

Abbot's Way School

St Mary's Road, Meare, Somerset BA6 9SR

Inspection dates

9 June 2022

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2, 3, 4

- The proprietor has applied for a material change to extend the age range of the pupils up to 16 years old and to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll to 40.
- The proprietor and school leaders understand the needs of pupils who currently attend. Most pupils have specific learning needs such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia. Almost all pupils have an education health and care (EHC) plan. It is likely this will also be the case for pupils in Years 10 and 11 if the material change to the age range is applied. Therefore, the proprietor body has devised a curriculum that takes these needs into account.
- The curriculum policy sets out to provide pupils with learning that matches their needs. The proprietor has built on the current learning pathways known as 'Spirit' in Years 3 to 6 and 'Flair' in Years 7 to 9 to devise the 'Charisma' curriculum for Years 10 and 11. It provides increasing academic challenge and is likely to provide pupils with the building blocks of knowledge, and specific learning and development that they need when working towards GCSE qualifications and/or further study.
- Leaders' planning for educating pupils aged 14 to 16 is nearing completion. It will incorporate all the aspects of the curriculum required by the independent school standards (the standards). The curriculum also includes speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and social skills development to meet pupils' individual needs.
- There is an assessment policy and framework in place. The policy sets out how staff will meet and assess pupils' individual needs. It outlines how staff will be expected to use their checks of what pupils know and understand to adapt onward learning.
- Leaders have systems in place to check that teachers and other staff use and apply strong subject knowledge when teaching. Leaders will check that teaching is closely matched to pupils' needs. They intend to monitor pupils' progress closely.
- Teachers will provide a written report every term to keep parents and carers well informed about their child's achievements. For key stage 4, leaders state that there

will also be regular face-to-face meetings with parents to review pupils' progress against their targets.

- The careers education package for pupils in Years 10 and 11 will build on what has come before. It will consider pupils' individual skills and talents and build on their aspirations. It is likely to ensure that pupils receive impartial careers guidance.
- The intended curriculum will support pupils to achieve a range of qualifications, including GCSEs in English, mathematics, sciences, geography, religious education, history, art, technology, photography and food technology. There are no plans at this stage to include a modern foreign language. The school will also offer a range of other qualifications such as the 'arts mark' and functional skills level 1 and 2.
- Leaders have devised a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme for pupils aged 14 to 16. It sets out to build pupils' awareness of the wider world, their mental and physical fitness and develop their social skills. The curriculum will teach about protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010. It will teach pupils about exploitation, drug education and give them an understanding of using money. Leaders intend that the subject content of the PSHE curriculum will develop pupils' resilience and independence.
- A relationship and sex education policy is in place and published on the school's website. The curriculum includes all statutory information. Leaders state that they will hold staff to account for ensuring that all pupils access this important aspect of the curriculum and that it is age-appropriate so that it meets pupils' individual needs.
- Teaching resources are in place to support a curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16. There is a training package in place to ensure that any staff new to the school are fully prepared to use the teaching approaches that take into full account pupils' needs and prior attainment.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5

- Leaders' work to extend the current scheme of work to incorporate Years 10 and 11 is almost complete. They have considered carefully how the curriculum will build on what has come before. Teaching is likely to support pupils to develop their self-esteem, self-belief and confidence in line with the school's aims and ethos. The scheme of work sets out how teaching will support pupils to know right from wrong and take responsibility for their actions.
- The planned curriculum for Years 10 and 11 identifies how it will promote fundamental British values. This includes learning about individual liberty, criminal law, democracy and learning to respect people, including those with protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 11, 12, 14, 16

- The safeguarding and child protection policy is published on the school's website. The designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable about how to keep pupils safe from harm. There is an induction programme which incorporates safeguarding and health and safety training for all new staff when they join the school. There will also be ongoing safeguarding training. Associate advisory board members have systems and processes in place to assure themselves of the culture of safeguarding.
- The proprietor has ensured compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The premises have suitable signage and equipment in place. Almost all actions from a fire risk assessment have been carried out. An additional call point will be fitted in the boiler room. Fire doors and mechanisms have been upgraded.
- Leaders understand the supervision requirements at lunchtime and social times. They are already recruiting additional lunchtime staff. Therefore, it is likely that supervision will be suitable.
- Leaders already have detailed risk assessments in place. The landscaping works at the front of the building have been completed. This has increased site safety and means that the school is now able to accommodate more pupils. A new drop off and collection routine is already in place. Current records show that leaders are knowledgeable in identifying possible risks on and off site and they are able to implement systems and procedures to mitigate pupils' risk of harm. The associate advisory body intend to conduct checks on risk assessments to assure compliance.
- A new bird aviary is being constructed in the school grounds. Leaders know that this will need to be risk assessed. Leaders intend to construct a gate within the school grounds, at the edge of the playing field, so that pupils cannot access the outbuilding area and oil tank. The school grounds extend over several acres and down to a stream. The proprietor knows that the outside area will need ongoing reviews to ensure that hedge boundaries remain secure. Detailed risk assessments are in place.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 18– 1

- The current single central record (SCR) includes all the information it should. The proprietor has ensured that checks take place to ensure that adults at the school are suitable to work with children. This includes all staff working at the school and the associate advisory body. Members of staff responsible for managing the SCR demonstrate a strong working knowledge of safer recruitment.
- Two new staff have been appointed. All the required checks have been completed for these staff and recorded in the SCR. Further recruitment for teachers and support staff are well underway.
- Leaders do not intend to use supply staff. However, staff responsible for safer recruitment speak knowledgeably about what checks they would need to apply if supply staff were used.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23–29

- A small number of pupils currently on roll learn at a satellite classroom 1.6 miles away from the main school. The proprietor body will cease using the satellite site if the material changes relating to the school are implemented.
- The main building has adequate teaching space to accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers. In addition to classrooms, there is a well-resourced therapy room, a sensory area, a food technology room, a newly upgraded library and a science room.
- The dining hall will accommodate 20 pupils. Leaders state that there will be two sittings at lunchtime. This is not unreasonable.
- Where safety glass is not in place, windows have a protective film to ensure safety. Acoustics are suitable. All bar one room has sufficient lighting. Work to add one additional light to a therapy room on the second floor is imminent.
- Drinking water is clearly labelled. While sufficient drinking water is available, the proprietor intends to add another drinking water pod on the first floor. This will prevent pupils needing to queue to refill their water bottles.
- There are sufficient single toilets for pupils' use only. There is sufficient water supply to all toilets and washing facilities, including in the therapy rooms and food technology space.
- There are suitable facilities for a medical room. There is an allocated room with a portable bed. It is close to a toilet and sink. There is a lockable cupboard for medicines. However, the proprietor has plans to provide a new purpose-built medical room. These works are likely to be completed in the next three weeks.
- The school site provides plenty of outdoor learning spaces. The field is spacious and provides ample space in which to play and socialise. There is a grassed area for football and games. There is also a seating area and hardstanding area close to the school building.
- There are no changing rooms. To accommodate pupils' learning and sensory needs pupils come to school in their physical education (PE) kit. There are two PE lessons each week. One happens off site and the other one is on the school field.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- The proprietor body and the chair of the associate advisory body have strong knowledge in leading specialist education. They have already done a lot to ensure that the independent standards are likely to be met. For example, they have taken effective action to address previous restrictions to pupil numbers by ensuring that all building works in relation to planning permissions and any relevant conditions have been completed.

- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets the requirements to become an exam centre for GCSEs. This was permitted in May 2022.
- Much work has been completed to ensure that policies and procedures incorporate Years 10 and 11. Development of the schemes of work for the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is well underway.
- The associate advisory board is knowledgeable and has appropriate quality assurance systems in place to check the independent school standards.
- Some new staff have already been recruited. Plans are already in place to increase part-time staff's contracts to allow for increased teaching hours.
- This standard is likely to be met.

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	148006
DfE registration number	933/6015
Inspection number	10243273

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 school
Proprietor	Abbot's Way Ltd
Headteacher	Hellen Lush and Gareth Wright
Annual fees (day pupils)	£18,981 to £23,379
Telephone number	01458397497
Website	www.abbotswayschool.co.uk
Email address	office@abbotsway.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	6–8 October 2021

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7 to 14	7 to 16	7 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	23	40	40

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	22	40
Number of part-time pupils	1	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	23	40
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	22	40
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	22	40

Staff

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

Information about this school

- The two members of the proprietor body are also the headteachers of the school.
- There is an associate advisory body which checks the school's work and its compliance with the independent school standards.
- Years 10 and 11 will cater for pupils who have an EHC plan. The school provides specialist education for pupils with specific learning difficulties; speech, language and communication needs; and sensory and/or physical needs.
- The school is currently operating on two sites. The proprietor body intend to cease using the satellite site if the material changes relating to the school are implemented.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- The inspector held discussions about the parts of the standards in scope for the material change with both members of proprietor body, who are also the joint headteachers of the school. She also held a discussion with the chair of the advisory body and met with staff responsible for safer recruitment.
- The inspector considered documentation related to the proposed school curriculum for Years 10 and 11, including the curriculum policy and schemes of work.
- The inspector considered documentation such as policies, safeguarding records, and plans in place to maintain pupils' safety. The discussed arrangements to keep pupils safe.
- The inspector also had a tour of the site and premises, both internally and externally, to determine if Part 5 of the standards is likely to be met.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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