



**Material Change Inspection Report**

**Abingdon Prep School**

**July 2024**

## School's details

<b>School name</b>	Abingdon Prep School			
<b>DfE number</b>	931/6095			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1071298			
<b>Address</b>	Abingdon Prep School Josca's House Kingston Rd Abingdon Oxfordshire OX13 5NX			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01865 391570			
<b>Email address</b>	school.sec@abingdonprep.org.uk			
<b>Head</b>	Mr Craig Williams			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Professor Michael Stevens			
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Governing Body of Abingdon School			
<b>Age Range</b>	4 to 13			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	219			
	<b>EYFS</b>	10	<b>Years 1-2</b>	33
	<b>Years 3-5</b>	60	<b>Years 6-8</b>	116
<b>Date of inspection</b>	2 July 2024			

# 1. Introduction

## Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Abingdon Prep School is an independent day school for male pupils. It is part of the Abingdon Foundation, a charitable trust administered by a governing body. The Foundation includes Abingdon School, which is situated on a different site. Although both schools have the same registration, they are inspected separately. The prep school has 36 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). None has an education, health and care plan. Nine pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL). The school's previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in May 2023

## Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the prep school's proposal to become co-educational. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 2 (curriculum)	<b>Met</b>
Part 1, paragraph 2A (relationships and sex education)	<b>Met</b>
Part 1, paragraph 3 (teaching)	<b>Met</b>
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils)	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	<b>Met</b>
Part 5, paragraph 23 (toilet, washing and changing facilities)	<b>Met</b>
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	<b>Met</b>
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	<b>Met</b>

## 2. Inspection findings

### Quality of education provided – curriculum [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2]

- 2.1 The school meets the standard.
- 2.2 A suitable written curriculum policy is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work and implemented effectively. All these take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with SEND and EAL.
- 2.3 Schemes of work are reviewed annually. They include planning for the introduction of female pupils, for example ensuring appropriate content and teaching methods.
- 2.4 The physical education (PE) and games curriculum is already broadly appropriate for both male and female pupils. Almost all fixtures with other schools are planned to be between mixed teams.
- 2.5 The school emphasises the importance of a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme and provides such. This reflects pupils' choices and preferences, and the intention is to consult all pupils, including incoming female pupils, before their arrival.
- 2.6 The curriculum does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It gives pupils appropriate experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education. Pupils are enabled to acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills.
- 2.7 Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) reflects the school's aim and ethos, and senior leaders have prepared suitable programmes for the envisaged change. The PHSEE programme and other subjects in the curriculum encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act. All pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress and are effectively prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 2.8 Pupils are made aware of career opportunities before the statutory age for inclusion of this element. Visiting speakers and contributors to the careers programme are already selected to ensure there is no suggested gender bias.

### Quality of education provided – relationships and sex education (RSE) [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A]

- 2.9 The school meets the standard.
- 2.10 Junior-age pupils receive suitable relationships education and those in Years 7 and 8, RSE, 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.
- 2.11 Leaders have reviewed and revised the content of the RSE programme to include provision for the particular needs of female pupils.

### Quality of education provided – teaching [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 3]

- 2.12 The school meets the standard.

- 2.13 Teaching does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It does not discriminate against pupils contrary to Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.14 When it might be appropriate for male and female pupils to be taught separately, for example for some aspects of RSE, leaders understand that any decision needs to satisfy the published criteria for segregated teaching.
- 2.15 Almost all teachers in the school have experience of teaching mixed classes. However, the school has provided training to enhance teachers' awareness of unconscious bias, and to develop strategies for teaching classes with a small minority of female pupils, as might be inevitable in the early years of the transition.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5]**

- 2.16 The school meets the standard.
- 2.17 The school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. In addition, it promotes principles which enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence; to distinguish right from wrong; and to respect the civil and criminal law of England.
- 2.18 Pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to society more widely. The school furthers tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. It encourages respect for other people, especially those with different gender or ethnic background.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]**

#### **Safeguarding policy**

- 2.19 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.20 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

#### **Safeguarding implementation**

- 2.21 The school meets the standard.
- 2.22 Implementation of the school's safeguarding procedures is effective in providing appropriate support for pupils' needs. Safeguarding procedures are implemented appropriately to safeguard children at risk and those in need. Staff show effective understanding of their responsibilities, including in those areas which are the focus of most recent changes in safeguarding guidance, in particular in the procedures to monitor and filter the use of the internet. Suitable recruitment procedures for staff are included within the safeguarding policy.
- 2.23 Staff show appropriate awareness of the staff code of conduct and safeguarding procedures. They use the school's low-level concerns procedures appropriately. In interviews, staff showed effective understanding of the training they have received in these areas, including the most recent training which reflected the new elements in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023*. They are aware of who to go to if they have a concern or receive a disclosure and also that they can make a referral to children's services if necessary.

- 2.24 The safeguarding policy includes suitable definitions of abuse. It provides appropriate guidance regarding possible abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil, including linking such abuse to bullying. A replacement policy has been drafted to reflect the particular needs of and risks to female pupils.
- 2.25 Suitable risk assessment procedures are provided for determining where immediate action is required in such cases, including referral to local agencies, although such referrals are not common. The school has an effective understanding of the local guidance on reporting child-on-child abuse. Discussion with safeguarding leaders for the school and scrutiny of records confirmed that pupils receive help to address risks and prevent issues escalating.
- 2.26 Leaders act on and refer the early signs of risk or need, monitor any potential for radicalisation, and ensure the school listens to the views of individual pupils, as required by KCSIE. This is confirmed in written evidence from suitable records. Such records are kept confidential.
- 2.27 Staff with particular responsibilities monitor children in need effectively. Suitable communication is maintained with parents where appropriate. Staff are clear that they cannot promise confidentiality if a parent makes a disclosure which requires action to be taken by the safeguarding team or external agencies. Pupils receive guidance on staying safe and show understanding of what they have been taught, including in relation to e-safety. They confirm that the school takes action when they express concerns.
- 2.28 The safeguarding policy gives contact details as required for local agencies. Suitable arrangements for handling allegations against staff are included in safeguarding procedures; they include seeking immediate advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officers (LADO). The school understands its role in reporting any person whose services are no longer used where referral criteria are met to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and/or the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA). Alternative persons of appropriate status are provided in the absence of the safeguarding lead.
- 2.29 The oversight by governors of safeguarding is appropriate and includes a formal annual review. Governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding. There is regular contact between those with safeguarding responsibilities and a nominated governor to liaise regarding safeguarding. The school keeps a separate record of safeguarding issues related to any inappropriate racial or sexual behaviour and takes suitable action.
- 2.30 The training for the safeguarding team is appropriate. Training is held in the school for teaching and non-teaching staff, including minibuses drivers. Training is of sufficient quality and scope and staff understanding is checked appropriately. Central records of staff attendance at training are kept systematically and these enable any staff who miss training to receive appropriate alternative guidance.
- 2.31 The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of both male and female pupils.

### **Premises and accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23]**

- 2.32 The school meets the standard.
- 2.33 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, are provided. Detailed plans have been approved to provide suitable accommodation for female pupils. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet their needs.

**Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]**

- 2.34 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.

**Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]**

- 2.35 The school meets the standard.
- 2.36 Appropriate procedures are implemented which allow senior leaders and governors to manage safeguarding and welfare arrangements and monitor compliance with regulations, including those concerned with staff recruitment and handling parents' complaints. Governors regularly review policies and the manner in which they are implemented, as do senior leaders.
- 2.37 Governors have considered in detail all potential consequences of admitting female pupils, including any potential impact on current male pupils. They have assessed and mitigated risk, have ensured that leaders and staff are well prepared and have identified suitable training. They have ensured that the wellbeing of pupils is promoted effectively. This is likely to continue to be the case because of revised strategies to monitor and evaluate the wellbeing of all pupils.

### **3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection**

#### **Recommendation**

3.1 It is recommended that the application to admit female pupils from September 2024 be approved.



## **4. Summary of evidence**

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors. He visited different areas of the school, observed activities and talked with groups of pupils. He scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.