

# Abbey College

Independent school standard inspection report

---

DfE registration number	885/6026
Unique Reference Number (URN)	117035
URN for social care	SC043035
Inspection number	410856
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2012
Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl HMI
Social care inspector	Angela Hunt HMI

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2012



## 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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>3, 4</sup>

## Information about the school

Abbey College, near Malvern, provides full time education for 49 male and female students from all around the world. It was established in 1979. Nearly all students board on the main college site. A small number of students live nearby with host families. The college runs a number of Easter and summer vacation courses.

For all students, English is not their first language. There are no students with a statement of special educational needs. It aims to 'foster a community of international understanding and shared values in which overseas students receive the quality of academic education and support in English Language which will enable them to succeed...' and 'progress successfully to higher education...'

The college's education and boarding provision was last inspected in May 2011. It had a monitoring visit in January 2012 to check on the progress of the action plan written by the college after the last full inspection. This education and boarding integrated inspection was carried out with no prior notice.

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is good. Students make good academic and personal progress from their starting points. The good educational provision enables students to go on to university and study courses relevant to their future careers. The quality of this aspect of the college's provision has been maintained since the last inspection. In contrast, the provision to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils including safeguarding, is inadequate. Procedures for checking the suitability of adults working at the school has not been robust and attention to on-going health and safety matters is not sufficiently coordinated or thorough.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>4</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

Despite some improvements since the last inspection, the overall effectiveness of boarding is inadequate. The college's inadequacy in provision for the welfare, health and safety of students also affects boarding. In addition, some parts of the boarding accommodation still have a low standard of maintenance and decoration.

The college does not meet all the national minimum standards for boarding and also fails to meet a number of education regulations. The college must ensure that it meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools that have not been met though plans are in place to address the shortfalls in accommodation.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is good. It prepares students well for their next steps in education which, for nearly all students, is a place at a university in the United Kingdom or abroad. For the older students, A Level and university foundation courses are flexibly planned to provide a range of options to meet individual needs. Younger students successfully follow international GCSE courses. The range of subjects on offer enables students to follow a suitably broad programme of studies. Good attention is given to developing key skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology, which also form core modules in the university foundation courses. Teachers give good attention to supporting students' skills in English language. This successfully enables them to engage fully with the requirements of the courses they follow. The main academic courses are well planned and carefully follow the requirements of the examination syllabuses. Most subject plans give clear information about what will be taught each week. Those students who follow art courses produce interesting work in a range of media. This work provides a good outlet for personal expression and the development of aesthetic awareness.

There is a programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship which successfully broadens the curriculum and helps students satisfactorily develop their personal skills. Younger students have regular physical education, but this is not as well planned as other subjects and does not systematically develop physical and sporting skills in a wide range of sports and games. It does however adequately contribute to providing opportunities for exercise and students' understanding of how to keep fit.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. This leads to students making good progress. Students are successful in their external examinations reaching the required grades to enter university. Teachers and students have good relationships. Students are very receptive to the support teachers give.

Teachers are alert to the language needs of pupils. Question and answer sessions and discussions are effective both in developing pupils understanding of the subject being taught and in improving their English. In the best lessons teachers put strong emphasis on ensuring that students know and understand key subject specific vocabulary, including correct pronunciation. Discussions in an English lesson gave students the chance to explain their ideas using personal examples of their

experiences in their home countries. This helped to develop students' confidence to take a full part in the lesson.

Teachers provide good individual help because class sizes are small. This support is effective because students' errors and mistakes are corrected quickly in class. Teaching is confident because staff have good subject knowledge and are mostly able to explain things carefully in a way that students can understand.

The college has placed emphasis on improving the quality of teaching. Lesson observations to check the quality of teaching are providing helpful feedback to senior leaders and teachers on what to do to improve the quality of lessons. In a recent survey, students had positive views about most of their teachers. This was reflected in their conversations with inspectors.

Teachers keep adequate records of test results in order to check how well pupils are doing. The quality of marking of students' on-going work is variable in its regularity and helpfulness, an issue already identified by senior leaders. Students are not always given enough help to ensure that they keep their files in order with well-presented work. Some students rarely date their work. Senior leaders carefully check students' test and examination results. Where students are not making the progress expected any matters of concern are followed-up quickly so that steps can be taken to remedy underperformance.

The majority of care staff also have teaching responsibilities and this provides a useful link between academic and residential staff and is supported by regular meetings. This results in an integrated approach to care which promotes positive outcomes and supports students successfully in their learning.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Students' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is satisfactory. There are some strengths in students' personal development. Students have good attitudes to learning and they work hard in lessons. They are keen to do well because they are clear about their future direction in education and employment. When students are applying for university courses they are very appreciative of the help and advice given by staff. Attendance is high and behaviour is good. Students from different backgrounds generally mix well and have positive views about each other most of the time. Students get along well together and enjoy each other's company in lessons and outside of teaching time.

The nature and ethos of the college creates an air of tolerance which students acknowledge and they appreciate the mix of different backgrounds and culture. Despite this, there was a small amount of uncomplimentary graffiti in one classroom.

Students learn about other faiths in citizenship and personal, social and health education. Studies in history and geography also give opportunities for broader learning. Students who study economics and business studies are encouraged to

keep up-to-date with current affairs through watching the daily news and reading newspapers as part of their homework.

Visits to nearby towns and cities and sometimes further afield help raise students' awareness of the United Kingdom. Links with a nearby primary school are just developing but there are limited chances to share ideas and culture with others in the wider community. There is an adequate range of evening and weekend activities. However a recent student survey shows that about one third would like a greater variety of things to do, especially at the weekends. The college is increasingly seeking students' views and this has helped to ensure that students make a difference at the college.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are inadequate. Senior leaders have not satisfactorily implemented procedures which properly reflect the national guidance on how to safeguard students. Senior leaders have not been rigorous enough in using procedures that are in place. Not all the required checks on suitability of staff to work with children have been completed before they work unsupervised on the college premises.

Day to day attention to health and safety matters is not robust enough. Risk assessments, although improved following advice from external consultants, are not managed in a sufficiently coordinated way. Information about how the college is meeting the risks it has identified is not detailed or thorough enough. During the inspection the college was unable to present a coherent and comprehensive approach to risk assessment and safety practices such as: attention to security, barring entry to unsuitable buildings, monitoring younger students who leave the premises after school and checking the access of visitors through the main entrance.

Since the last inspection fire safety arrangements and systems have been improved. This work is on-going. The most recent report from the fire service shows that fire safety is now satisfactory in the specific areas recently inspected.

Personal, social and health education lessons and visiting speakers appropriately cover aspects of health education, including sexual health and substance abuse.

An appropriate child protection policy is in place. All staff have had training in child protection that is adequate in what it covered. It forms part of staff induction and is enhanced by completing nationally recognised on-line training. The designated person and their deputy for child protection are senior staff and have completed the required level of training to undertake their responsibilities. However, neither the child protection policy nor content of the training are applied correctly. All staff are aware of the immediate procedures they should follow when concerns are raised by students but there is a lack of clarity about how to manage other aspects of the procedures, for example if there was an allegation against a member of staff, including senior staff. Students are clear that there is someone they can turn to if they have any concerns about their safety.

Admission and attendance registers meet requirements. There are clear policies for managing behaviour including bullying which are suitably implemented. Students say there are very few incidents of serious misbehaviour, racism or bullying of any sort. Procedures for managing behaviour in the boarding houses are satisfactory. Arrangements for first aid are satisfactory.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The college has not carried out all the checks it should have done to ensure the suitability of all adults to work unsupervised at the college. The single central register which shows which checks have been made, does not include all the adults it should, for example those working at the college but not directly employed by the college. The single central register also had other administrative errors.

All of the necessary checks have been carried out on the small number of host families to ensure that they are suitable to look after boarding students.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

Most classroom areas and laboratories are generally clean and tidy and appropriate for the subjects taught. Rooms are of a suitable size and easily accommodate the small number of students in each class.

Boarding accommodation is spread across three houses, all on the college site. The boarding accommodation is of a satisfactory standard of cleanliness. A small number of bathrooms are in a substandard condition and require attention because of poor flooring and decoration. Some fitments need upgrading. The school has a plan for refurbishment some of which was due in the vacation soon after the inspection. There is a suitably equipped medical room and other appropriate accommodation for students who are ill during the school day.

There are some inadequate security arrangements.

The college campus is large and includes an extensive outdoor area and sports hall which can be used for a range of activities, though none were observed during the inspection. There is sufficient space around the main part of the college for students to relax at break times. A number of buildings are not in use and due for refurbishment. Some are clearly barred to students. Some action has been taken to restrict access to other areas but they are potentially hazardous when doors to substandard buildings are left open and where protective fencing has gaps.

### **Provision of information**

The college provides all the required information, or makes available, to parents, carers and others.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The college's procedures for dealing with complaints fulfils all the regulations. There have been nine complaints in the last twelve months all of which were dealt with at the informal stage.

## **Leadership and management of boarding**

The quality of the leadership and management of boarding is inadequate.

The care provision is led by a welfare officer and overseen by the vice principal. There are adequate numbers of care staff and day-to-day management arrangements across the residential provision are appropriate. Regular meetings and on-going dialogue between care staff are used effectively to share relevant information in relation to the needs of individual boarders. The college is very inclusive, recognising the students' diversity stemming from both their backgrounds and from their personal needs. There is an independent listener who boarders can take their concerns or complaints to.

All college staff including care staff have received training that is suitable, including mandatory courses in first aid and on-line training in safeguarding intended to develop their professional skills, knowledge and understanding. However, the training has had insufficient impact. There are shortfalls in vetting procedures for adults who have unsupervised access to students and also weaknesses in the maintenance of premises and there are inadequate security arrangements. This means that not all minimum standards are met and the safety and welfare of students cannot be assured.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>5</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of state (paragraph(7))
- ensure that arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders and that they have regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools (paragraph(8))

---

<sup>5</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2010/1997/contents/made).



- ensure that there are effective procedures to ensure that there are effective measures to ensure pupils' health and safety which have regard to the DfE guidance (paragraph (11)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- ensure that all members of staff appointed since 1 September 2003 have an enhanced criminal bureau (CRB) check before or as soon as practicable after the person's appointment (paragraph 19(2)(c))
- ensure that for all appointments from 1 September 2003, in the case of staff who care for, train, supervise or are in charge of children for whom accommodation is provided in addition to the requirements of paragraphs 19(2)(a) to (d), that checks have been made by the proprietor that Standard 38 of the national minimum standards for boarding schools, or where applicable, Standard 27 of the national minimum standards for residential special schools, complied with (paragraph 19(2)(e))
- ensure that the single central register shows that for each member of staff appointed on or after 1 May 2007, that a criminal record (CRB) bureau check was made, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 22(3))
- ensure that the central register shows that all staff not directly employed by the school indicates that the school has received written notification from the employment business that it has carried out the checks referred to in 20(2)(a) together with the date the written notification that each check was made or certificate obtained was received. (paragraph 22(5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure that there are adequate security arrangements in place for grounds and buildings (paragraph 23(d))
- ensure that all parts of the school are kept in a clean, tidy and hygienic state (paragraph 23(m))
- ensure that arrangements are made to provide safe outside spaces for pupils to play (paragraph 23(s))
- ensure that boarding accommodation has regard to standards 40–52 of the national minimum standards for boarding schools or where applicable, standards 23–26 of the national minimum standards (paragraph 23(t)).

## National minimum standards

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

- ensure that boarding houses and other accommodation provided for boarders complies with any requirements set out in regulations relating to school premises (NMS 5.1)
- ensure that boarding accommodation is protected from access by unauthorised persons (NMS 5.5)
- ensure that the health, safety and welfare of the occupants are reasonably assured in every part of the school's land and buildings. (NMS 6.1)
- ensure that the school has regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State, 'Health and Safety: Department for Education Advice on Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies' (NMS 6.2)
- ensure that:
  - arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
  - such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (NMS 11)
- ensure that safer recruitment procedures are operated and check staff in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State (NMS 14.1)
- ensure that all persons visiting boarding accommodation (e.g. visitors, outside delivery and maintenance personnel) are kept under sufficient staff supervision to prevent them gaining substantial unsupervised access to boarders or their accommodation (NMS 14.4).

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development			✓	
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils				✓
--	--	--	--	---

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

### Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience

<b>Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience</b>				✓
Outcomes for boarders			✓	
Quality of boarding provision and care				✓
Boarders' safety				✓
Leadership and management of boarding				✓

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	International boarding school		
<b>Date school opened</b>	10 December 1979		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–19 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 39	Girls: 10	Total: 49
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 36	Girls: 10	Total: 46
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£20,950 – 21,950		
<b>Address of school</b>	253 Wells Road WR 14 4JF		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01684 892300		
<b>Email address</b>	Principal@abbeycollege.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Philip Moere		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Hekmat Kaveh		

**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.**



23 November 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Abbey College, Malvern, WR14 4JF**

Thank you very much for talking with us about your experiences and views of the College during the inspection. It was very interesting to find out about the College and good to see how well students from so many parts of the world get on together.

We were pleased with:

- the quality of teaching and how this is helping you to make good progress.
- the way in which the courses you study are helping you achieve the things you want to do in your careers and future life.
- the behaviour around the college and your attitudes in lessons.

I have asked the principal to:

- ensure that all the boarding houses are brought up to the standard of the best, especially the bathroom areas.
- ensure that all the required health and safety arrangements that schools have to follow are fully in place and rigorously adhered to.
- ensure that when staff are appointed that all the required checks are carried out and recorded properly on the single staff register.

Daniel Towl  
Her Majesty's Inspector