

Abbotswood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132199
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	341307
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2010
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dawn Lane
Headteacher	Andy Mead
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2007
School address	Kelston Close Bristol BS37 8SZ
Telephone number	01454 867777
Fax number	01454 867778
Email address	abbotswoodprimary.school@southglos.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 26 lessons and observed all 11 of the school's teachers. Meetings were held with leaders, staff, the chair of the governing body, the authority's senior locality advisor, groups of pupils, and informally with parents and carers at the start and end of inspection days. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at a range of policies and documentation, including those relating to safeguarding and equal opportunities, the school development plan, data to show the progress that pupils are making, pupils' books and reports from external advisors and the school improvement partner. The team also analysed questionnaires completed by staff, a sample of pupils in Years 3 to 6 and 57 parents and carers

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

- the effectiveness of the school's initiatives in addressing what looked like weak progress being made in Years 3 to 6
- the effectiveness of the support for the few pupils who speak English as an additional language
- whether pupils are being offered sufficient levels of challenge, particularly in Years 1 and 2
- the effectiveness of the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

Almost all pupils at this slightly larger than average school are White British, though small numbers have recently joined the school at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average and most of these have speech, language and communication or moderate learning difficulties. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made in two Reception classes. The school runs a breakfast club before school each day

There has been some disruption to leadership over the last year and the headteacher took up his post in April 2010. There has also been considerable change to staffing in recent years, for instance all teachers in Years 3 to 6 are new since the last inspection.

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

The school has had a difficult recent history, but has come through this well and is now offering pupils a sound education. From September 2009 to April 2010, the acting headteacher was supported well by the able senior leadership team and a consultant headteacher provided by the local authority. They put in place a number of good initiatives, which have been effective in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The new headteacher already has a clear picture of what needs to be done to maintain this momentum.

A major strength of the school is the care, guidance and support for pupils, which is outstanding. This is recognised by parents and pupils alike. A parent represented the views of many when she said, 'I am so grateful for the care and attention that my child is given at Abbotswood School, it is so personal and the staff really care. What more can a mother ask?' Staff frequently go the extra mile to ensure that all can take part in all that the school has to offer and to remove barriers to learning. This results in excellent relationships between pupils and adults, which have a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils behave well and are caring and supportive of each other. The breakfast club is a further example of the provision the school makes to ensure that pupils' and families' needs are met.

Information about pupils' achievements shows that, in the past, pupils were making inadequate progress. This has been addressed well and pupils are now making satisfactory progress through the school. This progress is good in the Reception classes, Years 1 and 2 and Year 6. Attainment is now average as many pupils have made rapid progress to catch up. The reason for this better progress is that leaders and managers have successfully focused on improving the quality of teaching. Good systems to monitor the progress of pupils, particularly those in vulnerable groups, have been established, which has enabled support to be directed well to those pupils who most need it. In particular, this has been effective in ensuring that those few pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities have been enabled to make the same progress as their classmates.

Although the quality of teaching has improved and most lessons seen during the inspection were good, there are still areas for improvement. In particular, less successful lessons are typified by pupils spending too long sitting and listening and not having enough opportunity to be actively engaged in learning. In these lessons, pupils sometimes become restless and their attention wanders. Work is not always precisely matched to pupils' needs and abilities, particularly for those of higher ability. Part of the reason for this is that, especially in mathematics, teachers do not always know exactly what skills pupils have mastered. They are therefore unclear about what pupils need to

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learn next in order to make best progress. In their questionnaires, a number of pupils said that they were not sure how well they are doing and this is because they are not clear about these next steps in learning. Teachers' marking, although often positive and recording how successful learning has been, infrequently points out to pupils how they can improve their work.

In their questionnaires, staff were unanimous in saying that they feel involved in the process of self-evaluation. There has been rigorous monitoring and leaders and governors have a very accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The new headteacher has already initiated effective plans for further improvement and is supported by a strong leadership team that has been instrumental in carrying through recent improvements. With the very obvious team spirit among all staff and the already evident improvements, the school's capacity to continue its forward movement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment, especially in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that teachers record accurately the gains in knowledge and understanding that pupils have made
 - using these records to set pupils precise next steps in learning
 - sharing these next steps with pupils to involve them in their own learning when marking pupils' work, ensuring that teachers refer to these next steps so that pupils understand how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better by
 - reducing the length of the introductions to lessons so that pupils can spend more time in carrying out tasks that involve them in learning
 - ensuring that pupils are consistently given work that matches their particular needs and abilities, especially those of higher ability.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Learning in lessons is typified by industry, enjoyment and enthusiasm. The excellent relationships lead to pupils having a desire to do well and please their teachers. For instance, in a mathematics lesson with younger pupils, pupils were keenly offering to say for example how many 2s in 12 and there was a glow of joy on their faces when they were successful. In the best lessons, pupils are enthused by the breadth of resources used. For instance in a science lesson where pupils were studying the tooth structures of animals with differing diets, a number of animal skulls were available for pupils to study. They pored over these enthusiastically, sharing well and each contributing to their group's views of the functions of the teeth and what the animal might therefore be. In lessons where learning is less successful, pupils often spend too long sitting listening. They are not actively engaged in learning and, when they do start

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their written tasks, there is insufficient time for them to complete very much to extend their learning.

Pupils have a keen sense of their place in society and their responsibilities towards it. They raise significant sums for those less well off than themselves and play a strong role in helping the school to run efficiently. They recognise that they have a voice and offer their suggestions, knowing that they will be valued. Although their development of basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills is only satisfactory, they are being prepared well for their future as workplace skills, such as handling money and working in teams and independently, are being developed well. Although they have good knowledge of their own culture and heritage, pupils are less well aware of the range of ethnic groups represented in Britain today.

Attendance has been improving in recent years and was above average last year. However, due to the number of parents taking their children away on holiday during term time, attendance has declined to average this year.

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	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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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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One of the key reasons for pupils' enjoyment of lessons is the improved curriculum. They clearly like the topic-based approach and teachers are beginning to use this well to enable pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. However, the timetable has not yet been fully adapted to take account of this and in some weeks a few classes occasionally spend too much time on English and mathematics. Teachers are encouraged to be creative in adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils in their class. Visits, visitors and focus weeks, such as the Arts Week, make experiences memorable and engaging for pupils.

Teaching is generally interesting and engaging. A focus has been on improving the quality of pupils' writing and this has been successful as teachers now know the small steps in learning that pupils need to take to make faster progress. However, they do not regularly communicate these next steps to pupils and there is no similar system yet in place in other subjects including mathematics. Teachers' expectations are higher than they were at the last inspection, though in a few classes work is not always matched to the needs of individuals and is sometimes too easy or too difficult for some pupils. This often means that there is still not sufficient challenge for the more able. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Parents are very appreciative of the high quality care provided for their children and the readiness of staff to listen to their concerns. They say such things as 'Teachers show passion for a happy learning environment and look at every child as an individual. They nurture every child's needs and always strive to help you and your child as much as possible' and 'Teachers are always happy to see you if you have any problems or concerns'. Very good use is made of external agencies when necessary to support pupils who have particular needs.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher is well supported by a strong leadership team. He has built on the good teamwork that exists within the school and has the full support of staff and governors in his ambition for the school and drive to raise standards. All staff feel involved in the process of taking the school forward. Monitoring and evaluation are rigorous. The governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and support the school well. While they challenge leaders in some aspects

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of provision governors recognise that they are not yet sufficiently involved in first-hand evaluation in order to provide a greater level of challenge to the school.

Equality of opportunity has a high priority and this is exemplified in the way that barriers to learning have been overcome for several pupils. The school monitors the progress of different groups effectively to ensure that none is being disadvantaged. Safeguarding procedures are thorough, regularly reviewed and updated and the school is always on the lookout for ways in which they can be improved.

A recent audit accurately evaluates the effectiveness of the school's promotion of community cohesion. It has begun to identify areas for improvement, but this is at an early stage. Links with the local community are good. Links with parents are effective and the school has worked hard and effectively to involve parents in their children's learning. A particularly good initiative is the Parents' Action Group, which is open to all parents who wish to contribute their ideas.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage due to the good provision made for them. The emphasis when they start school is on developing their personal and social skills to make sure that they are ready to start learning. They make good progress in this and share and play happily together. A successful focus is also made on their speaking skills so that they are able to express themselves clearly. There are lots of opportunities for them to practise their early writing and counting skills, both inside and in the well-equipped and spacious outside area.

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Teachers and teaching assistants have very good knowledge of the learning and development needs of these young children. They provide a good range of activities and challenge the children well through well-targeted questions. Relationships are strong and children behave well. They are encouraged to be independent and plan their own learning. For example, having visited the school's allotment, a group decided that they wanted to turn their role-play area into an allotment. They formed beds and started crafting flowers, fruit and vegetables out of materials available. Another group joined them and suggested opening a shop to sell the vegetables. It was not long before this was up and running, as well as a cafe, with money changing hands and valuable learning taking place

As in the rest of the school, the care and support for children are outstanding. Excellent induction procedures ensure that children settle rapidly and have a happy start to their schooling. Their individual needs are very well documented and attended to. Extremely successful efforts are made to ensure that they are safe at all times. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well. The leader has established that systems of assessment are the next area for further development. Although careful records are kept of the children's achievements, their next steps of learning are identified but not always recorded. This means that opportunities are sometime lost to ensure that each child is helped to make the best possible progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires and all those spoken to were overwhelmingly positive in their views of the school. Several noted the improvements made over the last year. There were no significant concerns, although a few expressed unease about the way that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with. The findings from the inspection were that the good systems for behaviour management are operated consistently by staff and that this has been successful in improving behaviour. A few also thought that their concerns and suggestions are not taken account of sufficiently. Many more commented on how approachable and helpful the staff are and the view of the inspection team is that the Parents' Action Group is a good vehicle for parents to express their suggestions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abbotswood 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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 285 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	61	21	37	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	67	17	30	2	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	51	24	42	2	4	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	53	24	42	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	35	61	20	35	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	56	21	37	1	2	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	37	33	58	1	2	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)	25	44	27	47	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	54	21	37	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	49	23	40	2	4	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	51	18	32	3	5	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	30	53	18	32	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	63	18	32	1	2	1	2

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.



27 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abbotswood Primary School, Yate, BS37 8SZ

Thank you so much for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you and seeing how hard you work. Your school has improved quite a bit in the last year or so and we think it is still improving and giving you a satisfactory education.

These are some of the things we found out about your school

- All adults take exceptionally good care of you and are very keen to help you develop as young people and learn
- You behave well, lead healthy lifestyles and make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school. You told us that you feel safe in school.
- You are making better progress than you were in the past, and your progress is now satisfactory
- The reason for your better progress is that teaching has improved. Whilst teaching is satisfactory overall, we saw many good lessons
- You told us that your lessons are interesting and we agree, as what is planned for your lessons has been improved.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors have good plans for the school to continue to improve.

There are two things we have asked your headteacher and teachers to improve

- Your teachers do not always know exactly what you have already learnt, particularly in mathematics, so they cannot tell you what you need to learn next. If they gave you this information and commented on it when they mark your work, you would be able to make faster progress.
- In some lessons, you spend too long sitting and listening, when you could be learning better if you were working on your tasks. There are also occasions when you are given work which is either too difficult or too easy for you.

You can help by asking your teachers how you can improve your work and telling them if you are finding the work too easy or too difficult. I am sure you will continue to work hard and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Eadie

Lead inspector

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