

Abbey CofE Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125654
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	328376
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Grainger

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	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	200
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	Paul Allred
Headteacher	Margot Brown
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Aston Road Nuneaton CV11 5EL
Telephone number	024 76386101
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils are of White British heritage. About 15% of pupils are from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds. Many of these are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language when they start school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Although these pupils' needs cover a wide range, most have moderate learning difficulties. The school's provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery, which children attend for either morning or afternoon sessions, and two Reception classes. The adjoining Abbey Children's Centre offers Nursery provision, before- and after-school care and holiday care.

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. It has improved significantly in recent years and many parents told inspectors how pleased they are with its continuing development. In particular, parents value the growing range of activities offered to their children and the way in which the school invites their involvement. One parent, reflecting the views of many, commented: 'My daughter loves coming to this school. She likes the variety in the curriculum and the pleasant atmosphere that starts at the school gates.'

Achievement is good. Children get off to a particularly strong start in the Nursery and make good progress through Years 1 and 2. Children's starting points are generally below the level expected. Many have particularly low skills in communication, language, personal and social development, and limited knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average. In Reception, progress is satisfactory but not as good as in other years. Overall, however, the gap between children's attainment on entry and the standards expected for their age narrows by the time children transfer to Year 1. On entry, there is a significant difference in the skills of boys and girls. While both boys and girls move on well during their time in the school, the gap between boys' and girls' performance remains wide in reading and writing. Girls reach much higher standards than boys in these areas.

There are two main reasons why achievement is good. First, teaching is good. In the Nursery and Years 1 and 2, it is firmly focused on the next steps individuals need to take in their learning. Second, the curriculum is rich and stimulating. Children from Reception to Year 2 have access to a very good range of activities in addition to daily lessons, including a wide variety of clubs. Much is being done through activities linked to carefully selected themes to engage the interest of boys in reading and writing. While success is already evident in boys' motivation and enthusiasm, the school recognises that it has to maintain a relentless focus on accelerating the boys' progress. In Reception, teaching and activities are not always sharply focused on the next steps in learning for each child.

As a result of high quality provision for personal, social and health education, together with very good pastoral care, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Particularly impressive is pupils' excellent adoption of healthy lifestyles. Relationships are good and the school is racially harmonious. Pupils' sensible behaviour helps to make the school a safe place. Pupils report that they feel very safe and able to approach adults with any worries or concerns. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and contribute well to the school and wider community. All in all, their personal attributes and their good academic progress prepare them well for their future lives. However, even though almost all pupils thoroughly enjoy school, the attendance rate is below average. The school has not been sufficiently successful in working with parents and carers to improve both attendance and punctuality.

Good leadership and management have driven the school forward since its last inspection. The involvement of all staff in leading and reviewing improvements, particularly in the curriculum, has improved substantially. The school's track record of improvement and accurate self-evaluation show that there is good capacity for further development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

By the time children transfer to Year 1, they have moved on well from their starting points in Nursery, even though standards are still a little below average and communication, language and literacy skills remain a relative weaknesses. Progress is rapid in the Nursery. As one parent observed, 'When my son started in the Nursery he had problems with speech. This is no longer the case and I believe it is because of how good the Nursery is.' An exciting range of activities is provided in the Nursery, both indoors and outside, that captures children's interest and promotes very effective learning through enquiry and exploration. A particularly good feature to the teaching is the way in which adults interact with children, seizing every opportunity to promote the development of spoken language and children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Exceptionally good gains are made in children's personal and social skills.

The gains made in the Nursery are maintained and built on satisfactorily in Reception. The curriculum provides an appropriate balance of adult-led activities and those that children select from a range provided indoors and outside. However, the attention given to promoting next steps in learning for each individual child is less focused in Reception than it is in the Nursery. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is well led and managed. This is seen, for example, in the very good arrangements for settling children into school and in the good attention to children's welfare. The school recognises where there are strengths and areas for development in the provision and plans effectively for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise boys' standards in reading and writing to match those attained by girls.
- Ensure that teaching and activities in the Reception Year are always sharply focused on the next steps in learning for each child.
- Work closely with parents and carers to improve attendance and punctuality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress throughout Years 1 and 2. The proportion of boys and girls working at the level expected for their age increases steadily. By the end of Year 2, boys and girls reach similar standards in mathematics but the boys still lag behind the girls in reading and writing. Pupils at an early stage of learning English make good gains in speaking, reading and writing in English. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, whatever the nature of their needs, move on well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' personal development are good. The outcomes are evident in pupils' good behaviour, attitudes and relationships. Pupils are friendly and polite. Their involvement in the community has increased well since the last inspection and it is now good. Pupils have a good awareness of the needs of others and do much to raise funds for charities.

Pupils know a huge amount about how to stay fit and healthy. They can explain very clearly, for example, why it is important to have five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. They

respond enthusiastically to opportunities for physical exercise within the school day, during extra activities and at playtimes. They know a good amount about how to stay safe in school and outside. While enjoyment of school is good, a small number of pupils have poor attendance and are persistently late in arriving in the mornings.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is almost consistently good in Years 1 and 2. Teachers are very clear about what they want pupils of all abilities to learn during lessons. They explain the purpose of lessons and activities clearly, including the 'steps to success' that pupils need to work towards. As a result, pupils know what they are aiming to achieve and undertake tasks purposefully and with good involvement. Teaching assistants are well deployed to work with small groups, often making a tremendously effective contribution to the learning of the pupils who need most support.

In almost all lessons, time is used to the full. Activities are varied well to keep up the momentum of learning as, for example, pupils move from a whole-class session to paired work or individual activities and back to another whole-class input. Just occasionally, the pace of learning slows in whole-class sessions when not enough account is taken of the full range of pupils' needs or this part of the lesson lasts too long.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is much better than at the last inspection. The use of cross-curricular themes is a strength. These themes, such as 'Celebrations', 'Time Travel' or 'Pirates', allow pupils to make connections between the content of different subjects. Currently, pupils are enjoying learning about 'Places People Go', which is about holidays. Together with a developing use of drama, the themes are creating meaningful contexts for writing. The school recognises that this approach, together with an increasing use of non-fiction texts, requires even further development and refinement to raise boys' reading and writing standards. Nevertheless, there is already evidence that boys are enjoying writing more now than in the past. The teaching of English and mathematics in sets based on ability in Year 2, together with ability-based phonics groups across the school, is helping to raise standards. Enrichment of the curriculum through visits, visitors and clubs is very good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school gives very good attention to pupils' personal welfare needs. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are secure. The school works with families and outside agencies, as appropriate, to provide very good support for pupils who are vulnerable. One parent told inspectors of the excellent support provided by the school when a child is going through a difficult time. There are examples of the school working closely with the education social worker to improve the attendance of individual families. However, the school has not been sufficiently successful in preventing the persistent lateness and poor attendance of a small number of pupils.

Academic guidance is good and pupils' progress is reviewed regularly. Pupils understand clearly what they need to do next to improve their work. Targets are used well and teachers give pupils good feedback on how well they are doing. In one Year 2 class, for example, marking is very thorough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A significant improvement since the last inspection is the involvement of middle managers in moving the school forward. Subject leaders now know the strengths and weaknesses in provision in the areas that they manage and are active in making improvements. This has been a major factor in the development of the curriculum. Both senior and middle managers recognise, however, that the initiatives to raise boys' standards in reading and writing require continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure that they are fully effective. The school also recognises that intensive monitoring of teaching is still required if all teaching in all years is to be good.

Governance is good, providing senior leaders with a balance of support and challenge. Newly appointed parent governors have become active quickly, enthusiastically undertaking training. Community cohesion is promoted well. The school has a good knowledge of the community it serves and reaches out to families. It works well with others, particularly the adjoining children's centre, to give good support to the local community.

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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?	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

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	1
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?	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**

18 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Abbey CofE Infant School, Nuneaton, CV11 5EL

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for helping us. We enjoyed watching your lessons, talking with you and looking at your work. As your parents told us, your school is getting better all the time. It is giving you a good education.

We saw that you enjoy school a lot and behave well. You move very sensibly around your school. You get on well with each other and with the adults, helping your school to be a friendly place. You know such a lot about how to keep fit and healthy. You are very good at choosing healthy things to eat and at having lots of exercise. You also do a good deal to help other people, such as when you raise funds for charities. Well done to all of you!

You are making good progress with your learning. You do well because the teaching is good. You also have lots of interesting activities. The themes such as 'Places People Go' look very interesting. The adults look after you well. You told us that you can turn to an adult in school if you have any worries.

Because we want to help the adults to make the school even better, we have asked them to work on some things in particular. This is what we have asked them to do.

- Make sure that boys catch up with girls in reading and writing.
- Make sure that the adults in the Reception classes focus very carefully on the next steps each of the children needs to take next in their learning.
- Work with your parents and carers to make sure that you all have good attendance and arrive at school promptly in the mornings.

You can help by always doing your best. Please make sure that your attendance is good and that you always arrive on time in the mornings. Thank you once again for your help.

Yours faithfully

Alison Grainger

Lead inspector