

# Abbey School for Exceptional Children

10-12 Abbey Square, Chester CH1 2HU

**Inspection date**

12 October 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 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(j)*

- The school has a clear written curriculum policy, which is suitable for the age range of children, pupils and students at the school. Across all key stages, pupils follow personalised curriculums which are broad and balanced. All pupils have equal access to an appropriate subject offer. Schemes of work are carefully crafted to meet the individual learning needs of the pupils, and they are adapted to suit both their age and their aptitudes. Curriculums do not undermine fundamental British values. The curriculum is likely to remain suitable if the material change is approved.
- Lesson plans show that teaching is suitably designed to enable children and pupils to acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding according to their ability. Subject curriculums are implemented effectively. Teachers motivate pupils to learn by preparing interesting and appropriate work. Pupils are given a broad range of opportunities to learn and progress in all aspects of their education. The implementation of the curriculum is likely to remain suitable if the material change is approved.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the material change is granted.

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

*Paragraphs 5, 5(b), 5(b)(i)*

- The school actively promotes mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The programmes for personal, social, health and economic education contain well-chosen topics to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including British values. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their self-esteem and their self-confidence through lesson activities and trips and visits to places of interest.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the material change is granted.

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

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

- The proprietor body has put in place a safeguarding policy that has regard to the latest guidance issued by the Secretary of State. This policy is available on the school's website. Leaders provide a copy of the policy to parents and carers on request. The policy is likely to remain suitable if the request for an increase in pupil numbers is granted.
- Staff receive frequent and regular updates on safeguarding issues and they undertake extensive safeguarding training. This helps them to know how to spot any signs of abuse or neglect that pupils may face. These procedures are likely to ensure that staff continue to recognise and respond to any concerns about pupils' safety and welfare if the request for an increase in pupil numbers is granted.
- The proprietor body also makes the required pre-employment checks on staff and records them appropriately. The proprietor body's processes to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are likely to remain appropriate should the material change be agreed.

#### *Paragraphs 11, 12*

- The proprietor body has ensured that appropriate health and safety and fire safety policies and procedures are in place. These policies will likely remain appropriate if the material change is approved.
- The proprietor body has ensured that an appropriate fire risk assessment is in place. The school undertakes regular checks on fire safety equipment and procedures. For example, the fire alarms and doors are checked on a weekly basis. Annual maintenance of items such as fire extinguishers ensures that they are in operational condition. These checks will likely continue if the request for an increase in pupil numbers is granted.
- The school provided evidence that leaders understand, and are compliant with, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These arrangements are likely to remain met if the proposed material change is granted.

#### *Paragraph 14*

- Pupils are well supervised at all times, including during lessons and at social times. Staff numbers are sufficient to ensure this.
- There is a planned increase in staff numbers to accommodate the rise in pupil numbers. This indicates that the supervision of pupils is likely to be appropriately organised if the proposed material change is granted.

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

- The school's policies on risk assessment and risk management are up to date and thorough. Individual risk assessments exist for all educational and extra-curricular activities, and for all pupils. Risk assessments are used effectively to identify risks and to take steps to reduce potential hazards. The risk assessment policy is likely to remain appropriate should the material change be granted.
- 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 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)(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(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6)*

- The single central record is complete and up to date. It contains all the required information on all members of staff.
- All the necessary checks on the background of staff and their suitability to work with children are made. These include checks under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008. These checks ensure that leaders, including members of the proprietor body, are suitable to manage a school.
- The school makes use of supply staff. The school ensures that supply staff are subject to appropriate checks before they start working at the school.
- All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

#### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

*Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)*

- There are suitable toilet facilities for the proposed increase in pupil numbers. Toilet facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils. They are all individual toilets that are lockable from the inside. Washing facilities are available in all toilets. The temperature of the hot water does not pose a scalding risk to users. Facilities exist for changing in the accessible toilet for people who have a disability. All toilets are clean and well appointed.
- Pupils have ready access to drinking-water throughout the school day in each classroom. Drinking-water is clearly labelled.
- There are separate boys' and girls' changing and shower facilities in the school site.

*Paragraphs 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)*

- Each building has a medical room for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils. Each medical room has a bed, a lockable first-aid kit, a medicine cupboard and a sink with hot and cold running water. The medical rooms are close to a toilet.

*Paragraphs 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b)*

- The school's premises and facilities are maintained to a very high standard, ensuring that the health, safety and welfare of pupils are well catered for. The school has sufficient space to accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers without pupils' health, safety and welfare being compromised.
- The acoustic conditions of the classrooms, including the new building, ensure that classrooms are suited to the activities that take place within them.

- The lighting in all rooms is suitable. External lighting is in place outside all of the school's buildings. Access through main doorways and gates is via keypads and magnetic fobs.

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

- The school has three separate outside spaces, which pupils can use during physical education or to play outside.
- All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

#### 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 and senior leaders have a strong knowledge and understanding of the learning needs and provision for children in the early years and pupils in key stages 1 to 5.
- The proprietor body has a good understanding of the standards. Members of the proprietor body work closely with the school's advisory board to support and challenge leaders. 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 the 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

- The proprietor body has 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	10304549

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 day school
Proprietor	Abbey School Ltd
Chair	Barnabas Borbely
Headteacher	Katy Lee
Annual fees (day pupils)	£89,356
Telephone number	01244 960000
Website	<a href="http://www.abbeyschool.com">www.abbeyschool.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@abbeyschool.com">office@abbeyschool.com</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	13 to 15 September 2022

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	4 to 19	4 to 19	4 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	90	110	110

## Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	90	110
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	90	110
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	90	100
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	90	110

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	25	25
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	109	133

## Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection was 1 to 5 September 2022.
- Abbey School for Exceptional Children is in three adjacent Grade II listed buildings in the centre of Chester. The school is based at 8, and 10-12, Abbey Square, Chester, CH1 2HU. One building serves as an office and the other two buildings are the school.
- The school provides for children, pupils and students with autism. 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.
- The school is currently registered for 85 pupils. There are currently 90 pupils on the school's roll. This has been agreed with the Department for Education.
- The chair of the proprietor body is Barnabas Borbely, who is the sole director.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This material change inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education because the proprietor body requested a further increase in pupil numbers.
- A material change inspection also took place in April 2023. This was because the proprietor body requested an increase in pupil numbers.
- The inspection considered the day school and not the linked residential provision.
- The school provides for children, pupils and students with autism.
- The inspector made a tour of the premises and checked the suitability of the premises against the relevant standards.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders during the inspection. He spoke on the telephone with the sole director of the proprietor body.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents and policies, including those relating to safeguarding, curriculum, health and safety, fire checks, staff training, behaviour and the maintenance of buildings and appliances.
- The inspector scrutinised the school's single central record and made checks on the suitability of staff. The school's work to promote pupils' safety, health and welfare was checked, including talking with some pupils.

## Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector



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