

Abbey College

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, and under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.^{1,2,3}

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

The Abbey College provides full-time education for 88 male and female students aged between 14 and 24 years. Established in 1979, it admits students mainly from abroad, although a small number of British students attend the college. Eighty-one of the current students reside in the college's boarding houses, with a further seven living with host families. For a large proportion of students, English is not their first language. There are no students with a statement of special educational needs.

The college prospectus states: 'Our college is a special place in which to study, work and live and there is a very strong sense of community and belonging here. We understand that once a child is happy they can learn and develop and it is our aim to produce happy, well qualified students who will go on to achieve fantastic things once they leave us.'

The college also runs a number of short courses during the year and in holiday periods. These include courses in English as an additional language, summer school activities and intensive courses of one or two weeks' duration in preparation for entrance examinations for medicine and dentistry courses at European universities. These activities are inspected separately.

The college is privately owned and is situated on a 70 acre site in Malvern Wells in Worcestershire. The British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education last inspected the college in 2010. The college was inspected by the British Council in 2009. The current principal was appointed in January 2011, having previously been principal from September 2002 to August 2009, and acted as a consultant to the college during the intervening period. A number of new teaching, boarding and support staff have joined the college since the inspection in May 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents.

Context of the inspection

The education and boarding provision were last inspected by Ofsted in May 2011. At the time a number of regulations and national minimum standards were not met. The college submitted an action plan to address these shortcomings. This was evaluated in September 2011 and found to be inadequate. This integrated monitoring inspection of the education and boarding provision evaluated the progress the college has made in meeting the regulations and national minimum standards that were not met at the time of the integrated inspection in May 2011.

In September 2011, national minimum standards for boarding schools were revised and the numbering of standards was changed. In this report the old and new standard numbers are referred to in order to aid clarity.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The school has made satisfactory progress overall in implementing its action plan. It now meets or is on course to meet most regulations and national minimum standards.

Education

The inspection in May 2011 judged that a number of staff were unaware of their responsibilities for child protection or the procedures to be followed when a disclosure was made. Consequently regulations 7 and 8 were not met. At that time, the college was not able to provide records of child protection training for all staff. The college's action plan proposed that enhanced training would be provided for domestic staff. This inspection found that the college has implemented an individual programme of induction training for all new education and boarding staff. This includes making staff aware of the college's safeguarding procedures. There will also be an annual child protection update briefing for all staff. Training records are now maintained in a format that enables managers to instantly identify any member of staff who has yet to undertake and complete the required training. All staff, including the designated member of staff for child protection, have been trained at the appropriate level so that they can fulfil their child protection responsibilities. Regulation 7 is now met because students are now suitably safeguarded. Regulation 8 is not met because a boarding accommodation weakness remains. The installation of new fire alarm and emergency lighting systems is not fully completed but fire safety arrangements do not compromise students' welfare or safety.

In May 2011, too many staff were unaware of their responsibilities for health and safety or how to deal with day-to-day health and safety matters. The college leaders recognised that their arrangements for promoting health and safety were inadequate and that, without help, they could not resolve these shortcomings. Although not made clear in the college's action plan, specialist consultants have since undertaken full health and safety risk assessments, including fire safety checks. They have also

assisted in establishing rigorous procedures and providing health and safety training for all staff. The evidence from this inspection indicates that the college's response to rectify weaknesses has been effective. The health and safety policy is being successfully implemented. A health and safety coordinator has been appointed and clear lines of responsibility agreed. Risk assessments are in place and any shortcomings in provision are being responded to within an appropriate timescale. Regulation 11 is now met.

At the time of the last inspection the college did not comply with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. In taking action to address this, the college has worked closely with the local fire officer and its electrical contractors to agree priorities and deadlines to improve fire safety. This inspection found that the college has made substantial progress towards complying with the fire safety order and that the work is ahead of the agreed schedule. A rolling programme of work is in hand to upgrade and improve electrical installations in order to meet the latest electrical installation standards. Electrical contractors are regularly working on the site to ensure deadlines agreed with the local fire officer are met. The fire detection alarms in all of the currently occupied boarding houses and other buildings used for teaching, recreation and administration purposes have either been replaced or upgraded to meet the required standard. Therefore, students' health and safety are not compromised because they are located in accommodation where fire safety is adequate. The provision of fire fighting equipment and signage are in place, and structural alterations to prevent the spread of fire and smoke, are either completed or nearing completion. Although regulations 8 and 13 are not met because fire safety requirements are not fully met, the college has made satisfactory progress in bringing about fire safety improvements and is well on course to meet regulatory requirements.

In May 2011, a number of regulations relating to the premises and accommodation were not met. The college was unable to demonstrate that it ensured the quality of the water supply and inspectors found that many of the washroom facilities lacked a supply of hot water, soap or effective hand-drying facilities. Too many areas of the school were not maintained in a clean, tidy and hygienic state, with patches of mould found in a number of bathrooms. The kitchenettes were inadequately cleaned. A number of light fittings did not meet safety requirements and the mechanical ventilation of some areas was not effective. At the time of the inspection students complained to inspectors about insufficient heating in bedrooms and classrooms during the winter months. The overall standard of decoration and maintenance was inadequate and in a number of areas the flooring was worn, stained or loose. The college's action plan did not make explicit how all of the regulatory failures would be remedied and in what timescales. In the intervening period, the college has appointed a campus manager and cleaning supervisor to identify and address shortcomings, and to put in place systems to monitor maintenance and cleaning on a day-to-day basis. This inspection found the college has achieved significant improvements in a relatively short period. Its action has proved successful and, as a result, all regulations for this standard are now met. There are rigorous procedures in place for identifying shortcomings and for prioritising and monitoring the college's

response. Water temperatures are monitored monthly and samples sent for analysis every six months. Washrooms have hot and cold water, soap and suitable hand-drying facilities. All areas of the college are kept in a clean, tidy and hygienic condition. Light fittings have been replaced or repositioned, flooring is satisfactory, and many areas of the college redecorated to an acceptable or better standard. The college has devised and implemented a heating policy that is explained to students and which includes monitoring temperatures in individual rooms so that heating is adequate. Staff are committed to raising and maintaining standards and the monitoring systems in place are making a positive contribution towards this.

At the time of the last inspection the college did not provide, or make available, all of the required information to parents, carers and others. The college planned to update the information available on its website so that requirements were met. This inspection found that all of the shortcomings have been suitably addressed and regulatory requirements for the provision of information are now met. All of the required information is now clearly signposted from the college's website.

The previous inspection found that the college did not implement its complaints procedures correctly. Many students, parents and carers were dissatisfied with the college's response to their complaints, which they felt were not being followed through. This inspection found that the college has revised its procedures and now records complaints in the correct fashion, including whether they were resolved at a preliminary stage. Regulation 25(j) is now met.

Boarding

The inspection of the boarding provision in May 2011 found that a number of recently appointed boarding staff were unaware of their responsibilities for child protection or the procedures to be followed when a disclosure was made. Additionally, the college was unable to provide a record of the child protection training undertaken by boarding staff. In its action plan the college proposed providing enhanced training for all domestic staff. This inspection found that all boarding staff have been appropriately trained to fulfil their child protection duties. Safeguarding training is part of boarding staff induction and there is annual refresher training for existing staff. Old standard 3.5 (new standard 11) is now met.

In May 2011, boarders' health was managed well and there were suitable health records, however, these did not show that parental permissions were always obtained for medical procedures. The college has improved its medical guidance and now has a formal process in place that ensures that parental permission is always obtained for medical procedures. A medical pro forma clearly asks parents and carers for key information regarding their child's medical needs, so the college knows what they are, and can respond appropriately to them. Records sampled during the inspection show that suitable health and medical checks are being effectively implemented and monitored, enabling the college to successfully promote and protect boarders' health and welfare. Old standard 15.4 (new standard 3.1) is met.

In May 2011, inspectors found many potential safety hazards in the boarding accommodation and in the grounds. Health and safety audits, risk assessments, monitoring and understanding of good practice were inadequate. The college engaged an external specialist consultant to draw up a health and safety policy; undertake a safety audit; and support the identification and management of risks. This inspection judges that the college has a suitable health and safety policy and it is implemented effectively. Its adoption has led to risks being more effectively identified and addressed, both in the boarding houses and around the college. The appointment of a health and safety coordinator has been pivotal in successfully implementing the new arrangements. The Principal oversees the monitoring and evaluation of health and safety provision effectively. Staff are committed to providing a safe environment for students and no potential hazards were observed during this inspection visit. Old standards 47.1 and 47.9 (new standards 6 and 6.1) are met.

At the time of the last inspection the college did not comply with fire safety requirements. While the proprietor had responded promptly to the fire officer's recent report, much required to be done to meet the deadline set by the Hereford and Worcester Fire Service. The college drew up and implemented a fire safety work schedule which outlined the planned work on fire detection, emergency lighting, compartmentalisation, fire risk assessments, fire-fighting equipment, evacuation procedures, staff training and fire safety signage. This inspection found that there is clear evidence of substantial progress being made in terms of improving fire safety. The fire officer has been involved in planning what must be done and has agreed the timescale for completion of the works by June 2012. Although work is well advanced and progress is satisfactory, old standard 26.1 (new standard 7.1) is not fully met because fire safety installation work has not been fully completed.

In May 2011, there was damage to the premises, for example, cracked windows. Regular checks are now made of the premises as part of the college's cleaning and maintenance schedules. They pinpoint damage so it can be quickly remedied. The campus manager now monitors the schedules and ensures that glazing is intact and, for rooms above the ground floor, that opening restrictors are in place. This inspection found that effective monitoring is taking place; successfully promoting students' safety and welfare. Old standard 47.3 (no new equivalent standard) is now met.

The inspection in May 2011 judged that there were extensive shortfalls in the presentation of the boarding houses, including insufficient cleaning of communal areas, showers and bedrooms and kitchenette equipment. The college action plan specified what action would be taken to improve cleanliness but there was no mention of monitoring or the evaluation of implementation. The college has appointed a cleaning supervisor and implemented a range of checks which are recorded and monitored on a regular basis. This inspection found that the college demonstrates good progress in bringing about improvement. The quality of cleanliness in the boarding houses visited was at least satisfactory and often good. The system of checks and records is effective and regular monitoring ensures that

bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchenettes and communal areas are regularly and effectively cleaned. Old standards 40.1 and 40.3 (new standard 5.1) are met.

In May 2011, the organisation of boarding was inadequate. There was a lack of focus and identification of common aims. Monitoring of boarding provision did not occur at the required intervals or in the way specified in college documentation. The proposals in the college's action plan did not address the core failings in the leadership and management of boarding. This inspection found that an improved staffing structure has increased capacity, and this results in better organisation, strategy and management. A new head of boarding was appointed in September 2011 and two further appointments have been added to the boarding team. Their roles and responsibilities, as outlined in job specifications, are clear, well-defined and effectively organised. Old standard 8.1 (new standard 13.1) is met.

The last inspection judged that the inadequate level of monitoring at several levels resulted in a lack of staff training. This applied to boarding generally, for example, regarding awareness of the national minimum standards and requirements, and to a wide range of health and safety issues, including medication and fire safety. It also applied to child protection training for ancillary staff. The college has since drawn up and implemented an effective staff training policy, together with a clear plan of training for boarding staff. This inspection found that boarders are supported by well-trained staff who are systematically undertaking training and sharing good practice. Old standard 34.1 (new standards 13.1 and 13.2) is met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010⁴ ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- ensure that arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders that have regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools (paragraph 8)
- ensure that there is compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 13).

In order to meet the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated regulations, the school should:

- ensure that the college fully complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the recommendations of the Hereford and

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

Worcester Fire Service (old national minimum standard 26.1: new national minimum standard 7.1).

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Other secondary		
Date school opened	10 December 1979		
Age range of pupils	14-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 68	Girls: 20	Total: 88
Number of boarders	Boys: 68	Girls: 20	Total: 88
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (boarders)	£20,950 - £21,950		
Address of school	Wells Road, Malvern WR14 4JF		
Telephone number	01684 892300		
Email address	principal@abbeycollege.co.uk		
Headteacher	Philip Moere		
Proprietor	Hekmat Kaveh		