

The Abbey RC Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103422
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308315
Inspection date	14 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Hazel Callaghan

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	357
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	61
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Lane
Headteacher	Mike Tierney
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sutton Road Birmingham B23 6QL
Telephone number	01213 731793

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	14 October 2008
Inspection number	308315

Fax number

01213 861047

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	14 October 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

the effectiveness of the school's provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, that is the Reception classes)

the extent to which teaching and the curriculum meet pupils' learning needs so that achievement becomes consistent across the school

the way in which all pupils are helped to understand how they can improve

how leaders at all levels have promoted the strengths of the school and enabled it to continue to improve.

Evidence was gathered from the school's assessments of pupils' standards and progress and an analysis of the results of the 2008 tests. There were observations of teaching and discussions took place with senior leaders, staff, governors and pupils. Parents' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were also analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Abbey Primary draws its pupils from across the local parish. Most pupils have been baptised into the Catholic Church but there are several other religious beliefs represented across the school. Whilst the majority of pupils come from families of White British backgrounds, there is a slightly smaller than average proportion of pupils from other countries and minority ethnic groups. A small proportion of pupils starting school are in the early stages of learning English. There is a below average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but an above average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved the Healthy School and the Investors in People awards. A privately run school is situated on the same site which also includes children of EYFS and primary school age.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Abbey Primary is a good school. It continues to develop from strength to strength and has many outstanding features. The strong Catholic ethos that pervades all sections of the school's work securely underpins the excellent care provided for pupils and their outstanding spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils are confident and show considerable maturity in the way they tackle their work and discuss issues important to them. They have an excellent understanding of how to develop healthy lifestyles and how to keep themselves out of harm's way. Pupils feel very safe and secure at school and work together very well to support one another. They take every opportunity to show initiative, especially in the ways they contribute to the life of the school, in their many activities within the parish and also within the local community. The school council is particularly active in organising events such as litter picking in the streets around school, and in deciding how school toilets can be improved. Pupils are prepared well for the next stages of learning and the world of work.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and many wrote to explain why they think it is a 'fantastic school'. At the top of the list is how much pupils like coming to school and their thorough enjoyment of learning. Attendance is consequently well above the national average. One child told the inspector, 'We have fun and this helps us to learn.' Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. When individuals have difficulties or problems, they are given individual support to overcome their difficulties. One boy explained that he had been a bully in the past but now he can't understand why as it's so wrong. Sensitive care and support is also given to staff and families when the need arises. Relationships at all levels are excellent and the school works extremely successfully at building community cohesion.

In this supportive environment, pupils throughout the school achieve well and reach standards that are above average in Year 2 and in Year 6. Progress in Years 3 to 6 has been only satisfactory in the last few years but a concerted effort to improve teaching and to enable pupils to understand how they can get better in their work has had a significant impact. Teaching is now securely good. Many very positive strategies are used consistently across the school to promote good learning. Pupils confidently evaluate how well they are doing, and when asked can clearly explain what they need to do next to improve. Academic support is extremely good for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their progress is monitored carefully and teaching assistants are both well trained and experienced in knowing how best to support these pupils so they are successful in their work. Pupils who come to school with very little English are also supported well. They settle quickly into the school and make similar good progress to that of their peers.

Although satisfactory, a weaker area of work is that of boys' progress in writing. This is a concern for many schools nationally and the staff at Abbey Primary are focusing on a variety of strategies to stimulate boys' greater interest. More effective use of computerised whiteboards and wider opportunities to explore subjects that are of greater interest to boys are both working well, but these and other strategies have not yet had an impact in terms of improved standards. The school has addressed the concerns raised at the previous inspection and pupils' language skills and their use of mathematical knowledge and information and communication technology (ICT) are now carefully planned to be taught in other lessons as well as discrete subjects, so that pupils' understanding is consolidated and extended. The breadth of the curriculum is good and pupils are enthusiastic about the wide range of additional activities on offer, both in the school day and as part of after-school clubs.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The school is exceedingly evaluative of its work in all areas. It monitors and reviews activities, procedures and initiatives very thoroughly, taking pupils' opinions and those of the parents and governors into account and making positive changes so that its practice improves. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide outstanding leadership. They work together as an extremely strong team. Their knowledge of the strengths and relative weaknesses of the school is exemplary leading to well judged action to make improvements. This thorough evaluation has also been adopted by the phase leaders. Although still new to their areas of responsibility, they already have a very clear view of the teaching and learning within the classes in their phases and a good overview of the subjects they lead. Improvements continue to be made. Weaknesses in mathematics identified last year, for example, have been addressed. The commitment of all staff to making Abbey Primary 'the best' can be seen in all their work. They are well supported by governors and their capacity for further improvement is exceptionally high.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is good. Assessments made by teachers when children start in the Reception classes show that children's skills and experiences are often lower than those expected for their ages. By the time they move to Year 1, children have made good progress across all the early learning goals. Children enjoy coming to school and play well on their own as well as with others, showing respect for people and property. They enjoy very good relationships with adults and other children. Children take responsibility for choosing activities, sustain their interest and explain what they are doing. They behave very well and show great enthusiasm about their learning. They feel safe, heed advice about safety and take good responsibility for their personal hygiene.

Children's learning and welfare needs are well met and there are good links with outside agencies to support children with specific needs. Informal discussions and regular meetings keep parents/carers well informed about what their children are learning and how they are progressing. Staff have a good understanding of how children learn and plan a good range of activities that are both appealing and purposeful. The EYFS team is well led and staff work closely together. Resources are plentiful and of good quality. However, the outdoor facilities are not readily accessible. Although staff are making the best use of what is available, this impacts adversely on the opportunities for children to further develop as independent learners; it limits their opportunities to explore new ideas and consolidate skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure boys make the same good progress as the girls in their writing.
- Ensure that children in their EYFS are able to extend their learning through exploration and experimentation in all areas of the curriculum, both inside and outside the classroom.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 October 2008

Dear Children

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

Thank you for making us so welcome and answering our questions when we visited you recently. You are rightly proud of your school and what it does for you. You and your parents are correct in thinking that you go to a good school that has lots of outstanding features. Here are some of the things we found out:

- You make good progress and you reach standards that are higher than in most other schools.
- Your behaviour is excellent. You are polite, friendly and helpful to everyone. You have an exceptional understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and healthy. Your excellent personal development and good standards prepare you well for your future education.
- You clearly enjoy your lessons and often have lots of fun. You work hard and want to do well.
- You are taught well and all your teachers work hard to make sure that your lessons are interesting and you have an excellent understanding of how you can get better in your work.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide excellent leadership for the school and the staff have an exceptionally clear view of the school's strengths and how it can be improved. Everyone in the school works together as an outstanding team.
- All the staff look after you extremely well so you feel safe and happy.

Even though Abbey Primary is a good school, there are some ways in which it can do better. We have particularly asked the headteacher and governors to do two things.

- Make sure boys make the same progress in their writing as the girls.
- Provide children in the Reception classes with an outside area all of their own to work and play in.

Thank you again for helping us and remember you can help to ensure your school gets better and better by continuing to work hard.

Best wishes

Hazel Callaghan Lead inspector