



Abbots Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 134362
 Local Authority Suffolk
 Inspection number 294126
 Inspection dates 27 - 28 February 2007
 Reporting inspector Geof Timms

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Airfield Road
School category	Community		Bury St Edmunds
Age range of pupils	4 – 9		Suffolk
			IP32 7PJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01284 718818
Number on roll	134	Fax number	01284 718811
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Allan Cartwright
		Headteacher	Mr Alex Bedford
Date of previous school inspection	N/A		

Age group	Inspection date(s)	Inspection no.
4 – 9	27 - 28 February 2007	294126

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is the school's first inspection since it opened in September 2005. It is a smaller than average school but has a very high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The provision includes a Specialist Support Centre for children with Moderate and Complex Learning Difficulties. Children come from a wide area, some travelling a long distance to attend the school. A below average proportion of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and a small number are at an early stage of learning English, three of whom receive some extra support. The school has been awarded a Creativity Action Research Award which recognises innovation in the curriculum.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective and rapidly improving school. Achievement is good and pupils are making good progress. There are many outstanding aspects to the school's work and since opening it has gone from strength to strength, largely because of the excellent leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. One parent summed this up by saying that the school is 'A happy, stimulating and innovative school with good standards of behaviour.'

The Specialist Support Centre (SSC) offers its pupils an outstanding education based on excellent leadership, teaching and curriculum provision. The pupils have developed good learning skills and parents are very happy with the provision. One said their child 'has progressed brilliantly, not only academically but socially and is making huge improvements to his emotional needs.' The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in the other classes is also outstanding and they make excellent progress.

Attainment on entry to the school is often below that expected nationally. The provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and is reflected in the excellent progress children made last year. As few pupils have been in the school since it opened, it is difficult to assess accurately their progress in other classes. Nevertheless, evidence from data analysis already shows that standards by the end of Year 4 are rising and are currently broadly average in reading, though in writing, and problem solving and calculating in mathematics, they are not yet high enough. The school provides some good quality opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills but has identified it is too early to see the impact of these initiatives. However, the results show that an above average proportion of the pupils reach higher than expected levels. This demonstrates the strength of the provision for the more able pupils.

A major focus of the school's development has been on pupils' personal and social development and their care. These are clearly outstanding aspects of the school's work and this success is helping turn pupils into confident and enthusiastic learners. Pupils love being at school and make good use of facilities such as the multi-sensory room. One parent said that her child is often unhappy at the weekend because he cannot go to school! Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe. They are developing good levels of independence and responsibility, working together in a range of ways to contribute very well to the school and wider community, and to prepare them for the future.

The school has been innovative in developing a very good creative curriculum based on areas of learning rather than subjects, and which is largely planned around what pupils already know and what they want to find out. This makes the good and sometimes outstanding teaching more appropriate to the pupils'

needs. Alongside the flexible timetabling and outstanding enrichment opportunities, this ensures that there is something unique about the education provided.

The school provides good value for money. It is clear from the creative and imaginative work of the leadership team and the governing body, and the successes they have already overseen, that the school has an outstanding capacity to continue to innovate and improve further in the future. However, senior leaders have not yet built in sufficient time to evaluate the success of much of their work. The leadership is clearly focused on raising standards but has also created a school that offers pupils excellent facilities and an exciting and innovative education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' calculating and problem solving skills.
- Improve the quality of pupils' written work by giving them sufficient opportunities to develop their speaking skills, improving their vocabulary and providing opportunities for them to write at length.
- Ensure time is given to evaluate the impact of new initiatives and innovations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils make good progress from the levels they are at when they enter the school. Many children start in Reception with below average levels of attainment, especially in their maturity, communication and mathematical development. They make excellent progress in the Reception Year and most are close to the levels expected by the time they reach Year 1. However, the school has inherited weaknesses in writing and although it provides some good opportunities for the pupils to develop speaking skills, extend their vocabulary and write at length, some underachievement remains. There are also weaknesses in their use of numbers in calculation, and problem solving. These weaknesses are evident throughout the school and are a major focus for improvement. Standards in the most recent Year 2 assessments were below average overall but a good proportion of the pupils reached the higher levels, demonstrating good achievement among the more able pupils. There was a similar picture at the end of Year 4. Standards are higher in reading than in writing, mathematics or science. The pupils in the SSC, and those with learning difficulties or disabilities in other classes, make outstanding progress, given

their low starting points. Those at an early stage of learning English make good progress. The school has recognised that boys are not achieving as well as girls by a greater margin than is found nationally, and teachers are working hard to address this.

Personal development and well-being Grade: 1

This aspect is outstanding because of the school's focus on improving pupils' personal and social skills, and on developing their emotional maturity. In addition, there is an excellent ethos of care and respect for each other. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and is reflected in the good behaviour and often exceptional relationships between adults and pupils, and between the pupils themselves. Particularly strong are the opportunities for creating awe and wonder such as happened in the Reception class during their excavations. The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to show responsibility and initiative. They show pride in their work and willingly share and talk about what they are doing. Attendance is above average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

This aspect is good because teachers have worked very hard since the school opened to create an interesting and innovative curriculum that provides effective and imaginative activities to help pupils learn. There are examples of outstanding teaching throughout the school and where this occurs the learning is very effective and pupils make tremendous progress. In one example, Year 3 and 4 pupils were so engrossed by the Anglo-Saxons that they carried on their work using chalk on the playground at lunchtime. Planning ensures tasks are well matched to pupils' earlier learning and appropriate for their needs. Teachers' marking of work and the feedback given to pupils remains a focus for improvement as it is inconsistent. However, teachers use praise well to encourage pupils. The work of the high quality teaching assistants is of real benefit, especially for the less able pupils, and is having a very positive impact on achievement. The school's monitoring of teaching and learning is accurate and is used to provide advice and support where needed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has created an innovative and exciting curriculum that matches pupils' needs and interests. Teachers make effective links between different subjects and this helps pupils understand how their learning in one area can be of benefit in another. The planning takes account of different theories about learning but translates them into creative and practical learning activities. The way topics start with pupils' ideas about what they already know and what they would like to learn leads purposefully into the activities they will take part in to achieve their objectives. The enrichment of the curriculum is outstanding and provides pupils with many opportunities to extend their interests and skills through clubs, sports events, visits and visitors. For example, Reception children learned about fresh fruit and vegetables and healthy eating from a supermarket representative before making their own fruit salads. The curriculum in the SSC provides an excellent basis for the progress pupils make there.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The inclusive nature of the school has benefits for all pupils and leads them to have a wider understanding of, and respect for, others. Staff ensure that the school is a safe place for the pupils and they are happy that there is an adult they can turn to if worried or upset. The sensory room and other facilities enable staff to provide care on an individual basis when necessary. The school ensures statutory requirements regarding safeguarding pupils' well-being are met and they are very effective at dealing with children with physical or emotional needs. Links with parents are growing and the school works very well with an enormous range of outside agencies. The detailed assessments of pupils' learning carried out by staff ensure excellent levels of guidance and support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Since the school opened the leadership and management demonstrated by the senior leadership team, and then by other staff as they have been appointed, have been outstanding. This is reflected in the tremendously strong, caring and creative ethos, the excellent provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and in the rapidly rising standards and quality of teaching. The headteacher and deputy headteacher make a very effective team and show an exceptional willingness to innovate and seek creative solutions to any problems. This commitment to excellence is reflected in the amount of work the school has already done in sharing ideas and practice with other schools and other professionals. The governing body have played their part in the success of the

school. They have supported the staff very effectively and have worked hard to ensure the new school is well led and managed. Data is tracked in detail by the senior staff and is used effectively by the school to analyse strengths and weaknesses, and to set priorities for improvement.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

¹ Grade 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

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

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?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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



1 March 2007

Dear Children

Abbots Green Primary School, Airfield Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP32 7PJ

Many thanks for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. You are very lucky to be at the school and in such a new and unusual building. The outside is very exciting and I loved seeing the giant you have created on the field, and the other play and garden areas you have got. I very much enjoyed the fruit salad made by Tiger class and watching the Panthers make their jelly!

You told me a lot about what you like about school and some things you think could be better. The Talk Team were interesting to meet and a lot of your parents have told me how much you enjoy being at the school. The school is very caring and the adults all look after you very well. You behave well and this helps the teachers teach you. They do this well and I especially like the way they use computers and the whiteboards to make your lessons interesting.

You are good at reading and you are all working hard to learn more about other things as well. A lot of you take part in clubs and other activities. The way the school involves you in planning the topics is excellent and I know this makes the lessons much more fun for you.

Even though the school has many excellent aspects, there are ways it can get even better. I have picked three that I have asked your teachers to work on so that you learn even more things.

Firstly, they need to help you get better at mathematics, especially using numbers to calculate answers and to solve problems.

Secondly, they need to help you get better at writing.

Lastly, so many good, new things have started at the school I think it is time to look carefully at what is working really well and what, if anything, is less good and needs to change.

Thank you again for the help you gave me. Enjoy your time at Abbots Green and keep working hard!

Best wishes

Geof Timms
Lead inspector