

Abbey Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102967
Local Authority	Sutton
Inspection number	323719
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	422
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel Griffiths
Headteacher	Miss Louise Tunstall
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	13 March 2008
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Glastonbury Road Morden SM4 6NY
Telephone number	020 8770 6770
Fax number	020 8770 6767

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school serves pupils from the local area. Most are from White British backgrounds, although the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing steadily. More pupils than average are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language and this proportion is increasing year on year. More pupils than in most schools have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mainly to do with dyslexia or speech, language and communication. Mobility is high, with a considerable proportion of pupils starting or leaving the school midway through the year.

There are two Nursery and two Reception classes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are admitted to the Nursery three times a year. They transfer to Reception classes in the September of the academic year in which they reach their fifth birthday.

The school offers after school care Monday to Friday 3pm to 6pm during term time. The school has won a number of awards in recent years, including Activemark and Healthy Schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides pupils with a secure basic education. The headteacher and deputy headteacher steer the school's work well, focusing very effectively on improving standards and pupils' progress. Staff retention has been difficult in the past, but good induction procedures and a growing reputation locally has meant that the school now has a stable, enthusiastic and committed team of teachers. Senior leaders have worked hard to ensure that the teaching that pupils receive is effective. Their high expectations, rigorous lesson-monitoring and clear feedback to teachers have resulted in good teaching overall, and some that is outstanding. This has had a successful impact on pupils' learning, with pupils reaching broadly average standards by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress throughout the school and achieve well considering their very low starting points when they first join the Nursery.

Staff know the pupils well. They provide an extremely safe environment where pupils can approach learning with confidence. Pupils value this, saying that they can always share any concerns with an adult in the school, knowing they will be treated with respect and sensitivity. The breakfast and after school clubs provide a useful service for parents and pupils clearly feel relaxed within the friendly and welcoming environment. They enjoy the wide range of opportunities provided for them in lessons to make learning interesting. 'The work can be challenging, but it's meant to be like that', commented one pupil. 'Teachers make lessons as fun as possible.' Pupils are keen to accept responsibility, for example through membership of the school council, and make a strong contribution to the school community. Their firm grounding in basic skills, good levels of confidence and positive attitudes to learning mean they are well prepared for their future education and beyond. Attendance, though showing signs of improvement, remains a high priority for the school. A small number of pupils are absent on a regular basis and miss important parts of their education. This hinders their progress and the standards that they eventually reach.

There is a strong feeling of teamwork in the school, with staff working well together to plan the curriculum and identify where improvements are necessary. Governors play an important role in checking performance and in ensuring there is a constant focus on standards and achievement. The school has identified the need to reach out more effectively to parents and the local community to encourage them to take a more active part in school life and in pupils' education. Several parents echo this view, one writing, 'I think we need to bridge the gap more between home and school - after all, we all have our children's best interests at heart.' A positive start has been made, but it is too early to see the impact of the developments so far. Nonetheless, the commitment and enthusiasm of leaders, staff and governors and their successful track record of raising academic standards put the school in a good position to improve still further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Many children start in the Nursery at levels that are exceptionally low for their age in all areas of learning, but especially in their communication, language and literacy skills. They get off to a very strong start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All six areas of learning and development are extremely well planned and personalised to meet children's individual learning needs. This results in children making excellent progress. While still below average in many areas, standards

have risen considerably over the past two years, especially in literacy and mathematics. In the after school club, planning for these children, though satisfactory, is not as detailed as in the Nursery and Reception classes. However, the leader has made a good start in organising a wider range of interesting activities for the youngest children.

Teaching and learning in Nursery and Reception are excellent. Adults know the children extremely well and make sure they have a good balance of independent and adult-led activities every day. Assessment of children's progress is meticulous and identifies those who need more help and those who would benefit from further challenge. Children's welfare is a high priority and all child protection and safeguarding requirements are robust and consistently implemented. Children feel safe, confident and ready to attempt new learning. Links with parents are developing well. The recent 'World Party' celebration day, for example, involved parents dressing in national costume to share their different cultures and traditions with the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with parents to improve the attendance and achievement of the small number of persistent absentees.
- Improve links with parents and community groups and monitor the impact of this work on pupils' learning and personal development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards have risen gradually over the past few years and are now broadly average by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. Achievement is good. Pupils learning English as an additional language and those with specific learning difficulties all make good progress. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in the national tests in English and science, however, are lower than average. New programmes have been implemented this year to further challenge the more able pupils and these are proving successful. In English, for example, more pupils are on track to reach the higher level because of the increased opportunities provided for them to write about their work in different subjects. A small number of pupils miss important lessons because of persistent absence. This affects their progress and overall achievement.

Standards in the national assessments for Year 2 pupils are average in mathematics but are below average in reading and writing. They rose dramatically in 2008 because of a new strategy implemented to teach basic literacy skills. Analysis of pupils' progress this year shows that this rise is likely to continue.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident, friendly and welcoming. They enjoy school and are keen to share their views and achievements with others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils contribute well to the smooth running of the school through their work on the school council, as 'Peer Mediators' to support behaviour in the playground and as 'Buddies' to help new pupils settle in. Pupils apply for and undergo training in these positions, a process that helps them prepare effectively for their future working lives. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with one another and adults. They are quick to offer help if needed, for example during the breakfast and after school clubs and in the playground if necessary. Pupils have a

good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They participate well in the exercise 'drill' at the end of playtime and many take advantage of the extra-curricular sports clubs.

The vast majority of pupils attend regularly and punctually. The school has been working hard to improve the attendance of a small number of pupils, and while their attendance remains below average, the work carried out is beginning to show positive results. Behaviour is good in and around the school. Pupils are confident in sharing any concerns with an adult. They know how to keep safe in and out of school, for example on the roads and when using the internet.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The main reason for pupils' good progress throughout the school is the good teaching that they receive. Lessons are carefully planned and organised and pupils are well aware of teachers' expectations of their work and behaviour. They move swiftly between activities so that little time is wasted. Teachers assess pupils' progress well during lessons, quickly adapting their plans to ensure that activities provide the right degree of challenge for different groups. Pupils respond very well, working hard to complete their tasks. Teachers use interactive whiteboards successfully to illustrate teaching points. This is helpful for all pupils, but especially for those learning English and those with learning difficulties. Literacy lessons in Key Stage 1 are very well structured and ensure that pupils develop secure basic skills at an early age. Mathematics is consistently well taught because of the subject leader's very effective monitoring and input. In most cases, teaching is lively and engages pupils' interest and concentration. Sometimes, however, teachers spend too much time talking, rather than involving pupils actively in learning. On these occasions pupils lose interest and concentration and this hinders their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a wide range of learning opportunities that engage pupils and make learning exciting. There is a clear focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Provision is regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils receive an appropriate balance of subjects. Teachers make sure learning is relevant and interesting by linking subjects, for example English and history, when pupils write about Greek myths or about the Second World War. More opportunities for pupils to carry out their own investigations in science are contributing to higher standards, especially among the school's more-able pupils. A wide range of exciting visits bring learning to life for pupils. They learn about life in the past through visits to the British Museum and Hampton Court Palace. The annual residential trip for older pupils provides good opportunities for pupils to live and work together and experience a range of activities that contribute well to their personal development. A good variety of clubs and activities outside the school day, such as street dancing, drumming and cheerleading, help pupils develop particular skills as well as supporting positive attitudes and teamwork. The school is currently adapting its curriculum to meet the needs of a small group of pupils with behaviour difficulties more effectively. This is showing early signs of success, with pupils more engaged in their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is good. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are robust and health and safety issues are carefully managed. Site security is very good. The school works hard to engage all pupils and has introduced, with some success, a wide range of measures to encourage good attendance. However, this remains a key feature of the school's work, particularly among a small group of families. Pupils who are new to the school receive good support to help them settle in quickly and take a full part in school life. Increasing numbers of pupils with limited English skills are joining the school and senior staff are currently reviewing provision to ensure that these pupils all receive appropriate support.

Pupils receive excellent academic guidance. Teachers assess pupils' learning extremely carefully and there are thorough systems in place for tracking their progress. Marking is good. Pupils respond positively to the useful advice that teachers provide about how to improve their work. Pupils are clear about their learning targets and this increases their motivation and desire to succeed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The steady rise in standards at both key stages and in the Early Years Foundation Stage shows the good impact of leaders and managers throughout the school. The school has successfully developed leaders at different levels to ensure that there is a consistent drive towards improvement. Subject leaders, for example, play an important part in monitoring provision and in taking action to improve areas of weakness.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of performance, analysing assessment information and checking the quality of teaching carefully to identify strengths and weaknesses. Challenging targets are set for both teachers' and pupils' performance. Regular pupil progress meetings between senior leaders and teachers identify pupils who are at risk of not meeting their targets so that action can be taken to support these pupils more effectively.

Senior staff have a good understanding of the school's context within the local community. Faith, ethnicity and culture are promoted successfully across the curriculum. The school has made a positive start in promoting community cohesion locally and more widely, including developing links with faith communities and schools overseas. However, links with parents and local community groups are not strong enough at present to fully support pupils' learning and personal development.

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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?	2
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

18 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abbey Primary School, Morden, SM4 6NY

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome when we visited your school a short while ago. We enjoyed speaking to many of you and looking at your work. Everything we saw and heard convinced us that you go to a good school. We were especially impressed with the way you work hard in lessons and are always ready to help others if necessary. You welcome new pupils warmly and this helps them settle into school quickly. Most of you attend school regularly, but a few pupils have too many absences and miss important parts of their education.

You make good progress because teaching is good and you are keen to learn. The teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and fun. The youngest children in Nursery and Reception get an excellent start to their education. The adults care for them really well and make sure they have everything they need to help them make rapid progress during their early days at school.

The people in charge are doing a good job in running the school. They work hard to make sure the buildings are safe and that you receive the education you deserve. We have asked them to improve the links they have with your parents and carers and with different groups in the local and wider community to help you learn even more effectively and gain a greater understanding of people's different cultural backgrounds.

Thank you once again for being so welcoming and we wish you good luck in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Mary Summers

Lead Inspector