

# Abbey Lane Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106982
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	324501
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jane Hughes

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)	411
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr D Kidd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Helen Chesters
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 May 2006
<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>	Abbey Lane Sheffield South Yorkshire S8 0BN
<b>Telephone number</b>	0114 274 5054
<b>Fax number</b>	0114 274 5054

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This large school draws pupils from an area of relative social advantage in a suburb of south-west Sheffield. Most pupils are White British. Of the few pupils from minority ethnic groups, most speak fluent English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is far smaller than average. The school has achieved several awards, most notably Artsmark Gold, Healthy Schools and Investors in People. It is currently pursuing eco-school status. Staffing has changed considerably in the last three years but is now stable. The headteacher joined the school in September 2008 as part of a local authority initiative. This uses the skills of nationally recognised leading headteachers within a limited time frame to develop good capacity for sustainable improvement in selected schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Abbey Lane is a good school with some outstanding features. In particular, senior leaders, governors and staff promote outstanding personal development and well-being among pupils, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pastoral care, personal support and academic guidance for pupils are also of the highest quality. The headteacher leads by example. She brings urgency to strategic planning and enables teachers, teaching assistants and leaders at all levels to develop their professional skills well. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of all the school offers their children. They typically remark, 'My child is receiving an excellent education but, more importantly, is enjoying it'.

From broadly expected starting points in Reception, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school builds well on this strong start. By the end of Year 2 standards are just above average overall, although lower in writing. Pupils continue to make good progress through Years 3 to 6 so that by the time they leave Year 6 they achieve well and reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Even so, their attainment in writing is not as high as in other subjects.

Consistently good quality teaching ensures that pupils do well. An increasing proportion of lessons are outstanding and these high quality experiences develop pupils' basic skills well. Pupils are vocal in their praise of the good and increasingly creative curriculum. This inspires them as it develops strong basic skills from which they can build for future success and well-being. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time at school and act as positive role models for the younger children. They relish responsibility and talk proudly of their achievements in school and how they work to benefit the local community. They turn theory into practice as they follow safe practices, such as when they investigated safer parking outside school. Pupils understand how to live increasingly healthy lifestyles and create posters for competitions full of relevant messages to help protect the planet. Excellent care, guidance and support ensure that pupils feel welcome and well cared for. High quality tracking of pupils' progress provides the vehicle to push them on to greater achievement.

Governors play a decisively strong role in the school's development. Following a period of staffing and leadership upheaval, governors, with the help of the local authority, sought the expertise of a nationally acknowledged leading headteacher. She continues to drive the school forward at a rapid pace and provides a first-class example for leaders at all levels to emulate. With the able assistance of the deputy headteacher, she shares out responsibilities, secures high quality teaching from staff and endorses a simple overview of how to improve the school further by embedding highly effective strategies to improve academic performance. Lack of complacency and a keen focus on continued improvement since the previous inspection demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further. The school is inclusive and all staff pay clear attention to equality of opportunity for all. The school is mindful of its mainly monocultural intake. Well-established community links help pupils to participate in local culture through art and music festivals, fundraising events and celebrations of the city's considerable steel heritage. Developing links with other countries and continents are widening pupils' global awareness and their understanding of differences between cultures, faiths and ethnic groups.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children settle in quickly and accept the high expectations of staff. Effective teamwork, focused leadership and management, and skilful practitioners deliver outstanding provision for children's welfare. This helps children to feel secure and to make the most of their time. Parents particularly value this support and confirm that they feel fully involved in their children's learning. Staff liaise well with the large number of early years' settings from which children transfer.

Consistently good quality provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children make good progress in all areas of learning. Progress is particularly rapid in their personal and social skills, which results in outstanding personal development and well-being. Children join Reception with skills that are broadly expected for their age, apart from their writing skills which are lower. By the end of Reception, most children achieve a good level of development in all six areas of learning, although writing skills are still not as well developed as other areas. Overall, children do not access mark-making activities with as much enthusiasm as other elements of their learning either indoors or outside. Higher attaining children make good progress and work at levels beyond those expected for their age.

Children are happy and behave beautifully because they understand the simple rules. They learn about safer and healthier lifestyles as they enjoy nutritious snacks and various physical activities. Enticing activities, indoors and outside, capture children's imagination as, for example, they build 'snow castles' outside. Children describe clearly what they are making. For example, one reported, 'I am making a wand for my cauldron!' Adults guide some activities with subtle expertise but allow the children to decide how each experience develops. Children take responsibility for choosing what and where to learn.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well in relation to their starting points. This includes pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who benefit from individual support programmes run by teachers and support assistants. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading and mathematics, although more remains to be done to raise pupils' attainment above the average in writing. Despite some fluctuations in standards over recent years, by Year 6 standards are now above average in English, mathematics and science even though the writing element is still lower. This is because pupils do not always pay close enough attention to their basic writing skills or the presentation of their written work. The overall rise in standards is a direct result of the accurate monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress instigated by senior leaders. This informs teachers' planning and highlights exactly what each pupil needs to do to improve. As a result, far more pupils are now reaching the higher levels in their work and staff continue to raise targets to provide increasing challenge throughout the year.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils develop into well-rounded, mature and effective learners and citizens. They follow the school rules and behave exceptionally well. Relationships are of the highest order as pupils respect one another's similarities and differences. Pupils show an excellent understanding of their own achievement and where they could do better. Written self-evaluations at the end of a Year 5 mathematics lesson, for example, contain helpful feedback such as 'I understand most of the work but I don't understand bisect and perpendicular.' High levels of attendance reflect pupils' reliability and enjoyment of school. Pupils eagerly embrace responsibility, for instance, they are conscientious councillors and staircase monitors as well as effective decision makers. They work well for the good of the school community and beyond. Pupils gain a strong awareness of sustainability issues as the school pursues eco-school status and they instigate recycling programmes and participate annually in a national recycling project. Their awareness of differences between their own and other cultures is growing as they exchange emails with a school in Africa and learn different European languages. An extensive range of physical activities includes dodge ball and street dance and pupils know that exercise is good for them. Their knowledge of emotional health and well-being is not yet as well developed. Pupils have healthy options at lunchtimes, although many choose puddings rather than fruit.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Predominantly good or better teaching engages pupils well in their learning. High expectations from adults lead to mature discussions in lessons. In some of the best lessons, teachers model good responses very well and revisit objectives and success criteria periodically during an activity. In this way, pupils regularly evaluate what they are doing and whether or not they are going about their work in the right way. Teachers use probing questions to capture pupils' attention and help them to marshal their ideas. This encourages pupils to develop increasingly sophisticated thinking skills. Adults mix these well with practical activities and extension tasks that pupils enjoy immensely. As a result, pupils develop enquiring minds and independent learning skills that prepare them well for future success. Pupils are supported but rarely spoon-fed. Occasionally, however, teaching does not promote pupils' independent learning effectively enough. Staff match work very carefully to the individual needs of pupils so all are challenged but never discouraged. In some lessons, and in pupils' workbooks, not enough attention is paid to basic writing and presentation skills. Teachers and pupils use information and communication technology as a learning tool in all subjects. Adults routinely introduce devices such as role-play and talking partners to lessons to develop different learning styles in pupils.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because basic skills in English, mathematics and science are provided for well and there is plenty of breadth, for example in clubs, visits and visitors. The development of a creative curriculum is progressing well. The school identifies more aspects to improve this further, for instance, there are some creative plans to engage pupils more readily with their writing. Increasingly effective links between subjects bring relevance and excitement to pupils'

learning. Some outstanding links between religious education and English, and science and art, are highly appreciated by pupils who engage well in the planned tasks and learn well from the activities. Links with the community, other schools and agencies, together with 'circle time', the study of modern foreign languages and the practical science curriculum all make an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils report how they enjoy a varied range of extra-curricular enrichment. Some parents say they would welcome even more.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Adults carefully nurture pupils' academic, emotional and physical well-being; all three elements underpin the work of the school. There are appropriate arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils and these meet current government guidelines. All adults provide exemplary pastoral care to pupils and, as a result, pupils say they feel very well cared for and that their teachers deal promptly with any troubling issues. Academic guidance for all pupils originates from excellent tracking systems. Staff use these accurately to plan effectively to meet pupils' needs. Teachers' marking provides valuable feedback while targets give clear guidance to pupils about how to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive first-class support through interventions and individual learning programmes. Class teachers, support and special needs staff deliver these effectively to meet individual needs. Appropriate links are in place with outside support agencies. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language receive specific support to maintain progress at the same rate as their peers.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Senior leaders provide clear direction for the work of the school. An all-encompassing focus on raising standards and achievement drives every aspect of its improvement agenda. As a result, staff are crystal clear about their main goals and how to attain them. Staff acknowledge that more remains to be done to improve pupils' writing skills and that this is still a 'work in progress' as the impact of initial interventions is showing more slowly than in other identified improvement areas. Robust monitoring and tracking procedures provide staff with all the information they require to plan lessons that exactly meet the needs of individual pupils. The successful implementation of this system since the previous inspection is a key strength of the school and provides continuity of purpose for the whole learning community. Knowledgeable subject leaders ensure close teamwork between staff members. Less-experienced colleagues receive appropriate support as their roles and responsibilities gradually develop. The governing body brings a variety of skills to the school combining the continuity provided by experienced governors with new perspectives from latest recruits. The core of experienced governors ensures that any pressing needs are quickly identified and that governors offer high levels of challenge and support for senior leaders. Although the school does not provide any extended provision on site, community cohesion is high profile and the school is at the heart of diverse creative, sporting and charitable community events. At the same time, links to schools in Africa and Siberia through, for example, pen pals, computer links and staff exchanges, enable pupils to gain greater awareness of global diversity. Parents are fulsome in their praise of the school and the progress their children make. As one parent succinctly summarises, 'This school has the feel-good factor'.

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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?	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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

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<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>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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?	2
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**

Inspection of Abbey Lane Primary School, Sheffield, S8 0BN

My fellow inspectors and I really enjoyed meeting you when we inspected your school. Thank you for being so polite and helpful. By the time we left, we understood why you enjoy school so much.

Your school is a good school and gives you a good education. Some of its work is outstanding, for example, you all behave very well and your attendance is very high. Well done! Many of you told us that you really enjoy coming to Abbey Lane and we saw that for ourselves in the lessons we came to. It was great fun to see how far the stockings stretched in Year 3, for example! We were pleased to see how kind you are to each other and how well you work together in lessons and on activities around the school such as the eco project. All the adults take excellent care of you and this helps you to do well in your learning and reach above average standards. We saw lots of interesting lessons, which you and your parents told us you enjoy, especially the practical ones. Since inspectors last came to your school, quite a lot of changes have taken place. Even so, all the adults know exactly what to do to make sure they plan the right levels of work for you, whatever your needs. This is because they track your progress very carefully. This is very important as it is helping you to reach higher standards in your work. We were impressed with how much you know about your own learning and the way you record this in your books at the end of lessons. Such clear self-evaluation, as we call it, shows great maturity and is a valuable skill for the future.

Part of our job is to see what your school could do better. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you all do better in your writing, including children in Reception. You can help with this by using all the techniques you learn in your 'Big Write' sessions as often as possible to become more successful writers. Also, don't forget to make sure that your writing is neat and your work is well presented.

Carry on enjoying school and working hard.