

# St Michael Abbey School

Main Building, Oldwood Road, St Michael's, Tenbury Wells,  
Worcestershire WR15 8PH

**Inspection date**

18 June 2025

## Overall outcome

**The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens**

Boarding provision outcome

**The school is likely to meet all the national minimum standards when it opens**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g) to 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2), 3 to 4.*

- The proprietor and school leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn. Leaders have high ambitions for pupils who will attend the proposed school. They have formulated a clear and ambitious curriculum that details their intentions about how pupils will progressively build on their knowledge and understanding over time. This includes helping pupils build up their self-confidence and well-being.
- The curriculum and schemes of work are detailed and well thought out. Leaders intend to employ subject specialists for each subject to help deliver their ambitious curriculum. As some pupils are likely to come from overseas, the school has thought carefully about how it will support pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The schemes of work consider sensibly the likely needs of EAL.
- The proposed curriculum is likely to enable pupils to develop their speaking and listening, literacy, numeracy and scientific skills and knowledge. This is because plans are clear and tailored to the needs of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), while at the same time focusing on academic excellence. The school knows that many pupils are likely to arrive with limited literacy levels in English. The reading and literacy strategy in place is appropriate and, if implemented well, is likely to lead to pupils catching up quickly and improving their English proficiency levels.
- The school has developed a suitable plan to ensure that pupils receive impartial careers advice and guidance in key stages 3 and 4. This is proposed to include experiences of the world of work, visits to universities and guest speakers from the world of business.

- The school has set out clearly its expectations of how pupils should behave. The behaviour policy specifies clearly the proposed procedures and strategies that staff will employ to help ensure lessons are free from disruptions. This policy is likely to support pupils to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.
- Leaders have created a suitable assessment framework to enable them and staff to check on what pupils can do and know. The assessment documents have been adapted to match the learning that is outlined in the schemes of work. Plans to check on individual pupils' learning are included in lesson design. If implemented effectively, these policies are likely to provide information on how well pupils are progressing through the intended curriculum.
- The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) provision is underpinned by many policies and strategies designed to meet the needs and interests of pupils. Consequently, the PSHE provision is likely to reflect the values and ethos of the school. For example, the proprietor and leaders want all pupils to strive to reach their full potential, and this is included in the PSHE programme. The school aims for pupils to become confident, independent leaders of the future and be well prepared for the next stage of their lives. If implemented, these schemes are likely to equip pupils with the knowledge they need to become active citizens in modern society.
- The curriculum documentation has clear strands about how the school proposes to encourage respect for all the different protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010, including disability and sexual orientation. These have been adapted to be age-appropriate to meet the needs of the pupils the school wishes to admit.
- The school's relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum is well organised and age appropriate. Leaders have clearly considered how staff will be trained to have the knowledge and skills they need to teach this effectively.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school is granted permission to open.

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

### *Paragraph 5 to 5(d)(iii)*

- The proposed schemes and policies for the teaching of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and PSHE education are clear and coherent. They reflect the ethos of the school as set out in the curriculum policy. The schemes are specific to this school and mirror leaders' high ambitions for pupils.
- The proposed schemes are clear in what should be taught. For example, plans include the teaching of religious studies and RSE for all pupils in an age-appropriate way. If implemented effectively, these schemes are likely to ensure that staff are clear about what to teach and in what order.
- The PSHE provision is likely to ensure that pupils will gain a good understanding of fundamental British values, the Equality Act 2010 and other aspects of pupils' SMSC development. It focuses heavily on pupils' mental and physical well-being. The school aims to ensure that all pupils learn to look after themselves and each other.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the school is granted permission to open.

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

#### *Paragraphs 7 to 16(b)*

- The proprietor's arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare and safety of pupils at the school and boarding provision are likely to be effective. The proposed policies are fit for purpose and adhere to government guidelines.
- The proprietor and leaders have created policies that are specific and unique to the school and its boarding provision. This means that staff are likely to have clear guidelines about what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Relevant safeguarding policies clearly outline the process and procedures staff will follow and how records will be kept.
- The proposed child protection and health and safety policies are clear and fit for purpose. The school refers to up-to-date guidance and leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the statutory guidance for keeping children safe in education. If implemented, these policies are likely to ensure that staff understand their safeguarding duties, roles and responsibilities to act in the best interests of children.
- There is suitable provision for first aid on site. The school has suitable medical rooms for the treatment of anyone being sick or ill at school. The school has given careful consideration to the potential needs the pupils may have. For example, it has created numerous well-being and quiet spaces for pupils to have some time out where required.
- The proposed plans for the supervision of pupils are suitable, including in the boarding provision. The school is planning to employ additional non-teaching support staff to make sure that pupils are well supported and cared for.
- The proposed risk-assessment policy is appropriate. Suitable risk assessments to identify potential risks to pupils and staff have been completed. For example, leaders have completed a checklist on all potential risks in the extensive school grounds and have carefully considered what the potential risks are. They have taken mitigating actions on all identified risks, such as security fencing around the school lake.
- Fire-risk assessments have been completed by qualified professionals. Leaders have acted on the recommendation and put in place strategies to mitigate any identified risks.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the school is granted permission to open.

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

#### *Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(3), 19(1) to 19(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(5) to 21(6)*

- Leaders are knowledgeable about safer recruitment. The proprietor has created a suitable single central record (SCR) template. The proprietor and leaders demonstrate the necessary knowledge and understanding to make sure that an SCR is completed accurately and appropriately.

- The proprietor has made all the necessary pre-employment checks on staff, including any staff who care for, train, supervise or are in charge of boarders prior to their appointment. The checks have been accurately recorded on the SCR. This includes checking that staff have not been prohibited from teaching. Section 128 checks have been made to ensure managers' suitability to work at the school.
- The proprietor does not plan to use supply staff at the school. However, they and leaders are clear about the safeguarding checks that need to be made on these staff should they ever be needed.
- There are clear processes in place to check that any volunteers and contractors are suitable to be on the school premises.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the school is granted permission to open.

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

*Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(1)(c), 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25 to 29(1)(b), 30*

- The school grounds are part of the site of St Michael Abbey and sits in about 25 acres of countryside. The proprietor has extensively refurbished the site, including the boarding provision and numerous separate buildings, one of which is an 18th century cloister. Most of the work is complete except for some cosmetic work in a small number of buildings.
- The proprietor has ensured that all classrooms have suitable acoustic conditions and lighting and are equipped with modern technology. Rooms are appropriate for the proposed activities.
- Toilet facilities for pupils are suitable. They have an adequate supply of cold and hot water for pupils to use.
- The proprietor has ensured that there are suitable rooms where pupils who feel unwell can be treated or first aid administered.
- The school site benefits from extensive outside spaces including, for example, sports fields, a sports hall and game courts for pupils to use for sport and physical education.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the school is granted permission to open.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraph 32(1) to 32(2)(b), 32(2)(d) to 32(1)(g), 32(1)(j) to 32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(d) to 32(3)(d), 32(3)(f)*

- The school has a website which provides detailed and helpful information for prospective parents and carers. It includes the necessary information the school is required to provide. This also includes extensive information about the school's boarding provision and fees.
- The proprietor has ensured that all relevant policies in relation to the school are available on the school's website.

- Leaders also plan to share relevant information and documents with potential parents in paper form, if requested.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the school is granted permission to open.

## Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

### *Paragraph 33 to 33(k)*

- The proposed policy outlines the procedures that will be followed in case of a complaint. Leaders aim to resolve a complaint informally, but the policy explains the steps the school will take where this is not possible.
- The policy includes appropriate timelines in which a complaint will be dealt with. It also refers to a panel hearing should a complainant remain dissatisfied. The policy makes appropriate references to the make-up of the panel and purpose of the panel hearing.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the school is granted permission to open.

## Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

### *Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)*

- The proprietor and leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the requirements to make sure that the standards are met continually and consistently.
- The proprietor and leaders demonstrate the necessary knowledge, expertise and understanding to make sure that pupils' SEND needs are identified, assessed and catered for.
- The proprietor has given due regard to how the school will make sure pupils learn and are safe.
- There is currently not a governing body. The proprietor intends to appoint a governing body once the school has been granted permission to open.
- The proprietor and leaders have developed all required policies. These policies have been written with thought and attention to the pupils they plan to admit.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the school is granted permission to open.

## Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has a suitable accessibility plan in place. This plan refers to the school's curriculum and the physical space. It outlines the steps leaders will take to make education at the proposed school accessible to the pupils they plan to admit. Therefore, the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are likely to be met.

## Boarding provision

The likely overall experiences and progress of children and young people

*Paragraphs 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.7, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 7.3, 11.4, 18.1, 18.2, 18.3, 18.4, 18.5, 20.9*

- Suitable accommodation is available on the school site. There are four boarding houses which can provide accommodation for up to 120 boarders. Two houses were seen. They have single occupancy rooms with some rooms having en-suite toilet and shower facilities. All rooms have a single bed, desk, chair, storage facilities and appropriate lighting. Two houses were being refurbished, and if refurbished to the same standard, will be suitable accommodation.
- Access to the boarding houses is controlled by secure card and key code pads. The grounds are monitored by CCTV cameras. In addition, a security fence is being erected to improve the overall security and access to the boarding houses and school.
- Suitable risk assessments of sleeping and living arrangements are based on age and gender. The houses are designed in such a way that children of one gender have sole use of that house or section of that house.
- Rooms are set aside for staff. Boarders will not be able to access these areas. Boarders will be able to contact staff if they need to.
- Within the school site, there is a well-being suite. This includes areas for children who are unwell. A qualified nurse will be available during the day and on call at other times. Boarding staff will complete first-aid and administration of medication training. The boarding provision has arrangements in place to care for children who are unwell or may need to be isolated because of illness.
- Boarders will have their meals within the main school. Meals will be provided by the school's catering staff. Each boarding house has its own common room which provides pupils with facilities to store and prepare drinks and snacks. In addition, there will be a second common room for sixth-form students within the main school where they can make drinks and snacks.
- The head of care has planned a full timetable of enrichment activities for boarders. This will include on-site and off-site activities and trips.
- Leaders have considered the cultural and religious needs of boarders. Arrangements are in place to ensure all dietary needs are met, that boarders have access to quiet spaces for prayers and meditation, as well as access to places of worship.
- Boarders will have access to an independent listener. This will give boarders the opportunity to share any concerns with someone outside of the school.
- This standard in this part is likely to be met.

#### How well children are likely to be helped and protected

*Paragraphs 1.1, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 9.1, 10.2, 19.1, 20.1*

- The leadership team understands the procedures to follow and has systems in place to keep children and staff safe.
- The safeguarding policy meets statutory requirements. Senior leaders are suitably trained, including safer recruitment and being the designated safeguarding lead. New staff will have a comprehensive induction which will include safeguarding training and information about how to raise concerns and whistleblowing.

- Leaders have a good understanding of safeguarding issues. They have made links with the local authority safeguarding team and designated officer.
- There is a clear fire safety management plan. The boarding houses recently had their fire risk assessments completed. Actions from those assessments were being completed during this visit.
- The boarding team will include a head of care, four house parents, four assistant house parents and visiting tutors. The head of care and one house parent have been recruited following safer recruitment practices. Leaders are in the process of recruiting to the other positions. Leaders are confident these positions will be filled due to the number of expressions of interest from those who would like to work at the school.
- The head of care has planned a comprehensive induction and training programme for staff. This will also include weekly one-to-one meetings with staff during the first six months.
- There is a statement of boarding principles which is available. The head of care is working on the statement of practice which will be available to boarders and parents shortly.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

#### The likely effectiveness of leaders and managers

##### *Paragraph 2.2, 2.6 2.7*

- The leadership team is knowledgeable and experienced in their field of work. They have a clear understanding of the requirements for registration.
- Leaders are aspirational and have a clear vision for the education and boarding provision. Suitable staffing ratios are planned with recruitment arrangements in place.
- The head of care is in post. She is an experienced head of care and teacher. She has been fully involved in the development of the boarding provision and recruitment of staff.
- All policies and procedures are in place to ensure the welfare, health and safety of boarders, staff and visitors.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for boarding schools**

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated requirements.

## Proposed school details

Unique reference number	151571
Social care unique reference number	2843928
DfE registration number	885/6097
Inspection number	10397845

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent boarding school
Proprietor	St Michael's Abbey School Ltd
Chair	Li Lui
Headteacher	Robert Ford
Annual fees (day pupils)	£23,622 to £25,827
Annual fees (boarders)	£34,863 to £47,880
Telephone number	01584 701 702
Website	<a href="http://www.sma-school.com">www.sma-school.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@sma-school.com">office@sma-school.com</a>

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	0	13 to 19	13 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	0	200	200

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
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Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	0	200
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of boarders on roll	0	120
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	0	0
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	0	0
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	0	0

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	1	34
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	1	46

## Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located in a rural setting just outside of the town of Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire. It sits in 25 acres of countryside adjacent to St Michael's Abbey. The main building of the school is a Grade II listed building dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The site is owned by the proprietor, as are the extensive outdoor spaces and boarding houses. The school is currently not operating.
- Leaders propose that the school will cater for day and boarding pupils, some of whom are likely to come from overseas.
- The proposed school will not have any religious character.
- The proposed school does not intend to use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to determine whether or not the proposed school is likely to meet the independent school standards if it is given permission to open. This is the proposed school's first inspection.
- The lead inspector telephoned the school's headteacher two working days before the inspection to discuss the proposed school and the details of the inspection.
- The lead inspector conducted a tour of the premises with the headteacher, proprietor, designated deputy headteacher, school manager and operations manager to evaluate the suitability of the school premises. The social care inspector visited the aspects of the school site in relation to boarding, including the boarding accommodation and parts of the school premises.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents and policies, submitted electronically by leaders.
- During the on-site visit, the inspectors met with the proprietor, headteacher, designated deputy headteachers, office managers, school manager, operations manager and head of boarding. The inspectors discussed safeguarding and welfare arrangements as well as the school's proposed curriculum.
- The inspector reviewed some of the school's documentation and policies together with leaders and the proprietor.

## Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Debbie Bond

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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