

Abbeyfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131969
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	341262
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Massey HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	947
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Sage
Headteacher	Mrs P Shubbrook
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2006
School address	Stanley Lane Chippenham Wiltshire SN15 3XB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 36 lessons, and held meetings with two governors, teaching and non-teaching staff and groups of students from both the main school and the sixth form. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including 214 parental questionnaires, 100 student and 31 staff questionnaires, students' work and the school's planning and monitoring files.

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

- the quality of provision and how effectively it leads to equally good outcomes and meets the needs of all students, including vulnerable groups
- how well the school is using assessment data to secure improvement for all groups of students
- how effectively the school monitors the impact of initiatives and plans for further improvement
- the impact of the school's business and enterprise specialism on outcomes for students, their economic well-being and on community cohesion
- the effectiveness of systems for managing behaviour and improving attendance.

Information about the school

Abbeyfield is a smaller than average school, serving the eastern area of Chippenham and nearby rural districts. In 2009 more students joined the school than in the two previous years. The first sixth form students started courses in 2006 with new purpose built accommodation opening in September 2008. The school collaborates with the other two secondary schools in Chippenham to make joint post-16 provision. It also offers a 14 to 19 diploma in partnership with North Wiltshire College and is a member of the North Wilts Federation. The vast majority of students are from a White British background and the proportion eligible for free school meals is low. Overall, the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average with the largest groups being students with behavioural, emotional and social problems, and those with autism. There is a higher proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Years 7 and 8.

The school was awarded business and enterprise specialist status in 2005. The school holds the International Schools Award, the Global School Award and Healthy 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Abbeyfield provides a satisfactory standard of education. Many aspects of its work and outcomes for students are at least good and sometimes outstanding. The attainment of students and the rate at which they make progress is, overall, similar to that found nationally. Outstanding aspects include students' positive contribution to the local community and the wide range of external partnerships which benefit students. These features are linked to the very successful business and enterprise specialism which gives the school its distinctive character. All students are taught enterprise skills as part of the curriculum, and in 2009 the GCSE results in these subjects were exceptional. Strong leadership of the specialism and the exceptional commitment of governors to encouraging this aspect of the school's work, have accelerated development over the last year. The school's Young Chamber is linked to the local Chamber of Commerce and is seen by the local community as a valuable resource with very strong links to several high profile groups in the local area. Although this forum is only two years old, students are very clear that they 'know they are helping to run the school', and believe they are listened to by both senior leaders and governors.

For the last three years standards have risen in line with the national average and overall students' achievement is satisfactory. However, a substantial improvement in GCSE results in 2009 indicates that all students, including the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are currently making faster progress. Much of this improvement is a result of creative changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum, so students are now more motivated because the courses provided match their interests and needs. This improved attainment and more rapid progress is also linked with the quality of teaching. Much teaching is good, especially for older students, and there are examples of outstanding teaching, although this good practice is not shared sufficiently widely across the school. Some teaching, however, particularly in Years 7 and 8, is not focused enough on the quality of students' learning. In lessons where there is insufficient pace and activity students make slower progress and sometimes low-level disruption interrupts learning. A robust system for tracking students' attainment is now in place and comprehensive information about the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is available, but teachers are not yet consistently using this data in their day-to-day planning. Students are not always given clear guidance about exactly what they need to do in order to improve.

In response to concerns from both students and their parents, a new behaviour policy has been implemented this autumn. Students and staff reported that it is already beginning to have an impact both on low-level disruption in some lessons and on behaviour at break and lunchtime. The vast majority of students also feel that the few

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incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively by staff and that they are safe in school. Procedures for safeguarding students are outstanding.

The school is led well. The headteacher and her senior team provide clear direction and their planning is based on thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses identified through rigorous monitoring of the school's work. Recent improvements in provision have enabled the school to meet challenging targets this year indicating that the school has good capacity to improve further.

The school promotes community cohesion effectively within the local area and through its international links with a school overseas, but students' understanding of their role within a multicultural society in Britain is much more limited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by improving the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Years 7 and 8, by:
- sharing best practice within the school, so all teachers understand what makes a lesson outstanding
- focusing on the quality of students' learning
- using assessment data and information about individual students more consistently so that work is effectively matched to students' needs
- ensuring that students know exactly what they need to do in order to move from one level to the next.
- Improve the contribution the school makes to community cohesion, particularly within a national context.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In lessons, the progress that students make and their attitude to learning is linked closely to the quality of teaching. Students enter the school with broadly average ability, and over the last three years they have made satisfactory progress and achieved standards at GCSE close to the national average, except in mathematics where attainment and progress has been significantly above average. In 2009, improvement in English meant that attainment overall rose substantially, particularly the proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades including English and mathematics. In the subjects linked to the school's specialism' information and communication technology (ICT) and business studies ' the results in 2009 were outstanding, with nearly all Year 11 students sitting at least one of these subjects at GCSE. Better analysis of data to identify underachieving students early and provide them with focused support has also helped to improve achievement. A programme of mentoring for more able students has increased the proportion of A and A* grades. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, children in care and those from minority ethnic backgrounds made progress in line with their peers.

Inspectors found students positive, articulate and friendly and the atmosphere in the school calm, although students did express concern about poor behaviour and the

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number of exclusions is high. The school building is well maintained and students look after it well. Students enjoy school and most join in enthusiastically with the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided. They are aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle with a high proportion involved in sporting activities, although take up of school meals is below the national average. Attendance has improved over the last year and is now close to the national average, but is affected by a higher than average number of persistent absentees. Enterprise education and a strong work experience programme in Year 10 enable students to develop workplace skills that will be useful to their future economic well-being. Students show good social and moral understanding but opportunities for them to develop spiritual and multicultural awareness are less well developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is better for older students than younger ones and this is reflected in the progress they make in lessons. In lessons at Key Stage 4, teachers are more focused on ensuring that high quality learning is taking place. Students learn and

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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behave well when they are engaged fully because teaching is energetic and enthusiastic and a wide range of activities is provided. In the outstanding lessons seen, teachers were making very good use of assessment data and students knew what level they were working at and what they need to do in order to improve, but this good practice is not shared sufficiently across the school. A wealth of assessment data is available, although teachers are still not using this consistently to ensure that the work they provide is sufficiently well matched to students' needs.

Recent developments to the Key Stage 4 curriculum now provide a wide range of pathways and qualifications for students both in school and through local partnerships, and have contributed to the improvement in outcomes at GCSE this year. The school has taken the lead in developing the Creative and Media diploma with a local college and another diploma is due to start at Abbeyfield in 2010. Plans are in place for major changes to the curriculum at Key Stage 3 in 2010 and this will also tackle current weaknesses in the citizenship and personal, health and social education programmes. A pilot programme for more vulnerable students is already beginning to have an impact on improving basic skills and confidence, and will provide the model for Key Stage 3 development.

Care, guidance and support are good. Improvements to leadership and arrangements for monitoring and tracking have led to more robust and targeted planning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and this is particularly helpful in supporting the high proportion of these students in the current Year 8. Teachers can access data and strategies for individual students easily and the support provided through the learning centre is valued by both students and their parents. Although systems for managing attendance are robust, the high number of late entrants to the school who are persistent absentees is a problem. The school has recently set up a federation with other secondary schools in the area to try and ensure appropriate support and provision for these students.

Students and parents describe as excellent the support they receive at key transition points ' from Years 6 to 7, into the sixth form, and choosing GCSE options.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Their vision to improve achievement for all students is shared by staff, and they

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are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for students. Self-evaluation is very thorough, involving leaders at all levels, and leads to effective planning for improvement, particularly for the school's specialism, where leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders maintain a good balance between providing direction and giving autonomy to middle leaders who feel very accountable for students' achievement within their departments. Systems for target setting to raise academic achievement are improving, with stronger use of data and greater emphasis on higher expectations for all students. Although the quality of teaching is improving, leaders could carry out a more thorough analysis of the quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement. Teachers, and indeed some middle leaders as well, are not quite clear what is meant by an outstanding lesson, and there is no systematic or regular way for them to share good practice.

Regular communication with parents through reports and the school's website provides up-to-date information about students' progress. In addition the headteacher conducts surveys and holds regular surgeries and a parents' forum several times a year to enable parents to express their views, although attendance at these meetings is limited.

Governors provide outstanding commitment and challenge to the school, using their range of expertise to assist in supporting community links through business and enterprise specialist status and working tirelessly over many years to develop the new sixth form accommodation.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

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'The sixth form has the feeling of a family'. This is how one student described her experience at Abbeyfield, and others talked about how much they enjoyed the social aspects of life in the sixth form. Students are very optimistic indeed about the positive impact of the new head of sixth form on their care, support and guidance and the new purpose built accommodation opened this term.

The first set of A-level results in 2008 showed that students had made outstanding progress. Progress at AS level was unsatisfactory, largely because some students were not on appropriate courses. AS-level results improved in 2009, narrowing the gap, so overall achievement is now good. A new broader curriculum has been introduced, making the maximum use of local partnerships, so there is now a wide range of courses suitable for students of all abilities. The impact of this will be evident in 2010. Inspectors found teaching to be good overall, with some outstanding, but it is more stimulating and challenging with the pace of learning faster in Year 13 than in Year 12.

Sixth form students are very active members of the school community and are keen to be fully involved in the community service programme, with some students supporting younger ones in school and others helping in the local community.

The school supports students very well into further education, employment and training.

While leadership overall is good, the quality of the new head of sixth form is exceptional. In a very short time, analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of provision has been completed, comprehensive plans put in place for improvement and impact seen. For example, the quality of the information, advice and guidance given to students has already improved, ensuring that students are on courses well matched to their needs and abilities.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over 22% of parents returned questionnaires to the school. The very large majority of parents are happy with their children's experiences and progress at the school and believe that the school keeps students safe. A similar proportion is happy with the school's leadership and the way in which they are informed about their children's progress. A number commented that they were very happy with the accelerated programme for some Year 10 students. A small minority of parents are concerned about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and the school has taken steps to tackle this, with new systems in place this term. Other areas of concern are the

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introduction of mixed-ability teaching for some classes and the way in which students are helped to have a healthy lifestyle.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abbeyfield 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 214 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 947 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	31	132	62	14	7	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	78	36	126	59	5	2	3	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	72	34	121	57	9	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	32	119	56	11	5	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	56	26	133	62	15	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	23	125	58	23	11	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	16	135	63	27	13	3	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)	53	25	114	53	25	12	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	27	123	58	15	7	7	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	20	115	54	28	13	12	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	20	124	58	20	9	9	4
The school is led and managed effectively	55	26	128	60	12	6	6	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	75	35	117	55	9	4	6	3

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.



19 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Abbeyfield School, Chippenham SN15 3XB

After our visit to Abbeyfield, I would like to share our findings with you and thank you for your friendly welcome and for taking time to talk to us.

Abbeyfield is a satisfactory school overall. This is because you make satisfactory progress and achieve examination results in line with national averages, although standards rose substantially at GCSE in 2009. It is a very distinctive school because its business and enterprise specialist status provides you with so many opportunities to prepare you for future life, and to make an outstanding contribution to your school and local community. We were very impressed with the Young Chamber, particularly the important role it has in helping to run the school and the strong partnerships it has with other organisations in Chippenham.

The school takes good care of you. You tell us that you feel very safe and that there is always someone to turn to when you need help. Although many of you expressed concerns about behaviour, you did say that the new systems put in place at the beginning of this term are beginning to have an effect.

The school's leadership is good and works hard to make improvements, so you can achieve even better. Major changes to the curriculum for Years 9, 10 and 11 are already beginning to make a difference to the progress you make and more changes are coming for Years 7 and 8 next year.

We have asked the school to make two improvements.

- Improve the quality of teaching and thus your learning, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
- Make sure that you have a better understanding of Britain's multicultural society so that the school can contribute to making a more cohesive society.

I wish you all every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mary Massey

Her Majesty's Inspector

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