

Q & As

1. Why has Abberley decided to form an association with Malvern College?

After a long period of consideration, where several strategic options were carefully weighed up, debated and explored, the Abberley board of governors decided unanimously that it was in the best interests of the long-term future of the school to make a formal alliance with Malvern College.

Those keeping an eye on the independent school sector will be aware that it is undergoing a period of change. Many schools are merging, some closing, others are forming groups or expanding. Abberley's governors are certain that the future lies in being part of a strong family of schools, which will be best placed to face the challenges, pressures and opportunities that the sector faces in the coming years. Malvern College has established a family of schools internationally and its association with The Downs Malvern has proved very successful. As a clear-sighted and progressive school with ambitions to continue this growth worldwide Malvern has been keen to include Abberley with its strengths in boarding and pastoral care in the Malvern family of schools. Both schools will benefit from this association. Malvern value what is distinctive about Abberley Hall and are keen to support this.

2. Why Malvern College?

Abberley and Malvern share a very similar ethos and a long history of close collaboration and strong relations. For many years a good proportion of Abberley pupils have gone on from Abberley to Malvern, with great success and happiness. Geographically the schools are close enough to one another to take advantage of the multiple opportunities that will exist for making the most of this close association, be that in terms of expertise, facilities, resources or shared ventures.

3. What are the benefits of this association?

For Abberley there will be immediate and long term benefits: a substantial investment over the next four years will allow Abberley to upgrade and extend its existing facilities, to maintain pace with the changes in technology and to develop its curriculum to the extent we would wish. Furthermore we will be able to share expertise in many areas: best practice in teaching, training, governance, compliance, IT and management systems, as well as to leverage some efficiencies in Finance and HR.

We feel that there will also be benefits in terms of giving our parents, staff and the market a greater degree of confidence in our long term financial security at a time when many schools are suffering from significant financial pressure.

4. We all know some of the Abberley Hall buildings are old and require constant maintenance, and that's a huge financial burden. This 'new arrangement' sounds very like a financial rescue plan to me ?

Abberley Hall is a thriving and popular place – it won the 2018 Worcestershire Education Awards Best School of the Year. This simply recognises that the educational landscape is changing, not least in regard to the growing financial pressures of greater regulation and parental expectations and it increasingly makes sense for schools to align themselves in groups. Certainly the greater financial security offered by this association will allow Abberley Hall to invest in projects that will improve its ability to enhance its provision for the children.

5. Will Abberley pupils still have to pass Common Entrance to get into Malvern?

Yes, all Top Year pupils will continue to take either Common Entrance or Academic Scholarships as a means to enter their next school. Although some senior schools themselves are changing their entrance requirements, there are no plans to stop preparing Abberley pupils for the demanding standard that Common Entrance is. We feel it stretches our pupils academically and gives them a benefit seen in their preparations for GCSEs, not to mention giving them a good target to aim for in their final year, and the satisfaction this brings.

6. Will you still prepare pupils to go to schools other than Malvern College?

Very much so. One of Abberley's defining features is the individual care and attention it gives all its pupils. This stretches from advising families on the best school for their child to preparing them for the entrance requirements for these schools. From the outset Malvern has stated that it has no wish to alter this independence. So we will continue to prepare pupils for pre-tests, interviews and scholarships to the wide range of schools we always have done.

7. Isn't there now a real risk Abberley will lose its identity altogether?

Absolutely not. We are still a separate charity, with our own management team and board of governors. Our particular educational vision with a strong leaning towards boarding and excellent pastoral care is the hallmark of Abberley Hall, and it would be madness to squander such a hard-earned reputation and unique character. Abberley Hall will continue to feed a wide variety of the country's leading schools and maintain a reputation for such.

8. I am still struggling to see why you've gone ahead and done this. As far as I'm aware, everything was running perfectly well, so why change it?

It was simply a question of making the most of an opportunity. A great deal of careful thought and research went into assessing the benefits of this partnership, and we feel it can only be good for Abberley Hall. We are a relatively small school, and it is always important to keep one eye on the road ahead to ensure we can keep doing what we've done so successfully, for so long.

9. Why was this news not shared sooner?

The governors at Abberley and Malvern have spent over two years considering this move and then going through a process of due diligence and discussion to achieve an agreement which is in the best interests of both schools. Inevitably during such a process such sensitive news cannot be shared until it is finalized and certain.

10. Who will lead Abberley going forward?

The Abberley headmaster, supported by his Senior Management Team will continue to lead the school. Abberley will continue to have its own board of governors to which the head will report.

11. Will Abberley's aims, ethos and values change?

While both schools do share a similar ethos, both boards of governors have been absolutely clear that Abberley will continue to keep its own distinctive and particular culture. Malvern has no wish to alter this and values Abberley pupils and the school for who they always have been and will continue to be.

12. Will the Sports Kit Change?

There are no plans to change the Abberley sports kit or colours, and this has played no part in discussions.