



SUMMARY OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

ABBNEYFIELD SCHOOL
Chippenham

Headteacher: Mrs P A Shubrook

Date of inspection: 02 - 05 December 2002

The school was inspected by twelve inspectors, led by Mr Paul Cosway. This is a summary of the inspection report, which is available from the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Abbeyfield School is a new comprehensive school, built to educate girls and boys from the age of 11 to 16. It was established in 2000, only moving to its new buildings, on a spacious, attractive site, in September 2001. It has been built as part of a Private Funding Initiative (PFI) bid. At the time of the inspection, the number on roll was smaller than average, with 332 pupils aged from 11 to 14. There are slightly more boys (173) than girls (159). It will be average in size when it has its full complement of pupils. It serves the town of Chippenham, and outlying areas. It is a relatively advantaged area and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, around 6 per cent, is below the national average. Almost all the pupils are white, which reflects the ethnic composition of the local area, although there is a small number, below the national average, of pupils who represent the rich variety of cultural backgrounds in the United Kingdom, including pupils whose family origin is the Indian sub-continent. None of these is at an early stage of acquiring English.

Just over 25 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs. This is slightly above the national average. Of these, six have full statements - an average proportion. Most pupils on the higher stages of the special educational needs register have learning or behavioural difficulties. On entry to the school, the overall attainment of pupils is average.



HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is making excellent progress. Already a very effective school, it has the capacity to improve even further. The personal values it engenders in pupils - of courtesy, good manners and a love of learning - are those that are characteristic of much older schools, with a long tradition of an excellent ethos and high standards. These characteristics combine with the best modern approaches to education, preparing pupils for life-long learning in a technological society. As a result of this, and the very good teaching, pupils achieve well. By Year 9, standards are above national averages in English, science and mathematics. The school prides itself on its inclusiveness, valuing all its pupils equally. It seeks to get the best from all of its pupils and staff, and generally succeeds. Very good leadership and management have established policies and procedures that are contributing strongly to the school's success. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Both boys and girls make good progress and achieve well.
- Teaching is very good overall, with examples of excellent teaching.
- Pupils develop excellent attitudes to school and their work. Behaviour is very good across the school.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent, leading to excellent relationships between pupils and between adults and children. Pupils like school and their attendance is very good. These extremely positive attitudes help their learning.
- The provision for the social, moral and spiritual development of pupils is very good, encouraging them to grow into sociable, independent and confident young people.
- Very good leadership and management, with excellent leadership from the headteacher, are providing a clear direction for the development of the school, concentrating on raising the attainment of pupils and developing their self-confidence and learning skills.



What could be improved

- This school is still at an early stage of its development. It has already come a long way, and much more is planned. The next stage in its development is to enhance the curriculum further for Years 7 to 9, by improving the provision for drama and design and technology, and to present a broad and balanced curriculum for the pupils moving into Year 10 next year. Also, some policies, such as those for gifted and talented pupils and assessment, need to be embedded more firmly.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is a new school. This is the first time that it has been inspected.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with:				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

There are no test or examination results for this school. Pupils currently in Year 9 will take the national tests for 14 year olds for the first time in 2003.

The pupils currently in Year 9 entered the school with attainment close to the national average. Almost all, including those with special educational needs, have achieved well, despite the disruptions that have been caused by changing sites and changes of teachers. The gifted and talented pupils have made satisfactory progress: good progress in some subjects, such as information and communication technology. Their attainment is above that expected for their age in English and mathematics and science. Over the rest of the curriculum, they have also achieved well. Standards are above expectations in art, design and technology, physical education, religious education, well above the expected level for their age in modern foreign languages and information and communication technology (ICT) and in line with expectations in geography and history. Composition in music is above expectations, but other aspects are below.



PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent: the pupils respond very well indeed to the school, are very proud of it and value the opportunities it gives them to learn and attain well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of pupils is very good. All are very well behaved and considerate around the school and in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent. Pupils' personal development is also excellent. They develop the skills they need to work together as members of a group and take responsibility for their learning.
Attendance	Very good: attendance is well above average compared with other secondary schools, reflecting the pupils' and parents' very positive attitudes towards their schooling. Pupils learn better because they attend regularly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Very good	Not applicable

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is very good, overall. Examples of excellent teaching were observed and not a single unsatisfactory lesson was seen. The teaching of English and mathematics is good, with much that is very good and some excellent. Numeracy is taught well, literacy very well across the school. Science teaching is very good. Teachers' high expectations, good knowledge of their subjects and the excellent relationships they have with their pupils are key strengths. Pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations of them. They are hard working, good listeners, know what to do to improve and make good progress. Although more consistent provision needs to be made for the gifted and talented pupils, teaching meets the needs of almost all pupils well.

**OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: the curriculum is broad and balanced for Years 7 to 9. It is still developing and better coverage of some areas, such as drama and aspects of design and technology, is planned for next year. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Support assistants work hard to meet individual learning needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils at an early stage of acquiring English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall: social and moral development is excellent. The provision for cultural development is good overall. The provision for spiritual development is very good. There is not an act of collective worship for all every day, but the ones that are held are of a very good quality.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The provision for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare is very good. There are very good procedures for promoting good behaviour and attendance. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress and personal development is good. Some learning areas, such as science and mathematics, use assessment information very well and the best practice needs to be shared more widely.

**HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, supported by a very effective team of senior managers, provides excellent leadership. The leadership and management of the school are very good overall. The vision and direction they give are key factors in the success of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities very well, helping senior managers to plan for the strategic development of the school as well as monitoring its effectiveness. They have been closely involved in the development of the school since its inception.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and assessment data are used very effectively to evaluate the school's performance and to plan future development.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of the resources at its disposal for the educational benefit of its pupils. Appropriate funding is carried forward to cover the gradual reduction in the school's 'start-up' grant year by year. Resources and accommodation are of good quality.

The senior managers have a very clear vision of the kind of school that they want to run and the skills to make that vision a reality. They know the school well and know where to concentrate their efforts to improve it still further. Middle managers are giving very effective leadership to their departments or pastoral areas and they monitor work well. The school applies the principles of best value well. Financial planning is very good. The school works well with parents to help them to support their children's learning.

**HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Of those parents who responded, more than 90 per cent agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school, the school expects them to work hard and they are making good progress.• the teaching is good and children are well behaved.• the school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed about their child's progress.• the school is helping their children to grow into responsible adults.• the school is led well.• there is an interesting range of activities outside of lessons.	<p>Of those who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 14 per cent are not satisfied with the provision for homework.

Those parents concerned about homework provision believe that not enough is set for the older pupils. The inspectors were satisfied with the quantity of homework that is being set. The tasks that are set are appropriate and extend pupils' learning.

The proportion of parents who are pleased with their school is high. Many parents decided to send their children to this school on the basis of their feelings that what the school would offer would be interesting and valuable. There were no test results to compare with those from neighbouring schools - for many of them not even a school building to look round. They have not been disappointed and many now consider themselves fortunate. These positive attitudes from parents transfer to pupils and contribute to the school's success. Many parents work hard to support their children's learning. The inspection team's findings support the positive views of parents.

OTHER INFORMATION

The governing body is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 days of receiving the inspection report, showing how the school will tackle the improvements needed. The action plan will be circulated to all parents at the school.



WHAT THE PARENTS SAY

"We feel that parent teacher communication within the school is excellent, with any queries being quickly followed up by the school."

"We are very pleased with the school and the various opportunities that J has been given this year."

"Period 7 is a brilliant idea and seems to be working well. I am sure my child would not stay for after school for 'sports' clubs and he has had great fun in a wide variety of activities."

"Abbeyfield School has exceeded my expectations this year and my expectations were high. I feel that strong leadership combined with enthusiastic and caring staff provides an excellent framework for learning within which children of all abilities are encouraged to do their best. We are proud to be part of the Abbeyfield community."

"Since joining this school my daughter has shown an increase in her desire to learn. Prior to this she had not found school life easy (having been bullied in her previous school). Abbeyfield has shown her that learning is an enjoyable and positive experience. She has been encouraged both academically and socially, restoring her confidence which had been lost. I feel that I would have to go a very long way to find a better school."

"I feel my son has achieved more in the year he has been in Abbeyfield than I could ever have expected. He has grown up in his behaviour and his ways. I feel Abbeyfield has helped him, the reason being he feels very relaxed and enjoys school for once."

"The homework is about right, not too easy, not too hard which makes him enjoy doing it."

"When I have had contact with staff and the Headteacher, I have been impressed by their energy, intelligence and commitment shown. I am more than satisfied with Abbeyfield and I do appreciate the opportunities open to my son through the energetic and creative approach to learning that is offered."

"The school magazine is a very good resource and keeps us informed about past and future events."

"My child's enthusiasm for school has definitely improved since attending Abbeyfield. He is a much happier more confident child who at times has shown quite an eagerness to do well and want to improve and achieve higher marks."