

Abbots Farm Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125580
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	340797
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	David Gosling

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacancy
Headteacher	John Alexander
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four inspectors. Inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at school plans, records of pupils' progress and key policies. Seventy-one parent questionnaires were received, as were surveys completed by all teachers and a sample of pupils.

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

- strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment and how well the decline in 2008 had been addressed
- the quality of whole school and subject leader evaluations
- the effectiveness of the governing body
- the provision for gifted and talented pupils
- procedures for ensuring pupils are safe.

Information about the school

Abbots Farm is a two form entry school with eight classes, two in each year group. There are about six percent more boys than girls in the school. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds although only a few are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and / or disabilities is close to the national average. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. Nearly all pupils come from the neighbouring infant school. The school roll is falling in the infants and consequently the junior school faces falling numbers for the next few years at least. The school is part of the Warwickshire Extended Schools programme and has gained a number of awards including a council Gold Safety Merit Award, Football Association Charter status and the Health Promoting Schools 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Abbots Farm Junior School is a good school, with many strengths. Pupils achieve well and they enjoy attending. Attainment in national tests rose considerably in 2009 after a dip in 2008. The 2009 tests show attainment in writing at the top levels to be the only weakness in standards. In lessons, writing is improving throughout the school, including for the highest attainers in Year 6. This is the result of a concerted effort by all staff to raise standards in writing. Ambitious targets have been set by the school for each child and these are being met well. Pupils are very keen to do well and they work very hard. They behave well in lessons and the school is a calm and harmonious community. Pupils enjoy the wide range of sporting activities.

Teaching is good and this is reflected in the very positive attitudes of pupils to their learning. The teachers have good subject knowledge as a result of thorough preparation and they convey to pupils their own enthusiasm for the subjects they teach. They have high expectations of each pupil and are very skilful at dealing with any misbehaviour. The use of assessments to target work in lessons is the key area for development in teaching. Although work has begun in this area, teachers are still not focusing enough on what groups in classes need to do to get to higher levels. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good but there is not enough attention given to the gifted and talented pupils in planning. The headteacher and staff know their pupils very well and provide high quality support, especially for the more vulnerable.

The leadership of the school is good and is highly valued by the parents, pupils and staff. The headteacher and deputy have established a strong drive to raise standards throughout the school. They have very rigorous systems for evaluating how well pupils are doing and how well they are being taught. The subject leaders also have a strong grasp on the strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas and a clear understanding of what needs to be done. This is giving the school a good capacity to improve, as shown through the gains in the 2009 test results and improvements in pupils' writing. The governing body has had recruitment difficulties in recent years and is not effective. It is not making much of a contribution to the direction the school is taking and is not sufficiently holding the school to account.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Monitor closely standards in writing through half termly reviews of pupils' work and teacher assessments, and regular focused observations of the teaching of writing.
- Target work more closely to the needs of individuals and groups in lessons so that gifted and talented pupils in particular are challenged to reach higher levels.

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- Increase governing body involvement in the setting of priorities and ensure that governors review weaknesses carefully and hold the school to account for how well they are tackled.

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

Pupils' achievement is good and they enjoy school. Historically, end of Key Stage 2 test results have been above average but they dipped in 2008 when they were only in line. In 2009, results improved considerably in all three tests - English, mathematics and science. In mathematics, science and reading over a half of the pupils gained a higher Level 5. Standards in reading are a particular strength throughout the school. As in the last inspection, attainment in writing is weaker than in other subjects, especially at the higher levels. In the 2008 tests, for which comparisons are available, and in lessons observed, there was very little difference in the attainment of boys and girls or different ethnic groups.

The progress made by pupils throughout the school is good, with data and observations pointing to it being strongest in Years 5 and 6. The school's tracking system for the last school year shows gains in reading to be excellent and the slowest progress being made in writing. The progress being made by pupils in lessons is good, including in writing which the school has successfully made a key focus for this year. Writing in books of the top set in Year 6 shows the pupils to be developing well, even at this early stage in the term. The progress being made by pupils with special educational needs and / or disabilities is good: they work hard and cope with some challenging work.

Pupils enjoy school very much, as indicated by one who wrote on a survey form: 'our school is exciting and interesting and we learn lots of new things'. Hard work is a notable characteristic of pupils throughout the school. They try hard, stay on task and don't give up when the work is difficult. In some of the problem solving activities in lessons, the level of focus, as pupils wrestled with some difficult ideas, was excellent. Pupils take care in the presentation of their work and are keen to do well. Questions are always followed by a shower of hands up and pupils are not slow in asking questions of their own. They work very well independently and waste little time when moving into groups.

All parents, in the inspection questionnaire, said they thought the school kept their children safe and, the vast majority of pupils said they felt safe in school. The few accidents recorded are minor and nearly all arise from exuberance in the playground. Behaviour is good. Pupils listen to each other with respect in lessons and follow classroom routines very well. They generally play safely in the playground and are very orderly as they move around the school. In the last inspection, the behaviour of a small minority of boys was found to be affecting their progress. A few boys still occasionally lack focus in lessons but this is picked up quickly and dealt with effectively by teachers.

Pupils have a good understanding of health issues, such as the dangers of smoking. Many are involved in sporting activities and clubs and all receive two hours a week of taught physical education. There is a very popular and well-attended "Funzone" every day which involves exercises organised by the pupils. Pupils generally eat healthily, with

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most taking up school meals or eating healthy packed lunches. A wide range of responsibilities is undertaken conscientiously by pupils. The School Council, elected by pupils, has had some clear impact on school decisions. There is good involvement of pupils in the wider community, especially through charitable events and links with a school in Malawi. Pupils are being prepared well for their future working lives, for example through the progress they make in developing key skills such as literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology Attendance is above the national average and punctuality is very good.

The understanding of right and wrong and the development of social skills are major strengths. Spiritual development is good and the pupils' growing understanding of different cultures is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Almost all parents and pupils are rightly very happy with the quality of teaching. There have been many changes to the teaching staff since the last inspection and this year teachers are all working in different year groups. This has not led to any decline in the

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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quality of teaching or learning: they remain good throughout the school, as was the case in the last inspection. Subject knowledge and understanding of National Curriculum requirements are, in fact, strengths, as are the good relationships between teachers and pupils. This is partly because of very skilled classroom management which creates a happy and positive place for children to learn. Teachers make their lessons interesting by conveying their own enjoyment and planning a wide range of activities. Paired and group work feature in nearly all lessons, enabling pupils to solve problems and develop their independence. Teachers are very good at modelling writing and practical activities, giving pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do.

The use of assessment in lessons is mixed. Marking is thorough, pointing out what pupils need to do to improve, and opportunities are being provided for pupils to assess their own and each other's work. There is not a clear enough link between the levels the pupils have achieved and the work planned for groups. Pupils with special educational needs and / or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants and teachers but there is very little provision of additional or different work for gifted and talented pupils. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a broad range of activities, including French. Some innovative approaches to linking subjects together are currently being piloted. Significant time is allocated to developing basic skills, and sport also receives a strong focus. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are met well. The school provides a very welcoming environment and a strong sense of community. A notable feature of the school is its knowledge and concern for individuals. Case studies of vulnerable pupils conducted during the inspection show that considerable time and effort are expended to meet their needs. One pupil wrote on his questionnaire: 'our teachers are willing to help if we are upset or lonely; they come and talk to us.' Most parents are happy with the efforts made by the school to prepare pupils for key changes - from infant to junior, and from primary to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Parents and pupils are rightly very happy with the leadership of the school. The headteacher is a strong and effective leader. Staff morale is very high despite recent instability, with some key staff absent or leaving. There is a clear and communicated vision, and ambitious targets are set and achieved. The leadership team and subject leaders know exactly what they need to do to improve. This, however, is not always

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reflected in their written plans, which at subject leader level are superficial.

An exceptional feature of the school is the rigour in which strengths and weaknesses in pupils' test results are analysed. The strengths and weaknesses of each class are clearly identified and the headteacher, deputy and subject leaders are adopting a range of well thought out strategies to address the weaknesses. These include targets set at the start of the year for each class. The effectiveness of this drive for improvement is shown in the rise in results in English, mathematics and science in 2009. All teachers are observed regularly and the headteacher has a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The tracking system is sound but does not record pupils' assessments during the year, only at the end through tests.

The governing body is inadequate. It has had difficulties in recruiting governors and there is no permanent chair. Attendance at governors' meetings has also been erratic. There is a core of governors now, which is keen to improve, but governors are having too little impact on the school. Governing body minutes show very little contribution being made to whole school planning, other than in financial areas. The school development plan is not being monitored with any rigour. Governors do not have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and there is little evidence that they have been holding the school to account, for example for pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.

Some good partnerships with outside groups which are helping to improve learning, such as specialists to teach sports and music. The Warwickshire Locality Extended Schools Programme has led to an analysis of the composition and needs of the local community and clear plans to support the less advantaged in particular. This has led to a wide range of activities for a range of pupils. Parental involvement in their children's learning is developing well, especially through the school web site. The school makes thorough provision for the safeguarding of its pupils and is meeting government requirements. Those for equal opportunities are also being met, although analysis of the performance of ethnic minorities is not systematic enough. The budget had a surplus in 2008/9 which is sensible given the financial implications of the falling roll. Taking the good progress and attainment of pupils into account, value for money is good.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents rightly rate the school highly. Almost all who responded to the inspection questionnaire think that their children enjoy school that it is led and managed effectively and that teaching is good. Inspectors agree with these judgements. All parents think that their children are kept safe. Questionnaires indicate no major concerns. The area where parents are least happy is in the children's preparation for the future. Comments indicate concerns about changing year groups and teachers, and how well the school takes account of their concerns. The changing of year groups has, in fact, been well-managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abbots Farm Junior 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 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 228 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	54	31	44	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	46	65	25	35	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	37	38	54	6	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	35	39	55	4	6	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	30	42	39	55	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	30	47	66	2	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	42	39	55	2	3	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)	24	34	37	52	5	7	5	7
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	37	39	55	4	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	37	36	51	8	11	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	27	43	61	4	6	4	6
The school is led and managed effectively	34	48	36	51	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	49	38	49	1	1	1	1

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">■ 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.



9 October 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Abbots Farm Junior School, Rugby CV21 4AP

Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection. We were very impressed with the sensible way you spoke to us and how well you expressed your views on your survey forms.

We think your school is good and that you are right to be proud of it. We agree with you that your headteacher and staff are doing a good job. Inspectors think that the school knows how well you're doing and what you need to do to get even better results. We agree with you that your teachers are good and we think they work very hard. You play a big part in the school's success yourselves by behaving well and doing your best in lessons. The way the school knows and cares for each of you is particularly good.

There are a few things which will make your school even better. These are:

- to carry on trying to improve your writing - so you need to work hard to help teachers
- for teachers to set more work when you are in groups that helps you get to a higher level, especially for those who are really good at your work
- for the school governors to know more about how well you're doing and what the school needs to do to get better.

Yours faithfully

David Gosling

Lead inspector

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