



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ABBERLEY HALL SCHOOL

**EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Abberley Hall School

The boarding provision was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	Abberley Hall School
DfE Number	885/6005
EYFS Number	EY305083
Registered Charity Number	527598
Address	Abberley Hall School Abberley Worcester Worcestershire WR6 6DD
Telephone Number	01299 896275
Fax Number	01299 896875
Email Address	john.walker@abberleyhall.co.uk
Head	Mr J G W Walker
Chair of Governors	The Hon David Legh
Age Range	2 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	292
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (176 boys; 116 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 7 5-11: 147 3-5 (EYFS): 36 11-13: 102
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Emma Green
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	25 Jun 2014 to 26 Jun 2014

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing on the Early Years Foundation Stage. The inspection occurs over a period of two continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in June 2011.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted informal discussions with children and examined samples of work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the governor responsible for the EYFS, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Miss Valerie Craven

Early Years Lead Inspector

Miss Victoria Plenderleith

Team Inspector for Early Years (Former Head
Pre-Prep, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- (i) Abberley Hall School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils from the age of two to thirteen years. The school's aims are: to provide the academic, sporting and social grounding which is the foundation for success; to provide pupils with a chance to be treated as individuals; and to encourage pupils to develop an understanding of their particular strengths, enjoy their childhood and make friendships. The school was founded in London in 1889 and moved to its current 90-acre site in Worcestershire in 1916. It began as a boys' school and became co-educational in 1998. Over one-third of the pupils are girls and about half of the pupils are boarders, mainly in the older years. The school was originally proprietorial, but in 1957 ownership was transferred to a charitable trust by the then owner. A member of the family who owned the school is still required to be a governor and the school is now run as an educational trust, with members of the governing body as the trustees. The work of the school is overseen by a board of governors, consisting of a chair of governors and elected members of the board, each with a particular responsibility in the school. The school is located in the village of Abberley, in Worcester. Since the last inspection, the head of the EYFS, who is also the Reception teacher, is now responsible for the Pre-Prep.
- (ii) At the time of the inspection there were 292 pupils on the roll. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises forty-three children between the age of two to five-years-old. Nursery 1 takes children from two to three-years-old, Nursery 2 takes children from three to four-years-old, and the Reception class takes children from four to five-years-old. There are 147 pupils in Years 1 to 6 and 102 pupils between the ages of 11 and 13-years-old.
- (iii) Pupils come from a range of family backgrounds, including parents working in the professions, business, including farming, and the Armed Forces in this country and overseas. From the results of standardised tests, the ability profile of the school is above the national average overall and the school takes pupils with a broad range of ability, including some very able pupils, but also some of average ability and a few with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Very few pupils come from families with minority ethnic backgrounds, but there are a small number of pupils who come from families living in South Korea and Spain. Considerable numbers of pupils join the school at the beginning of Year 4 and numbers in each year group increase significantly. Some pupils joining the school in Year 4 are boarders, but most boarders join in the later years. In the EYFS, none of the children have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or are learning English as an additional language (EAL).
- (iv) National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the EYFS and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Nursery 1	Nursery (2 to 3 years)
Nursery 2	Nursery (3 to 4 years)
Reception	Reception (4 to 5 years)

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with statutory requirements

- 2.1 In order to meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006, those responsible for the registered provision must:
- implement a policy and procedures to safeguard children; these should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB);
 - ensure that the people looking after children are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their roles.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.2 In addition to the above action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that all policies and procedures are consistently applied throughout the EYFS and provide more opportunities for staff to access external training.
 2. Make sure that the welfare needs of all children are met through well-embedded practice.
 3. Further develop planning in the Reception, making it clearer how activities are differentiated to meet all of the children's needs.
 4. Improve outcomes for children through more opportunities to initiate exploration and investigation activities and for them to access a wider range of ICT.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

3.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 3.1 The setting does not yet fully meet the needs of all the children who attend and so requires improvement. In the Nursery the educational programmes are suitable, covering all of the areas of learning, enabling the majority of children to reach their full potential. Caring and supportive staff have created a welcoming environment where children can achieve well in line with the school's values and ethos, and develop their skills appropriately. Assessment is satisfactory overall, through identifying children's learning needs and helping staff to plan age-appropriate activities. Assessment checks for two-year-olds are completed and shared with parents and carers as required. The planning in Reception, however, is not sufficiently developed to make it clear how activities are differentiated to meet all of the needs of children, particularly the older more able children, and reflective practice is not fully utilised in the planning process to accurately identify children's next steps.
- 3.2 Staff plan a variety of timetabled, structured activities, including phonics and literacy. They provide some exploration and investigation experiences, particularly during outdoor activities, for example, using small tools when digging in the garden area. The well-resourced outdoor play areas, including the Nursery garden, enable the younger children in the Nursery to engage in imaginative role play and adventurous physical activities. Older Nursery children have suitable opportunities to develop their language skills through sharing news during the morning session, including opportunities to make choices during indoor and outdoor practical activities. Staff make learning enjoyable, as observed in the Reception class during a 'cress head' activity, when children worked with a partner, looking at the sequence involved in growing cress. All children respond well to the staff's expectations of them and, as a result, they are enthusiastic and motivated learners.
- 3.3 Staff have established good partnerships with children's parents and carers, as seen in the overall positive responses to the pre-inspection parents' questionnaire. Parents were particularly positive about how much their children love coming to the school. Parents are encouraged to be involved in school events, such as organising a charity fete and end-of-term parties, and each class has a parent representative.
- 3.4 A small number of parental criticisms about the level of homework that children receive and the appropriateness of the way the school handles concerns were raised in the questionnaire responses, but the inspection found that suitable homework was provided, especially for the Reception children, and written records show that parental complaints are properly recorded and acted upon in line with the school policy. Staff are available to discuss achievements and progress on a daily basis with parents. Parents are encouraged to share observations, for example, through their child's learning journeys, and are well informed of activities through the school's weekly news letter, referred to as the 'Abberley Babble'. The organised after-school activities are available to the Reception children, and for the younger and older Nursery children there is after-school care.

3.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

- 3.5 The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being requires improvement. Members of staff are caring and supportive, particularly of the youngest children and as a result, children form secure emotional attachments with their key person. Staff work closely with parents and carers to ensure that smooth transitions take place, for example, from the Nursery to Reception and from Reception into Year 1. Staff in the Nursery work effectively together, for example in planning, and share information about each child and their learning journeys, enabling the Nursery staff to be aware of children's individual needs and starting points. Key people have established secure relationships with children. However, whilst day to day practice by individual staff is supportive of children's well-being some of the formal systems required are not in place. Centralised and secure records for the administration of medicines are not maintained and the lunchtime arrangements for the youngest children, that involve walking to and eating in the main school hall, do not fully take account of their welfare needs.
- 3.6 Children feel secure and display confidence, such as in the Nursery, when a child was asked to go and get the younger children to join them for joint registration. They are encouraged to be independent learners and to explore through imaginative play, and are able to talk and play with adults and with each other. Children are encouraged to celebrate a variety of festivals, such as the Chinese New Year through making a model of a dragon. The children's awareness of the need for a healthy diet and physical exercise are enhanced through snack times and cooking activities, as when making vegetable pizzas. The encouragement to eat fresh fruit and vegetables during snack time helps to raise children's awareness of healthy eating, and the use of the outdoor learning environment and swimming activities also fosters children's physical development. Children of all ages understand the importance of washing their hands after going to the toilet, after messy activities and before meals.

3.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

- 3.7 Leadership and management require improvement. Not all policies and procedures are consistently applied throughout the EYFS and there are limited opportunities for staff to access external training to enhance their knowledge and understanding. The staff do work effectively together as a team and this collaborative working contributes to the progress and development of children.
- 3.8 Members of the governing board are involved in the work of the EYFS, including one member of the board who is identified as the EYFS link. Governors have not fully undertaken their duties for oversight in line with statutory requirements, for example, by effectively monitoring the implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures and correct completion of the single central register.
- 3.9 Senior staff promote a positive and inclusive atmosphere to help children thrive. Staff complete appropriate risk assessments and have a genuine concern for the personal development of children. The self-evaluation provides a suitable basis for planning improvements, for example, in the most recent 'development area' for 2012 to 2014, setting out key objectives for the next two years.
- 3.10 Good partnerships have been established with parents and outside professionals, for example, a speech therapist, all contributing to improving outcomes for the

children. Suitable staff appraisals and one-to-one supervisions are completed, focusing on key strengths and areas for development, although due to a lack of access to outside training, these training needs are not always fully met.

3.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 3.11 The overall quality and standards of the early years provision require improvement. The children's achievements and progress meet age-related expectations in most of the learning areas in relation to their various starting points, although the more able children in Reception do not reach their full potential in the areas of knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. Physical development is promoted well for the under-threes, such as through outdoor play activities when skilfully handling small tools and when operating large wheeled toys. Older Nursery children are developing varied speaking and listening skills, for example through effective staff questioning. The children in Reception are learning about blending letter sounds to build words during daily structure phonics activities. They can write simple sentences with a degree of accuracy as part of extended writing. These skills are further extended through daily reading practice at home and at school. They are also able to use mathematical language confidently, such as during a weighing activity, and can understand and manipulate basic numbers. There are, however, limited opportunities for children to initiate exploration and investigation activities. The school acknowledges, through its development plan, that children do not yet have access to a sufficiently wide range of ICT to further develop their skills for the future.
- 3.12 The positive interactions with key staff help to foster children's personal, social and emotional development, for example, when the younger children were encouraged to attempt to solve simple puzzles, promoting sharing and taking turns. Children display good behaviour and they are courteous and respectful towards each other, visitors and staff. Children take delight in receiving praise, for example in Reception, when they receive reward stickers for good work. Since the previous inspection, the school has yet to fully address the recommendations. These include undertaking more rigorous monitoring of the EYFS and using this information, together with the views of parents, in order to identify further priorities for improvement. Children's wellbeing is generally secured by the staff caring for them but there are gaps in some required elements of leadership and management that need to be addressed in order to support the continuous improvement desired by the school to enhance children's life chances.