

Abram Bryn Gates Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106414
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	324394
Inspection date	1 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Sonja Oyen HMI

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)	157
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Clegg
Headteacher	Mr S Sheekey
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lily Lane Bamfurlong Wigan Lancashire WN2 5JT
Telephone number	01942 866392
Fax number	01942 863251

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

HMI evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement and standards, especially in reading, writing and mathematics; the quality of teaching and learning; the use of information from monitoring and evaluation. Evidence was gathered from school documentation, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, nationally published assessment data, reports from representatives of the local authority (LA), the school's records of pupils' progress, observations of lessons and a visit to the breakfast club. Discussions were held with pupils, staff and parents and 102 questionnaires returned by the parents were considered. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but HMI found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Abram Bryn Gates is a smaller than average primary school a short distance north east of the town of Ashton-in-Makerfield in an area of some social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just above the national average. Although some pupils live close to school, a good proportion travel some distance to attend. A few pupils are in the care of the local authority. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and are in the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. Two pupils have a statement of special educational need. In September, 21 children started in the Reception class, part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school runs a breakfast club from 0800 till 0845 each school day and several clubs at lunchtime and after school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Abram Bryn Gates is a good school with a well deserved reputation for being warm, welcoming and inclusive. Some aspects of its work are outstanding, such as pupils' behaviour and enjoyment of school, their engagement in a healthy lifestyle and the way that the school encourages all pupils to achieve their personal best. The very high return of questionnaires reflects parents' overwhelming support for the school and headteacher: typical comments were 'a great school', 'friendly, family oriented', 'he cares deeply, he knows and greets every child every day'. Parents also agree that the school provides a good education. Since the last inspection, standards have risen. The quality of teaching and leadership and management has strengthened to good. The headteacher has successfully established a culture of 'doing one's best' alongside that of being a happy, caring school family.

Pupils come to school with a smile. They want to be at school and enjoy learning because 'there are lots of fun activities' and 'the teachers help us'. A key factor in pupils' absence being above average is that families take holidays in term time. Community spirit is strong and relationships are excellent at all levels. This is partly because of the many opportunities for pupils of different ages to work and play together, as in the breakfast club. The high level of care and concern for everyone's welfare is evident throughout the school. Safeguarding requirements are met. Pupils say they feel safe; they know who to go to when they have a concern and they also want to help others 'so they are not on their own'. The school's strong links with outside agencies ensure that individual pupil's needs, such as help in learning English, can be met.

Older pupils set a super example to the younger ones in their politeness, thoughtful behaviour and honest opinions. Classes decide their own codes of behaviour and on a wild, wet day, pupils of all ages behaved impeccably. They were willing learners and eager participants in activities indoors and out. They enjoy playing sports and dancing and know this helps to keep them fit and healthy as does tasting the vegetables grown in the school garden.

A concerted effort to boost pupils' achievement has paid off well. Standards are above average, pupils' achievement is good and Year 6 pupils leave well prepared for secondary school. In 2007, Abram Bryn Gates had its best results ever for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Although the results in the 2008 tests and assessments were not as high, most so at Key Stage 1 and in science at Key Stage 2, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who did really well increased yet again. In mathematics and English, half were working at a level more typical of pupils a year or two older. Many pupils in the current Year 6 are already working at the level expected at the end of the school year and the school is on track to meet its targets.

Basic skills are taught well. A school-wide focus on teaching writing has ensured boys and girls develop as confident writers. They know how to grab the reader's attention but sometimes inaccurate spelling and untidy presentation let them down. While pupils compile interesting poems and stories, not all are equally adept at producing a scientific report. Mathematics is a strength of the school; pupils develop a good feel for number and how to apply it. Several older pupils, having learnt their multiplication tables, were proud to be mathematicians.

Standards have risen because the teachers expect the pupils to do well and tailor their teaching to help pupils reach their targets. They track closely each pupil's progress, investigate why progress might have fallen short of the expected target and decide how best to support pupils. Effective teamwork between teachers and support assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not miss out and make good progress in reaching their targets.

The deputy headteacher has taken the lead in trialling some teaching and assessment systems before they are rolled out across the school. A start has been made, for example, in helping Year 6 pupils to decide how well they have met success criteria. However, as a whole, teachers' marking of pupils' work does not focus enough on identifying what pupils need to do to improve.

A shared commitment to the pupils, strong teamwork and raised expectations are at the heart of the school's improvement over the last few years and indicate a good capacity to improve further. There is much good practice to share in teaching and learning, such as getting pupils to explain their thinking, to help to iron out some inconsistencies and support new members of staff. Governors, senior managers and staff all have a clear, accurate picture of how well the school is doing. While they have identified relevant priorities for improvement, such as raising standards in science, this is not always with the specific detail needed to ensure that action will make the difference sought.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The youngest children get a good start to their education. Many start in the Reception year with skills and knowledge lower than expected for their age, but having made good progress, they move into Year 1 as beginning readers, writers and mathematicians. They make exceptionally good strides in their personal development because of the supportive, warm relationships between adults and children. Parents remarked on how well their children had settled in. During the day, the children were happy, at ease and knew the routines, reminding the adults that it was time for fruit. They were excited by things they had done, including planting snowdrops in pots outside and talked confidently about them. All sat very still and waited for their turn to use the microphone and describe what they liked best in school. The teacher already knows each child well. Regular observations, focussed teaching sessions and discussions as a team ensure that all the adults are aware of the children's individual needs and their steps in progress. Experiences are tailored to ensure that the children move on in their learning, particularly in their knowledge of letters, sounds and number. The children take part in a wide range of activities indoor and out over the year, including several walks to local woods to observe seasonal changes. The teacher leads the EYFS well and is constantly looking to ways to improve the provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that in marking pupils' work, teachers indicate how pupils can improve the quality and move on in their learning.
- Sharpen evaluation of the school's performance to pinpoint exactly what will make a difference to pupils' achievement and standards in the short and long term.
- Strengthen the quality of report writing in science.

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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	2

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?	1
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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?	2

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

Thank you for your warm welcome when I inspected your school. I much enjoyed my day and appreciated the many smiles you gave me! I can see why you enjoy school as there are so many interesting things happening. Your parents and Year 6 pupils told me that your school is one of the best, with a really caring headteacher, well mannered people, good lessons and teachers that help you. I agree. Abram Bryn Gates is a good school and I also agree with Mr Sheekey that some things are very good! Your behaviour for one – I was very impressed with how you happily found things to do when you could not go out on that very wet, stormy day and to see you getting on so well together at the breakfast club. You are really good models of how to stay fit and be healthy with all that exercise, dancing and fruit eating. It must be very rewarding to eat things you have grown in the school garden. Since the last inspection almost three years ago, the school has got better in helping you all to do well, especially in mathematics and writing. The standards you reach are often higher than expected for your age. I was pleased to see that Year 6 pupils are again aiming high. I can see why Mr Sheekey and you are so proud of your school.

To help your school to be even better, and to help you to do the very best you can, I have asked Mr Sheekey, the governors and staff to make sure that:

- when marking your work, the teachers make clear what you need to do next time to make it better. You can help by asking when you are not sure and by trying your best to act on what they say
- in their plans to improve the school, they home in on what exactly they need to do to help you to do well. Keep giving the school councillors your ideas!
- they give you even more guidance on how to write up your investigations in science. I'm sure like Year 6 you want to be scimagicians who can come to conclusions about scientific findings!

P.S. I hope the snowdrops make a good show outside the Reception classroom!