



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION
FOR SCHOOLS WITH RESIDENTIAL PROVISION
ABBOTSHOLME SCHOOL**

FEBRUARY 2017



School's details

School	Abbotsholme School			
DfE Number	830/6005			
Registered charity number	528612			
Address	Abbotsholme School Rocester Uttoxeter Staffordshire ST14 5BS			
Telephone number	01889 590217			
Email address	enquiries@abbotsholme.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Steven Fairclough			
Chair of governors	Dr Paul Kirtley			
Age range	2 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	289			
	Boys	144	Girls	145
	Day pupils	192	Boarders	97
	EYFS	40	Juniors	52
	Seniors	149	Sixth Form	48
Pupils' ability	Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is average.			
Pupils' needs	The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 117, 4 of whom have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They require support with conditions such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. English is an additional language (EAL) for 29 pupils, 23 of whom receive additional support for their English.			
History of the school	The school was founded in 1889 as a boarding school for boys. It is now a co-educational day and boarding school.			

Ownership and governing structure	A board of governors works closely with a consultative committee.
School structure	The school is on one site and comprises an Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS), a preparatory school, a senior school and sixth form. All are overseen by the headmaster, working with a senior management team.
Other useful information	The school has four boarding houses: Flaxfield for girls aged 9 to 14; Orchard for girls aged 14 to 18; Cedarholme for boys aged 9 to 18; and Barnfield, a complex of five log cabins for boys and girls in the sixth form. It also has a farm and an equestrian centre.
Inspection dates	07 to 08 February 2017

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards (“the standards”) in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school’s accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school’s most recent statutory inspection.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (‘boarding NMS’). It also comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding NMS. It identifies any standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the standards.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards, including the boarding NMS, following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards and any qualitative concerns identified at their previous inspection.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school’s compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils’ health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents’ complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management, together with the NMS covering the same areas. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

The inspection does not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as:

- (i) the school's aims;
- (ii) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (iii) compliance with data protection requirements;
- (iv) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features;
- (v) contractual arrangements with parents;
- (vi) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups. Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Independent School Standards Regulations](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

SUMMARY EVALUATION

The school does not meet all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and associated requirements, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

PART 1

Quality of education provided

In the preparatory school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.

At GCSE in the years 2012 to 2015, performance has been in line with the national average for maintained schools.

In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2012 to 2015 have been below the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.

The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.

The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

PART 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.

The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.

PART 3

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.

An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.

The school does not have sufficiently thorough arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, as these do not pay due regard to current statutory guidance. The required checks of the suitability of staff have not always been completed prior to appointment, including those for prohibition from teaching and prohibition from management.

The standard on child protection (NMS 11) is not met for the same reason and represents a failure to safeguard boarders.

The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9-16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 2-4, 6-10, 12, 15 and 16 are met, but those in paragraphs 7(a) and (b), and 8(a) and (b), and in NMS 11 are not met.

Action point 1

- **the school must ensure that its arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils pay due regard to statutory guidance, including ensuring that checks are made against the list of those prohibited from teaching or management [paragraphs 7(a) and (b) and 8(a) and (b), and NMS 11].**

PART 4

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of proprietors. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised. The school does not appoint guardians.

The school does not always make appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff and supply staff prior to appointment. It has not always carried out the required checks prior to a person taking up an appointment. In the case of supply staff, the school has not always checked a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate obtained by an employment business prior to the person beginning work. The school has not always kept its register of appointments accurately.

The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school in paragraph 20 and NMS 14.2 to 14.4 are met, but those in paragraph 18, 19 and 21, and in NMS 14.1 are not met.

Action point 2

- the school must ensure that appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff and supply staff are carried out prior to a person beginning work in the school, including checks of the person's medical fitness and qualifications; [paragraph 18(3); NMS 14.1]

Action point 3

- the school must ensure, in the case of supply staff, that it receives a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate obtained by an employment business prior to the person beginning work at the school; [paragraph 19(2)(a)(ii); NMS 14.1]

Action point 4

- the school must ensure that all checks are accurately recorded in its single central register of appointments as required. [paragraph 21; NMS 14.1]

PART 5

Premises of and accommodation at schools

Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their medical needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.

The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22-31] and NMS 5 are met.

PART 6

Provision of information

A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for those with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. This also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, and its results in public examinations, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.

The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and statement of boarding principles [NMS 1] are met.

PART 7

Manner in which complaints are handled

Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.

The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.

PART 8

Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Leadership and management actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

The proprietor has not fully ensured that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met.

Failings in Part 3 relating to the required checks upon the suitability of staff, and in Part 4 relating to the requirement to carry out checks prior to appointment and to record them accurately in the school's register of appointments, lead to the failings in Part 8.

The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in sub-paragraphs 34(c) is met but those in sub-paragraphs 34(a) and 34(b), and in NMS 13 are not met.

Action point 5

- **the proprietor must ensure that people with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, so that the Independent School Standards and the NMS for boarding are met consistently [paragraph 34(1)(a) and NMS 13].**

Action point 6

- **the proprietor must ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities at the school fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the Independent School Standards and the NMS for boarding are met consistently [paragraph 34(1)(b) and NMS 13].**

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The inspectors conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teachers, senior members of staff and the chair of governors. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Roberta Georghiou	Reporting inspector
Mrs Kate Tripp	Compliance team inspector (Head of human resources, HMC school)
Mr Keith Metcalfe	Boarding team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)