

Material change inspection report

23 June 2025

Abbot's Hill School

Bunkers Lane
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
HP3 8RP

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Inspection outcome

The school has requested a material change request to become fully co-educational from September 2025. The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school Standards if the material change is implemented. It is recommended that the material change be approved.

Inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

ISSR paragraphs 2, 2A and 3(j); EYFS 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.11, 1.12, 1.13, 1.14, 1.15, 1.16, 1.17 and 1.18

1. Leaders ensure a suitable curriculum policy is in place which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work and which is effectively implemented. The curriculum covers all the required areas of learning and takes account of pupils' ages and individual needs.
2. Leaders scrutinise both the curriculum and teaching to ensure that subject content meets the needs of pupils. They have also made suitable curriculum and teaching plans for the proposed material change.
3. Librarians review the books taken out on loan to identify pupils' preferred reading and have made suitable plans to ensure pupils' interests continue to be supported when male pupils join the school.
4. Leaders provide a suitable range of sports for pupils, including rugby and football. Leaders plan to appoint additional appropriately qualified and experienced games teachers.
5. Pupils engage with a variety of suitable extra-curricular activities such as coding and science clubs. When male pupils join the school, leaders have suitable plans to continue to respond to pupil requests for new activities.
6. Leaders ensure an effective careers programme is in place and this is likely to remain effective if the proposed change is approved.
7. Leaders currently support pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education using a syllabus taught in both the preparatory and senior schools which is appropriate to the needs of pupils. Pupils are taught the importance of respect for others, and the harm caused by discrimination. Leaders will continue to use this syllabus and maintain the inclusive assembly programme which supports the pupils' PSHE education.
8. Leaders' have implemented a suitable relationships and sex education (RSE) programme. They are sensitive to the needs of pupils and have identified the aspects that they plan to teach as single sex groups. Parents are consulted about any changes to the RSE programme, as required, and leaders plan that this will continue to be the case when male pupils join the school.
9. Leaders' plans for co-education include appropriate staff training in the use of suitable language and activities to support staff in preparing to teach and care for male pupils.
10. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

ISSR paragraphs 5(b)(vi)

11. Leaders successfully teach pupils the importance of respect for others and the harm caused by discrimination. Leaders' plans for PSHE education and RSE are likely to ensure that the school continues to fulfil its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

12. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

ISSR paragraphs 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.16, 3.20, 3.24, 3.25, 3.26, 3.61 and 3.71

13. The proprietor ensures that the school's safeguarding arrangements are effective. The safeguarding policy meets current statutory requirements.
14. Safeguarding leaders are appropriately trained and ensure that all members of staff receive suitable safeguarding training, including at induction. Leaders provide staff with regular updates on safeguarding issues and procedures. Frequent assessments help ensure staff have a secure understanding of these issues and procedures. As a result, staff know how to respond to any concerns, including those raised through pupil disclosures or relating to adults working in the school, and understand they need to act without delay.
15. Safeguarding leaders maintain close links with external agencies, including local authorities and children's services. Any required referrals to these agencies are made promptly. Safeguarding leaders respond in a timely and appropriate manner to any concerns and maintain detailed records of the concerns and the school's responses. These records are held securely.
16. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, both physically and online. They learn about online safety through PSHE education lessons, computing lessons and assemblies. Leaders implement appropriate filtering and monitoring of the school's internet. They respond promptly to notifications of any potentially inappropriate use and review the effectiveness of the filtering and monitoring systems annually.
17. Leaders ensure there are adults who provide prompt and helpful support for pupils who have concerns. Pupils benefit from access to a pastoral hub, where they can seek advice from pastoral staff, guidance from trained counsellors and a dedicated email address by which they can secure support for their emotional wellbeing.
18. Leaders monitor attendance carefully and provide the local authority with timely information about pupils joining or leaving the school outside the standard transition points.
19. The safeguarding governor and the Foundation's director of safeguarding work closely together to ensure rigorous proprietorial oversight of safeguarding. The safeguarding governor meets with the safeguarding leaders and counselling team each term and checks documentation, including the single central record of appointments and personnel files. The Foundation's director of safeguarding completes an annual audit of safeguarding arrangements and reviews the annual safeguarding policy which is revised in accordance with statutory requirements and approved by the governing board.
20. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

ISSR paragraphs 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1) c) and 23(2)

21. Leaders have appropriate plans to create toilet facilities, changing accommodation and shower facilities to meet the needs of male and female pupils. The required facilities can be provided through the partition of existing toilet and shower rooms and the re-purposing of an existing staff toilet to provide a toilet for male pupils close to the school dining hall.
22. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 6. Provision of information

ISSR paragraph 32(1)(c)

23. Leaders publish particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding on the school's website.
24. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standard if the material change is implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools

ISSR paragraphs 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c) and 34(2)

25. Governors ensure that leaders, including those with specific responsibilities for safeguarding, demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the Standards are consistently met, and the wellbeing of the pupils is actively promoted. Leaders have completed a detailed risk assessment of the move to full co-education and implemented suitable mitigations. Measures planned for the proposed admission of male pupils are comprehensive and are likely to promote the pupils' continued wellbeing
26. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

School details

School	Abbot's Hill School
Department for Education number	919/6000
Registered early years number	490982
Registered charity number	1064758
Address	Abbot's Hill School Bunkers Lane Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP3 8RP
Phone number	01422 240333
Email address	sarthur@abbotshill.herts.sch.uk
Website	www.abbotshill.herts.sch.uk
Proprietor	The Mill Hill School Foundation
Chair	Mr Elliot Lipton
Headteacher	Mrs Sharon Schanschieff
Age range	0 to 16
Number of pupils	413
Number of children in the early years registered setting	58
Date of previous inspection	7 to 9 November 2023

Information about the school

27. Abbot's Hill School is a day school for female pupils from the ages of 4 to 16 located in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. The current headteacher took up her post in April 2024. The school joined the Mill Hill School Foundation in April 2024.
28. There are 66 children in the early years comprising three Nursery classes and one Reception class. There is a separate early years setting which is registered with Ofsted and which provides for children under two years of age.
29. The school has identified 112 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
30. The school has identified 45 pupils for whom English is an additional language.
31. The school states that it aims to create a community in which pupils are happy, confident and inspired to live purposeful and fulfilling lives as compassionate citizens

Purpose of the material change inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection following an application made by the school to the Department for Education to make a material change to the school's provision. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about whether the school is likely to meet the Independent School Standards and Early Years Foundation Stage requirements if the material change is implemented.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

23 June 2025

32. Two reporting inspectors visited the school for one day.

33. Inspection activities included:

- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school and information available on the school's website
- tour of the school site to ensure the school will be able to provide suitable toilet, changing and shower facilities for both male and female pupils
- discussions with the Chief Executive Officer of the Mill Hill School Foundation and a member of the governing body
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant Standards are met.
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Independent Schools Inspectorate

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