



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

ABBERLEY HALL SCHOOL

MAY 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Abberley Hall School			
DfE number	885/6005			
Registered charity number	527598			
Address	Abberley Hall School Worcester Worcestershire WR6 6DD			
Telephone number	01299 896275			
Email address	office@abberleyhall.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr William Lockett			
Chair of governors	The Hon David Legh			
Age range	2 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	253			
	Boys	141	Girls	112
	Day pupils	140	Boarders	113
	EYFS	51	Pre-prep	23
	Prep	179		
Inspection dates	10 to 11 May 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. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates on behalf of the DfE, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest report on the work of ISI on the Ofsted website.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection 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 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 unmet standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Diane Gardiner	Reporting inspector
Mrs Helen Lowe	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Helen Skrine	Team inspector for boarding (Head, IAPS school)

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Abberley Hall School is an independent day and boarding school for boys and girls aged between two and thirteen years. The school is a registered charity, led by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, the pre-prep and prep sections of the school have become more closely aligned in terms of sharing an underlying ethos and use of the facilities on site. One-to-one tutoring has been introduced and the new timetable has allowed a greater focus on independent learning.
- 1.2 Abberley Hall School was founded as a Dame School for boys in Kent in 1878 and moved to its current site in Worcestershire in 1916. The school began as a boys' school and became co-educational in 1998. It is split into two sections: the pre-prep, which includes the nursery for children aged two to four years and the pre-prep for pupils aged four to seven years, and the prep for pupils aged seven to thirteen years. The two boarding houses provide accommodation for up to 190 boys and girls. Over half of the prep school pupils are full boarders.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to offer pupils a broad, all-round education in the academic, sporting and creative spheres in order to provide them with a firm social grounding. It also aims to give pupils the chance to be treated as individuals and the opportunity to develop an understanding of their particular strengths, while enjoying their childhood and developing firm friendships.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional, business and farming backgrounds, mostly from White British families living within an hour's drive of the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 45 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia, ASD, ADHD and attachment disorder. All pupils with SEND receive additional specialist help. Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 11 pupils, whose needs are supported by specialist teachers and classroom staff. Data used by the school have identified 36 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 67 other pupils because of their special talents in sport, art, drama and design manufacture.

- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Class 1	Year 1
Class 2	Year 2
Form One	Year 3
Form Two	Year 4
Removes	Year 5
Shells	Year 6
100s	Year 7
Form 6	Year 8

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils achieve high levels of success in scholarships and national competitions for sport, music, art, drama and design manufacture.
- From the early years onwards, pupils are happy, energetic and enthusiastic learners.
- Pupils display strong number skills and apply them effectively in subjects such as music, art design manufacture and geography.
- Opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills through collaborative learning and problem solving are less well embedded for the younger children.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Both day and boarding pupils across the age range work very well together and are mindful of the value of kindness and gentleness, due to the strong family atmosphere.
- Older pupils enthusiastically take on a wide range of responsibilities within the school community, both in the boarding house and in the school generally.
- Pupils have a very strong understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.

Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Provide time for staff to share existing good practice in the development of higher order thinking skills and independent learning, from the early years onwards.
- Ensure that marking is consistent, timely and provides clear targets for improvement.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The school's aims are met successfully. From the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) onwards, pupils make good progress as they move through the school, resulting in excellent outcomes by the time they leave the school. The school does not take part in National Curriculum tests but the data available, including the results of standardised tests in English and mathematics, scrutiny of books and lesson observations, show attainment to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. Pupils achieve excellent results in selective senior school entrance examinations, with a very high proportion of them gaining awards and scholarships for academic success, music, art, drama, design manufacture and sport.
- 3.3 In the EYFS, children make excellent progress. A programme of engaging and well planned activities ensures that their particular interests and aptitudes are quickly identified and encouraged. Tracking of the children's progress is thorough. This ensures that every child is well supported where gaps in learning are identified, so that appropriate interventions can be put in place at an early stage, such as extra one-to-one support for early language skills. Children quickly develop skills that allow them to make decisions about which activities to choose and how to work closely with their peers. A group explored volume in the water play area and worked collaboratively to ascertain how many smaller containers were needed to fill a larger vessel. Children are happy and actively enjoy their learning when showing off their skills in ballet or making marks in shaving foam to make letters of the alphabet. Staff know their children well. Regular and detailed communication between staff and an improved training programme ensures that pupil needs are well understood and that best practice in planning and evaluation is consistently applied across all age groups and individual needs met as a result. This meets a number of recommendations from the previous report.
- 3.4 Throughout the school, pupils with SEND or EAL achieve at a very high level in relation to their starting points because of the high quality of the support they receive. Pupils of all ages reach their full potential because their individual needs are identified at an early stage and an individual education plan is put in place, which informs pupils, parents and staff of the next steps required to improve learning. One-to-one support and careful planning by class teachers ensures that pupils access the curriculum and progress rapidly. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) progress extremely well in using English confidently. They are assessed on entry and their particular needs are met through a programme of specialist and in-class support. More able pupils are encouraged to extend their own learning and undertake research projects successfully through the personal tutor system in the three most senior years. As a result, by the time they leave the school, pupils are able to take their own learning forward, take risks with their learning and become independent and resilient. Opportunities for independent learning for the younger pupils in the middle years are less well developed.
- 3.5 Across the age range, pupils express their ideas articulately. Younger children confidently discuss the nature of triangles as they use them to create pictures and older pupils demonstrate a confident approach to presenting their research on erosion and the effect of weather on rock formations to their peers. Creative writing is well developed, and improves rapidly as the pupils move through the school, resulting in the older pupils using complex sentence structure as they describe the impact scientists through history have made on our world. Pupils of all ages develop excellent public speaking skills through the wide range of opportunities to participate in speech and language competitions in school and local events.
- 3.6 Pupils display strong number skills and apply them effectively in subjects such as music, art and geography. In Science, Technology, Engineering and Design (STED), mathematical skills learnt in the classroom are extended and applied to design projects as pupils learn the

relevance of numeracy in everyday life. This successfully meets a recommendation from the previous report to develop cross-curricular links in the prep school. Pupils enjoy their learning, as the youngest pupils demonstrated when they confidently manipulated shape and numbers to 20 or beyond and used simple addition and subtraction to solve problems. Older pupils tackle complex problems and enthusiastically try to work out exactly how many notes can be achieved on the school organ when different stops are employed.

- 3.7 Information and communications technology (ICT) skills are well embedded by the time pupils leave the school. A range of devices are used to build confidence as the pupils learn to code, use the internet for research through tablets and record their work in different ways. Younger children demonstrate good keyboard skills as they word process their accounts of visits to London and add interest through the addition of photographs. Older pupils regularly undertake research projects in many subjects and present their findings in a variety of ways, including presentations, which are engaging for younger year groups. The use of ICT for design is at a particularly high level as pupils research their designs for an ergonomically sensitive craft tool that will fit their hands perfectly.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate exceptionally high levels of skill in the performing arts. As part of an ethos which allows pupils to experience an extremely broad range of opportunities to discover their particular interests or strengths, every child is encouraged to learn a musical instrument, sing or play in a number of groups or take part in activities which lead to speech and drama examinations. The numerous opportunities the pupils have to perform result in exceptionally confident and capable performances at all levels. The younger children explore choral techniques, which lay down a good foundation for music throughout the school. Older pupils are highly successful in music board examinations, with some of them achieving Grade 5 before leaving the school or performing in the chapel choir in Worcester Cathedral. Pupils take an active role in assemblies and in termly house performances for prose poetry and public speaking. Artistic skills are extremely well developed over the whole age range. The excellent facilities for art, ceramics and design manufacture and high levels of inspirational specialist teaching encourage pupils to be creative, resilient and determined when tackling projects such as designing and producing ceramic tiles to use in a kitchen or preparing items for scholarship entry, such as a garden table and benches made from recycled materials.
- 3.9 As they move through the school, pupils develop excellent sporting skills, whether as part of a team or for individual sports such as riding, sailing or fencing. All pupils are encouraged to represent the school in sports matches. As a result of the time allocated to physical endeavours and the range of specialist teaching available, pupils of all ages develop their physical fitness and skill for a particularly broad range of events. In recent times, school teams have been very successful in the regional show-jumping event, the epee fencing championships and a number of talented pupils have represented county teams for cricket, rugby and hockey. A high number of pupils have gained sports scholarships to their senior schools over the last few years.
- 3.10 Pupils develop their own interests and talents to an exceptionally high level through an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities. The daily programme of clubs and activities, open to both day pupils and boarders, is a real strength and provides pupils with many opportunities to develop their own interests for music, individual and team sports, bee-keeping, gardening or creative subjects. Confidence and self-esteem blossom, as a result of pupils' participation in activities that help to identify their particular areas of interest or skill.
- 3.11 Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They are enthusiastic and demonstrate unusually high levels of maturity as they support one another in class and in activities around school. They enjoy working together to achieve common goals, as demonstrated when the older pupils worked together to build a full-size display for the Malvern Royal Horticultural Show on

the theme of “Space”, which they had designed. They demonstrate good levels of independence from an early age as they take responsibility for their own personal hygiene and decide whether wearing an overall would be a sensible idea for a messy activity. The vast majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were completely satisfied with all elements of school life.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils are self-aware, confident and independent. They display compassion for those with different needs and are aware of their own responsibilities for improving their performance both in the classroom and in the wide range of activities available to them. They are resilient and demonstrate a range of strategies which ensure that they are able to manage their own emotions and take their learning forward. The strong family ethos evident in the school and the warm and welcoming day and boarding environment provides a home from home in which boarders and day pupils can thrive. The whole school community work together to support each other. The structure for pastoral care enables pupils to be seen as individuals and, when they get things wrong, they receive support that is personal to them. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem develop well through the well-structured personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, a good assembly programme and a wide range of opportunities for them to take on responsibilities within the school community. The pupils' confidence was demonstrated as they delivered their own sports reports in assembly and as they helped to organise aspects of lunchtime.
- 4.3 From the earliest stage, pupils organise themselves well and learn to make decisions about their daily needs and routines as was seen when they understood the need to wear an overall if tackling a messy activity. Pupils have a strong sense of responsibility for their own behaviour and support each other in a mature way for their age. They are effective in managing their relationships with each other and are reflective about how their decisions can have a positive or negative impact upon others. Older pupils show a keen awareness of their responsibility for younger pupils and are quick to offer advice or support as they take on a wide range of leadership roles, such as patrol leaders, around the school. Pupils take an active role in school improvement through the school council, which offers all pupils a forum at which to express their own ideas, and breakfast club for boarders, which provides time to raise areas of concern or praise. As a result, new water fountains have been provided and boarders are allowed to wear home clothes at different times of the week.
- 4.4 Pupils have a well-developed sense of the non-material and spiritual aspects of life. They appreciate opportunities for reflection within their busy day. Pupils enjoy their chapel assemblies and their beautiful environment and look forward to spending time with their friends in the grounds. From the EYFS onwards, pupils demonstrate a keen awareness of the need to look after our planet, as they explain the importance of recycling, reducing our footprint on the world and reusing waste material to make new items. Pupils appreciate music and drama and realise how much better they feel after hearing music they find uplifting.
- 4.5 From an early age, pupils develop a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong. They have a strong understanding and acceptance of the school rules, and the need to work within them, and as a result their behaviour is generally very good. On the few occasions where they make the wrong decision, they feel that they are well supported in understanding the way forward. They are able to make the link with the necessity for rules in the wider national community and show respect for the rule of law. Pupils demonstrate a natural understanding of the needs of others and are strongly supportive of each other and of the school as a whole. The boarders benefit greatly from the warm family atmosphere in the boarding houses, where they learn how to live with others from different parts of the world and share their experiences in a safe and supportive community. New boarders interviewed were keen to share how well supported they were by their peers, making it easy to settle in. A small number of pupils felt that staff were not always fair in the way that sanctions and

rewards were applied but inspectors found the systems for rewards and sanctions to be well organised and generally fair in their application.

- 4.6 Pupils of all nationalities and ages work effectively together, support each other and achieve common goals successfully. The importance to the pupils of the patrol system and the easy and positive relationships between pupils of all ages and staff are significant factors which actively support the social development of every pupil. The many opportunities they have to play together, take part in team-building days in year groups, solve problems in class, work in groups on specific projects or take part in charitable fundraising events ensure that they understand how working together achieves the best results.
- 4.7 Pupils of all ages enjoy taking on positions of responsibility within the school community. Older pupils take on a good range of practical roles in the school including, such as organising pupils as they enter assembly and monitoring aspects of lunch. Older boarders also take on different responsibilities in the boarding houses. The pupils have an excellent understanding of the needs of those who are less fortunate than themselves, both in the UK and abroad. Their work to raise money for a care centre in South Africa, which they visit on bi-annual tours, has been successful in providing wheelchairs and new beds for the residents. Events such as a 100-mile cycle ride, cake sales and a 10-mile walk in the local area have all contributed to the total raised over the year. As part of the leavers' programme, the most senior year group plan and lead an activity day in the outdoor education area for local primary children, thus building effective links with the local community.
- 4.8 Pupils respect those from other cultures and religions and accept each other's differences, strengths and weaknesses. As they move through the school, they develop an increasing awareness of their own culture and that of other world faiths. Pupils possess a strong awareness of the need to support their new friends from different backgrounds, and take pride in helping them to settle into their new environment as well as ensuring that they are confident and happy in the boarding houses.
- 4.9 Pupils have a very strong awareness of what constitutes a healthy and balanced lifestyle. The time allocated to physical pursuits across the curriculum and in free time builds an interest in and love for exercise from an early stage. A new structure for supporting pupils in the management of their emotions, their relationships with each other and when dealing with periods of stress in their lives is an important factor in the development of the pupils' well-being as they move through the school and life. Pupils are keen to show that they make good choices at lunchtime, and understand the need to eat a balanced diet. All staff are responsible for the pastoral needs of the pupils and are supported well to ensure that pupils' individual social, emotional and physical needs are understood and well met.
- 4.10 A vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were supportive of the way that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development, meets their pastoral and welfare needs and helps new boarders to settle easily. They appreciate the way that the school actively promotes good behaviour and promotes the values of democracy, tolerance and respect for those with different faiths or beliefs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. As they leave the school, they are healthy, self-confident and have a balanced view of life which prepares them well for their senior school experience.