

The Abbey RC Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103422
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376901
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2012
Lead inspector	Mary Hinds

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Bragington
Headteacher	Julie-Anne Tallon
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2008
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	25–26 June 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Mary Hinds

Additional Inspector

Michael Onyon

Additional Inspector

Kathryn Brunt

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 24 lessons taught by 14 teachers. The majority of these were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at records of pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation, behaviour records and results of the school's checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors analysed the responses of pupils and 156 parents and carers to the inspection questionnaire.

Information about the school

The Abbey RC Junior and Infant school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with the minority from a wide range of other ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average, while the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average, including those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The headteacher has taken up her post since the last inspection. There have been significant staffing changes this year, including six new teachers and new leaders at all levels, including a new Chair of the Governing Body.

The school has achieved Healthy School status, Investors in People award and Gold Artsmark.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because there is not enough good or better teaching to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve consistently well in writing and mathematics. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Children’s progress in Reception Year is good, as is the progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress in writing and mathematics and good progress in reading. Attainment is broadly average.
- Teaching is satisfactory but improving. Increasingly effective teaching is having a positive impact on progress, particularly in reading and in some year groups in writing. However, assessments are not always used consistently well enough to tailor work precisely to meet the needs of all abilities, especially for more-able pupils in mathematics. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to assess their own and others’ progress and to develop pupils’ investigative skills in mathematics in order to secure rapid progress.
- Pupils’ behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. They contribute well to the school’s cohesive community. The school is very responsive in keeping pupils safe. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are punctual, and attendance is above average.
- The headteacher provides good leadership. She has worked hard to build a stable staffing structure and leadership team. The school gathers comprehensive data on pupils’ progress. This information is not used sharply enough to determine and improve the quality of teaching. The leadership of teaching and management of performance are satisfactory. The school improvement plan identifies the correct priorities but does not have measureable targets so that leaders at all levels can accurately check the

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impact of actions to drive improvement. Governors are ambitious for success but their monitoring of the impact of the school's work is not always rigorous enough to hold leaders fully to account.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better lessons in Years 1 to 6 by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment rigorously to plan lesson activities that challenge all groups, but especially the more-able pupils in mathematics
 - giving pupils more problem-solving and investigative work and a wider range of chances to apply their mathematical skills
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to work independently and collaboratively through assessing their own and others' progress.

- Improve the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation by:
 - analysing pupil progress data to make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching
 - using the results of checks on teaching to better inform the professional development required by individual teachers
 - drawing up a more detailed school development plan with measurable targets that can be used by all those in leadership, including the governing body, to evaluate the success of improvement actions and to hold leaders fully accountable.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the Reception classes with skills that are below levels expected for their age. They make good progress in many areas of learning because there is a good balance between independent activities where children make choices about their learning and adult-led activities. By the end of Reception, children's learning and development is broadly in line with the national average and in some areas above, for example their personal, social and emotional development is a particular strength and they develop secure early literacy skills. Almost all parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire agree that pupils make good progress. Inspectors found that while pupils make good progress in reading, almost all other groups of learners make satisfactory progress in writing and mathematics. There are no real differences between the progress different groups make in all subjects.

There are clear indications that actions to improve attainment in writing are accelerating progress, particularly in Key Stage 1 and in some year groups in Key Stage 2. Planning for writing has improved, where pupils have writing frameworks to support how they structure their writing. Writing for a real purpose and for specific

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audiences has increased pupils' motivation. Progress in mathematics also varies from year to year but is slower than other subjects.

Some effective learning was observed during the inspection. For example, in a group reading session the teacher skilfully ensured that pupils read texts which were well matched to individual abilities. Pupils were thoroughly engaged, reading a variety of media, including newspapers, and smart pads. They read fluently with effective comprehension skills and they talked about different authors' styles expressing individual preferences. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is average at the end of Key Stage 1. By the time pupils leave in Year 6 their attainment in reading is above average, and broadly average in writing and mathematics. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good and often outstanding progress as a result of meticulous tracking of their progress and precisely tailored programmes to meet individual needs.

Quality of teaching

In all year groups pupils work best when they are given the freedom to get on with the task and to work with others. Children in the Reception classes have many opportunities to be independent learners. They are encouraged to work with others as 'learning friends'. The newly introduced phonics scheme (linking letters and sounds) is securing children's confidence and ability to read and spell unfamiliar words. For example, children wrote 'sing' correctly without any prompting in a sentence. Although there is an increasing amount of good teaching, particularly in reading and writing, assessments are not always used precisely to meet all pupils' abilities. More-able pupils complete similar work or just do more of the same, particularly in mathematics. Furthermore, in some lessons there is an imbalance between the time taken for teachers to model learning in lengthy introductions and the reduced time available for pupils to apply their mathematical skills independently and collaboratively. Pupils' work books show that over time they are not provided with enough opportunities to use their thinking skills in problem-solving contexts.

There are pockets of good assessment practice across the school. In these lessons pupils are informed clearly how to improve their work and are sometimes encouraged to self assess. In a Year 3 literacy lesson pupils were learning how to punctuate dialogue correctly. Pupils understood what they were expected to learn by the end of the lesson. This teacher provided timely feedback verbally and through written comments throughout the lesson so that pupils knew exactly what their next steps in learning were. They confidently report that this helps them to know how to improve their work. In other lessons, pupils had steps to success to help them to gauge what progress they had made towards the learning outcome but they were not encouraged to use them unaided.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make better progress than others in these circumstances, because teaching assistants explain and adapt the tasks to meet their specific needs. Furthermore, the special needs co-ordinator rigorously evaluates the effectiveness of strategies and adapts them accordingly. The

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impact of teaching on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and have very good attitudes to school. The vast majority of parents and carers feel that teaching is good and so do the pupils. While there are elements of good teaching, overall inspectors found teaching to be satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school is a very harmonious community as a result of strong relationships between parents and carers, staff and pupils. Pupils' behaviour is typically good, as is evident from the views of parents and carers and the pupils themselves, school records and observations. Their good behaviour contributes well to their learning and when given the chance pupils work well together. Pupils are considerate, caring and respectful. They enjoy taking on extra responsibilities, such as 'chicken monitors' and 'buddies' for the younger children in Reception. All pupils say that they feel safe in school and they have a good understanding of what constitutes different types of bullying. They are confident that if there was any it would be dealt with well by adults. They said that they trust adults to help them if they had a concern. Almost all parents and carers say that their child feels safe. However, a very small minority did express some concerns about bullying and how the school responds to this. Inspectors investigated this thoroughly and found that incidents are rare and dealt with robustly. Attendance has risen over the last three years and is now well above average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides strong leadership. Together with the deputy headteacher, she has created a forward-looking team of staff who share her commitment and drive to ensure that pupils' achievement continues to improve. Significant staff changes have meant that some leadership roles are relatively new. Nevertheless, the headteacher has quickly identified leaders' professional development needs and provided support to enable them to grow into their roles. Subject leaders have a good overview about their subject and their responsibilities but have not had sufficient impact yet on improving the quality of provision to sustain good achievement in all subjects. The school's capacity for improvement is evident in some improving and good outcomes. The school promotes equality well through the careful tracking of progress to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as each other. For example, the gap between boys' and girls' achievement in writing has been closed.

The new tracking system, introduced by the deputy headteacher, together with termly meetings to consider pupils' progress, enables leaders and teachers to identify and address underachievement through well-targeted interventions. All teachers are now held accountable for the progress pupils make in their classes and performance management is robust. Even so, pupil progress information, including data and evidence from pupils' work books, is not used rigorously enough to provide precise information about the quality of teaching over time. While some teachers are being

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supported through coaching and mentoring, individual feedback on the quality of teaching does not always pinpoint precisely what teachers need to do to improve, including subject specific weaknesses to better inform training needs.

The governing body are very supportive and fully involved in all aspects of school life. They ensure all safeguarding requirements are met in full and that all pupils are free from discrimination. Together with senior leaders, they set appropriate priorities for improvement. However, there are no measurable targets based on pupil outcomes in the school improvement plan which limits their ability to evaluate the success of initiatives accurately.

The curriculum is good because it is particularly effective in meeting pupils' personal development. It successfully promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Themed weeks encourage pupils to reflect and appreciate their own and others' beliefs, religions and cultures through visitors, visits to different places of worship and through art and music. There are close links with the local and wider community. Pupils lead the Sunday mass at the neighbouring parish church and have contacts with schools in Sweden and Australia. Pupils greatly appreciate the myriad of extra curricular activities provided. The school has an excellent partnership with parents and carers, who are encouraged to be fully involved in supporting their children's education.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Abbey RC Junior and Infant School, Birmingham, B23 6QL

Thank you for the way you welcomed us to your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit, reading your questionnaires and talking to many of you. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. This is important because it helps the teachers provide you with some interesting work, as well as keeping you safe and happy in school. Keep it up!

The Abbey is a satisfactory school. You work well, and you all make good progress in your reading. Some of you are making better progress in writing. We also think you are capable of achieving more, especially in mathematics and reaching even higher levels. We have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities for you to use your mathematical skills as much as you can in different topics. We have also asked the school to make sure those of you who are good with numbers are given difficult enough work, and for all of you to have more chances to solve problems.

The teachers are working hard to help you learn. We have asked teachers to let you have more time to assess how well you think you are learning, and for you to share work with your classmates so that you learn more from each other. Your headteacher provides good leadership and the leadership of other staff and the governing body is improving. We have asked them to make sure they use all the information they have to improve the quality of teaching and to make sure that they are able to assess more accurately how well the school is improving.

Thank you again for your friendliness and help. We hope that you continue to enjoy your time at The Abbey and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Lead Inspector

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