



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Abingdon House School and College

January 2022

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School's Details

School	Abingdon House School and College			
DfE number	213/6405			
Address	Abingdon House School and College Broadley Terrace London NW1 6LG			
Telephone number	02037505526			
Email address	office@abingdonhouseschool.co.uk			
Headteacher	Ms Tanya Moran			
Proprietor	Cavendish Education			
Age range	5 to 19			
Number of pupils on roll	97			
	Juniors	15	Seniors	72
	College	10		
Inspection dates	18 to 21 January 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Abingdon House School and College is a co-educational day school. The school is part of the Cavendish Education Group, the directors of which act as governors of the school. It specialises in the education of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including specific learning difficulties, dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit disorder, autistic spectrum condition, social communication difficulties and other associated needs.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has incorporated the use of a nearby community centre to create a college setting for its post-16 pupils.
- 1.3 During the period March to August 2020, the school remained open for children of key workers and those whose vulnerabilities meant they were unable to access learning remotely.
- 1.4 During this period of closure the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils requiring these.
- 1.5 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on-site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.6 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.7 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, most pupils received learning on site and others were able to access learning remotely.
- 1.8 In 2020 and 2021, public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades and teacher-assessed grades were awarded.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.9 The school aims to provide a mainstream style, specialist education with high expectations and aspirations in a nurturing environment, facilitated by a multidisciplinary team through an integrated therapy approach. It seeks to remove barriers to learning and is focused on supporting pupils to develop their personal and academic skills, personal well-being, confidence and self-esteem to achieve independence and lead meaningful and fulfilling lives. Its objective is to provide a pupil-centred approach that embraces and celebrates each individual and which values diversity.

About the pupils

- 1.10 Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds mainly from London boroughs, and beyond. The school's assessment data show that the underlying ability of pupils in the school is average for the majority but less than average for some. On admission to the school, pupils may be working a number of years behind age related expectations in some or all of their subjects due to their barriers to learning, including social communication and interaction, sensory processing and regulation, executive functioning, processing speed, working memory and anxiety. Eighty-nine pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Four pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) but do not require additional help in this regard.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The COMPLIANCE inspection 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.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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 specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 In the senior school and college, results in alternative qualifications confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 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

2.13 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy 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.

2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.15 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes 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 any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.17 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.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.19 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.

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

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils of all abilities make excellent progress in relation to their starting points on joining the school.
- Pupils achieve well academically and non-academically, making the very best of their underlying abilities.
- Pupils develop effective communication skills, particularly the ability to listen well.
- Pupils become highly adept at using information and communication technologies (ICT) to assist them when learning.
- Pupils display excellent attitudes to learning, working hard and confronting challenges with determination.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils demonstrate responsibility for their own behaviour, self-regulating their reactions to situations they find difficult.
- Pupils value and support each other's efforts and successes, and show respect for diversity.
- Pupils work well together and share recreational time successfully, displaying a strong commitment to participating fully in the life of the school.
- Pupils develop a clear understanding about potential risks in the wider community.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next stage in life.

Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Strengthening pupils' achievements through the development of a wider variety of suitable qualifications.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils of all abilities make excellent progress in relation to their starting points on joining the school. For many, their previous experience of education has been less successful because their specific and

often complex learning difficulties have presented as barriers to learning. Following admission to their present setting, pupils discover they can look at their learning needs systematically, understand how to address them and overcome the barriers. The school enables this to happen because its governors, leaders, teaching and therapy staff have the requisite knowledge, skills and understanding regarding the education of pupils with special educational needs. They ensure that each pupil is assessed fully, has a personalised educational plan, is monitored regularly regarding progress, and benefits from a suitable curriculum. Pupils' make the most of their underlying abilities because the school places them into groupings which respect their need for either a predominantly mainstream school experience or for a more nurturing approach. This means that pupils can make assured progress at an appropriate rate, facilitated by teaching and therapy that is matched to their priority needs. Post-16 pupils make excellent progress in acquiring age-related life and independence skills. They maintain a high, continued commitment to learning, not least because the school has created a college setting in which they are suitably respected as emerging young adults.

- 3.6 Almost all pupils achieve well, taking into account their often previously poor performance in other settings. In those very few instances when achievement is less than expected, the school rigorously investigates the reasons and implements additional interventions to support the pupils concerned. The school is highly effective in identifying any underperformance and in remedying it. Within the junior school, the school's own assessment data indicate that almost all pupils achieve at least at expected levels, with around two out of every ten pupils exceeding expectations. In the senior school and college, there is a similarly positive picture. In these settings, pupils succeed well in suitable qualification-based courses which have been carefully selected by the school to match their ability levels and learning difficulties. The school has identified that for some pupils the range of qualification-based courses could be extended to allow increased achievement and is planning to do so. Some parents responding to the questionnaire expressed a wish for this to happen and inspectors agree with them, and with the school's commitment that this development should be introduced as quickly as possible.
- 3.7 Many pupils in the school have difficulties in processing information and in communicating, but deal proactively and successfully in addressing these issues. This is a result of the school's expertise in assisting pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and by teaching them techniques to ameliorate barriers to learning. Pupils respond very well to the combined input of teachers and therapists working together in lessons, empathically and expertly, to provide focussed support and challenge. Pupils learn that staff will be kindly persistent and patient in requiring responses to questions and will provide helpful prompts, but an answer will always be required. Consequently, pupils develop excellent listening and attention skills, and this enables them to engage purposefully and with good outcomes in all subjects.
- 3.8 Pupils are highly adept at using their personal computer devices to assist them in their learning. For many of them, this enables effective engagement in reading, writing and numeracy which would not be as readily achievable otherwise given their learning difficulties. This means they receive, produce and interpret text and carry out computations and investigations to a good standard. The school has a clear commitment to facilitating pupils' progress in this regard, and is thereby helping pupils to achieve more. Lesson planning consistently includes attention to pupils' use of ICT and staff have suitable levels of ICT competence. Many examples of excellent computer-assisted learning were observed. For example, older pupils showed competent computer skills in designing and creating their own websites in order to compete in the school's Young Enterprise project. Younger pupils successfully used satellite software to identify wilderness and rainforest areas in geography. Pupils attended very well during a lesson that was conducted remotely on-line by a teacher, displaying their familiarity and confidence with this mode of learning which has been engendered positively by the school during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3.9 Pupils learn how to organise their own learning resources well and to manage their use of time efficiently within school so that they can work more effectively. Specific study skills lessons support

pupils well in this endeavour. In one such lesson, pupils preparing for future engagement in IGCSE Foundation Stage mathematics completed the initial task of decoding the language of a six-part question and then moved on to solve a more complex problem, applying excellent numerical skills. Their ability to make such good progress so quickly was fostered by teaching that focused very precisely on pupils' learning needs, breaking the task into small, manageable steps, along with plenty of encouragement.

- 3.10 Pupils of all ages and abilities show excellent ability to share ideas with each other and to discuss and build their thinking about topics in lessons. College pupils in a food technology lesson helped one another to recall the names of cooking apparatus, utensils and ingredients and to agree a way forward with the recipe. Senior school pupils, discussed a text about a current controversial issue regarding the use of animal heart transplants for humans. They debated the matter with due mutual regard for each other's viewpoints whilst competently asserting and justifying their own. Their discussion included some profound philosophical considerations and explicit higher-order thinking skills. Teaching effectively facilitates pupils' abilities in these areas of learning because staff have specialist expertise regarding special educational needs. They are particularly skilful when questioning and prompting pupils' responses. They maintain high expectations matched accurately to pupils' abilities. They know individual pupils well, and within the context of small class numbers, pupils therefore have every chance of experiencing success.
- 3.11 Pupils' non-academic achievements are excellent, including successes in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, LAMDA, instrumental music, competitive rowing and other sporting events in which they compete with other schools. Many achieve well in extending their experiences during daytime and after school enrichment activities. In their responses to questionnaires, some parents and pupils expressed the view that they would like more extra-curricular activities. Inspectors judged that the school makes suitable and sufficient provision considering that travel time for many pupils is lengthy and limits what is possible to timetable at the end of the school day.
- 3.12 Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive most of the time and excellent overall. When there are occasional lapses staff are quick to help individuals re-engage with their work appropriately. While not all pupils are adept at working independently, all are encouraged to take up the challenge, and generally they work well together collaboratively. Younger pupils were observed learning to successfully take turns using a strategy based on the game *scissors, paper, stone*, and it is this kind of detailed attention given by the school to pupils' acquisition of skills that ensures their progress in learning. Pupils show determination and resilience when tackling work which can often present particular challenges in relation to their learning difficulties. They told inspectors that staff are always there for them, helping them to succeed, and this was seen to be consistently the case. Pupils also appreciate that by working hard they will increase their opportunities in the future to have further education or enter apprenticeships and to have jobs they would enjoy. The school's stated aim to embrace and celebrate each individual pupil is put into practice at all times.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils regain or discover self-confidence and self-esteem as a result of joining the school. They benefit from the school's effective implementation of its aims to support pupils in achieving independence and leading meaningful and fulfilling lives. For the majority of pupils, previous school experiences have not sufficiently met their needs and they have often been left feeling disorientated, disenfranchised and dispirited. Because their present school understands the personal emotional impact of having special educational needs insufficiently met, and has the expertise to address this, pupils flourish following admission. The very large majority of parents responding to the questionnaire, agreed that the school has had a positive impact on their child's personal development and this is reflected in what pupils had to say about the school. Pupils explained to inspectors that since starting at the school they

now feel calm, safe and valued. They feel they can take risks in their learning, no longer fearing making a mistake. This was evidenced in many lessons observed, as for example in a science lesson when pupils with reading difficulties were determined to read instructions out loud to the class, despite knowing they were likely to struggle with some words. The pupils trust staff, knowing they are there to support and challenge them in a consistently kind and encouraging manner. They appreciate the advice and strategies they receive and say that this enables them to deal proactively with any difficulties they face. On the basis of a wide range of evidence, inspectors agree that parents' and pupils' positive perceptions are well founded.

- 3.15 Pupils mainly demonstrate the ability to self-regulate their emotional reactions to situations they find difficult and manage their own behaviour well. This is the result of the school's guidance which helps them to monitor and evaluate their own reactive feelings. Pupils employ strategies to reduce tensions they may be experiencing, so that they maintain self-control and a proportionate response to their circumstances at any given time. This approach is embedded in school life for all pupils who require this kind of self-help, and contributes to the school being a well-behaved environment in which everyone can get on with learning and other activities productively. On a number of occasions, pupils were observed to initiate a brief time out from the classroom when feeling unable to cope with a demand, then reflect, regain composure and return to the lesson to continue their work. Staff had advised them previously to use this strategy when necessary and the pupils' decision was respected.
- 3.16 Regarding pupils' general commitment to keeping to the school's rules, they mostly behave well. On those few occasions when they do not comply, they are quick to acknowledge and correct their misdemeanours, responding well to the rational and supportive admonition, advice and guidance they receive. The clear and simply stated school rules help them to relate successfully to what is right and what is wrong. They demonstrate a keen interest in moral and ethical issues, as seen in a lesson focusing on totalitarianism, when they avidly debated issues of personal responsibilities and freedoms.
- 3.17 There is a generosity of spirit that is observable between pupils, and between pupils and staff. Pupils show strong regard for each other's efforts and successes and a sensitive and respectful appreciation of one another's learning difficulties and personal challenges. This contributes to a prevalently positive, tolerant and supportive ethos throughout the school and college. Pupils become open to the spiritual and non-material dimensions of life. They were observed to be emotionally moved during a music performance, sensitively discussed and appreciated Buddhist observances and displayed a sincere empathy regarding Holocaust issues. Staff present very good role models, demonstrating the importance of being open-minded and are ready to explore the non-material aspects of life in depth with pupils, giving them due time and emotional space to do so.
- 3.18 Pupils gain a good understanding of each other and learn to work cooperatively and collaboratively to achieve common goals. Being taught in small class groups allows them opportunities to work closely together. They are supportive of one another and committed to helping other classmates when they may be finding it hard to cope. In one lesson observed, pupils considerably ensured that members of their class who were intent on leaving the lesson instead stayed, contributed fully and enjoyed the group task. They also boost each other's confidence, for instance valuing their peers' topic presentations. Pupils generally have a positive attitude to participating in every aspect of school life, in class and recreationally.
- 3.19 Within school, pupils contribute to their immediate community with enthusiasm. The elected Junior Leadership Team effectively represent their peers regarding suggestions for school improvement. The Young Enterprise group manage market stalls in community locations, selling school produced products and engaging positively with local people. Pupils act as representatives on the local borough mental health student voice council, influencing provision from a young person's perspective. On a broader front, pupils support national charities through fund raising events. As a result of these involvements, pupils develop a good understanding of the need to be a positive force in community participation. Pupils also gain experience of the wider world through work-placements and this

prepares them well for life after school, acquiring suitable competencies such as good time-keeping and adaptability. The school has fostered good relationships with local placement providers.

- 3.20 The school's own diverse population of pupils and staff provides a suitable context for pupils to develop a well-informed understanding and appreciation of diversity amongst cultures and individuals. Pupils display a fulsome and positive attitude to the differences that exist, whilst valuing the fundamental similarities which can bind people of varied backgrounds together. They gain an excellent understanding of the diversity of cultures and faiths because the school's religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes include suitably relevant content and are taught well. During an informal conversation over lunch, pupils told inspectors about the different religious backgrounds of those young people at the table and how much they valued, and learned from, each other's faiths and cultures. Pupils exhibited no prejudices regarding those with protected characteristics such as race, gender and orientation.
- 3.21 Pupils develop a good understanding regarding their personal safety and how to ensure the safety of others. They know that there are risks associated with on-line social media activity and that it is important, for instance, not to share passwords and to tell an adult immediately if they have a concern about content. They understand the concept of consent and that it is unsafe and wrong to share images of others inappropriately. Pupils also have an awareness of the need to keep safe in the kitchen, identifying the risks posed by boiling water and sharp utensils. Pupils are alert to the potential risks which exist in the community and learn how to avoid placing themselves in dangerous situations. The school is aware that pupils may be at more risk of harm as a result of aspects of their learning difficulties and therefore keeps reinforcing and checking pupils' understandings in these regards. Those pupils who travel independently to and from school are supported by training programmes which help them to do so with an awareness of keeping safe.
- 3.22 Pupils know the importance of maintaining a healthy diet and of keeping fit. At lunch, pupils were observed making healthy choices and in a food technology lesson demonstrated good awareness of the nutritional value of ingredients in a recipe. They also engage well in sporting and leisure activities that contribute to their physical health, such as using rowing machines and playing crab football at break time. They enjoy and benefit from the school's use of local outdoor and indoor leisure facilities. Pupils are also aware of the need to respect their own mental health. They respond well to the school's approach to well-being that emphasises personal responsibility for gauging and modifying one's own emotional responses to situations as necessary. Pupils know that the school cares for them and that they can get help with any worries they may have.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspection examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Andrew Farren	Reporting inspector
Mr William Burn	Accompanying reporting inspector
Mr Roger Shaw	Compliance team inspector (Senior master, HMC school)
Mrs Paula Hobbs	Team inspector (Headteacher, ISA school)
Mr Chris Townsend	Team inspector (Head HMC, school)