

# Abel Smith School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117111
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326528
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike Best

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	238
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ian Patrick
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Richard Boulton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Churchfields Greencoates Hertford SG13 8AE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 583244
<b>Fax number</b>	01992504702

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- children's progress towards meeting and exceeding the early learning goals in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the effectiveness of new procedures for checking pupils' standards and progress to highlight where they can improve further
- improvements in the provision and outcomes in Reception and Key Stage 1 since the last inspection.

Inspectors gathered evidence from:

- observations of lessons
- scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and records
- discussions with pupils, parents, governors, the headteacher and staff
- scrutiny of school policies and documentation
- analysis of parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is similar in size to other primary schools. It draws its pupils from established residential areas of the town and most are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. The before and after school childcare and pre-school provision that take place on the school site are not managed by the governing body and are subject to separate inspection.

Children start in the school's Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery on a part-time basis at the age of three, becoming full-time when they move into the Reception class. The school is over-subscribed and the number of pupils joining other than in the Early Years Foundation Stage is much lower than average. Although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, the number with statements outlining their special needs is broadly average. These pupils have a wide range of individual needs.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils flourish in both their academic and personal development. Starting in the Nursery with skills and experiences that are typical of the age group, pupils make at least good and often outstanding progress as they move through the school, reaching exceptionally high standards at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science.

Achievement overall is excellent. Standards at the end of Year 2 in reading and mathematics are above average and exceptionally high in writing. Progress and achievement are never less than good and at times outstanding. Results have improved each year since the previous inspection due to significant improvements in the quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2. The emphasis on raising standards in writing has been particularly successful in promoting boys' sustained progress, enabling a high proportion of them to achieve the higher levels. At Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in English, mathematics and science year after year is significantly above the national averages. In 2008, pupils in Year 6 exceeded already challenging targets. Pupils make excellent progress in Years 3 to 6, with boys and girls doing equally well. More able pupils are well challenged by work that extends and strengthens their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties or at risk of falling behind are promptly identified and well supported, enabling them to also make excellent progress.

The overall outstanding quality of teaching and learning is the key to the pupils' high achievement. Teachers have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve, based on strong subject knowledge and a very thorough understanding of how children learn. The rich curriculum, with its emphasis on developing the pupils' international knowledge and understanding, is very well planned and teachers actively encourage pupils to delve deeper into the topics they study. This, together with their high-level skills in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) is an excellent preparation for the next stage of the pupils' education. Lessons proceed at a good pace and the effective use of a variety of different approaches to learning fosters and sustains pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Teachers' consistent attention to detail, for example when demonstrating the importance of accurate measurement in a science experiment or using the correct terminology in mathematics, helps pupils to establish first-class learning habits. Pupils know their targets and confidently discuss what they have to do to meet these. Their work is regularly marked and teachers' constructive comments help pupils improve their work. The school has recently introduced new and rigorous systems for checking the pupils' standards and tracking their progress. Aiding the early identification of pupils who need additional help, these high-quality procedures are helping to smooth out any small dips in their progress. The school rightly acknowledges that this new practice now has to be embedded to improve further the consistency with which the information is used in planning the next steps in the pupils' learning.

The pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. These strongly underpin their superb relationships with adults and each other, exemplary behaviour in and out of lessons, and excellent regard for the opinions and beliefs of others. Pupils are confident, enthusiastic and thoroughly enjoy school. They have excellent attitudes to learning and work hard, as when working together in small groups with a minimum of adult intervention to think through and solve problems in mathematics or resolve dilemmas in English lessons. Their mature respect for the beliefs, views and opinions

of others is evident in their work and play. In conversation, pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of keeping safe. They are secure in turning to adults for help when needed and confident that staff would deal promptly and effectively with any incident of bullying. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy eating and keeping fit. The school council, with elected officers and representatives, takes an active role in planning and running fund-raising events for national charities and discussing plans for improvement with the headteacher. Through this, pupils make an excellent contribution to their own and the wider community. In discussion, pupils explain how they were involved in planning the provision of new equipment for the playground and field, and how rotas are organised to ensure everyone has their fair turn.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements and a regular programme of staff training is established. The school has excellent links with parents, nearly all of whom express their strong satisfaction with all aspects of its work. Parents have responded positively to the school's request that they avoid taking term-time holidays and attendance has risen to significantly above the national average. The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The school reaches out to its local community and beyond. Pupils have an excellent regard for beliefs, views and differences of others and enthusiastically adhere to the school's shared values. Through the International Primary Curriculum and links with the wider community, pupils gain a very clear understanding of global issues and their individual roles in an ever-changing world. Relationships at all levels are very strong, cemented by excellent partnerships with parents, other providers, and local businesses and organisations. The school's commitment to full equality of opportunity is evident in every aspect of its work, particularly pupils' high achievement.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, who is highly respected by pupils and parents, provides a clear and erudite direction for the school. He is well supported by a hard-working staff team. Their focus on achievement drives the school forward, with rigorous and regular monitoring of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning providing the basis for high-quality school self-evaluation and improvement planning. The impact of this is evident in the excellent progress since the last inspection and underpins the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement. The governing body knows the school extremely well and robustly calls it to account. Governors have a thorough understanding of the school's systems for checking pupils' progress and monitoring teaching and learning, and actively evaluate the impact of financial priorities on pupils' achievement and well-being.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and improving as a result of good leadership focused on the right priorities. The well-planned curriculum and good teaching, provide children in both the Nursery and Reception with opportunities for exploring, investigating and using their imaginations through a wide range of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The outdoor areas have been remodelled to maximize the use of space and provide children with a good range of experiences in each of the six areas of learning.

Children make good progress and by the end of Reception most achieve the expected goals in each area of learning and a high proportion exceed these in their knowledge and understanding of the world, language and communication, personal development and number work. Children make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the excellent care, guidance and support given by the staff. Children are very happy, feel secure

and have full trust in the adults who foster excellent working relationships, high levels of independence and ensure a high level of safety. Children develop very high levels of independence, for example by self-registering, accessing the resources they need to initiate their own play, helping themselves to snacks and changing shoes to play in messy areas. Resources are extremely well organized and accessible, and daily routines are very well established. Their outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning reflect the staff's excellent classroom management, provision of a stimulating environment and success in developing self-discipline in children.

Early reading and writing skills are well taught but children's speaking, listening and thinking skills are not developed consistently because opportunities are missed throughout the day to engage them in deep level discussion, particularly when they initiate their own play. There are good procedures in place to assess children's learning and monitor their progress but their next steps are not consistently recorded following observations. This means that the planning of future activities does not always have the sharp focus needed to accelerate progress.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Embed systems for checking on what pupils and children know and can do and ensure teachers' consistently use the information to plan the next steps in learning.
- Maximize opportunities to develop children's speaking, listening and thinking skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

**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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	1
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**

27 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Abel Smith Primary School, Hertford, SG13 8AE

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school last week. We are particularly grateful to those of you who talked to us about your work and what goes on in school. As promised, I am now writing to you to tell you about what we found out from our visit.

Abel Smith Primary is an outstanding school. You work very hard and get exceptionally high results at the end of Year 6. The reason you make such good progress is that the teaching is excellent. The staff know you well and give you lots of help and support to do well. You are really enthusiastic about learning and we were delighted to hear you ask very good questions and share your super ideas and thoughts in discussions. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent and you told us how much you enjoy coming to school. You have an excellent understanding of how to work together and your knowledge of the wider world is really impressive.

Mr Boulton and the staff have made many improvements since the previous inspection. You have helped to make these successful through your work in lessons and by contributing your ideas through the school council. They have recently improved the systems they use to check how well you are getting on. We have asked them to make sure that they all make the best use of the information they now have to plan your next steps in learning. In the Nursery and Reception classes, the staff help you make a really good start to reading and writing but we would like them to spend a bit more time talking with you, especially when you are working on your own or in small groups.

Please continue to work hard and help improve the school further.

Yours sincerely

Mike Best

Lead inspector