

Abbot Beyne School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 124449 |
| Local Authority | Staffordshire |
| Inspection number | 293001 |
| Inspection date | 11 July 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | David Anstead HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 1037 |
| 6th form | 128 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Margaret Fletcher |
| Headteacher | Christine Thompson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 24 February 2003 |
| School address | Linnell Building Osborne Street Burton-on-Trent DE15 0JL |
| Telephone number | 01283 239835 |
| Fax number | 01283 239852 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Abbot Beyne School is of above average size. It is in its fifth year of designation as a specialist visual arts school. The main school roll is falling due to a decline in the local population although the numbers in the sixth form are increasing. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds represent a higher proportion than the national average and English is an additional language for around one fifth of students. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is just above average. The school is situated on two sites some fifteen minutes' walk apart. The upkeep of the buildings is a pressure on the budget because of their age.

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 a good school. Dramatic improvements have been brought about in almost all aspects of the school's work. Behaviour has improved, teaching and learning are better and consequently standards are rising. The headteacher and her senior staff are a highly effective team. They have clearly identified what needs to improve and how this will be done, and have secured the commitment of staff to make the changes being asked of them. The extent and pace of improvements that have been brought about are remarkable. Leadership and management are outstanding.

Students enjoy school and are appreciative of the good range of lunchtime and after-school activities they can choose to participate in. They say the school is much calmer since the new timings to the school day were introduced. A new 'learning for life' programme makes a strong contribution to students' good personal development. Teaching is good in the main school and there is now a greater focus on improving learning. However, in some lessons students are all given the same work to do despite their different capabilities. Consequently some work is too easy for the most able students. The curriculum is good, offering a good choice of academic and vocational courses. Students are aware of their current levels of performance and have good guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. They are well cared for by the school and well supported. Students make good progress in the main school and satisfactory progress in the sixth form. Achievement overall is good and standards are broadly average.

The school sees itself as having an important role to play in promoting good relationships within its multiracial community. The governors have actively recruited representatives from minority ethnic groups to serve on the governing body. The chair of governors speaks some Urdu and has established strong links with the Asian community. The school's specialist status community programme includes weekend classes in textiles and embroidery put on at a nearby Muslim community centre. Students are aware of a few incidents of disharmony between different communities within the town. They say that most incidents start outside school and that the school deals very well with any issues that arise within it. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion.

Most aspects of the school's work are good bar achievement in the sixth form, which is still satisfactory in spite of it improving over the last two years. However, the school is well aware of this relative weakness, and given the present trend of improvement and the school's excellent track record in improving itself, this is set to change. Parents are highly supportive of the school and speak of its good reputation in the town.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Despite below average standards, students' achievement is satisfactory and improving. Leadership and management are good because the well-established, high quality care, guidance and support students receive is now blended with rigorous analysis of how well they are doing academically and a firm focus on improving their achievement. However, developments in the main school such as improving teaching and learning and behaviour have necessarily taken priority and the full impact of these new systems on achievement is yet to be felt.

Students are happy in the sixth form. They mature into articulate, thoughtful and kind young adults. Their personal development and well-being are good. They are appreciative of the generally satisfactory, and often good, teaching they receive and the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities; for example, working with younger students or raising funds for charities. The sixth form curriculum is good though the range of vocational courses is not that extensive. Sixth formers enjoy the outside speakers who contribute to the 'learning for life' course and feel very well supported about careers advice and university applications.

What the school should do to improve further

- Apply the same rigorous focus on improvement that has been so successful in the main school to raise achievement in the sixth form.
- Raise the quality of teaching by ensuring that work is always closely matched to the students' differing needs, and particularly those of the most able.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Attainment on entry is broadly average. Standards in the Year 9 national tests in 2007 have improved from the 2006 results, but the overall progress made by students during Key Stage 3 remains satisfactory. During Key Stage 4, however, progress is much better and is good. In the 2006 examinations, the proportion of Year 11 students attaining at least five GCSEs at A*-C, where these included English and mathematics, was just above average. The school's predictions for 2007 are that results will be even higher, and the overall progress made by students from entering to leaving the main school is good.

Standards in the sixth form are below average and have declined over the last few years. However, in terms of their prior attainment, students' progress has improved over the same period and their achievement is now satisfactory. Standards are broadly average across the school.

The school follows national guidance in using prior attainment to set challenging but realistic targets. Statutory targets and those set for the school's specialist subjects have mostly been met or exceeded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Recent changes to the timings of the school day have reduced the proportion of non-lesson time, and this has helped improve behaviour. A new approach to behaviour management has dramatically cut the previously very high number of exclusions. There is now an emphasis on changing poor behaviour rather than managing it. Students say this has been successful and that the school is now a lot calmer and attitudes to learning are better. Relationships are good and students move between the two sites responsibly. Consequently school has become more enjoyable and attendance has improved from being below the national average a year ago to above average this year. Students have regular timetabled physical activity plus other opportunities at lunchtime and after school which are well attended. The school catering service meets government expectations for providing a

healthy diet. Students make a good contribution to the community through the school council, arts college outreach activities, sports activities and musical performances. Their basic skills in key subjects such as English and mathematics, coupled with events like the Year 10 enterprise day, ensure students are well prepared for their future economic well-being. Students know how to keep themselves safe. For instance, any strangers seen on the school site are reported to adults and students have a good awareness of how to use the internet safely.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Of the four main primary schools whose children transfer to Abbot Beyne, one serves a community of predominantly Asian heritage whilst the others are almost exclusively white. The transition to the high school is the first close experience of being with others from a different culture for a majority of children joining the school. Accordingly the school has instigated a number of opportunities for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 from the four primary schools to work together beforehand. Students have a good understanding of each other's cultures and the school makes an important contribution to community cohesion.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Since the last inspection teaching has improved in Years 7 to 9. It is outstanding in several subjects. Students feel confident they are taught well and sixth formers refer to the dedication of staff and how willing they are to help them to succeed. Sixth form teaching develops students' independent and research skills well. Some imaginative art work links the school's specialist status with other subjects. Examples include drawing images of poppies linked with World War 1 history studies, creating bright and colourful images of bacteria being studied in science and portraying images of bullying to support students' 'learning for life' work.

Sixteen recently appointed lead teachers carry out research into what makes for successful teaching and share good practice. This is having a very positive impact on the quality of learning and the percentage of good teaching is increasing. Learning support assistants provide extremely effective help to students in lessons and their skills are valued highly. With better behaviour management and more interesting lessons, students' behaviour is rarely a problem. In several subjects, teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to make lessons interesting. In some subjects, students do not use computers enough to extend their learning.

Teachers are increasingly skilful about asking probing questions and marking work with constructive advice about how students can do better. In some classes the range of ability is quite wide. Not all teachers prepare different levels of work to match students' abilities so higher ability and gifted students occasionally do work that is too easy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Virtually all students gain at least one GCSE pass and the vast majority gain five passes. This indicates that the curriculum broadly meets the needs of students. Specialist status has enabled the school to offer a good range of arts courses including textiles, art and graphics. Many Year 9 students are able to begin GCSE courses in graphics and Urdu a year early. At Key Stage 4

students have a good choice of academic and vocational courses. Good links with a local college and employers in the town enable a group of students to spend some time on work-based learning. The provision for gifted and talented students beyond lessons is good. Consequently the school has recruited the highest number of participants of any other high school in the local authority for the Warwick University gifted and talented summer school. The previously unsatisfactory provision for ICT and enterprise education has been improved and now meets government requirements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school has recently introduced an excellent system for tracking individual academic progress which is available to staff, students and parents over the internet. Accordingly, students are aware of how they are doing in their subjects and have good guidance on how to improve their work. Pastoral leaders are able to carefully monitor the performance of students in their care at three main points in the academic year. Any students identified as underachieving are given effective extra support to help them catch up. A designated member of staff monitors and supports looked-after children.

Around 19% of the students speak English as an additional language. They are well supported in lessons by bilingual teaching assistants. Students with LDD receive good support and make the same good progress as other students. A learning support assistant qualified in anger management supports students with challenging behaviour. Students who are identified as needing a great deal of support follow a special integrated course when they join the school in Year 7 to ensure their successful transition from primary school. The new 'learning for life' programme rectifies an earlier omission in provision and makes a good contribution to students' personal development and well-being. Guidance on future career choices is good. Government expectations for safeguarding students are met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher was appointed two years ago. Since then there have been changes in the senior leadership team with most recently two assistant headteachers and a business manager being appointed from Easter 2007. Leadership and management are outstanding. Self-evaluation is incisive and informs the priorities for action set out in strategic plans. There is absolute clarity about what is expected of staff and carefully targeted support and monitoring to ensure it happens. Despite some tough decisions, which were necessary to balance the budget and to tackle areas of underperformance, the leadership of the school have the strong support and confidence of staff, students and parents.

The impact of outstanding leadership and management is seen in the rapid improvements being effected across the work of the school. Strengths in teaching and learning within the school's arts specialism have been used well to improve teaching and learning in other subjects. Extra support has ensured subject leadership and management have improved too. The school recognises not as much progress has been made in raising achievement in the sixth form, but

this is largely because of the more pressing demands for improvement lower down the school. Nevertheless the impact of actions being taken to improve the sixth form is already becoming apparent. The school has an excellent capacity to continue to improve.

Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They are well organised and fulfil their statutory roles well. Governance is good.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

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 | 3 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | |
| 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 the learners' needs? | 2 | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 | 2 |
|--|-----|-----|
| 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 | 1 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No | |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No | |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 July 2007 Dear Students

Abbot Beyne School, Burton-on-Trent, DE15 0JL

Following our visit to inspect your school, I am writing to tell you about our findings. I would like to thank those of you we spoke to for the friendly welcome you gave us. Your thoughtful responses to our questions helped us decide what is good about your school and what needs to be improved. The education you receive at your school is good overall with some outstanding features.

These are the main strengths of your school:

- You enjoy coming to school because behaviour and relationships are good.
- The way 'learning for life' helps you in your personal development is good.
- The guidance you receive on how to improve your performance is good.
- Your headteacher and senior staff are outstanding and making the school better.

There are two aspects of the school's work which we think can be better. Students in the sixth form are making slower progress than they did previously further down the school. In some lessons you are given the same work to do even though this is too easy for some of you. I have asked your headteacher to ensure that the most able students are always challenged to do as well as they can, and to improve the progress you make in the sixth form. You can help by following the guidance your teachers give you on how to improve your work.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

David Anstead Her Majesty's Inspector