in this area so that all leaders and managers are as effective as they can be. The governing body is providing appropriate levels of support and accurately assesses that the need for more challenge is crucial in order to make further improvements. Much has been accomplished in the last two years and the school is justifiably pleased with progress. However, staff are not complacent and realise the necessity to keep the foot on the pedal. Abbots Hall Primary School has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	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	3
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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
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

10 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Abbots Hall Primary School, Stanford-Le-Hope, SS17 7BW

Thank you very much for your help and for being very kind and polite to us during our visit to your school. I must say how welcoming and how well kept the school is. It is obvious that everyone takes a pride in your school and that you enjoy being there. You behave really well and help each other too.

We saw many happy faces and it was good to see you enjoying your lessons so much. The Year 5 plans for the Year 6 BBQ were going really well with lots of ideas for creating a menu that you had to cost and set against the entry fee. What a brilliant idea! Year 2 children were busy being little investigators in science, using the school grounds to find mini-beasts in their habitats. You were really taking the job seriously with your magnifying glasses and your clipboards. This was really exciting stuff. There were also other good lessons going on in school too. In fact, most of them were good.

We were impressed with how well you are looked after. You told us you feel safe and secure and that you like to play with your friends. Assemblies are good and teach you well. The assembly, led the vicar, made you really think about yourselves and others, as well as bubbles. Why are there colours in bubbles?

We had a good look at lots of lessons and we looked in many of your books as well as talking to you and your teachers. We can see that you are doing well and that you are learning about many different things. The school and the inspectors decided that more could be done to give you opportunities to improve your learning, particularly for those who are capable of working at higher levels. Therefore, the school is going to have a close look at what you do and how you do it. They are then going to think more deeply about how they collect that information and what they do with that information so that they can give you the right kind of work in the right way and at the right level. Also, the staff would like you all to be little investigators so they are going to think of some good ideas for you in science where you can do practical things, working with your friends, as well as developing ideas of your own. All staff are going to be thinking about this and, just like you; they will be helping each other. Brilliant!

Once again, thank you very much.

Kind regards

George Falconer

Her Majesty's Inspector.