



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION

ABBOT'S HILL SCHOOL

MARCH 2017



School's details

School	Abbot's Hill School			
DfE Number	919/6000			
EYFS Number	EY490982			
Registered charity number	311053			
Address	Bunkers Lane Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP3 8RP			
Telephone number	01442 240333			
Email address	enquiries@abbotshill.herts.sch.uk			
Headmistress	Mrs Elizabeth Thomas			
Chair of governors	Mrs Janet Mark			
Age range	6 months to 16 years			
Number of pupils on roll	509			
	Boys	19	Girls	490
	EYFS	63	Prep	171
	Seniors	275	Sixth Form	0
Pupils' ability	Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average.			
Pupils' needs	The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 78. None of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. No pupils have English as an additional language (EAL).			
History of the school	Abbot's Hill School was founded in 1912 as a boarding school for girls. It became a day school in 2003.			
Ownership and governing structure	The school is overseen by a board of governors which currently has nine members.			
School structure	The school is made up of a co-educational nursery			

	and pre-school, a girls' prep school and a girls' senior school.
Other useful information	The school occupies a single site on the edge of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.
Inspection dates	1 to 2 March 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.

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 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 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. 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.

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](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

SUMMARY EVALUATION

The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1

Quality of education provided

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

At GCSE in the years 2014 to 2016, performance has been above the national average for 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.

The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.

PART 3

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; 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.

The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.

PART 4

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required.

The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.

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.

The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] 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. These include 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. They also include 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.

The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is 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.

The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8

Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is outstanding.

As a result of the wealth of appropriate educational experiences and outstanding levels of care provided, all children under two make rapid progress relative to their individual starting points. All children are superbly supported in their learning and development, and transitions are extremely well managed and prepared for. The personal development of children is outstanding. Children are extremely happy and feel safe and secure in the nurturing environment. Safeguarding and welfare requirements are fully met. All staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of the safeguarding procedures and place great importance on children's well-being. Leadership and management are rigorous in evaluating practice across the setting and show a strong commitment to continuous improvement. The recommendations from the previous inspection, to thoroughly evaluate improvement plans to ensure they have a positive impact on children's learning and development and to ensure parents know how they can support and extend learning at home, have been met.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management are outstanding.

The dynamic leadership provided by the leadership team results in an enthusiastic and strong EYFS team of staff who share an ambitious vision to provide high quality education and exemplary levels of care. Leaders ensure that all staff have very high expectations of what babies and children aged under two can achieve in their learning and development. The quality of the provision is enhanced by the strong interest governors take in the setting and the rigour they apply to overseeing policies and procedures. Leadership and management are highly effective in overseeing the education plans, staff practice and the children's records, ensuring that the curriculum is suitably covered and offers a stimulating range of exciting experiences. Strong emphasis is placed on the prime areas of learning for the youngest children: personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development. This ensures firm foundations are set for future learning.

Regular and realistic self-evaluation provides a continuous review of practice and the setting of appropriate targets for improvement and future development. The setting has very strong relationships with parents and daily verbal and written communication, in addition to an annual parent questionnaire, and the setting's 'open door' policy ensures the views of parents are known, considered and responded to. Any issues are dealt with swiftly. The children freely let their likes, dislikes and personal choices be known and children's choices are included in the planning. Parents who talked to inspectors showed overwhelming support and appreciation for all aspects of the setting and said that they would wholeheartedly recommend it to other parents.

Leaders' regular monitoring of the provision and meetings with staff to discuss their professional practice and development ensure that staff are extremely well supported in their roles, and that any training needs are identified and met. This impacts positively on all children's learning and development.

Leaders make certain that all staff actively promote equality, diversity and fundamental British values, as consistently seen in the promotion of respect for others and the appreciation of differences. Staff act as exemplary role models of the high standards of behaviour expected. Rigorous and effective safeguarding procedures, including the prevention of radicalisation and extremism, are given high priority at all times. Leaders ensure that welcoming and stimulating learning environments are created, and that all children are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.

All staff have consistently high expectations of what babies and children under two, including the most able and those with additional needs, can achieve. All staff have a thorough knowledge of the EYFS framework and of how young children learn, and they foster a positive culture and a real commitment to learning. Adults model language highly effectively for babies and toddlers, and they creatively use books to devise guessing games and songs to increase vocabulary. No opportunity is missed for learning as they count out high chairs, talk about what is for lunch or allow the children's 'babies' to enjoy breakfast. Children with advanced language skills are given opportunities to use and extend these skills by playing with older companions. However, staff do not give children using the outdoor area as much challenge or as many opportunities to investigate as possible.

Regular assessments and highly appropriate observations track progress extremely well and are used to plan the next steps of learning for individual children. Parents are encouraged to contribute information to ensure that all children are extremely well-known and all their needs are met. Parents contribute to children's initial assessments, enabling staff to plan precisely for each child as they begin their learning journey. This results in children settling happily and quickly. Continuous monitoring ensures that all children are helped to reach and sometimes exceed expected levels of development, and that they are ready to move seamlessly into their next class.

Staff evaluate their planning daily and make adjustments as necessary to ensure that children are stimulated, have their interests considered, and know how to progress. Staff give meaningful praise to let the children know how well they are doing and successes are celebrated. Staff and parents work closely together to ensure relevant support is provided for children needing particular help or encouragement with their learning and development, and relevant strategies are put in place. Effective relationships have been established with external agencies and they become involved when necessary.

Parents receive much helpful information about the setting and the activities provided so they can support learning at home. All written reports contain detailed information about progress and helpful identification of children's next steps in learning.

Staff create a highly inclusive environment and teaching and learning across the setting promotes equality of opportunity and the recognition of diversity. Understanding of different cultures is encouraged by the celebration of festivals such as Diwali, Holi and Chinese New Year. Multi-cultural resources are used naturally and effectively. Teaching supports children's learning and development extremely well, and equips them with the necessary skills to develop and learn effectively and be ready for the next stage of their learning journey.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding.

Staff create highly positive, stimulating and safe environments, both indoors and outside. Key people set achievable goals for each child and individual successes are praised and celebrated, ensuring all children are happy and confident learners who enjoy finding out more about the world. The encouragement that adults give ensures all children grow in self-confidence and become suitably aware of others and their surroundings. The highly appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities promotes independent choices, and high levels of independence are continually encouraged. For example, babies are encouraged to feed themselves and access toys independently. Staff develop the children's imaginations through excellent role play areas, the use of percussion instruments and creative activities. Babies and toddlers are captivated by exciting stories where they are given opportunities to provide the missing animal word and express the noises made by each animal.

There is a culture of mutual trust and respect throughout the setting. Children form excellent relationships with their key members of staff and all adults. The warm family atmosphere evident throughout the setting

gives all children a sense of belonging. Babies and toddlers begin to share, take turns and co-operate. They learn to care for and respect each other, and are extremely well prepared for all transitions.

The children's behaviour is exemplary throughout the setting because of the consistency of approach and the common expectations of all staff. Substantial importance is placed on ensuring that children are happy and feel content and secure. Attendance is prompt and very regular and staff follow any absences up diligently.

Children are taught how to keep themselves safe, as was seen when toddlers were negotiating the slope in the outdoor area and indicated when they needed help. The under-twos do not have access to social media, and the setting is vigilant in its approach to online safety. From a young age children are increasingly encouraged to manage their own personal hygiene and there is suitable importance placed on healthy eating and physical exercise. The children's personal development is excellent. They are encouraged to respect one another and are well prepared to contribute to the wider life of the school and society in Britain.

Outcomes for children

The outcomes for children are outstanding.

All children progress extremely well from their individual starting points. Individual next steps are matched to children's developmental stages and are carefully planned for by the members of staff responsible for each individual. Consistently high standards are achieved because of the outstanding levels of care and the stimulating learning opportunities provided by dedicated leaders and staff. These result in most children reaching, and often exceeding, the levels of development typical for their age.

Babies enjoy exploring their environment, both indoors and outside, using their newly discovered ability to crawl and reach the attractive toys that can be independently accessed. They show their pleasure and excitement as they build towers and then knock them down. Toddlers are inquisitive and happy in the setting, independently selecting the resources that are required to participate in their self-chosen activity. They love stories and actively share books with their friends. They begin to join in action songs with real enjoyment. Children begin to make things purposefully and display their creativity as they use foam to draw on the windows. They run, jump and kick balls to develop their gross motor skills. Most children reach, and many exceed, the levels of development typical for their age. They are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Compliance with statutory requirements

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Recommendation for further improvement

The school is advised to make the following improvement to its provision for children in the early years.

- Ensure the outside classroom poses greater challenges and gives children more opportunities to investigate.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with teachers, senior members of staff and with the chair of governors. They observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Mr Bill Burn

Reporting inspector

Mrs Julia Burns

Compliance team inspector (Former head, GSA school)

Mrs Patricia Griffin

Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Former head of early years, IAPS school)