

# Abbots Langley School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117083
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	338945
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John William Paull

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	477
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Alison Longbottom
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Anne Heywood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Parsonage Close Abbots Langley WD5 0BQ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They spent about half of their time looking at learning and they observed 17 lessons involving 15 different teachers. Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, teachers, governors, some parents and groups of pupils, including school councillors. The school's documentation was considered carefully, including policies related to safeguarding, pupils' attainment, learning and progress, as well as staff vetting arrangements and future planning. In addition, 139 questionnaires from parents and carers and 30 staff questionnaires were analysed.

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

- the extent of rigour with which leaders and managers track and analyse pupils' rates of progress and how well they use the information to sustain high levels of attainment by the time pupils leave in Year 6
- the accuracy of assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 2
- whether there is any mismatch between the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress and if so, the reason that lies behind it
- whether outcomes that relate to pupils' personal development are as strong as the school's senior leaders believe.

## Information about the school

Abbots Langley School is much larger than most other primary schools. A new substantive headteacher took over from an acting headteacher just over a year ago. The school accommodates children aged three to five in the Early Years Foundation Stage in its own Nursery and Reception classes. Nearly all pupils live in the area around the school and are of White British heritage; although small numbers are drawn from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils are identified with specific learning difficulty associated with speech and language disorder. The school runs its own daily breakfast club.

The school holds several awards, including a DCSF International Award and Healthy Schools accreditation.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

This good school has recently passed through a period of change, including in its senior leadership. On taking up her position, the present headteacher identified correctly that rates of progress and levels of attainment had slowly fallen since its previous inspection. At that time, the school was judged to be outstanding with high standards. However, the results of Year 6 national tests taken in 2008 dipped to only a little above average. The new headteacher, then only just appointed, took immediate, decisive and successful action. Results in 2009 rose sharply. However, as seen in responses to the inspection questionnaires, some changes have given rise to criticism from a significant minority of parents and carers. Inspectors do not agree with such views. Their findings support the majority who see the changes as important and positive. Much of what has been done has already contributed to reversing the downward trend.

Staff now use greater rigour in identifying effectively groups and individuals whose progress slows. They use this information well to ensure that performance speeds up. Thus, learning and progress are currently good in nearly all lessons, although not consistently so for a small proportion of the school's pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although the progress of these pupils is satisfactory overall, planning does not always contain sufficient information for teaching assistants on how to adapt learning requirements to support these pupils fully when working with them directly. Nevertheless, greater responsibility and accountability, devolved to leaders at all levels, including the new special educational needs coordinator, puts leaders in a strong position to lead well, supporting the headteacher's drive for improvement. As a result, self-evaluation is accurate and a good capacity to sustain improvement has re-emerged; this is because decisive action has led to rising standards. Governors, too, are effective and active. They ask probing questions, adding further to sustaining this good capacity. Attainment in lessons is above average, demonstrating the success of this new direction. That said, it is more consistently evident in English than in mathematics and science, where the need for a stronger focus on investigative, practical and experimental work has been identified.

Pupils of all age groups, including the Nursery and Reception classes, enjoy school, and their attendance is excellent. They are interested in the themes on which their lessons are based. These themes strengthen a good curriculum, including successful links with museums, which helps to facilitate good teaching. In Year 6, for example, all pupils who were asked, thought that their new notebook computers helped them to learn far more effectively, because they could carry out research and find answers straight away when the need arose. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is good, as is care, guidance and support, leading to strengths in pupils' personal, social and moral

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development. Their willingness to help each other and to contribute to other communities, for example, is outstanding.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise attainment further, especially in mathematics and science, by:
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to acquire investigative, practical and experimental skills
  - increasing the frequency of opportunities for pupils to make decisions about their learning and to assess outcomes for themselves.
- Improve learning outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so their progress matches more closely that of other pupils, by:
  - ensuring that adaptations to teaching to meet their particular needs are clearly stated in planning
  - helping teaching assistants and adults who work with pupils to focus on their learning needs precisely.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Starting points when pupils enter the school are average. Learning and progress are good for the very large majority of pupils, so by the time they reach the end of Year 2, overall attainment is significantly above average. Achievement is good in reading, writing and mathematics. Similarly, good learning and progress are evident in Key Stage 2. More able pupils, and those who are at the early stages of learning English also flourish. These groups continue to do well by the time they leave in Year 6. It is especially the case when pupils are given opportunities to show initiative in their learning. In a good geography lesson in Year 4, for example, this was demonstrated when laptop computers were available to find out about Commonwealth countries. This enabled pupils to uncover a remarkable range of information. Opportunities to share findings then added considerably to each other's knowledge. That said, adaptations to match the learning needs of a few of the school's pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are not as consistently effective as they are for others. Pupils' learning and progress in English are often very good. In Year 5, for example, teachers emphasised strongly that pupils should concentrate on using exciting and lively vocabulary to engage readers. As a result, 'stories with a moral' were precise, clear and astute.

Pupils throughout the school, when asked directly, agree that they are well looked after. They say that this makes them feel 'perfectly safe'. They explain that behaviour is nearly always good and poor behaviour and bullying are rare. Pupils also feel that the staff deal with incidents very well. Pupils are good at recalling information about what is good for them, both in terms of diet and exercise. A few parents and carers, however, do not follow the school's advice on the contents of packed lunches. The help that pupils contribute to the school is extensive. Older pupils run clubs for younger ones, others act

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as librarians, and pupils of all ages perform a wide variety of roles as monitors. The school council is active and full of ideas to improve their school. This outstanding picture is enhanced by contributions in the wider community, such as taking part in the carnival and village fete, singing in local care homes and involvement in projects with overseas schools. Attendance is high, which adds to good basic skills in sociability, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. As a result, pupils are prepared well for the next stages in their education.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Teachers are effective in offering pupils criteria for successful learning. They also explain the point of lessons before they begin teaching. This supports learning strongly because it enables pupils to judge how well they have progressed. Recently purchased notebook computers provide pupils with opportunities to access the information they need on the internet, exactly when they need it. Strong guidance means that pupils are aware of internet safety on these occasions and their skills develop well. Involvement of pupils in designing the curriculum, allowing them a say in the themes to be studied, produces a

<sup>1</sup> 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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relevant, interesting curriculum and much enjoyment. In Year 6, for example, the current curricular themes build in opportunities for pupils to research cacao trees and hyacinths and the scientific needs of plants for successful growth. Teaching is lively and very informative. In lessons that are not quite as successful, teachers sometimes direct pupils too much, providing insufficient situations for learners to take the initiative or to assess their work for themselves. The pace of lessons is usually good and is typified with well-structured questioning, assisting pupils to acquire learning in a logical sequence. The school's partnerships with a range of educational agencies provide good advice for vulnerable pupils. Required policies to safeguard and protect pupils are robust.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Sharing of expertise and skills among the staff is contributing to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and the rate of pupils' progress. The governing body plays an important and knowledgeable part in this process, supporting the school's strategic direction, asking questions and offering ideas. Statutory safeguarding procedures are in place. Staff vetting, the need to update first-aid training, child protection and risk assessment are rigorous. Governors understand their responsibilities in monitoring these important policies. Arrangements to evaluate the school's impact on local and wider communities are good. These indicate that pupils understand and empathise positively with other people in different contexts. The headteacher, supported by senior leaders, has ensured strong procedures for managing and correcting any kind of racist or social intolerance. Equal opportunities are satisfactory, rather than good, because targeting of work and support for a small number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is not consistent. The special educational needs coordinator, although new to the post, is aware of this. She is well supported by the headteacher, but has not yet had enough time to embed change. That said, the school's many strengths mean that good value for money is achieved.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children entering the Nursery arrive with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding matching those usually found nationally. This is particularly the case in communication, language and literacy skills and mathematics. Good induction procedures, including home visits, ensure that children settle quickly. Good learning and development follow and nearly all children reach age-related goals by the start of Year 1, with several exceeding them. In Nursery and Reception classes, children know 'what is good for you' and they choose pieces of fruit and milk or water as a snack. Overall, outcomes are good.

Good teaching and a carefully planned curriculum provide well resourced activities, balanced between those led by staff and those chosen by children. Well-equipped outside areas, engage children's interest and enjoyment. Sheltered space permits outdoor learning even during inclement weather. Adults take responsibility for groups of children and record effectively how each child responds to activities. This information is used well to plan the next stages in learning and is shared with parents in home books. Systems to monitor and track progress are thorough. All the staff target the needs of individuals across all areas of learning effectively. Welfare arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements, including staff trained in paediatric first-aid.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2



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## **Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers' questionnaires indicate that a very large majority are pleased with what the school provides. High proportions of parents and carers believe that their children are happy and safe at school. A significant minority feel that the senior leadership does not listen to their concerns, does not deal with poor behaviour and presses ahead with changes without communicating reasons. However, the majority are very supportive of what the headteacher has achieved so far. A response typical of these states: 'The headteacher has brought some good changes and I am pleased with how it is going.' Inspectors agree with such comments, finding that changes are related to improving pupils' progress. The school's behaviour and incident logs were inspected and are kept carefully. These indicate conformity with good practice and also that incidents are taken seriously and dealt with effectively.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abbots Langley 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 139 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 477 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	50	66	47	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	71	51	62	45	3	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	23	94	69	9	7	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	32	73	53	15	11	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	52	38	75	55	6	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	28	79	58	13	9	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	41	73	53	5	4	2	1
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)	28	21	75	56	14	11	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	26	83	61	9	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	28	69	51	19	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	17	78	58	22	16	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	43	31	64	47	20	15	7	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	44	66	48	9	7	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



10 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abbots Langley School, Abbots Langley, WD5 0BQ

Thank you for your helpfulness during the two days when my colleagues and I inspected your school. You were very polite and well behaved. We enjoyed speaking to you outside in the playground and in the classrooms, and seeing your work. It is great that so many of you told us that you enjoy school a lot. We enjoyed speaking to your school councillors. They told us that they think your school is good. We agree with this comment. It is indeed a good school.

Here are some important things that we found out about your school:

- your learning and progress are good, including in the Nursery and Reception classes
- you are considerate of each other
- all the staff care for you a lot and the teachers teach you well; although we have asked them to give you more opportunities for investigations and practical work in mathematics and science.
- you know how to stay safe, eat healthily and know that exercise is important
- you are outstandingly willing to do things that help your teachers and contribute to the village and further afield
- your achievement is good; although some of you who find learning challenging are not supported as well as possible. We have asked for this to be improved
- your headteacher, governors and staff have good ideas about how to make your school even better; you can help by telling them your ideas through the school council and at other times.

All four of us wish you every success in the future and hope you will always enjoy school as much as you told us you do now.

Yours sincerely

John W. Paull

Lead Inspector

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