

Abigail's Place

St Ann's, Worcester Road, Spetchley, Worcester WR5 1RS

Inspection date

31 March 2021

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i) and 3(i)

- Members of the proprietor body and the education lead clearly articulate their vision for the proposed school. They explain and demonstrate how they will meet the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of pupils. They set out how this work will also underpin and support pupils' academic achievement. The proposed curriculum, which covers the primary and secondary phases, is based on the national curriculum. This is important because it will support the reintegration of pupils into mainstream education, where this is possible.
- It is intended that all pupils will have a baseline assessment when they join the school. This will include information provided by previous settings and in-house assessments. Baseline assessments will incorporate an education psychology assessment, an occupational therapy assessment and a speech and language assessment. It is proposed that every pupil will have an individual learning plan, linked to their education, health and care (EHC) plan, which identifies and meets their specific learning needs.
- The therapeutic and nurturing nature of the curriculum is what sets the proposed school apart. The unique learning environment supports this. 'Theraplay informed practice' is a crucial element of the provision that aims to develop healthy attachments between pupils and the suitable adults in their lives. Specialised equipment, including a sunken trampoline, a child-friendly gym, wobble stools, therapy drums and exercise bicycle-style desks, will be used to improve pupils' gross and fine motor skills. The equipment will also underpin wider aspects of the curriculum.
- Curriculum plans map out the order of learning that pupils will follow. The plans indicate that pupils are likely to access a broad range of experiences in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic, and creative education. Curriculum plans in key stages 1 and 2 are particularly detailed,

especially in the core subjects. This is likely to help pupils develop their speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy skills.

- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 2(2)e, 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii) and 2(2)(e)(iii)

- Through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, leaders have developed a suitable plan to make sure that pupils are likely to receive impartial careers advice and guidance. The education lead has already made links with a local college. The intention is that staff from the college will come into the school to speak to pupils about career and further education options. Bespoke work experience is planned for Year 10 pupils which is linked to their interests.

- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(j) and 4

- In line with the school's therapeutic ethos, leaders demonstrate the necessary knowledge and expertise to improve pupils' self-confidence, self-esteem and levels of motivation. This is likely to support pupils in making good academic progress in line with their ability.
- Leaders have created a stimulating and unique learning environment that is rich in high-quality resources. The outdoor environment is extensive and includes gardens, play areas and a sporting field. Within the school grounds, an unused bus is being transformed into a sensory room. It is planned that the school grounds will be used in a range of ways to support the delivery of the curriculum.
- The education lead and the other teacher in the school have qualified teacher status. Leaders want pupils to be taught by highly qualified staff with good subject knowledge.
- The education lead talks confidently about how she will check on the quality of teaching and learning across the school. She plans to carry out a range of monitoring activities, including lesson visits, book scrutinies and pupil discussions. The school leader says this information will be used to inform future developments and to plan staff training.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraphs 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii) and 5(d)(iii)

- Leaders are anticipating the likely SEMH needs of the prospective pupils. Consequently, a well-planned programme of nurture and therapeutic care threads through the intended curriculum. This is likely to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders are keen for pupils to develop a love of learning through the planned curriculum. As a result, teachers will take account of pupils' interests when planning units of work. Developing pupils' social skills in a range of situations to prepare them for later life is a school priority. However, leaders are very aware that many of the pupils, due to their past experiences, will need high levels of support with this.

- There is no evidence in curriculum plans and wider documentation to suggest that fundamental British values will be undermined. Rather, the education lead explains clearly how these values will be promoted through the curriculum and other activities. The proposed school is keen to develop pupil voice, even in day-to-day choices, such as what will be on the lunch menu.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b) and 32(1)(c) [Part 6. Provision of information]

- The school's child protection and safeguarding policy takes account of the most recent government guidance and is available on the school's website.
- The education lead, who will be the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), and the deputy DSL have completed suitable training in relation to their roles.
- Proposed safeguarding training for staff will focus on noticing signs and symptoms and dealing with disclosures. It will also cover specific safeguarding issues, such as the 'Prevent' duty and female genital mutilation. It is intended that the three directors will attend this training. However, their background in social care means that they are already very knowledgeable in relation to safeguarding.
- Leaders demonstrate the necessary knowledge and understanding to make sure that pupils are kept as safe as possible throughout the school day and beyond. Leaders display a secure understanding of managing behaviour and prevention of harm. Every pupil will have an individual risk assessment that will set out the required levels of supervision, both indoors and outdoors.
- The planned PSHE curriculum is likely to help pupils to learn how to keep safe in different situations, including when they are working online.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c) and 10

- Leaders have put together a detailed behaviour policy, which they refer to as a regulation policy. The school's approach to behaviour management dovetails with their therapeutic ethos. The intention is to create a calm environment where pupils feel safe and confident to take risks. The curriculum and daily routines provide opportunities to praise, reinforce and reward positive behaviour. Leaders are aware that some pupils struggle to accept praise, so they have put together strategies to overcome this. The education lead outlined how staff will respond to any negative behaviour. The responses will focus on regulation, distraction, moving to a space of calm and opportunities for reflection. Staff will be trained in positive handling in case this level of physical intervention is required.
- The proposed school has a suitable anti-bullying policy in place. The policy outlines the causes and consequences of bullying. It also exemplifies the additional challenges for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The policy is very precise with reference to the language that will be used. For example, the terms 'bully' and 'victim' will not be used to avoid the labelling of pupils.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- A detailed health and safety policy and other related policies, such as a risk assessment policy, are in place. Staff already appointed are first-aid trained and it is proposed that all new staff will be trained in first aid.
- A fire risk assessment of the refurbished building has been carried out. Leaders are already responding to action points outlined in the risk assessment. The risk assessment is being used as a working document. The education lead outlined the timetable for the checking of fire safety equipment, including fire extinguishers and emergency lighting. The company which carried out the fire risk assessment provided current staff with fire safety training. All new staff will receive the same level of training.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 14 and 15

- There are currently no pupils attending the school. The information that the proposed school plans to include on the admissions register is in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance.
- The staff-to-pupil ratio suggests that pupils are likely to be suitably supervised throughout the school day. The teaching staff within the school also provide support for pupils' welfare. This is part of the school's holistic approach to supporting pupils' SEMH needs.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c) and 21(6)

- The proposed school has appropriate recruitment procedures in place. This includes obtaining two references and carrying out a medical check prior to appointment.
- The single central register contains the full range of pre-employment checks. It is stored centrally in an electronic format. The education lead will update the register as new members of staff are recruited.
- The education lead states that they do not intend to use supply staff. However, she is clear about the checks and procedures that would need to be followed if they did.
- The chair of the proprietor body has completed safer recruitment training and he sits on every recruitment panel. The education lead has registered for an online safer recruitment training course.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)

- The proposed school is a building that in the past was a small village school. It is newly refurbished and decorated to a very high standard. However, the original features and charm of the building have been retained.
- Indoors, there is a classroom, an occupational therapy room, a trampoline room, a hall, a nurture room known as 'the nest' and other facilities. All rooms are well lit and have good acoustics. There is suitable space for the proposed number of pupils to learn.
- There are three separate toilets available to pupils with hot and cold running water and handwashing facilities. One of these is a unisex toilet that contains a shower and a suitable changing space for pupils to use if required. There is a separate toilet for staff and visitors.
- The occupational therapy room will also serve as the medical room. It will contain a foldable bed and a portable washbasin facility will be close at hand. The unisex toilet is adjacent to this room.
- The outdoor area is impressive. It consists of extensive gardens, a field, a yard, a converted bus and other facilities. There is plenty of space for pupils to play and socialise. The space is also suitable for outdoor physical education lessons. The education lead outlined how the outdoor area will be used to support many areas of the curriculum.
- The proposed school has a kitchen area that pupils will use for cooking activities. When supervised, pupils can obtain drinking water from the kitchen area. A water fountain in the main hall is also available for pupils to use.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(j), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(b)(ii), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(b), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d) and 32(3)(f)

- The school's website provides a range of information, including relevant contact details and the main aims of the setting. All required policies and documentation are available through the website. Leaders shared the format of the school's prospectus, which contains a range of useful information.
- All policies, documents and information required for the pre-registration inspection were provided in a timely manner. Where relevant, policies reflect the therapeutic nature of the proposed school's provision.
- The school's assessment system will be used to create the annual written report to parents. Leaders intend to adapt the format of the report so that it includes additional information linked to the PSHE curriculum and the emotional development of the pupils.

- The education lead has a comprehensive understanding of how relevant staff will contribute to annual reviews for pupils with EHC plans.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii) and 33(k)

- The complaints policy sets out the steps that parents and carers need to take if they have a concern about the proposed school. The aim is to resolve complaints informally where possible, but more formal steps are outlined if required, including a panel hearing. It sets out a suitable time frame for dealing with complaints. There is no evidence of how previous complaints have been handled, due to the fact that the school is not currently operating.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- Leaders have a clear rationale for why they want to register as an independent school. Their aim is to support pupils who have experienced early loss, trauma and attachment disruption. Leaders demonstrate a secure knowledge of how to cater for the wide and varied needs of pupils with SEND, particularly pupils with SEMH needs.
- The education lead was appointed in September 2020. She has worked closely with the directors to prepare the proposed school for registration. The proprietor body has established monitoring systems, including the setting up of a quality assurance board, to check that the education lead and other staff fulfil their responsibilities effectively. The chair of the proprietor body also plans to support and hold the education lead to account through monthly meetings.
- All leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the independent school standards. They are keen to be outward looking so they can learn from other leaders, professionals and organisations within the sector.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have ensured that they have a suitable accessibility plan in place that meets the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	148419
DfE registration number	885/6072
Inspection number	10182100

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor body	Abigail's Place Limited
Chair	Yaf Yafai
Education lead	Nina Stone
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000 to £52,000
Telephone number	01905 622322
Website	www.abigailsplace.co.uk
Email address	admin@abigailsplace.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	5 to 16	5 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	8	8

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	8
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	8
Of which, number of pupils an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	8
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	8

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	3
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	2

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school intends to cater for pupils who find mainstream school settings challenging. It is likely that many of the pupils will be highly vulnerable. The pupils will most likely have experienced early loss, trauma and/or attachment disruption.
- Leaders propose that the school will cater solely for pupils with SEND. These pupils are very likely to have an EHC plan.
- The proposed school will not have a religious denomination.
- The proposed school does not intend to use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the DfE during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, to determine whether the proposed school is likely to meet the independent school standards if it is given permission to open. This is the proposed school's first inspection.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many documents were submitted electronically and were reviewed remotely by the lead inspector prior to the inspection. Several additional documents, including the school's single central register, were scrutinised on site.
- As the inspection included a full-day on-site visit, a tour of the premises was possible.
- Social distancing was maintained throughout the inspection. This was aided by the fact that the proposed school currently has no pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the education lead. He also met with the chair of the proprietorial board and another director.
- The two directors and school leader attended the final feedback meeting, which was conducted on site.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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