

ABBOTSHOLME SCHOOL

Rocester, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, ST14 5BS

11 SEPTEMBER 2017

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Founded in 1889 and situated in rural Derbyshire, Abbotsholme School is an independent boarding school for boys and girls aged between 2 and 18. Its board of governors works closely with a consultative committee within its affiliation to the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST). There are 235 pupils on roll, of whom 81 are boarders. Boarding is in four houses; one for boys, two for girls and one, consisting of five log cabins, is for sixth form girls and boys. There are 102 pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities, including three with statements or education, health and care (EHC) plans. Twenty pupils have English as an additional language.

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

This is an unannounced visit carried out at the request of the DfE to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following a focused compliance inspection in February 2017. The focus of the visit was on safeguarding; the checking of the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors; the school's single central register of appointments and the quality of leadership and management.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b), 8 (a) and (b); NMS 11]; Provision of information to parents [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32 (1) (c)]

The school meets the regulations and standard.

The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding, which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. It has regard to the most recent statutory guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016 (KCSIE) (September 2016)*. The policy identifies a governor with responsibility for the oversight of safeguarding, and is further supported by suitable guidance covering the safe recruitment of staff, whistleblowing, a staff code of conduct and information on how pupils are educated about online safety.

The policy is implemented effectively. Safeguarding procedures are well managed in line with the local authority guidance, ensuring the welfare of both day and boarding pupils. Appropriate procedures are in place to support pupils in need. There are suitable arrangements for listening to pupils. Detailed child protection records are held securely with the required confidentiality. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and her deputy have recent safeguarding training, including inter-agency training, provided by the local authority.

All other staff receive regular safeguarding training, which includes the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. They have a strong understanding of their responsibilities and are aware of how to refer concerns. They

understand that anyone can make a referral to the children's services. New staff have undergone suitable induction training. All staff have received a copy of KCSIE Part 1, which includes Annex A. They sign to say that they have read and understood this. Staff report that they receive informal updates from the DSL and additional on-line training to confirm their understanding of procedures. Appropriate records of staff training are maintained. There have been no recent incidents, but senior staff understand the need to report any allegations against staff to the Disqualification and Barring Service (DBS) and/or National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL).

Pupils report that they feel happy and safe in school and would feel confident to report any concerns to their tutor, boarding staff, or to other members of staff. Pupils confirm they are taught about safe internet and social media use and how to report any issues which arise.

The school now ensures that all the required recruitment checks are carried out before staff take up their post, including those against the list of those prohibited from teaching or management of independent schools.

The safeguarding governor visits regularly, conducts a safeguarding audit, and reports back to the main board, together with the DSL. Governors formally review the school's policy and arrangements annually.

Suitability of staff and supply staff [ISSR Part 4, paragraph 18(3), paragraph 19(2)(a)(ii) and NMS 14.1]

The school meets the regulations and standards.

The school ensures that it carries out the appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff and supply staff prior to a person beginning work in the school. These include the checks on medical fitness and qualifications. The school receives a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate obtained by an employment business prior to the person beginning work at the school. The staff with administrative responsibility for these checks are thorough, careful and conscientious. There are effective procedures and systems in place. Senior staff and governors oversee and monitor the arrangements well.

Single central register of appointments [ISSR Part 4, paragraph 21; NMS 14.1]

The school meets the regulation and standard.

The school's single central register of appointments accurately records all checks. It is scrupulously maintained by administrative staff who have appropriate expertise and have received relevant training. The register is regularly scrutinised by senior staff, governors and external consultants to ensure compliant practice.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34(1)(a) and (b); NMS 13]

The school meets the regulation and standard.

The governing body ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, fulfil their responsibilities effectively, and actively promote the well-being of pupils. The school has implemented its action plan effectively, so that the previous issues have been remedied. It has revised its procedures for checking the suitability of staff and for accurately recording all checks in the school's single register of appointments as required, to prevent a recurrence. Governors monitor these aspects of the school's operations with care, and are in regular contact with senior staff in order to address issues and concerns which might occur in the future.

REGULATORY ACTION POINTS

The school meets all of the relevant requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, and no further action is required.