

Inspection of Abigail's Place

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

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 July 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Prior to starting at Abigail's Place, many pupils have experienced a disrupted education. At this school, staff meet pupils' individual needs well and their attitudes to learning improve. Pupils learn things that help them to prepare for success in future qualifications and careers.

Pupils' behaviour can be challenging. Staff manage this effectively. They teach pupils about managing their feelings in constructive ways. Staff provide a safe environment in which pupils can talk about their experiences and emotions. The 'sunshine group' encourages pupils to reflect on the positive aspects of their lives. This, alongside professional therapy sessions, ensures that pupils get the support they need.

Pupils enjoy school. The highly positive environment and ethos of the school enables them to be successful and feel safe. If bullying occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and fairly by staff.

Pupils have access to a rich, ambitious curriculum and experience a broad range of activities. A particular feature of the school is its music curriculum, which supports all pupils to competently play the recorder and African drums. Pupils told inspectors that they value what the school does for them.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

All pupils have significant special educational needs. Leaders use a range of assessments to make careful checks on what pupils already know and what they need to learn next. They use this information to plan the best ways to help pupils. Staff set clear rules and have high expectations of pupils. Pupils understand the school's clear routines and boundaries for behaviour. This helps the school day run as smoothly as possible. Poor behaviour does happen, but its impact on learning is kept to a minimum.

Leaders have made many improvements to the school's curriculum. A new structured phonics programme for pupils who need support with their early reading is in place. Staff introduce pupils to different types of books and authors and encourage them to take an interest in reading. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about visiting their local library (The Hive), where they take out books to read for personal interest. Most pupils make strong progress with their reading.

Pupils receive an appropriately broad curriculum. This includes all national curriculum subjects. The curriculum is well sequenced, so pupils develop a range of knowledge and skills. Teachers identify any gaps that pupils have in their learning. They work hard to address these so that pupils can make sense of new learning. However, staff do not have clearly defined subject leadership roles and responsibilities. This limits leaders' ability to have a good oversight of the different subjects.

The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme is established throughout the school. Pupils benefit from a range of well-planned activities. These include activity days that promote keeping themselves healthy, and 'PRIDE' days that focus on equality and diversity.

The relationships and sex education and health education curriculum adheres to current Department for Education (DfE) guidance. It has been fully implemented. Teachers ensure that work is age-appropriate. Staff teach pupils about healthy relationships, different types of families and the importance of good hygiene as they grow and change.

Careers guidance is appropriate and interwoven into the PSHE education curriculum. Pupils are beginning to discuss future jobs and the qualifications and skills they may need to achieve their ambitions. Staff take pupils out and about to different settings where people work. In addition, pupils receive impartial advice from a careers adviser.

Staff use classroom discussions well to encourage pupils' self-awareness of how they are feeling and behaving. Pupils regularly reflect on how they are managing their emotions and how their actions may affect others. Pupils are well supported by leaders to access a range of creative and cultural experiences to widen their understanding of the world around them.

Leaders have made sure that the school's policies are fit for purpose. The complaints policy, for example, sets out how to make a complaint and what to do at each stage of the process. The school buildings offer suitable accommodation and a wide range of facilities. These include a specially designed multi-gym with age-appropriate equipment.

The school's website includes all the information that it should. Attendance and admissions registers are kept correctly. Pupil attendance at school is high.

The proprietor is well informed about leaders' work. The proprietor's decision-making is guided by pupils' needs, while also being mindful of the welfare and workload of staff. Staff say they feel well supported and that there is a real team spirit.

The proprietor has ensured the school meets the independent school standards and that it has a suitable accessibility plan. Leaders comply with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at this school, which is evident in all that the staff do. All staff receive appropriate training in keeping pupils safe. Leaders and staff are very alert to the risks vulnerable pupils can face. Staff record concerns in

detail and share information with the right people. When needs be, the school is quick to refer matters to the appropriate professional agency.

The proprietor has ensured the correct checks on adults are completed. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe.

The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and follows the latest DfE guidance.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Currently, the oversight and development of the curriculum lies solely with the education lead. This limits the staff's wider involvement with curriculum development. Leaders are in the process of allocating subject leader roles and responsibilities to staff. Leaders should ensure staff have the skills and knowledge to take on these leadership roles so that they have an informed oversight of their subjects. They should use their oversight to identify what could be improved and take action to strengthen the curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	148419
DfE registration number	885/6072
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10220455
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Abigail's Place Limited
Chair	Yaf Yafai
Headteacher	Nina Stone
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000 to £57,000
Telephone number	01905 622322
Website	www.abigailsplace.co.uk
Email address	nina.stone@abigailsplace.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Abigail's Place is a small, specialist school for pupils who have experienced trauma, or complex trauma. All pupils at the school have had repeated placement breakdowns within the care sector. Pupils present with complex behavioural, social and emotional needs that have been unable to be met in other specialist provisions.
- Ofsted carried out a pre-registration inspection in March 2021. The school opened in April 2021. This is the school's first full inspection since opening.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The proprietor has set up a school education board to provide an extra tier of school governance.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the education lead, who is also the school's special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. Inspectors also met with the proprietor, staff, pupils and a representative from the school's education board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and PSHE education. In these subjects, inspectors looked at the curriculum, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and met with staff and pupils to discuss learning. Inspectors considered other subjects in less detail.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. They also considered the free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy. They spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn to keep themselves safe. The inspectors spoke to the safeguarding lead about the recording and reporting of any safeguarding incidents.
- The lead inspector checked the school's website.

Inspection team

Heather Phillips, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Edgerton

Ofsted Inspector

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