

# Abbey School for Exceptional Children

10–12 Abbey Square, Chester CH1 2HU

## Inspection dates

19 April 2023

### Overall outcome

**The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)*

- Leaders, including members of the proprietor body, have put in place a suitable safeguarding policy that has regard to the appropriate statutory guidance. This policy is available on the school's website. During the inspection, leaders demonstrated secure reporting procedures for staff to report any safeguarding concerns. These procedures are likely to remain suitable if the request for an increase of pupil numbers is granted.
- Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. This helps staff to remain knowledgeable about the risks that pupils may face, such as abuse or neglect. Leaders check that staff understand the procedures to follow if they have any safeguarding concerns. These checks are likely to ensure that staff continue to recognise and respond to any concerns about pupils' safety or welfare if the material change is approved.
- Leaders are knowledgeable about how to ensure the suitability of staff appointed to work at the school. Leaders' processes to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are likely to remain appropriate should the material change be agreed.

#### *Paragraph 11*

- Leaders have ensured that a suitable health and safety policy is in place. The policy covers all required elements of health and safety. This includes, for example, an asbestos survey, the safety of gas equipment, and the storage of substances hazardous to health. This policy will likely remain appropriate if the material change is approved.
- Leaders' records show that a range of health and safety checks are completed regularly, such as portable appliance testing and legionella testing. These checks will likely continue if the request for an increase of pupil numbers is granted.

#### *Paragraph 12*

- Leaders ensure that emergency lighting checks, fire alarm tests and fire drills take

place regularly. During the tour of the school, it was clear that appropriate fire safety equipment is available and well maintained. Fire escapes are clearly identified and are not obstructed. The proprietor body ensures that required checks on the fire alarm and fire safety equipment are carried out by a competent person. These checks are likely to ensure that this standard will remain met if the material change is approved.

- Leaders provided evidence during the inspection to show that they understand and are compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These appropriate arrangements are likely to remain met if the proposed increase in pupil numbers is granted.

#### *Paragraph 14*

- Leaders have employed a suitable number of additional staff. They have taken care to ensure that staff are deployed effectively in order to ensure pupils' welfare and safety. Leaders continue to recruit more staff and would employ further staff to meet individual pupils' needs should this be required. The proposed increase in staff numbers is likely to ensure the suitable supervision of pupils if the increase in pupil numbers is approved.

#### *Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)*

- The proprietor body has ensured that an effective risk assessment policy is in place. Leaders have completed suitable risk assessments. For example, they have carried out risk assessments for when pupils use the range of equipment and tools in the food preparation room, or for when pupils travel off site for educational visits. The risk assessment policy and associated risk assessments are likely to remain appropriate should the material change be granted.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the material change is granted.

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

#### *Paragraphs 17, 18(2)–18(2)(e), 18(3)*

- Leaders ensure that they complete the required checks on new staff before they start working at the school. These checks are likely to continue if the material change is approved.
- The proprietor body ensures that all appropriate pre-employment checks are suitably recorded on the single central record, and that this record is checked regularly to ensure that it is up to date. Consequently, it is likely that these standards will remain met if the increase in pupil numbers is granted.

#### *Paragraphs 19(2)–19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)*

- Leaders make occasional use of supply staff. They ensure that the required checks are in place before supply staff work at the school. This is likely to be the case if the material change is approved.

#### *Paragraphs 20(6)–20(6)(c), 21(1)–21(7)(b)*

- Checks under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 are in place. These ensure that leaders, including members of the proprietor body, are suitable to manage a school. This is likely to continue to be the case if the material change is approved.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

## Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- The current school building is spacious and well organised, and adequately supports the proposed increase in pupil numbers. It is suitable for the age and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of the pupils that may attend the school.

### *Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c)*

- Leaders have ensured suitable toilet facilities for the proposed increase in pupil numbers. Hot and cold water is available for handwashing. This does not pose a scalding risk. Toilets are for the sole use of pupils. To ensure privacy, cubicles can be locked from the inside. This is likely to continue to be the case if the material change is approved.
- There are separate toilets for staff and visitors. These are suitable. Disabled toilets are also provided for pupils, staff and visitors. All toilets have an appropriate sink that is suitable for handwashing. These facilities are likely to remain appropriate if the material change is approved.
- Leaders have ensured that suitable showering facilities are available for pupils. These facilities will remain appropriate if the request for an increase in pupil numbers is granted.

### *Paragraphs 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)*

- The medical room is appropriately equipped with a bed, pillows and disposable covers. It has a dedicated toilet and sink with hot and cold water. This room is therefore suitable for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, and is likely to remain so should the material change be granted.

### *Paragraph 25*

- Leaders have ensured that the school premises are maintained to a high standard. Regular checks are completed by staff. Any identified issues are quickly and appropriately addressed. This is likely to continue to be the case if the material change is approved.

### *Paragraph 26*

- Leaders have ensured that all areas of the school provide suitable acoustic conditions, which are conducive to learning. This is likely to continue to be the case if the material change is approved.

### *Paragraphs 27, 27(a), 27(b)*

- All areas of the school, including classrooms, have suitable lighting. Leaders maintain appropriate lighting so that visitors, staff and pupils can enter and exit the building safely. This is likely to remain the case if the material change is approved.

### *Paragraphs 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)*

- Sources of drinking water are clearly labelled. Pupils have access to drinking water throughout the school day. This is likely to continue to be the case if the material change is approved.

*Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)*

- The proprietor body has ensured that pupils have sufficient outside space in which to play and to socialise safely. This space will be suitable if the proposed increase in pupil numbers is accepted.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed material change is granted.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proprietor body has an appropriate knowledge of the standards. Members of the proprietor body work closely with the school's advisory board to hold leaders to account. This helps to ensure that the standards are met consistently. The proprietor body, and senior leaders, have thought about and planned carefully for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- The proprietor body has ensured that all standards checked during this inspection are likely to be met if the proposed increase in pupil numbers is granted.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed material change is granted.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have an appropriate accessibility policy in place which ensures that Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 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	147951
DfE registration number	896/6010
Inspection number	10284169

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	Abbey School Ltd
Chair	Barnabas Borbely
Headteacher	Dr Katy Lee
Annual fees (day pupils)	£82,737
Telephone number	01244 960000
Website	<a href="http://www.abbeyschool.com">www.abbeyschool.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:l.rushforth@abbeyschool.com">l.rushforth@abbeyschool.com</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	13 to 15 September 2022

## Pupils

	<b>School's current position</b>	<b>School's proposal</b>	<b>Inspector's recommendation</b>
Age range of pupils	4 to 19	4 to 19	4 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	70	85	85

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	70	85
Number of part-time pupils	None	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	70	85
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	70	85
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	70	85

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	19	19
Number of part-time teaching staff	None	None
Number of staff in the welfare provision	87	103

## Information about this school

- The school is based at 10–12 Abbey Square, Chester CH1 2HU.
- The chair of the proprietor body, Abbey School Ltd, is the sole director.
- The school provides for children, pupils and students with autism spectrum disorder. Some pupils have additional learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan or, if resident in Wales, a statement of special educational needs.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This material change inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education because the proprietor body requested an increase in pupil numbers.
- The last full standard inspection took place in September 2022.
- The inspection considered the day school and not the linked residential provision.
- The inspector had a tour of the premises and checked the suitability of the premises against the relevant standards.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other leaders during the inspection. She met with the sole director of the proprietor body.
- The inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents and policies in relation to the health, well-being and safety of pupils. This included the safeguarding policy.
- The inspector scrutinised the single central record and discussed leaders' safer recruitment processes.

## Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector



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