



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Report for an Additional Inspection

Abbotsholme School

March 2022

School's details

School	Abbotsholme School			
DfE number	830/6005			
Address	Abbotsholme School Rocester Uttoxeter Staffordshire ST14 5BS			
Telephone number	01889 590217			
Email address	enquiries@abbotsholme.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Simon Ruscoe-Price			
Proprietor	Achieve Education			
Age range	2 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	299			
	Day pupils	217	Boarders	82
	EYFS	50	Juniors	59
	Seniors	136	Sixth Form	54
Date of visit	17 March 2022			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Founded in 1889 and situated in rural Derbyshire, Abbotsholme School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. The school was purchased in 2017 by Achieve Education, a company registered in China. The school is assisted in governance by an advisory board of directors. The school has identified 98 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND and one pupil who has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 30 pupils. The previous regulatory compliance inspection was in February 2020.

Purpose of the visit

- 1.2 This was an unannounced additional inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2015. The focus of the visit was in the senior school.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 11	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour), NMS 12	Met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying), NMS 12	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety), NMS 6	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils), NMS 15	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment), NMS 6	Not met
Part 5, paragraph 25 (maintenance of premises and accommodation), NMS 5	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management), NMS 13	Not met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 11]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school does not meet the standards.
- 2.4 The school implements its safeguarding arrangements effectively in many areas but implementation in some required areas is not consistent.
- 2.5 The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies have the appropriate level of advanced training for their roles. The DSL provides regular training for staff, including a recent session on professional boundaries, as well as giving updates as and when necessary. New staff have appropriate induction training, which includes all required documents and procedures, and boarding staff receive further training appropriate to their roles. Staff are clear about expectations of their conduct and reported that they are confident to use whistleblowing procedures if necessary. Pupils reported that they feel safe and have many adults to whom they could report any concerns. Recruitment policies and procedures are effective, the school has robust systems in place to monitor use of the internet and educates pupils suitably about how to stay safe online.
- 2.6 The DSL liaises closely with children's services in the relevant local authorities and reports to the LADO appropriately for advice. The safeguarding team works in close partnership with parents and carers. However, safeguarding records lack coherence and rely for completeness on additional detail understood by individuals in the safeguarding and senior leadership teams but not recorded in centralised records. This means that the records themselves are not comprehensive. This prevents effective overview of pupils' needs in individual cases, including those of child-on-child abuse. This fragmentation prevents effective monitoring of actions going forward and of resultant outcomes for pupils, whether boarding or day. Where serious safeguarding concerns have occurred and action taken, systematic assessment of the on-going risks to the pupils concerned has not been made, preventing adequate provision of measures to reduce identified risks. Referrals to the LADO of allegations against adults working in the school are made appropriately. The school was unable to confirm written referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) in all cases of staff misconduct.
- 2.7 Governance receives termly reports on safeguarding practice and undertakes an annual review of policy and procedures but this process has not identified and remedied the weaknesses found in safeguarding implementation by the visit.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9; NMS 12] and bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10; NMS 12]

- 2.8 The school meets the standards.
- 2.9 Suitable measures to promote good behaviour and guard against bullying are implemented effectively, including in boarding. An appropriate log of serious sanctions is kept and sanctions are commensurate with the poor behaviour recorded. Day-to-day logs of behaviour and bullying enable effective monitoring of behaviour by tutors and pastoral leaders who meet regularly to discuss pupils of concern. Records show that incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils confirm this and say that any

bullying is effectively and promptly dealt with should it occur. Pupils understand the expectations of high behaviour which are central to the school's ethos and the necessity for appropriate sanctions. They perceive sanctions to be administered fairly in the event of poor behaviour or bullying and inspection evidence confirms this.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11; NMS 6] and maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25 and NMS 5]

2.10 The school meets the standards.

2.11 The school has a suitable health and safety policy which it implements effectively. All buildings, including boarding accommodation are maintained to a standard which ensures the health and safety of the pupils. Boarding accommodation, including that for the sixth form, is secure, well-lit and ensures the safety of the resident pupils.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14, NMS 15]

2.12 The school meets the standards.

2.13 Scrutiny of supervision rotas for both day and boarding times shows that supervision is sufficient to ensure the safety of pupils, including boarders. Pupils say that sufficient staff are always visible or easily available to them and that they feel safe. Supervision on school trips is effective. Recent changes to seating arrangements for staff on school coaches, so that they are distributed more widely, has improved supervision further.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 6]

2.14 The school does not meet the standards.

2.15 The school has a suitable risk assessment policy. Procedures for assessing risks on the school site and its buildings and for educational visits are effective and staff report that they understand how to complete risk assessments for these. However, the school has not assessed risk adequately for pupils' ongoing welfare needs following serious incidents of safeguarding.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

2.16 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 13]

2.17 The school does not meet the standards.

2.18 The proprietor does not ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils. The current methods of recording and monitoring serious safeguarding incidents lack coherence and do not ensure the ongoing welfare of the pupils concerned.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 11

- Ensure that records of safeguarding incidents are coherent; in particular that they show follow-up actions, including recording and monitoring an effective assessment of the ongoing risk to the pupils involved in serious incidents, and recording referrals to statutory bodies effectively, including to the TRA [paragraphs 7(a) and (b) and 8(a) and (b); NMS 11.1 and, for the same reason, 13.8].
- Ensure that review of safeguarding by the proprietor or their representative is sufficiently robust to ensure compliance with requirements in all areas of safeguarding [paragraphs 7(a) and (b) and 8(a) and (b); NMS 11.1]

ISSR Part 7, Risk Assessment, paragraph 16; NMS 6

- Ensure that appropriate and systematic assessments of risk to pupils' safety and welfare are carried out following serious safeguarding incidents in order to actively promote the well-being of the pupils concerned [paragraph 16(a) and (b); NMS 6.3].

ISSR Part 8, Leadership and Management, paragraph 34; NMS 13

- Ensure that leaders and managers demonstrate the good skills and knowledge necessary to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the standards are met consistently and pupils' well-being is actively promoted. In particular, ensure that records of child protection incidents are systematically and effectively maintained and monitored, including in boarding [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); NMS 13.1, 13.3–13.5 and 13.8].

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with a group of governors. They visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.