

Abbey School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	880/6000
Unique Reference Number (URN)	113566
URN for registered childcare and social care	EY 234164
Inspection number	348790
Inspection dates	19 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision³ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.⁴

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Abbey School is an independent co-educational school for children aged from birth to 11 years old. The school was founded in 1954. The current proprietor has owned the school since 1979. It is situated in large grounds in the St Marychurch district of Torquay and currently provides for 93 pupils. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school aims to: 'provide a happy, safe and stimulating environment for all our pupils'. The education and care provision were last inspected in October 2007.

Abbey School has been registered to provide day care since 2003. The Nursery is based in three rooms within the independent school and has the use of other rooms and facilities such as the hall, swimming pool and the extensive grounds. Before- and after-school care is provided for pupils of the school in designated rooms. In addition, the school provides an Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum for 12 children in the Reception class.

There are currently 82 children on roll in the Nursery, of whom 65 are nursery grant funded three- and four-year-olds and 12 are under two years of age. There are also 6 funded four-year-olds in the school's Reception class. Holiday play schemes cater for children up to the age of 11 years. They also accept children from the community, who use the out-of-school rooms, the hall and other facilities.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49

Evaluation of the school

Abbey School meets its aims and provides a good standard of education and good arrangements for pupils' safeguarding and care. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good as it provides a good learning environment for children. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to help pupils make good progress both personally and academically. Parents are generally supportive of the school but some would like to be better informed of their children's academic progress and feel that the school could do more to take account of their suggestions. The school meets all but one of the regulations, as attendance registers in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not always completed in ink.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. The quality of the curriculum is good from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards and enables all pupils to make good progress in their learning. The school provides a full range of subjects that mirror the recommendations of the National Curriculum. The balance of the curriculum is good and an appropriate emphasis is given to sporting and other activities, such as music and drama. Individual pupils achieve high levels of performance in their chosen activities. The opportunity to develop these skills is aided by the good facilities within the school for swimming and theatre activities.

There is a strong focus on the teaching of basic skills, and pupils successfully incorporate these in other learning. A majority of pupils attain high levels in the national standardised tests within the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In the most recent national tests for which figures are available, particular strengths occur in mathematics. By the time they leave the school, the majority of pupils successfully gain entry to their chosen secondary school.

The broader curriculum is enriched by an extensive range of clubs and societies that take place after school hours. These offer varied activities, such as sporting and performing arts, and, for example, tuition in signing that enables pupils to communicate with those who are hearing impaired. These activities, alongside an effective programme for personal, social and health education, help pupils become confident and mature young people. They show a good awareness of others as well as the needs they have as individuals in terms of healthy living. Pupils displayed a sound understanding about the detrimental effects of some drugs.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers prepare lessons well and these are securely linked to broader curriculum planning. Where teaching is most effective, tasks undertaken by pupils are purposeful and there is a good balance between talk and activity. Better lessons include a variety of activities that are used to support the learning and also

maintain the pupils' concentration. These lessons also include very clear links with other subjects so that pupils can use their prior learning within other contexts. Relationships are good and these enable pupils to have the confidence to question that which they do not understand. Where tasks are engaging, the pupils persevere, even though they may find the content difficult to understand; this brings about very positive attitudes on the part of pupils and assists them in making good progress. Teachers, unfailingly, are sensitive to difficulties pupils may experience and are consistently on hand to provide additional support. Teachers' questioning is a common strength in all lessons, but in the best lessons, all pupils are encouraged to offer their responses, and their replies are often used as the starting point for the development of greater understanding.

Assessment of pupils' work is embedded within the teaching. This is done mainly through perceptive questions or through the plenary sessions held at the end of each lesson. Pupils' work is also marked appropriately and better examples of this indicate clearly to pupils what they must do in order to improve. Teachers use national assessment data to provide attainment levels for each pupil. However, some parents recorded a wish to be more fully informed about the outcomes of this, particularly in helping to inform their choice of secondary education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Between starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the time pupils leave the school, they have developed into well-rounded individuals who have a balanced view of their world and who are ready to face the challenges of the next phase of their education.

Pupils enjoy being at the school and attendance levels are high. Incidents of unauthorised absences are negligible. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic and they develop good attitudes to their work. The school overall is a caring community in which the role models provided by many staff encourage pupils to be equally caring. Pupils get on well with each other and their behaviour towards each other, and around the school generally, is good. Pupils react well to the school's weekly celebration of the awarding of team points and certificates. This results in an orderly community in which the self-esteem and confidence of pupils are well developed.

Pupils are prepared well for their future lives because of their achievements in learning as well as the development of their social skills. Whole-school assemblies help pupils develop spiritually and they display a good awareness of the needs of others as well as the ability to reflect on the world around them. A limited range of visits ensure that pupils have a satisfactory cultural awareness of the community in which they live as well as the wider national picture. Pupils explained with significant clarity the outcomes of the most recent national election and what this means for the government of the United Kingdom. An awareness of public institutions and services is promoted effectively through visiting speakers.

Pupils make an effective contribution to the school as a community. Pupils undertake charity fund-raising events such as Red Nose Day and Water Aid. As well as the posts of head boy and head girl, house and games captains represent the four different houses and help out with the younger pupils. Some pupils take on the role of first aid support during break times. These pupils have followed a, at times, demanding first aid course and use their skills to support fellow pupils. Other pupils contribute to the life of the school by willingly supervising the use of the library, computer and art rooms.

In their questionnaires, pupils indicated that some would like to undertake even more responsibility. They were also quite critical of the behaviour of some of their peers, particularly during lunchtimes, although inspectors found levels of behaviour were consistently good. Some of the older pupils felt that they were not as prepared as they might be for the next phase of their education. The latter is a view not wholly endorsed by the inspection team. Positive comments were a significant majority, with many pupils saying how much they enjoy being at the school because the staff care for them so well. In discussions with pupils, none indicated feeling unsafe at the school.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school's welfare, health and safety procedures are good, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The child protection policy and safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and all appropriate checks on staff are in place prior to appointment. The single central register records all the required information for the proprietor, members of staff and volunteers. The school's first aid policy includes clear definitions of categories of injuries and the appropriate recording procedures. The school maintains rigorously an accident log which includes a detailed account of any incident. These records give rise to actions to prevent or lessen the likelihood of reoccurrence and are very well monitored and recorded and achieve their aim. Fire safety risk assessments are completed very regularly with comprehensive entries showing regular fire drills and checks on fire fighting equipment, and include periodic spot checks. Disability accessibility modifications have been made to the curriculum and to the school buildings. The plan includes intended further actions to increase accessibility over the next few years with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision, outcomes and overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Staff providing pre- and after-school services show good levels of care for children. Children from the very youngest age arrive confidently and are met

with a warm personal welcome from staff and, as a result, settle comfortably. The setting has good links with parents, and learning diaries are used well to share information, observations of progress and significant events. Good provision for physical education includes swimming, gymnastics and dance. Resources are generally appropriate for the age range of children and all classes share a common planning format which ensures that activities are matched to the needs of children in each class.

Staff have good relationships with children of all ages and this results in the children making good gains in personal and social development. Staff know what actions to take in the event of concerns and pass these on appropriately. Children show consideration for each other, share and wait patiently to take their turn, for example in putting the last few pieces in a jigsaw. The setting provides healthy food during the day and water is available in the classroom at all times. Children are encouraged to wash their hands. With no immediate access to toilets near the classrooms, this takes time but hygiene is assured.

Leadership and management are good and have identified areas of weakness and have demonstrated the capacity to tackle them. For example, although staff take up opportunities for children to learn and play outdoors, children have restricted access to the outdoor area. The school has recognised this, has received local authority funding to develop the outdoor area and has applied for planning permission. A new willow structure is a popular resource for children. Occasionally the attendance registers are not completed in ink and therefore do not comply in full with the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that attendance registers are completed in ink (paragraph 3(9)).

In order to comply with the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the school must:

- extend the facilities for the outdoor area so that children may move freely in and out of doors and so develop their independence.

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- increase pupils' participation to the levels common in the best lessons by:
 - encouraging responses from all class members rather than from the quickest to respond
 - providing opportunities for pupils to evaluate other pupils' responses

- when introducing lessons, ensure that teachers regularly take account of, and make links to, pupils' learning and development in other subjects.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		√		
The behaviour of pupils		√		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		√		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?		√		
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?		√		
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?		√		
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?		√		

The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	Abbey School		
DCSF number	880/6000		
Unique Reference Number (URN)	113566		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY 234164		
Type of school	Nursery care and primary school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1954		
Age range of pupils	Birth–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 57	Girls: 41	Total: 98
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 41	Girls: 35	Total: 76
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 30	Girls: 33	Total: 63
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,025–£6,465		
Annual fees (childcare)	£613–£4,950		
Address of school	Hampton Court Fore Street St Marychurch Torquay Devon TQ1 4PR		
Telephone number	01803 327868		
Fax number	01803 327868		
Email address	Headteacher@abbeyschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs S Greinig		
Proprietor	Mrs S Greinig		
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI		
Date of inspection	19 May 2010		