

# The Abbey CE VA Primary School, Shaftesbury

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113850
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	325899
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Chris Grove

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>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	171
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>	Sue Minshaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Meacham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2009
<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>	St James's Street Shaftesbury SP7 8HQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01747 852620
<b>Fax number</b>	01747 852620

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average in size. It draws its pupils from the town of Shaftesbury and from outlying villages. The great majority of pupils come from mainly White British backgrounds. There are small numbers of pupils of Gypsy/Roma families, and of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, principally speech, language and communication difficulties, is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of a Reception class. The school has gained several awards, including the Activemark and Eco Schools (Bronze) awards. The new headteacher took up his post in April 2008. There is currently an acting deputy headteacher.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The Abbey Primary is a good school. It also has outstanding features. The school enjoys the full-hearted support of parents. One happy parent wrote of the school's 'vibrant, exciting and truly supportive learning environment'. Another parent praised its 'wonderful atmosphere, rather like a huge, happy family'. The partnership with parents is outstanding. There are good links with other organisations, including the neighbouring church, the local secondary school and other primary schools, and local authority services.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The exceptionally good relationships within the school, and the caring way in which all staff relate to pupils, contribute very positively to the strong sense of community. Not surprisingly, every respondent to the parental questionnaire judged that their child enjoyed school. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils of all ages work very cooperatively in the school's highly supportive atmosphere. Pupils feel extremely safe, and their positive contributions to school are outstanding.

Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement. Pupils attain above average standards overall, and make good progress in their learning. At the end of Year 2, standards have been broadly average in the last two years, but higher in reading and mathematics than in writing. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average, particularly in English and mathematics. Although overall progress is good, it is relatively stronger in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 to 2. In general, teachers create a motivating climate for classroom learning. They have good skills in classroom organisation and this ensures that time is used well. In most lessons, a good pace to learning sustains pupils' interest and attention successfully. The curriculum meets pupils' learning needs well, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Provision for other subjects is also good.

The school is a harmonious community, which provides very strong pastoral care. Pupils benefit from very good personal support and guidance. The school has adopted a new policy for marking pupils' work, but its implementation is not yet consistent, so that pupils do not always receive enough academic guidance. Targets are also not yet fully used to help pupils to understand the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management, including that of governors, are good. Since his appointment, the headteacher has had a positive impact on the school, and has been well supported by other staff, especially the acting deputy headteacher. The new leadership has set a clear direction for further development, and has the enthusiastic endorsement of the parents. Planning to guide the school's improvement is based on good self-evaluation.

Effective steps have been taken since the last inspection to implement improvements, including the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the tracking of pupils' performance. The quality of teaching has also improved. These factors demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

On entry to the school, most children have knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. By the time they enter Year 1 they have made good progress in all areas of learning, and their attainment is a little above average. They develop confident language and communication skills

because of the good impact of a new course to teach children letters and sounds. The very good relationships in the warm and welcoming setting ensure that children settle quickly. Behaviour is extremely good. Children clearly enjoy their work, and quickly gain independence.

Staff work together closely, and this contributes to good teaching and learning. They also know the children very well. The planning to support all areas of learning is mostly good, though on occasion opportunities to provide greater challenge for more able children are missed.

Assessment is used effectively to meet individual needs. All welfare requirements are securely in place. Children are offered a wide range of stimulating activities. One parent commented that, 'The variety of things they have learnt in such a short time is incredible'. Staff place a firm emphasis on experiences that allow for exploration and investigation, and these are balanced with carefully chosen activities led by adults. Good links with parents have been formed. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The leader is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses in provision, which is good overall, and has written a well-focused action plan to bring about improvements.

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

- Raise standards and increase progress in Years 1 to 2, especially in writing.
- Ensure more consistent academic guidance from marking, and especially from target setting, to help pupils to understand the next steps in their learning.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by Year 6. Good progress is evident throughout the school, although it is relatively slower in Years 1 and 2 than in other year groups, particularly in writing. Since the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 2 have been broadly average. However, results for reading and mathematics improved in 2008, with above average proportions reaching the higher Level 3. Lower results in writing last year were due in part to staff changes and a number of new pupils joining after the Reception year. The school has taken action this year to improve the teaching of writing. As a result, pupils are now beginning to make faster progress in this subject in Years 1 and 2.

The school has maintained above average standards at Year 6 in recent years, particularly in English and mathematics, with above average proportions of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in mathematics. The school makes good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The support provided by teaching assistants is very well managed, and ensures that these pupils make the same good progress as their peers.

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

#### **Grade: 1**

Excellent attitudes and behaviour are evident in classes and around the school. In lessons pupils are very attentive and responsive to questions. As a result of the school's caring approach, pupils are self-disciplined, very polite, and always happy. A wide range of opportunities encourages them to understand their own emotions and show consideration for others. All parents agree that their children feel safe in school, and pupils' high levels of care for one another attest to their strong sense of how to keep themselves and others safe. One important reason for pupils' sense of security is the successful introduction of the 'worry box'. Pupils say that they are confident in staff to address promptly any minor difficulties that arise.

There are good levels of participation in the wide range of sports available through the extra-curricular programme. However, although pupils understand the concept of healthy eating, the contents of lunchboxes do not consistently reflect this. The pupils themselves make valuable contributions to school and to the community. In a moving assembly, the audience spontaneously applauded the moving presentation made by the pupil who was given the first school 'Blue', a new award acknowledging exceptional contributions to the school. Other instances of important contributions include the lead taken by pupils in organising extra-curricular provision, such as the 'Cartoon Club', and the support provided by older pupils for their younger peers in the early morning 'Wiggle and Giggle' club. Many pupils are involved in a range of musical performances, which are very well received in school and at events in the locality. Pupils feel that their opinions expressed through the school council are valued. Their self-confidence, independence and care for others, and above average standards in basic skills, mean they are well prepared for their future education and adult life. Most pupils have good attendance, although a small number of families take holidays in term time.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Lessons are purposeful, with clear learning objectives. Good use of resources, including the interactive whiteboards, stimulates pupils' interest well. Secure subject knowledge and a range of teaching strategies result in confident teaching. In a good lesson in English, for instance, the scene was first set well, and then pupils' understanding of the historical context was developed by skilled use of drama techniques. This exciting approach helped pupils to reach a deeper understanding of the roles of the characters in preparation for a short piece of persuasive writing. Teachers are good at providing pupils with clear explanations. They are also skilled at asking questions that require pupils to reflect and explain their reasoning. Praise is well used to encourage pupils. In most cases, tasks are well matched to pupils of different abilities, and this provides good levels of challenge. Sometimes, however, the match of work is not as effective as it could be, which constrains learning to a satisfactory level. Teaching assistants give close support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The particular strength of the curriculum lies in the wide range of opportunities on offer, which enrich pupils' experience. Music, for example, is a strength of the school. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to sing in the choir, perform on steel pans, or play in the orchestra, in school and in the community. French is taught from Reception onwards. Physical education is extended well through the local sports partnership. Recent improvements have begun to reorganise the curriculum around topics, so that pupils have more opportunities to apply their basic literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. This development is at a relatively early stage and means that pupils do not always have the wider opportunities they need to practise their writing skills.

The curriculum is inclusive in its approach. It is successfully adapted to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the small numbers who are learning English as an additional language. Pupils from Traveller backgrounds are sensitively included through consideration of their way of life. Additional provision is also made for those who are gifted

and talented. 'Golden Time', when pupils take part in activities involving mixed-age groups, makes a good contribution to their personal development. Residential visits broaden pupils' experience well. Participation in the wide range of clubs, which include chess, gardening and sports, is high. A good number of visits and visitors, including members of the Traveller community, add significant enrichment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after. Procedures to safeguard pupils and to assess risks are robust. The school works well with external agencies to provide support for vulnerable pupils. Attendance is closely monitored and effective action is taken to reduce unnecessary absence. The quality of guidance arising from the marking of pupils' books is variable. Although some pupils are given detailed guidance about improvement, others receive only positive comments without clear indications of how to make work better. However, pupils' understanding of their progress in lessons through the 'traffic light' arrangements is having a positive impact. There is also no school-wide system for setting learning targets for pupils, so that they know what they must do next to move on to a higher level. Where pupils have targets, they are not skilled at assessing progress towards their achievement.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents appreciate the school's many strengths and recent improvements. The leaders of English and mathematics have been involved with the headteacher in a wide-ranging programme of monitoring. Effective self-evaluation has identified important priorities, reflected in the current school improvement plan. Tracking shows that the drive to improve pupils' writing, including those in Years 1 and 2, is leading to increased progress. However, initiatives to provide better opportunities to practise writing skills in other subjects are yet to be fully developed. Governors fulfil their legal responsibilities well and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They offer strong support and also act effectively as 'critical friends' to the school. The school is aware of the need to make improved use of challenging learning targets to raise pupils' expectations of their academic performance.

The school's inclusive ethos ensures that it promotes equal opportunities well. Good contributions are made to community cohesion at the levels of the school and the local community. In order to broaden pupils' perspectives of other cultures, links with another school in a contrasting context have been established and reciprocal visits are already planned.

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**Annex A**

**Inspection judgements**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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	2
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?	2

## 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	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	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**

15 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Abbey C of E VA Primary School, Shaftesbury SP7 8HQ

We would like to thank all of you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking to you. The Abbey Primary is a good school and a very happy place for children to be. Many of your parents wrote to us about how much you enjoy school, and about its many good features. These are some of the important things we found out about your school.

- The school makes everyone feel very welcome.
- You have excellent relationships with each other and with the staff, who take very good care of you, so that your enjoyment of school is outstanding.
- Your personal development, including your behaviour, is excellent.
- You feel very safe in school, and make outstanding contributions to school and community life.
- You are making good progress in your learning, so that by the time that you leave at the end of Year 6 you are doing better than many other pupils of the same age.
- The teaching in your school is good.
- The school provides you with lots of extra-curricular activities, and many of you take part in these.
- Teachers do a lot of checking up, so they know what is good about your school and how to improve it.

All the staff are working very hard to make the school a good place for you. We have asked them to make things even better in the following ways:

- Make sure that those of you in Years 1 and 2 make even faster progress, especially in your writing.
- Ensure that marking, and especially target setting, help you to do better by pointing out the next steps in your learning. You can help by continuing to work hard and taking advantage of the improvements that your school will be making. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Chris Grove

Lead Inspector