



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Progress Monitoring Inspection Report

Abbotsholme School

June 2023

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			
Chair of proprietors	Mrs Tong Zhou			
Proprietor	Achieve Education			
Age range	2 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	299			
	Day pupils	235	Boarders	64
	EYFS	70	Juniors	43
	Seniors	139	Sixth Form	47
Date of inspection	7 June 2023			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Abbotsholme School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated in rural Derbyshire. It was founded in 1889 and purchased in 2017 by Achieve Education, a company registered in China which has responsibility for oversight. 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 7 pupils have an educational, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 30 pupils. The previous inspection was a progress monitoring inspection in October 2022.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced progress monitoring inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the unannounced progress monitoring inspection on 6 and 13 October 2022. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2022. The focus of the visit was on the senior school.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	Met

2. Inspection findings

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

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 meets the standards.
- 2.4 Scrutiny of records together with discussions with pupils and staff indicate that the safeguarding policy and procedures are now implemented effectively. Pupils, including boarders, stated confidently that they know how to stay safe, including online. They confirmed that they can talk to staff if they are worried or concerned, will receive a response and that action will be taken when they express concerns. Pupils' safety is ensured with regard to any visitors with access to the school grounds, which are the focus of suitable risk assessments. Procedures should any child go missing are appropriate and understood.
- 2.5 Those responsible for safeguarding hold senior positions within the school. They are suitably knowledgeable and appropriately trained, including for multi-agency working. Key information is shared regularly between safeguarding, pastoral and healthcare staff, taking into account each individual pupil's physical, emotional, mental health and learning needs and wishes. This information is used to agree appropriate action, including the drawing-up and implementation of individual risk assessments for pupils. Training for all other staff and for the proprietor and advisory board directors is conducted regularly as required.
- 2.6 Staff are knowledgeable about changes in recent legislation, including the management of children's mental wellbeing, contextual safeguarding, child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence. There is appropriate understanding of, and provision for the needs of pupils with protected characteristics, including in relation to gender. Suitable risk assessments are implemented for vulnerable pupils. Staff understand the principles underpinning the school's code of conduct for staff. Staff demonstrate appropriate confidence in safeguarding procedures such as when using the digital reporting system to monitor pupils' behaviour and any concerns. They confirmed accurately in discussion with inspectors the procedures for making a referral, including the importance of low-level reporting and whistleblowing. The school now seeks advice and refers concerns to the local authority designated officer (LADO) for safeguarding appropriately. They understand their responsibility to make referral to relevant statutory bodies once investigations by themselves and external agencies are completed. They now fulfil this requirement effectively.
- 2.7 The director on the advisory board who is responsible for safeguarding on behalf of the proprietor meets regularly with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and members of the extended safeguarding team. The directors now maintain effective oversight of safeguarding policies and their implementation. Reports are given regularly to the board so that they are well informed. These highlight appropriate details of any safeguarding incidents. The chair of the advisory board, together with the director for safeguarding review, these effectively. This ensures that the advisory board provides effective scrutiny and oversight on behalf of the proprietor. This includes oversight of the use of technology. In addition to continuous monitoring, a suitable annual review of safeguarding is undertaken in line with guidance from the local authority.

- 2.8 Since the previous visits, the school has ensured that all required checks are completed before an individual takes up employment. Staff who are responsible for the recruitment process have now been suitably trained and suitably efficient systems are in place. When the school accepts a pre-existing criminal record check because the new appointee has been working in another school, or a DBS check has not been seen, a barred list check is carried out before the member takes up post.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 19]

- 2.9 The school meets the standards.
- 2.10 The school has an appropriate formal recruitment policy, and members of staff who implement it are now trained effectively. All appropriate checks have been carried out on staff appointed since the previous inspection before they commence work at the school. Where DBS checks have been delayed the school has taken appropriate steps and assessed any risk effectively. Staff files are kept up to date and information within them supports that recorded on the single central register (SCR), which is now an accurate record. The advisory board of directors now undertakes a regular and effective audit of recruitment arrangements. Visitors to the boarding accommodation are also checked and suitably supervised.

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

- 2.11 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 2]

- 2.12 The school meets the standards.
- 2.13 The advisory board of directors ensures that the leadership and management of the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that all the independent school standards are now consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils. They have fully implemented the action plan submitted following the previous inspection with regard to safeguarding pupils, the suitability of staff and the recording of recruitment checks.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Summary of evidence

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

Inspectors

Mrs Daphne Cawthorne

Reporting inspector

Dr Gerard Silverlock

Assistant reporting inspector