



SEND REVIEW REPORT: Abbot's Lea School - 13/09/22

SEND Review: A school-led approach to improving provision for all



SEND Review Team

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SEND Review



Commissioning a SEND Review from a system leader, trained in using the SEND Review Guide, means that both the ‘supporting’ and ‘supported’ school benefit from working together. The school receiving the Review benefits from an experienced practitioner with knowledge and expertise in SEND and a track record of improving outcomes. Reviewers also benefit from the process: they gain experience of schools in different contexts and settings and often learn a great deal from the schools that they work with. It is a rewarding and enriching experience that supports professional development, develops knowledge and inspires new ideas and ways of working. As a result, the opportunity to engage in such work can also offer a powerful retention strategy for schools involved.

School-to-school SEND Reviews also offer real opportunities for specialist schools and mainstream schools to learn from each other. For example, many mainstream schools have found it helpful to have their SEND provision reviewed by colleagues from specialist settings. Equally, specialist settings can benefit from the expertise found within mainstream.

Excellent teaching for students with SEND is excellent teaching for all. The Code of Practice emphasises that high-quality teaching, differentiated for individual students, is the first step in responding to students who have or may have SEND. Additional intervention and support cannot compensate for a lack of good quality teaching. Accurate identification of need and early intervention will support high-quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. This should include the use of evidence-based interventions and approaches. Educational settings, joint commissioning arrangements and local authorities are therefore responsible for ensuring that the best evidence available on interventions and approaches is used to support children and young people.

An uncompromising focus on improvement and recognising what works and what doesn’t for those identified with SEND will raise attainment and make a difference to all children. There is a growing and valuable evidence base which helps teachers and leaders make evidence informed decisions about which interventions can maximise impact and provide good value for money, for example the Education Endowment Fund (EEF), The Communication Trust and NICE. Research from randomised control trials (RCTs) should be used to build the professional judgement and the discretion of teachers, as the most powerful knowledge about what works is informed by each context and the expertise of practitioners, particularly for the SEND sector. Localised and applied research is likely to be most useful for informing strategy and teaching practice. Growing the research literacy of teachers in schools and building localised research of what works will strengthen professional judgement and intelligent, informed decision making to deliver continuous progress for all students with SEND.

A Six Stage Process – SEND Reviews

<div>  </div> <div> <p>Identification</p> </div> <div> <p>Request for a Review is made</p> </div>	<p>Abbot's Lea School leaders have committed to a SEND Review as part of the NLE work, commissioned by the Department for Education.</p>
<div>  </div> <div> <p>Self-Evaluation</p> </div> <div> <p>School completes self-evaluation of current provision.</p> </div>	<p>The starting point for all SEND Reviews is a detailed self-evaluation using the SEND Review template. This is an essential part of the process as it helps the Reviewers to focus their energies and follow an evidence trail to confirm the accuracy of self-knowledge in the area of SEND.</p> <p>Schools can have confidence that the function of a SEND Review is to support continuous improvement and not to be a judgement on personnel and provision. School leaders are encouraged to be brave and honest in their self-evaluation as this allows Reviewers to gain a greater a depth of understanding and make the most useful recommendations possible. The Sea View Trust is committed to the provision of supportive Reviews and the process and tone is absolutely not one of inspection. The Review identifies areas of strength and areas for development. In many cases the high-quality of provision and practice will mean that areas for development are 'even better ifs' designed to move the school forward. Wherever possible, quick wins will be included to support schools in making rapid improvement.</p> <p>School leaders at Abbot's Lea have conducted their Self-Review and this forms the basis of the one day school visit.</p>

<div> <div>3</div> </div> <div> <h2>Preparation</h2> </div> <div> <p>Reviewer requests preparatory information, analyses relevant data and confirms programme</p> </div>	<p>Half a day has been allocated to scrutinise the available paperwork and plan the school visit. The format of a school visit will vary in accordance with observations made in relation to the information shared through the Self-Review.</p> <p>Typically, Reviewers will share a draft timetable as part of the review of the school's self-evaluation. Reviewers request that school-based staff tailor this to the school's unique context and timetable.</p>
<div> <div>4</div> </div> <div> <h2>School Visit</h2> </div> <div> <p>Reviewer visits the school, collects evidence and delivers verbal feedback</p> </div>	<p>In order to ensure the Review can have impact, there is a need to engage with Headteachers. It is essential that any member of SLT responsible for SEND is available to support the Review process. In order to check and triangulate findings, Reviewers will want to speak to students and, depending on the Review focus, parent feedback may be requested. Governance of SEND is an important part of evaluating current SEND leadership and therefore speaking to the SEND Governor is an important element of the SEND Review process.</p> <p>Class teachers and support staff are likely to be a focus of the Review process and Reviewers may engage with staff during lesson observations, although they will always endeavour to do so without causing disruption to the flow of the lesson.</p> <p>Activity may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson observation • Observation of intervention sessions for students with SEND • Assessment systems of all students including those with SEND • A tour of the school • Paperwork scrutiny • Learning walks • Book looks • Observation of unstructured activities such as breaktime and lunchtime clubs • Observation of alternative/off-site provision • Review case studies on students.

	At the end of the school visit, Reviewers will provide verbal feedback on areas of strength and areas for development to school leaders, and any other staff or Governors the school would like to involve in this process.
<div> <div>5</div> <div>Reporting</div> </div> <p>Reviewer submits a written report within a timescale agreed with the school</p>	The Review Report will align closely with the verbal feedback given on the day so there should be no surprises in the Review Report. The Reviewers will produce a draft Report that will be shared with the school for fact checking within 2 weeks of the school visit. Schools are asked to return the report within a week so any changes can be made and the Review can be finalised.
<div> <div>6</div> <div>Follow up</div> </div> <p>School may agree follow-up visits and support</p>	There is no formal follow up as part of the agreed commission with Abbot's Lea School. However, we do endeavour to maintain contact with schools and can provide additional support as required. Abbot's Lea School is a research-led school and so research partnership is possible in the future.

Context of the school including key SEND statistics, for example, percentage of students with SEND, percentage of students with an EHCP

Abbot's Lea School is a maintained special school in the Liverpool City Council Local Authority. The school is a day school and caters for students across the 3-19 age range. Students attending the school have an Educational Health and Care Plan, with a diagnosis of Autism and cognitive learning disabilities. The majority of students currently on roll at the school have additional, co-existing conditions.

The school is popular and heavily oversubscribed and the number on roll exceeds the commissioned 272 students. However, there is continued pressure (via tribunals) to admit additional students.

The school has a clear and ambitious vision for its students exemplified through the school's vision and mission statement: ***'To be the international Centre of Excellence in Autism education, research and professional development' ©***

Leaders hold a Philosophy of Education called: ***The ASD Model ©***, with equal importance assigned to:

- *'Academic Progress*
- *Specialist Therapeutic Support*
- *Development of Life Skills'*

Leaders are committed to ensuring that there is parity of resource and effort placed on each of these areas and engage in school improvement planning that reflects this approach.

Leaders have established four clear school aims:

- *'To provide outstanding education to the students*
- *To work in united partnership with the families*
- *To recruit, develop and retain the best professionals*
- *To lead innovation and positive change in the field of Autism'©*

Leaders have ensured that the school vision and mission is communicated, in learner-friendly language, through the **School's Motto** 'Abbot's Lea is the best specialist school in the world!'© and a simple code of conduct expressed as four 'Golden Rules':

The Golden Rules©

- Be here. Every day...
- Work hard and be nice
- Never give upon yourself or others
- Stay positive and be happy!

These golden rules apply to all members of the school community, staff and students.

The school is evidence-based and embraces an approach of creating new learning, through action research.

The school is financially stable and the Head of Finance and Operations ensures that best value is achieved in all areas. Effective financial management has ensured that investment can be made in resources, to improve learner outcomes and to support staff wellbeing.

The school operates a “*primary model*” of teaching across all key stages, although care has been taken to ensure that curriculum and resources are age and cognitive-stage appropriate. Each classroom has a Teacher, Higher Level Teaching Assistant and one or more Teaching Assistants. There is an extensive in-house multi-disciplinary team, led by the Head of Care and Safeguarding, consisting Safeguarding Team, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Child Psychotherapist and a newly formed Positive Behaviour Support team led by a PBS Leader, with six PBS Assistants.

General Comments

This NLE support was part of the **2021-22 School Improvement Offer** package of support for schools with a Requires Improvement judgement. The focus of support was specifically to address the RI judgment for Leadership and Management, made by Ofsted in November 2021.

Ofsted (2021) noted the following areas for improvement:

- *There is ongoing tension between a minority of staff and leaders. While it does not directly affect the quality of education that students are receiving, it has created a divide in the staff. This is hindering ongoing school improvement. Leaders and governors should continue to engage meaningfully with these staff to resolve the ongoing tensions.*

- *Leaders do not ensure that some students in key stage 4 and students in the sixth form work towards a full suite of recognised qualifications. On occasions, this hinders some students and students from achieving as highly as they could. Leaders should continue to review the qualifications that students and students can access to enable them to fulfil their potential and career aspirations.*

Therefore, the function of this SEND Review was to support school leaders, and those responsible for governance, in understanding how their post-Ofsted engagement with staff is working to resolve tensions between the minority of staff and school leaders. These tensions were the result of a radical change of approach in behaviour management in the school and therefore a further function of the SEND Review was to enable expert scrutiny of the school's approach to positive behaviour management.

Reviewers note that school leaders, and those responsible for governance at Abbot's Lea School, have made significant efforts to identify and address the issues raised by the minority of staff during the 2021 Ofsted inspection. It is recognised that, following inspection publication, have had opportunity to engage in 1:1 discussions with the Headteacher to voice any ongoing concerns. Many of the staff employed at the time of the last inspection are no longer in employment at Abbot's Lea School.

Ofsted (2021) acknowledged that Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development and the Sixth-form provision were all Good and therefore these areas have not been scrutinised in detail as part of the current Review process.

Abbot's Lea School is an inclusive school, with recent years showing that the demographic of learners has changed, with a greater number of students on roll having a range of additional needs co-existing with their Autism diagnoses. All students are welcomed and included and leaders strive to ensure that all students access the best curriculum and learning experience possible.

The school faces high levels of transience as a number of children are non-routine admissions, accessing specialist education as a result of the breakdown of their mainstream placements. Leaders recognise that many learners have experienced trauma and so, to mitigate, they have developed approaches which are trauma-informed. The school serves a wide geographical catchment area and a number of members of the school population face significant social disadvantage, in addition to their special educational needs.

Students with SEND make progress and attain well at the school and this can be evidenced in case studies.

Mainstream inclusion is a key focus and, across all key stages, students are taught vital 'learning to learn' and self-regulation/self-management skills to support good choice making and to prepare them for a successful adulthood.

School staff have worked hard to secure meaningful pathways for all learners, including those who require further support with their Preparation for Adulthood (PfA). In the 2021 cohort, all leavers transitioned to Education, Employment or Training (i.e. 0% SEND NEET).

The school has forged positive relationships with the community, and families of children and young people with SEND feel well supported, reporting that their children feel safe in school. Ofsted (2021) found safeguarding to be effective.

FOCUS Area 1: Outcomes

KEY STRENGTHS	KEY AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>Leaders are focused on improving the Quality of Education (QoE) the 'new curriculum' identified by Ofsted is now being embedded. Leaders engage in a robust QA process and know where development is needed. The Deputy Headteacher is a visible leader who actively engages in learning walks and provides feedback and coaching for staff.</p> <p>The school has adopted a wide range of evidence-based interventions to match students' need and, where available, intervention outcomes indicate high impact.</p> <p>Transition to and from the school for learners with SEND is a strength recognised by parents. Leavers' destinations are tracked post-school to support the Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) impact judgement.</p> <p>In Key Stages 4 and 5 the school has established a flexible pathway approach where learners (at Y11, Y12, Y13 or Y14) have the opportunity to transition at their own pace, moving to local colleges, into apprenticeships or on to employment.</p>	<p>Over the past year, the school has considered inclusion opportunities for Abbot's Lea learners. Reviewers recommend that leaders of Abbot's Lea School consider refining it into an Inclusion Strategy detailing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Inclusion pathways, for example enabling access to a range of GCSE options (KS4) and SATs (KS2) • Social Inclusion pathway, for example enabling access to safe and social mealtimes and mainstream team sports • Internal Inclusion pathways, for example detailing how learners accessing PBS Hub maintain access to their school peer group • In-reach pathways, for example short term placements to support learners on roll of mainstream schools • Outreach pathways, for example Autism and functional behaviour analysis training for local mainstream <p>It is recognised that all of these pathways may not be in action, but understanding the outward-facing nature of the special school could support inclusion conversations with local schools and the education department.</p>

	<p>Leaders may consider setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for inclusion, using 2021-22 data as the baseline.</p> <p>Abbot's Lea School might benefit from the opportunity to benchmark the progress of learners against the progress made by learners with similar starting points accessing other schools across the North West. Reviewers recommend that the school considers joining the North West Specialist Curriculum Assessment and Pedagogy (NWSCAP) group.</p> <p><i>'The North West Assessment Group (NWSAG) was established in Summer 2015 to develop a co-ordinated response to the governments 'Assessment Without Levels' agenda for Specialist Education provision across the North West. The group is led by two former National Support Schools.'</i></p> <p>Contact: n.webster@theviewtrust.org for details on how to join this group.</p>
FOCUS Area 2: Leadership	
KEY STRENGTHS	KEY AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>Leaders have a strong vision, and a clear learner-centred philosophy, to support the range of learners who access the school. Leaders have formulated an approach to Behaviour Management which is clearly rooted in a strong evidence base, including a shared understanding that all behaviour (including attendance) is always a form of communication.</p>	<p>There is synergy between staff at different levels, in terms of their understanding of the Abbot's Lea School approach to Positive Behaviour Support, and staff generally coalesce around a recognition that 'all behaviour is a form of communication'.</p> <p>However, there is some variance across (and within) teams.</p>

<p>School Leaders value all learners and have invested in high-quality human resources to meet student needs. They recognise the importance of staff training and development and incremental coaching to raise staff confidence and morale.</p> <p>Line management systems are clear across all roles in the school and there is a coherent structure, with established roles and responsibilities. Key Stage Leaders are essential middle leaders who are pivotal in leading their key stage. Middle leaders report that they are listened to and are well supported by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). They have the opportunity to work as a team and have co-produced their curriculum with staff.</p> <p>Teachers are leaders within their class teams and the class staffing structure supports line management.</p> <p>The multi-disciplinary team is well led and key personnel have credible expertise. To support children and families, leaders have ensured that safeguarding support is available for 52 weeks of the year.</p> <p>The Chair of Governors is proactive and in full support of the Headteacher and senior leaders in their approach to Positive Behaviour Support (PBS). However, on behalf of the GB, he has accepted the need to work with school leaders to restore the confidence of some staff. The GB provides useful challenge and support, to enable progress to be made in this area.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair of Governors is highly effective. She is an experienced educationalist with many years of connection with Abbot's Lea</p>	<p>Reviewers advise that an 'elevator pitch' of up to 3 bullets could be co-produced to encapsulate the behaviour philosophy for the school, to be used confidently by all staff and governors in describing their philosophy.</p> <p>To identify and resolve underlying issues, leaders have worked hard to engage with staff. However, they recognise that some staff may not find a 1:1 conversation, or an open meeting, meets their needs when raising potential challenges.</p> <p>Leaders are committed to exploring alternative approaches to staff engagement.</p> <p>Reviewers recommend that a School Change Team model is adopted. This would be a representative group of staff from across all job roles in the school (leadership, teachers, TAs, premises, multi-disciplinary team, catering and administrative staff) who can collect and collate concerns from their peer group and bring them to a half-termly meeting for resolution. Post-meeting production of a 'You said; We did' style bulletin could be shared across the whole school community, supporting communication of concerns and any corresponding actions to resolve them.</p> <p>The Sea View Trust has recently won a bid to run a SEND innovation project on behalf on whole school SEND and the Department for Education. The project 'What's the BIG idea for SEND?' is designed to <i>identify, evaluate, document, sustain, investigate the validity of scale up and share promising school or college initiatives which benefit children and/or young people with SEND.</i></p>
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<p>School. However she recognises that, as the educational climate, evidence-base and student demographics have changed over time, there has been a need for leaders to make significant changes to their approach to behaviour management. She understands that, for a minority of staff, this change was unsettling and it led to reduced confidence in the school leadership.</p> <p>The School's SEND Information Report is up to date and compliant.</p> <p>In spite of recent challenges, the Leadership Team remains optimistic, driving forward school improvement and making every effort to bring staff with them.</p> <p>The team remains outward facing and is connected to local and national research.</p> <p>Research-focus is a strength of the school.</p>	<p>Reviewers would encourage Abbot's Lea to apply to be part of this SEND innovation project.</p> <p>Reviewers previously mentioned Bambrick-Santayo's <i>Leverage Leadership's</i> 'See it, Name it, Do it' approach and would recommend this as a consistent coaching approach - [PDF] Leverage Leadership 2.0 by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo eBook Perlego</p> <p>This is a simple approach to incremental coaching which can become part of staff vernacular and is in line with the school's approach to developing skills, through modelling and unpicking good practice.</p> <p>It is recommended that quality assurance is put in place, so that research practices are embedded throughout all aspects of the school.</p>
<h3>FOCUS Area 3: The Quality of Teaching and Learning for Students with SEND</h3>	
<p>KEY STRENGTHS</p>	<p>KEY AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT</p>
<p>This was not a key area of focus for the SEND Review. However, Reviewers did spend time in class observing practice, which appeared to be effective.</p>	<p>The quality of functional behavioural analysis by the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) team is impressive. In rolling out this support across the school, leaders should take care to ensure that teachers remain empowered and are upskilled in their own knowledge and ownership of their learners and their behaviour support in school.</p>

	HLTAs have clear roles and responsibilities and can access Teachers' planning. They identify that they could benefit from additional support on how to differentiate, to meet individual learner needs.
FOCUS Area 4: Working with Students and Parents	
KEY STRENGTHS	KEY AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>Reviewers spoke to a group of learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students feel happy and safe • Students value the support provided by staff and feel that staff foster good relationships. They report that they can talk openly with support staff. • Students report that staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>'make lessons fun</i> - <i>are patient</i> - <i>address behaviour concerns</i> - <i>know my ability'</i> <p>Reviewers interviewed a parent who, in their feedback, was effusive in their praise for the school, identifying that the school goes over and above. Specifically the following strengths were identified by the parent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication - Co-production - Ensuring that improvements in school are transferred to the home context - Impact of multi-disciplinary team - Informal parental engagement, for example coffee mornings 	<p>One student in key stage 2 identified that he would like to access SATs. The inclusion pathways identified in Section 1: Outcomes might address this issue.</p> <p>The parent interviewed could not identify any areas for development.</p>

FOCUS Area 5: Assessment and Identification

KEY STRENGTHS	KEY AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>This was not a key area of focus for the SEND Review.</p> <p>Students attending Abbot's Lea School have Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP), with the diagnoses of Autism and cognitive learning difficulties.</p> <p>Understanding the individual learner has been a long-standing strength of staff teams, supported by the adoption of the 'primary model'.</p> <p>Class staff and the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Team now work together to refine the collective understanding of each individual learner.</p> <p>The parent reported that transition was positive.</p>	<p>The newly appointed PBS Team is already having impact on staff confidence.</p> <p>The next step will be consistent application of new methods of working in line with the PBS Leader's direction, across the whole school community.</p> <p>Streamlining this methodology to assist replication in other settings would be worthy of further research.</p>

FOCUS Area 6: Monitoring, tracking and evaluation

KEY STRENGTHS	KEY AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>This was not a key area of focus for the SEND Review.</p> <p>Assessment processes are strong and holistic. Evidence for Learning (EFL) is used to capture evidence of achievement and make links to key developmental and curriculum milestones.</p> <p>GL assessment is used effectively to track student progress against standardised data sets.</p>	<p>Further opportunities for tracking could be developed across the full suite of interventions on offer, more specifically tracking the progress of the targets set and progress (quantitative and qualitative) made in targeted interventions.</p>

FOCUS Area 7: Efficient Use of Resources

KEY STRENGTHS	KEY AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>Lessons observed were found to be purposeful. Where students were in crisis, this did not impact on the learning of others.</p> <p>No curriculum narrowing has been identified. Ofsted noted that the curriculum was Good.</p> <p>The Head of Care and Safeguarding manages an effective team comprising the safeguarding personnel, a range of therapists (Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist and Child Psychotherapist) and the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Team. The PBS Team Leader is a BCBA-certified expert with extensive experience of functional behaviour analysis in children and adults with Autism and complex needs.</p> <p>The support of PBS team enables classroom staff to focus on teaching and learning, with early impact of this new service already evident.</p> <p>HR systems are well-designed and fit for purpose. Induction processes support staff who are new to the school. Staff have access to CPD through the school's offer, together with a personalised offer through the performance management process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAs report that they have an Appraisal process and feel the school supports their professional development. • Teachers feel valued and are aligned with school improvement direction. 	<p>The Appraisal/ Performance Management of TAs and teachers could be further enhanced with the use of:</p> <p>https://www.wholeschoolsend.org.uk/send-development-pathways-school-workforce</p> <p>This resource provides a curated directory of free, online, CPD which is relevant to different Career roles for the school workforce.</p> <p>Staff report that a Buddy system (a peer to support them through induction) could be beneficial. Formalising Mentor arrangements on appointment would also support new staff in settling into their roles.</p> <p>Multi-disciplinary team specialists report that they are able to support staff CPD however, as there is a commitment for leaders to reduce workload, it can be difficult to find time to deliver CPD to class-based staff. An optional training programme may address this issue and consideration could also be given to a 30 minute Zoom format or pre-recorded sessions for some training, increasing accessibility.</p> <p>Multi-disciplinary team specialists would also welcome greater involvement in teacher and TA induction, to explain their function in supporting class-based staff.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle leaders are enabled to be effective and feel they contribute to school improvement. <p>A strong social committee has been established and, post-Ofsted, this is galvanising a more positive staff culture.</p> <p>The leadership team is visibly supporting this activity.</p>	
FOCUS Area 8: The Quality of SEND Provision	
KEY STRENGTHS	KEY AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>On the basis of the areas of focus in this Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders have a clear, evidence-informed vision, together with systems for positive behaviour support. They are keen to improve staff confidence, skills and consistent application of PBS methods of working. • Leaders have established genuinely specialist approaches and are developing all staff through high-quality CPD opportunities. 	<p>School leaders would welcome an early re-inspection from Ofsted to endorse the improvements they have implemented and, in line with the aspirations, receive inspection grade more favourable than RI.</p>
What is the future vision for SEND provision?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Headteacher and fellow leaders have a strong vision of improving Quality of Education for all learners. • They have been on a relentless journey to raise staff confidence in their evidence-informed approach to Positive Behaviour Support and to improve staff morale more generally. • Conversations with staff across all levels in the school indicate that there is now greater ‘buy in’ for the leaders’ positive behavioural philosophy. • This has been secured through training and development opportunities. • Significantly, the work of the newly appointed Positive Behaviour Support Team, in modelling and coaching staff through the implementation process, is already having impact. 	