

Abbeys Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110401
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	337491
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Marion Wallace

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	282
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Moore
Headteacher	Tracy Fielding
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The vast majority of time was spent looking at learning: 12 teachers were seen, 20 lessons were observed, and meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan and individual subject plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and analysed 89 questionnaires completed by parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of senior management in bringing about improvements in mathematics and science, especially at Key Stage 1
- the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and its effectiveness in promoting improvement
- how effectively teachers use assessment information to support pupils' learning and help them understand what they have to do to improve their work
- how effectively the curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of different groups of pupils throughout the school.

Information about the school

Abbeys is larger than the average primary school. Most pupils come from Bletchley and the local area. The majority are White British. A few speak English as an additional language, and two are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average. A small minority are known to be eligible for free school meals. Some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. There have been a considerable number of staff changes since the last inspection, including to the senior management team. The headteacher has been in post for 19 months and the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher for 7 months. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises two Reception classes. Other provision on the school site including a breakfast and after-school club provided by Acorn, the Daisychain Children's Centre and Surestart Children's Centre are not managed by the governing body. The school has achieved the Healthy School award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standard of pupils' work and their achievement in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils' low attainment and underachievement reflect a history of weak provision and inadequate systems to track pupils' progress. These weaknesses have been identified by the headteacher and senior management team, who have set about improving the climate for learning, the growing success of which is acknowledged by pupils. One expressed the views of the overwhelming majority, saying, 'I like this school because the teachers are friendly and they try their best to help and care for us.'

These are the main strengths of the school.

- Pupils enjoy school and lessons because they like and respect their teachers.
- The school's ethos is friendly, warm and welcoming and relationships are good.
- Pupils all feel very safe and secure in school and are confident that adults will help them if they have any concerns.
- Strong intervention and more robust tracking in mathematics are leading to rising attainment and higher achievement among all groups.
- The headteacher and senior management team have a clear vision for future improvement and have made many good changes and improvements in a short period of time. They are tackling weaknesses with determination.
- The new library is attractive and pupils are starting to use it well.
- There have been significant improvements in the opportunities for learning outside, especially for younger children.

These are the key weaknesses of the school.

- Achievement and attainment in English, mathematics and science is inadequate.
- Teachers do not consistently use assessment information in order to match tasks closely to the learning needs of pupils.
- The roles of middle and senior staff have yet to be fully developed, particularly their monitoring and evaluation of the impact of key aspects of provision.

Recent improvements in teaching mean that the progress pupils make in lessons is accelerating, often at a good rate, and all groups of pupils are now on track to achieve better results than in recent years. Even so, overall effectiveness remains inadequate because the gaps in pupils' learning from earlier years mean that too many are still

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underachieving by the time they leave. However, systems for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school are improving. These changes together with the effective work done in mathematics, and the improved opportunities for practical learning that have led to better achievement in science, demonstrate that the school now has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in English, mathematics and science in Key Stages 1 and 2, by April 2011 by:
 - ensuring key skills are taught consistently well
 - improving standards of presentation of pupils' work
 - helping pupils learn to use a wide range of vocabulary to enrich their writing
 - improving spelling by ensuring younger pupils regularly practise words they find difficult
 - improving pupils' pencil grips and the quality of their handwriting
 - improving the mental and oral starters to mathematics lessons.
- Ensure that all teaching is of consistently good quality by April 2011 by:
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan lessons that match pupils' needs and provide appropriate
 - ensuring pace, challenge and high expectations are features of every lesson so that all groups of pupils are challenged
 - helping pupils know how to improve through consistently good-quality marking.
- Increase the rigour of monitoring and evaluation by April 2011 and ensure leaders are effective in checking teaching and learning and supporting their development so that pupils make securely rapid progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

While achievement is inadequate overall, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the quality of learning is improving rapidly. Expectations are rising but are not yet sufficiently consistent. Too few pupils reach the higher levels in mathematics and science. The school's tracking information indicates improved progress for all groups this year with an increasing number of pupils on course to reach their targets. Examination of pupils' work confirms that numeracy and literacy skills are improving, but preparation for their future economic well-being remains inadequate because attainment is still too low. Handwriting skills, spelling and presentation remain weak because these have not been a focus for improvement, but the content of pupils' work is improving. Pupils know their targets and are able to say what they need to do to improve their work. Increased opportunities to develop their scientific knowledge through improved practical work are having a good impact. Year 2 pupils enjoyed planting their own plants and investigating the roots, bulbs, flowers and stems of real

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plants and were able to talk accurately about what plants need to grow.

Pupils enjoy learning because most lessons are carefully organised and warm relationships contribute to a positive climate for learning. The vast majority feel that they learn a lot in lessons and feel adults 'explain things clearly and help them improve their work'. In a good Year 5/6 literacy lesson pupils were excited at the prospect of writing their own newspaper article. The teacher used the interactive whiteboard well to help pupils focus on the contents of a newspaper article on the 'round-the-world yacht race' and guided them skilfully to identify the main features of good report writing. Good learning was also seen in a Year 6 numeracy intervention group. The pace of learning was good because expectations were very clear and all pupils rose to the challenge to identify strategies to solve everyday number problems. High expectations assisted pupils' good progress. Not a moment was lost as pupils worked individually and with a partner to solve the challenging problems. However, this good learning is not yet consistent enough across the school and many lessons still lack pace, challenge and high expectations, especially for more-able pupils. There is some good-quality marking but this is not consistent in all classes and subjects.

Other key features of pupils' outcomes are as follows.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is satisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory overall; it is good around the school and pupils are polite and hold doors open for visitors, but occasionally they become restless and fidgety because of the lack of challenge. Pupils' understanding of cultural differences, both in the United Kingdom and globally, is insufficiently developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall, having improved recently. There is an increasing amount of good teaching but its impact on learning is not sufficiently widespread to support rapid progress in all classes. Teachers' expectations are also not always consistent or rigorous enough to ensure good learning. The senior management team uses assessment information well to review patterns in attainment. However, at classroom level, despite some good individual practice, too few teachers use assessment information well enough to plan work that is matched to pupils' different abilities; this impedes progress. Teachers use questions effectively to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and pupils appreciate well-planned opportunities to discuss their ideas with others during 'talking partner' sessions. Pupils know their targets and are starting to show understanding of their own learning. Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to helping the most vulnerable pupils develop confidence and self-esteem. The satisfactory curriculum generally meets pupils' needs but is not adapted sufficiently in all subjects to enable all to achieve their potential. This is particularly the case in relation to developing pupils' writing skills. Improvements to the planning for literacy and numeracy are beginning to raise attainment in English and mathematics. However, activities do not stretch those pupils who find learning easy and this limits their progress. Pupils talk positively about the extra-curricular activities such as pottery, cookery and dance. They enjoy the residential trip and visits to Holdenby House that enhance and extend learning about life in Victorian times. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these activities and appreciate the increasing range of learning experiences they are offered. Good links with the local secondary school support opportunities for learning Spanish and visits to local places of historic interest such as Bletchley Park also enrich the provision.

Parents are very happy with the school's care. Pastoral care is satisfactory and improving because staff understand the needs of those who require extra support to help them move on. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities gain confidence in their own abilities to 'have a go' and tackle new work. Support for potentially vulnerable pupils is adequately organised and ensures that they gain confidence. Pupils say they feel well cared for, as one parent commented, 'Staff are friendly and help pupils if they have any concerns.' Parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities say they appreciate the help and support their children receive. Support for pupils who need extra help is well planned and better matched to need. The school works well with other agencies. Induction and transition arrangements are satisfactory and there are good procedures for checking attendance.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders demonstrate strong drive and are ambitious for the school's improvement. The headteacher has a clear vision and is determined that the school should move forward. She has an accurate view of teaching in each classroom and is using this information to sharpen provision and target the most important areas that need improvement. The headteacher is well supported by other senior leaders who have begun to improve systems to monitor and evaluate the schools work. The senior management team tracks pupils' achievement carefully and is starting to identify reasons for weaknesses in particular subjects. They do not yet, however, play a sufficient part in monitoring the quality or effectiveness of teaching and learning. The headteacher has a clear understanding of what needs to be done and has raised staff morale very effectively. There is a clear plan to improve teaching and learning and monitor pupils' progress more robustly. However, much is at an early stage of development and the school's best practice needs to become more consistent and fully embedded. The governors, too, are increasing the level of challenge and new governors are bringing additional skills to the governing body.

The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate areas for development. Partnership working with the local authority has helped to strengthen the leadership team and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Safeguarding procedures are good. Promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school works well with the local community but pupils' understanding of the wider national and global communities is insufficiently developed. Leaders and managers have started to evaluate the impact of initiatives but have yet to do so more thoroughly to help improve outcomes for pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle well into school life. Most children enter Reception with the skills and knowledge below those typical of their age and make satisfactory progress. Provision has improved significantly with the recent development of the outdoor learning area. Children make sound progress in their personal development, behaving well and learning to play with and alongside others. Children's personal, social and emotional development and their communication and language skills are developed well through role play. While enacting the 'Little Red Riding Hood' story, children developed their skills in calculation by counting objects into Red Riding Hood's basket. In a bingo game they made sound gains recognising numbers; however, adults did not always challenge or extend children's awareness and knowledge. Adults encourage children to respond individually to questions and talk to each other, helping them to make progress in their speaking and listening skills. Good phonics teaching results in children enjoying sounds and recognising letters. Children are learning to lead a healthy lifestyle, enjoying the healthy fruit snacks. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and managers know what works well and what needs to be improved. Care and welfare are satisfactory and contribute to children's achievement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are satisfied with the school. They regard it as happy, welcoming and friendly. They say children enjoy attending and most are happy with the

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progress their children make. Parents regard the school as caring and supportive and say the staff are friendly. They identify strengths of the school as: the activities, the relationships with staff, the improved provision in the Reception classes and the leadership of the headteacher. The majority of criticisms were offered constructively and were mainly concerned with the way the school helps children adopt a healthy lifestyle, deals with unacceptable behaviour and takes account of parents' suggestions and concerns. Inspectors found discipline was satisfactory and teachers made expectations of behaviour very clear. The school regularly informs and involves parents in school life. The school has gained the Healthy School award and is working hard to extend opportunities for pupils to learn to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abbeys Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 282 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	48	41	46	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	51	57	36	42	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	42	44	49	5	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	42	41	46	7	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	54	37	42	8	9	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	40	44	49	7	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	48	43	48	8	9	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	34	45	50	4	4	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	37	46	52	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	36	44	49	8	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	31	50	56	8	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	33	38	42	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	42	46	57	4	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abbeys Primary, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK3 6PS

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. We enjoyed your assemblies and will remember how polite you all were and how you all worked together sensibly. You and your parents told us how much you enjoy school and all the activities. While there are some good things, we think that your school needs help to make it as successful as it should be and because of this inspectors will be coming back to see how well the school is making improvements.

These are the things we found that your school does well.

- You enjoy your learning and feel safe and happy in school.
- Your school cares for you well and teaches you about how to be healthy, and to respect and care for others.
- You like your teachers because they make a big effort to make lessons interesting and enjoyable.
- You are kind to each other and help others by raising money for charity.
- Your headteacher and senior leaders are working very hard to improve your school in many ways.
- Your headteacher has high expectations of you and she gives a very strong lead to everyone.

There are the things that we have identified for staff and governors to improve.

- Make sure that you all reach higher levels in English, mathematics and science.
- Make sure that all your teachers become really clear about how well you are doing and plan lessons that help you improve.
- Make sure your teachers always teach you good-quality lessons so that you learn even more.
- Ensure all your lessons have lots of challenging work for you to do.

We are sure you can do really well if you receive this help. We hope you continue to work hard and have fun at school. Thank you for a very enjoyable visit to your school and best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marion Wallace

Lead inspector

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