

Abram CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106469
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	324406
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Don Mason

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	217
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	Rev Carol Close
Headteacher	Mr P Freeman
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Simpkin Street Abram Wigan Lancashire WN2 5QE
Telephone number	01942 703465
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Nearly all pupils in this average sized primary school are from White British families. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. So, too, is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is for children in Reception.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school that has some good features. A key factor in its improvement is the impact of the strong leadership and clear vision of the headteacher. Rapid progress has been made in the last year in addressing the issues raised by the last inspection and this indicates the school's good capacity for further improvement. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of its work. The following comment is typical, 'My child really enjoys going to school. Her teacher and the teaching assistant make the lessons interesting and she always has lots to tell me when she comes home.' Pupils are proud of the school. They feel safe and secure and clearly enjoy their time there. Their good personal development is reflected in their good behaviour, the way they care for each other and their positive attitudes to learning. Good personal development is a consequence of the good care and support pupils receive from the adults in school. However, the academic guidance provided for pupils is at an early stage of development and pupils are not always given enough advice about how to build on their achievements and what the next steps in learning should be. This slows down the rate of pupils' progress, especially in writing.

Children make satisfactory progress in the EYFS and this is maintained through Years 1 to 6. Standards are average at the end of Year 6. After the last inspection, standards at Key Stage 2 fell significantly in 2006 but have since risen in 2007 and 2008. Overall, the standards being attained represent satisfactory achievement for pupils during their time at the school. Standards in reading, mathematics and science are generally higher than those in writing. The latest Key Stage 2 provisional national test results show an improvement in boys' standards in English and continuing improvement in mathematics.

There are early signs that achievement is improving because of the changes being made by the school's leadership. Key among these is the implementation of a rigorous system for checking pupils' achievements and monitoring their progress, term by term, to ensure that they are making the progress they are capable of and reaching the challenging targets which have been set for them. However, the school recognises that the process of checking the impact of its actions to secure improvement is not yet as sharp as it could be. Teaching, which is currently satisfactory, is improving because teachers are beginning to use information about pupils' progress to ensure that work is well matched to their learning needs. However, this is not yet being done consistently throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well because of the good support they receive from well-trained, conscientious teaching assistants. The satisfactory curriculum is well enriched by a wide range of special events, visits and visitors. Pupils take enthusiastic advantage of a good range of after-school activities. The impressive school garden is a major feature of school life, contributing very well to pupils' enjoyment and learning. Through the developing work of the school council and by taking on a range of duties, pupils make a positive contribution to school life.

Recent improvement has been greatly influenced by the very strong leadership of the headteacher, who is determined to maintain the strengths of the school whilst improving achievement and standards. He is well supported by an experienced, effective deputy headteacher. Senior colleagues and subject leaders are developing their skills to support this process and are being provided with good support, including from the local authority, in developing their leadership role, checking the school's performance and helping to ensure that it moves forward successfully.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with skills that are slightly below those typical for their age, the weaker areas being in some aspects of language and communication. Good induction procedures ensure that they settle happily into school routines. Children quickly develop independence as they sign themselves in at registration and choose their own activities. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with a good range of practical activities that engage the children's interest and contribute to the satisfactory progress they make. The outdoor area is much improved since the last inspection but is not always used well enough to extend the children's learning experiences across the whole curriculum. Children are well cared for in a secure environment and their personal, social and emotional development is good. They work and play happily together, sensibly taking turns and sharing resources. Children particularly enjoy helping to make toast for the daily snack and willingly tidy up. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as are planning and assessment systems. Assessment information is not always used well enough to match activities to children's needs and planning is not yet fully in line with new requirements. As children enter Year 1 they are working within nationally expected levels, except in writing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment information is used consistently and rigorously by teachers throughout the school to set work that matches pupils' needs, especially in writing.
- Ensure that full use is made of performance information to check that improvement measures are having the desired impact on achievement and standards.
- Improve the advice offered by teachers to pupils about what they have to do to improve, especially in writing.

A small proportion of 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

After the last inspection, standards at Key Stage 2 fell significantly in 2006 but have since risen in 2007 and 2008 and they are now broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their average starting points in Year 1. Standards in reading, mathematics and science have generally been higher than those in writing. In some years, girls have significantly outperformed boys in both reading and writing, where standards are below average overall. The school is taking action to improve standards in writing and to tackle the issue of boys' performance, but it recognises that further improvement is required to build upon its initial success in relation to writing. Recent phonic work undertaken in EYFS and Years 1 and 2 is also having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Teachers have worked hard to develop pupils' enthusiasm for writing and to prepare them well for writing activities so that they experience success. These improvements, whilst benefiting all pupils, have had a particularly beneficial effect on boys' achievement. The 2008 provisional Key Stage 2 national test results show a distinct improvement in boys' reading and writing. In addition, standards in mathematics rose further, building on the improvement in 2007 and indicating the successful impact of improvement strategies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Thoughtful assemblies make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development and their good understanding of how to live and play together safely and happily. The pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity of modern Britain and the wider world is less well developed. However, a good start has been made in improving this aspect, and promoting links with the wider community, through last term's topic on a local pit disaster and the link established with a school in Ireland. Pupils' enjoyment of school and good understanding of the requirements of healthy living are enhanced by the school garden, the new kitchen area for pupils and the healthy tuck shop. Pupils enthusiastically take part in physical activities and make good use of the new playground resources which are helping to make playtimes more productive. Attendance is average. Sound basic skills and positive attitudes in and out of the classroom prepare pupils satisfactorily for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory. Regular checks are made on pupils' progress. The information gathered from these checks is being used with increasing effectiveness to ensure that work set for pupils better matches their needs, although this is not yet consistent throughout the school. Teachers have a sound grasp of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses in writing and this is now helping them to plan appropriate work. Pupils respond well to clear routines. Lessons are generally well planned and pupils have sufficient time to work on tasks at their ability level because teachers do not talk to the whole class for too long. Interesting resources including electronic whiteboards, and a variety of short activities, are well used to support and motivate pupils. However, these good features of the better teaching, particularly the good use of assessment information, are not yet applied consistently in all lessons and, consequently, pupils' achievement is not always as good as it could be. Teaching assistants provide very good support when working with individuals and groups but they are not always used to best effect when the teacher is talking to the whole class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum enables pupils to make satisfactory progress in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). Lessons in personal, social and health education contribute to the pupils' good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. The curriculum is well enriched by a good range of activities which successfully promote pupils' enjoyment and learning. These include work with artists, visits from sports coaches, special events such as 'Tudor Day' and visits such as those to a farm and a bird of prey centre. A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided including a sports club, a keep fit club and a cheerleaders group. Opportunities to develop writing and mathematics skills across the curriculum are limited but teachers are currently working to identify further ways to promote these.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for in this secure, welcoming school environment but academic guidance is satisfactory. Relationships are very good and pupils know there is always someone to help with any worries they might have. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by skilled teaching assistants and outside specialists, when necessary, to enable them to be fully included in all activities. The small number of pupils whose first language is not English receive effective support and, hence, make satisfactory progress in their learning. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current government requirements.

Although teachers talk to pupils about how to improve their work, not all aspects of academic guidance are implemented consistently. Pupils have learning targets but their use is not fully developed. Marking is mainly congratulatory and seldom related to targets, the purpose of the lesson or to next steps in learning. As a consequence, pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve is not as well developed as it should be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall in their impact on pupils' achievement but there are clear signs of developing good practice that is starting to boost pupils' performance. The leadership of the headteacher is playing a significant part in this process. Staff have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A clear plan of action with a manageable number of priorities is in place to bring about improvements. Senior leaders and subject leaders are making good progress in developing their leadership roles. The school sets challenging targets and the recent rise in standards shows that it is being increasingly successful in meeting them because of improvements in the way pupils' progress is checked. The school recognises the need to sharpen its procedures to ensure that its actions to secure improvements have the desired impact. It makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Governors are supportive of the school. The headteacher and the new chair of governors are taking steps to strengthen the ability of the governing body to hold the school to account and provide it with appropriate challenge. Rising standards and accelerating progress, together with the very strong leadership of the headteacher and the positive response from all staff, show that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

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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	2

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 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/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	3
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 learners' needs?	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?	3

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

Inspection of Abram C of E Primary School, Wigan, WN2 5QE

My colleague and I really enjoyed our visit when we came to inspect your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. We particularly enjoyed visiting your classrooms, seeing the work you were doing and talking to you about your school. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education and that you make satisfactory progress in your learning.

What is going well in your school

- You are beginning to make quicker progress, especially in mathematics, because of the improvements the teachers are making.
- You behave very well in class and enjoy your lessons.
- You get on very well with the adults in school and they take very good care of you.
- The adults in school are working well together to make the school even better than it is now.

What we have asked your school to do to improve further

- Make sure that teachers always use the information they have about your progress to set work that matches your needs.
- Ensure that school leaders check really carefully that the improvements they are making are working as well as they expect.
- Tell you more about what you need to do to make even better progress, especially in writing.

You can help too by making sure that you know your targets and are working hard to achieve them.

We would like to wish you all the very best for the future.