

Abbeywood School

Rother Way, Hellaby Industrial Estate, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, South Yorkshire S66 8QN

Inspection dates

24 March 2022

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- Leaders have ensured there is a safeguarding policy in place and available on the school's website. The policy is detailed, easy to follow and complies with current government guidance.
- Leaders train all staff in child protection and the wider aspects of safeguarding, including positive behaviour management and health and safety. Staff are confident in raising any concerns they have about a child. Pupils trust staff to help them with any problems or worries they have.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL), and his deputy, have completed enhanced training in child protection. The DSL is knowledgeable and works closely with local agencies to ensure pupils get help outside of school when this is needed. The DSL keeps accurate and detailed records of all safeguarding concerns and referrals. The DSL and headteacher are proactive in contacting local authority partners if any pupil at the school needs additional support and protection. The DSL leads the school's pastoral team and the deputy DSL is the deputy headteacher. The proprietor is aware of the need to review DSL capacity if the Department for Education (DfE) approves the request to expand the school in terms of pupil numbers and with the addition of a second site to the school.
- Leaders' oversight of safety and well-being in school is strong. There are secure safeguarding systems in place. The headteacher and proprietor's regional director monitor the progress and outcomes of all safeguarding referrals. The proprietor has established a school board to govern the school. It meets half termly. Board members review the school's safeguarding arrangements and any child protection referrals at each board meeting.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Paragraphs 11, 12

- There is a comprehensive health and safety policy in place. Staff are trained in health and safety and know what they are expected to do to with regard to their role in school. The headteacher ensures staff implement health and safety procedures correctly. Health and safety records show that staff complete relevant site checks daily, weekly and monthly, as directed by the proprietor's policy. The proprietor has a specialist health and safety manager who visits the school regularly to audit the school's health and safety checks.
- Leaders are aware of the importance of having secure fire risk assessments in place. There is a robust, up-to-date, fire risk assessment in place which covers the current school site. This assessment is reviewed annually by the proprietor's representative. The proprietor wishes to increase the numbers of pupils in the school and expand the school onto a second site. The proprietor has plans in place to complete a fire risk assessment on the school's proposed additional site when current refurbishment work is complete.
- The headteacher ensures that checks of fire safety equipment and emergency evacuation drills are completed regularly and consistently. All staff complete training in fire safety. There are four members of staff who have received enhanced fire warden training. The proprietor is intending to increase the number of trained fire wardens if the DfE approves the school's request to expand.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Paragraph 14

- Pupils are supervised effectively, and behaviour around the school is good. Pupils like the small class sizes and appreciate the support they receive from staff. The proprietor is aware of the additional support pupils in the school need. The ratio of staff to pupils is high in the school. The proprietor is committed to maintaining current staffing levels and has appropriate plans in place to increase the number of staff in line with the proposed increase to pupil numbers.
- Leaders have ensured that this standard is likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Paragraphs 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- There is a detailed risk assessment policy in place. The proprietor has ensured staff know how to identify, assess and reduce risks around the school and when taking pupils off site. The proprietor has a risk manager who provides support and guidance to the headteacher. This support includes providing an extensive range of standardised risk assessment templates for staff to use as exemplars. Risk assessments are completed consistently by staff and monitored carefully by the headteacher.
- The headteacher ensures there is an individual risk assessment and positive behaviour support plan for each pupil. These documents are used effectively by staff and reviewed regularly with pupils and their parents.

- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

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)

- Leaders know how to recruit staff safely. The school business manager checks application forms for any gaps in employment history. The headteacher clarifies any gaps in employment history with candidates before they progress through the recruitment process. The headteacher ensures that references are collected diligently and validated through a follow-up telephone call.
- The headteacher makes sure that all required pre-employment checks are completed on adults before they start working or volunteering at the school. The proprietor ensures that safer recruitment checks are completed on all members of the school board before they start to work with the school.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve the material change.

Paragraphs 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)(c), 21(6)

- Information from pre-employment checks is stored on a central record. The central record has sections covering all adults who work or volunteer at the school, including supply staff and board members. The headteacher ensures there are no gaps in the information on the central record and that entries are kept up to date. The proprietor checks the central record for completeness and accuracy as part of the school's regular safeguarding audits.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve the material change.

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), 29(1)(b)

- The proprietor has requested an increase to the numbers of pupils able to be admitted to the school from 51 to 96. The proprietor is developing additional school premises to accommodate this potential increase to the school roll. This new site will also have workshop facilities that will help leaders in their desire to broaden the school's vocational subject offer. The additional premises are a short walk from the school and currently undergoing a programme of refurbishment. The project manager for the refurbishment is confident that the work will be completed by 9 May 2022. The estimated pupil capacity based on the existing school building and the planned layout for the additional site is in line with the maximum number of pupils requested on the

material change application. The proprietor has considered the additional needs of the pupils in the school and does not anticipate opening the new site fully to pupils until later in the summer term 2022. The headteacher has plans in place to ensure any change to the school is managed well.

- Both school sites have appropriate toilets and shower facilities for the age of the pupils in the school. The temperature of water at handbasins and sinks is maintained at a safe level. There are water fountains around the school for easy access to drinking water. Leaders are aware of the need to label taps clearly to show whether the water is suitable for drinking or not. Some taps did not have appropriate labels at the start of the inspection. This was rectified by the headteacher.
- There are two medical rooms in the school, one on each site. Both medical rooms have a bed and handbasin and are close to a toilet. These rooms are available for pupils to use any time they are feeling unwell or require treatment.
- The current school building is very welcoming and maintained to a high standard. Classrooms are light and airy and acoustic levels are comfortable. The specification of improvements at the additional premises is of a similarly high quality.
- The entrance areas to both school buildings are designed to ensure security and pupil safety. There is adequate external lighting at the current school building. There are plans in place for similar lighting at the new school site.
- Both school sites have outdoor space for pupils to socialise and play sport. The current school building has a multi-use dining hall which can be used for activities such as sensory circuits and dance. There are plans for a fitness room and multi-use sports hall on the proposed additional school site.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)(c)

- There is an up-to-date child protection policy which complies with current statutory requirements. The policy is published on the school website and easily accessible to parents and carers. A printed copy of the policy is available upon request.
- Leaders have ensured that this standard is likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proprietor has a clear vision for the school. The rationale behind the material change request is based on need in the local area and the desire to expand the vocational curriculum offer for older pupils. The proprietor has experience of making a similar material change successfully to another school in the Witherslack Group. The proprietor has developed a robust project management plan to support the proposed expansion of the school.
- The headteacher is an experienced school leader. The current school is well organised and well ordered. The headteacher knows exactly what she wants from the proposed,

expanded school and has clear plans in place to support her school as it grows and develops.

- The proprietor has set up a school board to provide the function of school governance. The members of this board have the knowledge and skills to provide support and challenge to the headteacher, and the school board meets half termly to scrutinise information provided by school leaders.
- The proprietor's regional director is in school regularly. There are proprietor group staff who lead on key functions such as safeguarding, health and safety, and property management. These leaders bring additional capacity to the overall management of the school.
- Leaders have developed robust systems to record all training completed by staff. Training records are regularly checked to ensure mandatory refresher training is done in a timely fashion. Staff complete safeguarding training as part of their induction and then on an annual basis. The DSL runs additional safeguarding training sessions for staff. He checks staff knowledge of safeguarding routinely through question and answer sessions on different topics in the daily staff briefings. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding. They are positive about the training they receive and feel confident about how to perform their role with regard to safeguarding in the school.
- Leaders occasionally use alternative providers as part of bespoke programmes for individual pupils. At the time of this inspection, two pupils were attending two alternative providers on a part-time basis. One of these was unregistered and one was another independent school regulated by Ofsted. The headteacher completes thorough due diligence checks on any alternative providers used. These checks include reviewing safeguarding documentation and ensuring any pupil absence is followed up promptly.
- Leaders support the well-being of their staff. Staff spoke warmly about the range of thoughtful support they get from school leaders. Staff are excited at the prospect of the school expanding. They have confidence in the capacity of leaders to develop the school successfully.
- Pupils have no concerns about the expansion of the school. They trust the staff in the school to meet their needs and sort out any worries they may have.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	146571
DfE registration number	372/6000
Inspection number	10221414

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Ltd
Chair	Phil Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Douglas
Annual fees (day pupils)	£63,372 to £87,621
Telephone number	01709 916900
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk
Email address	abbeywood@witherslackgrop.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	4 to 6 June 2019

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	10 to 18	10 to 18	10 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	51	96	96

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	51	96
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	51	96
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	51	96
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	51	96

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	13	19
Number of part-time teaching staff	1	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	4	5

Information about this school

- Abbeywood School is an independent special school which is part of the Witherslack Group. It is situated on an industrial estate in Rotherham.
- Pupils attending the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, learning difficulties and neurodevelopmental needs. Some pupils have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. Some pupils have spent considerable lengths of time out of education before joining the school.

- The school received its first standard inspection in June 2019 and was judged to be good. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils the school is registered to take has increased from 50 to 51. The proprietor is now requesting a material change to increase the school roll to a maximum of 96 pupils and to add a second school site. The address of the proposed additional site is Unit 3, Kea Park, Hellaby Industrial Estate, Rotherham, S66 8LB. This site is a short walk from the current school.
- The school uses two alternative providers. One of these is a registered independent special school and one is an unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE in response to the proprietor's request for a material change. The material change requested is to increase the number of pupils who could be admitted to the school from 51 to 96 and to add a second school site. There is no change requested to the age range of pupils in the school or the SEND provision.
- This is the school's first material change inspection. The proprietor had previously requested an increase of the school roll from 50 to 51. This increase was approved by the DfE in July 2021 without a material change inspection.
- Leaders were given two days' notice of the inspection. The inspection lasted one day and was conducted by one inspector.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, including the DSL. She also met with a range of other staff and three proprietor representatives, including the chair of the school board.
- The inspector undertook a tour of the school and visited the classrooms, social areas and other facilities. The inspector visited the proposed additional site and reviewed plans for this site. The inspector checked both school buildings and grounds against the independent school standards.
- The inspector spoke to pupils and observed pupils' behaviour around the school and at break and lunchtime.
- The inspector scrutinised school documents and the arrangements to safeguard pupils. This included checking the school's safeguarding systems and the single central record, meeting with the DSL and speaking with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- The inspector checked the school's alternative provision arrangements, including the safeguarding systems in place for the two alternative providers currently being used by the school.

Inspection team

Patricia Head, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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