

Abram Bryn Gates Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106414
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	377398
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Marguerite Murphy HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	J Clegg
Headteacher	S Sheekey
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Twelve lessons and other learning activities were observed and eight teachers seen. Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, staff, representatives of some of the school's partnerships, members of the governing body and a group of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and checked documentation relating to its self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, and information about pupils' attainment and progress. The content of 90 questionnaires completed by parents and carers was considered along with the content of those submitted by members of staff and Key Stage 2 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether all groups of pupils make good progress, including girls and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The reasons for apparent dips in pupils' attainment since the school's previous inspection and whether these have been tackled successfully by school leaders through rigorous monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning.
- How effectively the school is working to improve pupils' rates of attendance and other skills to contribute to their future economic well-being.
- Whether outcomes and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved sufficiently to be outstanding, as senior leaders believe.

Information about the school

Abram Bryn Gates is a below average-sized primary school in which almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.

The school has Healthy School accreditation.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Abram Bryn Gates provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and has maintained some particular strengths since its previous inspection. Most notable of these is the ethos of a happy, caring school that places itself at the heart of the local community with the overwhelming support of staff, pupils and their families. Excellent relationships and pupils' exemplary behaviour contribute to the high regard in which the school is held by parents and carers, who praise very highly the headteacher's caring approach and accessibility. 'He is always there if you have a problem', was a typical view, as was the comment that 'This is a small school with a big heart'. This reflects parents and carers' appreciation of the school's high-quality pastoral care and support for pupils, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

Children have a very positive start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where provision is good, and they make good progress, particularly in their development of social skills and communication, language and literacy skills. Pupils' attainment by the time they leave the school is broadly average, although this has fluctuated over the last few years, when it has also been below average on occasions. A dip in pupils' attainment in Key Stage 2 national tests since the previous inspection has been remedied and in 2011, results were nearer to the national average in English and mathematics. This represented satisfactory progress for those pupils, some of whom only joined the school partway through their primary education. The school is aware of the need to accelerate the rate of progress made by pupils in lessons, where teaching and the use of assessment to support learning are satisfactory. Pupils are not always challenged with tasks that are well matched to their capabilities or expect them to work at a brisker pace to demonstrate good learning. Generous levels of support staffing in classes are not capitalised on sufficiently by teachers to help tailor the work more precisely to pupils' needs. Questioning and marking are satisfactory but not always used effectively to ensure that pupils know exactly how they are doing and what they need to do to move up to the next level.

School leaders are motivated to seek improvement and are receptive to working in partnership with the local network of schools. There have been few opportunities previously for staff to work alongside others or observe best practice as part of their professional development. Leaders' lesson observations have focused too much on what the teacher is doing rather than the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. The school's key priorities for raising pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are appropriate. However, action plans are not well focused on how

these will be monitored against their impact on pupils' achievement. The governing body is very supportive and involved in the school, but is not sufficiently involved in evaluating its performance against key targets for raising attainment. For these reasons, the school's capacity to sustain improvement is satisfactory rather than good.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and the use of assessment to accelerate the rate of pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers' planning of lessons builds carefully on assessments of pupils' prior learning and is closely matched to the needs of pupils of all ability levels
 - ensuring that teachers consistently deploy support staff in a more effective way to provide well-targeted support and challenge to all groups of pupils
 - using time more effectively in lessons, by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving, ensuring a good pace of learning for all
 - improving teachers' skills in questioning pupils and marking work to check understanding and move their learning on rapidly towards more challenging targets.

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management in driving and sustaining school improvement by:
 - monitoring more rigorously the quality of teaching by always focusing on pupils' learning and rates of progress when observing lessons
 - ensuring that school improvement plans and subject action plans have clear timescales and success criteria by which their impact on pupils' outcomes can be measured
 - ensuring that the governing body is more fully involved in evaluating the school's performance and holding it to account for raising pupils' attainment.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The majority of children enter the Reception class with knowledge, skills and understanding that are typically below expectations for their age. They make good progress towards their early learning goals, enabling them to enter Year 1 suitably prepared for the Key Stage 1 curriculum. Pupils make satisfactory progress across the rest of the school to reach average attainment in English and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6. Attainment in mathematics is often more secure than in English in both Key Stages 1 and 2. This is because improvements in writing have

been slower than in reading, and few more-able pupils reach beyond the average level. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are more able make similar rates of progress to their peers. Variations from year to year indicate that there are no significant differences between the performances of different groups of pupils, including between girls and boys. Some pupils, whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, make good progress in their attitudes towards school and learning in general. Pupils unanimously agree that they feel exceptionally safe and that adults care about them and listen to their views. They have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles; many pupils can explain the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise, and participate in a good range of physical activities during and beyond the school day. Pupils get along together very well and show an awareness of each other's needs, demonstrating kindness and consideration and the ability to listen to each other and to their teachers and support staff.

Pupils particularly enjoy being given the opportunity to work independently or in collaboration with others. For example, groups of pupils in Year 1 made good progress in understanding how to write instructions because they were fully engaged in tasks that challenged them at the right level and encouraged them to write independently. Learning is less successful when too much is done for the pupils and they have fewer opportunities to research or solve problems for themselves. Progress in the majority of lessons is satisfactory because the pace of learning is quite relaxed and does not demand too much of the pupils. For example, Year 6 pupils were successfully writing cursive script during a handwriting lesson. However, this was immediately followed by a task in which some pupils reverted to using pencil, not always joining letters or taking as much care with their spelling or presentation. Pupils are happy to take on responsibilities, including as school council members and contributing to the planning of school events and raising funds for local and national charities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with particular strengths in their development of social skills and in the ability to consider moral dilemmas and right or wrong choices. Attendance has been well below average in some years but pupils' attendance has improved and was in line with the national average in the last academic year and is so currently. The majority of pupils arrive punctually at the start of each day. Taking into account their broadly average basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT), pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school incorporates elements of literacy, numeracy and ICT across other subjects and topics, and a good range of extra-curricular activities and clubs are provided. However, the overall effectiveness of the curriculum is satisfactory because it is not adjusted sufficiently or imaginatively enough to promote at least good progress for all groups of pupils. This is a factor in the satisfactory teaching, as teachers do not use short-term plans to ensure that lessons are more carefully designed to consolidate, build upon and extend pupils' learning in all aspects of the curriculum.

Teachers' subject knowledge is secure; they give clear explanations to pupils and incorporate question and answer opportunities into lessons. However, teachers do not always challenge pupils to give more detailed responses, or they give too many clues before pupils have had time to think for themselves. Excellent relationships and good use of praise and encouragement contribute to pupils' enjoyment of lessons. Teaching is more effective when a variety of activities are planned to actively engage pupils in their learning, with more time allocated for pupils' discussion and independent activity than for teacher-led instruction. This ensured, for example, that pupils in a Year 3 science lesson made careful observations and good progress when sorting rocks. They learned about the properties of different rocks and understood some of the key vocabulary introduced by the teacher. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher made good use of time at the end of a lesson to bring pupils together and make a quick assessment of their learning through a plenary activity using cardboard clock faces. This enabled her to address any errors and check how well pupils had understood the concept of 'quarter past' or 'quarter to'. In less-successful lessons, teachers do not use assessment well to ensure that pupils of all abilities make good progress. On occasions, pupils are all expected to complete similar worksheets, with teaching assistants helping the lower-ability pupils to do so. This does not promote independent learning or ensure that any gaps in pupils' basic skills are remedied. 'Challenge activities' are provided for more-able pupils, but these are sometimes 'more of the same' activity rather than an additional problem-solving task that makes pupils think more deeply.

The school's excellent pastoral care for pupils is a particular strength of its good guidance and support. Effective systems for monitoring and following up pupil absences have been key factors in the improved attendance levels and reduced instances of pupils persistently absent. Good support is provided for pupils making the transition to secondary education, and this is helped by the school's successful work in raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body embed ambition and drive improvement satisfactorily. The health, safety and well-being of pupils have a high priority in the school, and good safeguarding arrangements and child protection procedures support this. This can sometimes appear to take precedence over the headteacher's responsibilities for strategic leadership and holding staff to account for their role in raising pupils' attainment. Leaders are aware of the need to be more rigorous in their monitoring and evaluation of teaching to improve its quality and consistency across the school and raise their expectations of pupils.

The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. It acts successfully to ensure that pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are able to engage positively in their learning. The school provides funding for some educational visits so that no pupils are disadvantaged by economic circumstances. The very few pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour are very well supported and those who join the school at other than the usual times are warmly welcomed and fully integrated into the school community. This also contributes to the school's good promotion of community cohesion. It seeks ways to ensure that pupils have a good awareness of others from different backgrounds locally and internationally, through links with other schools. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to gain direct knowledge of more ethnically diverse communities in the United Kingdom.

The school has a good range of partnerships that make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and well-being. There are particularly successful partnerships with services that support the school's excellent pastoral care for vulnerable pupils. The partnership with an external sports company enhances provision for physical education and the extra-curricular sports and dance activities that pupils enjoy.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress overall across all areas of learning as a result of the effective provision, a good balance of support and intervention and very positive links with parents and carers. Given children’s below average starting points, many make excellent progress in communication and language to develop their reading and writing skills. Their personal and social development is also a particular strength. They settle in quickly, work cooperatively and display positive attitudes towards each other and the adults, because of the excellent relationships and levels of care. Children learn to take turns and develop well their confidence and independence when working on a good variety of well-planned tasks indoors and outdoors. For example, groups of children were fully engaged in learning about the sounds that letters make (phonics); enjoying their ‘robot voice’ activity; making advent calendars and taking part in an outdoor dominoes activity. The learning environment is well organised and resourced to promote a good range of adult-led and child-led activities and develop children’s skills in using ICT. Adults have good knowledge of the learning and development needs of young children. They all take a full part in promoting their learning, including adults who have particular responsibilities to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well by the Reception teacher, who is aware of the need to keep assessment and observation systems up to date.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed very positive views about all that the school offers. They were unanimous in saying, for example, that their children are happy at school, make good progress and that the teaching and leadership are good. Inspection findings confirmed that the headteacher and staff provide excellent pastoral care and support for pupils, whose behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding as a result. However, inspection evidence shows that teaching and leadership are satisfactory overall. Inspectors found that the level of monitoring and challenge provided to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress in their work is not as good as it could be.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abram Bryn Gates Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 172 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	75	83	15	17	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	79	88	10	11	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	69	77	21	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	73	81	16	18	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	74	82	16	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	77	20	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	71	79	19	21	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	60	67	24	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	67	74	22	24	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	62	69	24	27	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	72	22	24	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	71	79	19	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	76	84	13	14	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



12 December 2011

Dear Pupils/Students

Inspection of Abram Bryn Gates Primary School, Wigan, WN2 5JT

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed watching your lessons and speaking to you about your work. There are some excellent aspects to your school, such as your behaviour and attitudes, your knowledge of healthy lifestyles, how you feel very safe, the way the school looks after all of you and works in partnership with your parents and carers and the local community. Children in the Reception class get a good start to their school days, and pupils who arrive later in their school life are supported and warmly welcomed by all of you.

We found that yours is a satisfactory school overall because some things could be improved to make sure you learn as much as you can. At the moment, you reach just about average standards in your reading, writing and mathematics, and for most of you this means that you have made satisfactory progress. We have suggested that your progress could be better than that if some improvements were made to teaching and leadership. I have described these in the full report after talking about them with your headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors, who have agreed that these are the right targets for the school to work on.

You can play your part in this by always being ready to work as hard as you can in lessons. For example, do not be happy to sit back comfortably when you have finished a task or already understand something – keep going and ask for the next challenge! It is good that your attendance has improved, so keep that up too.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite Murphy
Her Majesty's Inspector

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