

# The Abbey Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121916
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	319510
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marian Harker HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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 (total)	232
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	21
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Karen Popely
<b>Headteacher</b>	Renuka Popat
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 July 2007
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Winchester Road Northampton NN4 8AZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 660100
<b>Fax number</b>	01604 660106

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

The Abbey is an average sized primary school situated on the outskirts of Northampton. The large majority of pupils come from the local area with the rest from surrounding neighbourhoods. Pupils are from a wide variety of backgrounds, although the general socio-economic profile is in line with the national average. The proportions of pupils who are eligible for free school meals or do not have English as their first language are lower than average. The large majority of pupils are of White British origin. The school has full time Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision for children in Reception. The Butterfly Centre, which offers provision for before and after school clubs and pre-school, is based within the school grounds and is independently managed. Following the previous inspection, in July 2007, the school was issued with a Notice to Improve.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The Abbey is a satisfactory school that has significantly improved since the last inspection. Partnerships with parents and the local community are a strength and everyone works well together in this harmonious school. Pupils much enjoy their education and behaviour is excellent. One typical parent said, 'The school boosts children's confidence by giving them a say in how things are done.' Children enter the school with skill levels generally in line with those expected for their age, although there is variability. They make satisfactory progress through Reception and most children achieve the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1, although some key skills, including writing and calculation, remain below expectations. The overall effectiveness of Reception is satisfactory. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 and achieve standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 2. Standards in reading at Key Stage 1 have recently improved due to the implementation of a structured phonics scheme. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 2 where standards have recently improved and are now broadly average. However, more work remains to be done to improve standards and achievement in mathematics and writing across the school.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay healthy and safe. The curriculum is satisfactory and offers a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including a number of residential visits, which are very much enjoyed by the pupils. Achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. A few pupils make good progress, particularly in reading and writing, because their learning difficulties are quickly identified and effective support put in place. Achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups is in line with their peers. The few pupils who are learning English as an additional language are well supported and make satisfactory progress.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. During the inspection, the majority of lessons observed were good and the remainder were satisfactory. However, the recent improvements in teaching have not yet had time to impact fully on pupils' achievement and there is not sufficient challenge for more able pupils. In the more successful lessons, the pace of learning is brisk, teachers make good use of partner talk to extend learning, and well chosen activities match the needs of the pupils and make learning exciting. In some lessons, learning objectives are not as clear as they could be, and opportunities are missed to reinforce key skills, particularly in writing and mathematics. The quality of pastoral care and support is a strong feature of the school's work and is outstanding. Staff are committed to caring for pupils and the school fully meets statutory requirements regarding the safe recruitment of staff. Academic guidance is good and equips pupils with the skills to become independent learners.

The quality of leadership and management across the school is satisfactory. The determination of the headteacher and senior leaders to improve the quality of education for pupils has resulted in the school moving forward at a rapid rate since the last inspection. Senior leaders have formulated a clear direction for the school and they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school is aware of the need to further develop leadership and management at all levels, particularly subject leaders, to improve standards and achievement.

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Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay healthy and safe. The curriculum is satisfactory and offers a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including a number of residential visits, which are very much enjoyed by the pupils. Achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. A few pupils make good progress, particularly in reading and writing, because their learning difficulties are quickly identified and effective support put in place. Achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups is in line with their peers. The few pupils who are learning English as an additional language are well supported and make satisfactory progress.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. During the inspection, the majority of lessons observed were good and the remainder were satisfactory. However, the recent improvements in teaching have not yet had time to impact fully on pupils' achievement and there is not sufficient challenge for more able pupils. In the more successful lessons, the pace of learning is brisk, teachers make good use of partner talk to extend learning, and well chosen activities match the needs of the pupils and make learning exciting. In some lessons, learning objectives are not as clear as they could be, and opportunities are missed to reinforce key skills, particularly in writing and mathematics. The quality of pastoral care and support is a strong feature of the school's work and is outstanding. Staff are committed to caring for pupils and the school fully meets statutory requirements regarding the safe recruitment of staff. Academic guidance is good and equips pupils with the skills to become independent learners.

The quality of leadership and management across the school is satisfactory. The determination of the headteacher and senior leaders to improve the quality of education for pupils has resulted in the school moving forward at a rapid rate since the last inspection. Senior leaders have formulated a clear direction for the school and they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school is aware of the need to further develop leadership and management at all levels, particularly subject leaders, to improve standards and achievement.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children clearly enjoy their time in the Reception class. Close links with parents and the warm, secure environment ensure they settle quickly and make rapid progress in their personal development. Children work well together and the development of speaking skills is given a high priority. Consequently, most children are able to talk confidently with a partner and make

contributions to group discussions. Their attainment on entry is broadly average. Children make satisfactory progress and most are working within the expected levels for personal, social and emotional development by the time they enter Year 1. The rate of progress made by the children is accelerating because of the improving teaching and interesting curriculum provided. Activities are carefully planned and adapted to meet the interests and needs of the children. The enthusiasm of the staff is infectious and ensures that children are excited about their activities and eager to take part. Occasionally, opportunities to capitalise on this enthusiasm and provide greater challenge, for example in writing and other key skills, are missed. Careful attention is paid to pupils' welfare and safety as illustrated in the risk assessment for the 'soap flake sculpture' activity. All staff work very closely together and the leadership of the EYFS is satisfactory.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the rate of progress and raise standards in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that all teaching is at least consistently good.
- Increase the level of challenge for more able pupils.
- Ensure that middle leaders make a greater contribution to improving standards and achievement. 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**

The school's strategies to raise attainment are beginning to have a positive impact, as shown in the recent improvement in standards and achievement in Key Stage 2 and in reading at Key Stage 1. However, more work remains to be done to raise standards and achievement across the school. When children enter Reception their attainment is broadly in line with the expected levels for this age. However, writing skills and some aspects of mathematics, such as calculation, are less well developed. Children make satisfactory progress in their acquisition of basic skills and good progress in their personal development during Reception. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and achieve standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 2, although not enough pupils achieve the higher levels, due in part to gaps in their knowledge and understanding of key skills. In Key Stage 2, progress is satisfactory overall and standards have recently improved to bring attainment in line with national averages. Progress in mathematics has been slower than in other subjects as a result of previous underachievement.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The pupils display high levels of self confidence, self esteem, and very positive attitudes in lessons. They respond very well to their teachers and the Year 6 pupils take their responsibilities as role models very seriously. Special events focusing on India and Greece, visits from people of a variety of faiths, and a wide range of musical and artistic activities contribute well to the pupils' good spiritual and cultural development. Attendance is satisfactory and improving as a result of action taken by the school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe and this is evident in their enthusiastic involvement in sports clubs, the healthy tuck shop, and the responsible way in which they conduct themselves around the school. This

is confirmed by the school's recent receipt of the Active Mark and Healthy School awards. Pupils are encouraged to express their views through class discussions and the school council. Councillors report that their work will help them in later life because they will be used to 'working together as a team and coming up with ideas'. The work of the school council, duties in school, and responsibilities such as running the school book shop enable pupils to make a good contribution to school life. Pupils leave the school as confident individuals with good personal and sound academic skills that prepare them satisfactorily for later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

This is a friendly school where relationships between pupils and staff are very positive. In Reception there is a strong emphasis on developing children's personal, social and emotional development which gives them a good foundation for their future learning. In good lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are given interesting activities that are well matched to their age and abilities. For example, Year 6 pupils were introduced to a new writing genre through a murder mystery scenario. On occasion, the level of challenge is not closely enough matched to the needs of more able pupils. All the teachers know and manage their pupils well. Pupils work hard in lessons and work well in pairs actively contributing to their learning. For example, in some lessons good use is made of partner talk and hot seating so pupils can explain their thinking. Progress made by the pupils across the school, although satisfactory, is variable because the quality of teaching is not consistently good. In satisfactory lessons, progress is not as speedy because learning objectives are not as clear as they could be and learning styles are not closely matched to pupils' needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are sensitively supported and activities are well matched to their individual needs. Learning support staff make valuable and effective contributions in lessons.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum enables pupils to make satisfactory progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and in information and communication technology. Work in science develops the pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles, which is demonstrated in the enthusiastic purchases from the school's healthy tuck shop. Teachers are making good progress in developing activities which make links between subjects, thereby broadening the curriculum and increasing pupils' enjoyment, but recognise that more needs to be done. Some after school clubs, such as the 'Writers Club', cater for more able pupils but the school also recognises that more needs to be done to increase the level of challenge for more able pupils in all subjects of the curriculum. The curriculum is successfully enriched by a good range of special events, visits and visitors. These enhance the pupils' good personal development and enjoyment. The pupils take enthusiastic advantage of a wide range of after school clubs in sports, arts and other activities. Over half the pupils are learning to play a musical instrument. Pupils sing enthusiastically in assembly and music is a strength of the school. The pupils particularly enjoy the theme days that take place in science, art and design technology. For example, the project inspired by the work of the designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh was much enjoyed by pupils and their parents.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Pupils' high levels of self esteem, their outstanding behaviour and the warm, purposeful atmosphere in the school are a consequence of the exemplary care and good guidance pupils receive. Policies to ensure pupils' safety are securely in place, reviewed regularly and training provided in order to keep staff up to date. Learning mentors provide effective support for pupils and parents in a variety of ways and adjust their timetables to meet the needs of pupils as they arise. The school makes good use of outside agencies to support pupils and their families. Pupils are provided with good advice about their achievements and what they need to do to improve further. Work is thoroughly marked and pupils in all classes are given time to respond to the marking, to correct work, and sometimes to take on another challenge. Pupils have targets in English and mathematics which they generally find helpful, although the language in which they are expressed is sometimes over complex. Pupils are becoming skilled in assessing their own achievements.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's improvement and provides strong leadership. She has developed a good team spirit across the school but she recognises there is still work to do in holding all managers accountable for the standards achieved and progress made by the pupils. However, the school's collective leadership and management have had a positive influence in moving the school forward since the last inspection. The quality of self-evaluation is good and the school is suitably placed to improve. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity and deals effectively with any issues that arise. The governing body is very supportive of the school and is determined to raise achievement and standards. Governors are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities and increasingly hold the school to account for the standards attained by the pupils. Outside professionals associated with the school hold it in very high regard. They acknowledge the strong links the school has made with the local community, actively promoting community cohesion. Parents too are full of praise for the school and the way it develops happy and confident young people. One parent commented, 'My daughter would choose not to come home in the evening because she loves school so much.'



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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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	3

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
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?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Abbey Primary School, Northampton NN4 8AZ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We learned a lot about it through talking to you, seeing how you were getting on in your lessons, looking at your work and sharing your assemblies. We could see that you enjoy coming to school and try hard to do your best and help each other.

- We think you go to a satisfactory school where everyone works really well together.
- You all looked very smart in your school uniform.
- Your play leaders do a really good job on the playground.
- Your school council are good ambassadors for the school.
- Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent.
- You get on really well together and greatly enjoy coming to school.
- You are extremely well looked after and cared for and given good advice on how to improve your work.
- You know really well how to stay healthy and safe.
- You are given good opportunities to develop your interests including sports activities and music.

In order to make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher and senior staff to do the following.

- Make sure that you all achieve as well as you can in writing and mathematics.
- Make sure that teachers always plan good lessons that are interesting and excite you.
- Make sure that teachers ensure your work is challenging.
- Make sure that all school leaders help you to improve your work and make fast progress.

Yours sincerely

Marian Harker Her Majesty's Inspector