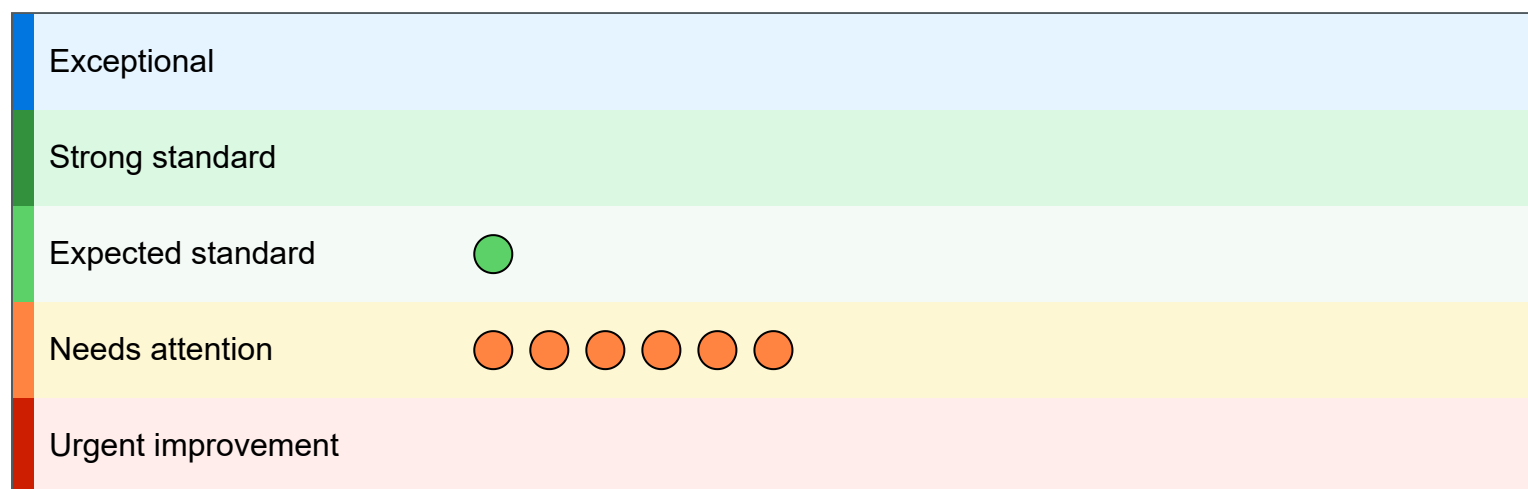


# Abbeyfield School

**Address:** Mereway, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN4 8BU

**Unique reference number (URN):** 138858

## Inspection report: 20 January 2026



### ✔ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

#### **How we evaluate safeguarding**

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

## Expected standard

### Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are taking thoughtful and well-considered action to improve the school, and their work has had a clear and positive impact in a relatively short period. Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what needs to improve, and they use this insight to make decisions that help pupils learn more successfully. Leaders have set a clear direction and have strengthened important areas, including the curriculum, teaching and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff speak positively about the practical guidance they receive and the improvements they see.

Leaders' actions are improving pupils' day-to-day experiences. They check how well the curriculum is working with increasing precision and use this information to support staff and to address weaknesses promptly by identifying appropriate, well-considered training. This contributes to more consistent routines and rising expectations across the school.

The trust provides effective support and plays an active role in the school's development. Trust leaders know the school well and ensure that statutory duties are met. They offer challenge and provide lines of accountability so that improvement work stays focused and coordinated.

Staff value leaders' open approach to workload and wellbeing. Many say that leaders listen to their views and take sensible steps to reduce unnecessary workload, which impacts positively on staff wellbeing.

Leaders are building confidence across the wider community, developing links with external agencies, including the police, to increase the confidence of pupils, parents and carers.

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## Needs attention

### Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' achievement across the school is inconsistent. Outcomes in national examinations are broadly average overall, but performance varies considerably between subjects. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve markedly less well than their peers in key areas, including English and mathematics at grade 4+, science and languages, where large gaps remain compared with national figures.

Achievement also varies between prior-attainment groups. Pupils who previously attained in line with age-related expectations have strengthened their performance, whereas pupils who were working above expectations do not achieve as strongly as similar pupils nationally, particularly at higher grades. Pupils who have not secured strong foundations in reading, writing and mathematics struggle to access subject content securely, which limits their progress over time.

Variation in teaching further contributes to uneven outcomes. When learning is not sequenced well or misconceptions remain unaddressed, pupils do not build their knowledge securely. Where teaching is precise and consistent, pupils gain stronger foundations, achieve more confidently and are prepared for their next steps to differing extents.

## **Attendance and behaviour**

**Needs attention** 

Overall, pupils' attendance is variable. A number of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and some with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are absent too often. Persistent absence for these groups of pupils remains high, limiting how well they learn over time. Leaders have strengthened systems for monitoring attendance and introduced clearer procedures to follow up concerns. This helps some pupils attend more regularly, but improvement is inconsistent and gaps for vulnerable pupils remain wide.

Behaviour in lessons is generally calm, but pupils' attitudes to learning vary. In some classes, teachers do not notice quickly enough when pupils lose concentration, and agreed routines are not applied consistently. This leads to uneven expectations and means that some pupils do not benefit from a purposeful learning environment. Where routines are secure and expectations are applied fairly, pupils remain focused and participate confidently.

Around the school, behaviour is mostly orderly. Staff respond to concerns about bullying, discriminatory language or harassment, and pupils say that issues are taken seriously when reported. Leaders have increased supervision and work closely with pastoral and safeguarding teams to ensure pupils with SEND receive appropriate adjustments, including access to quieter spaces and support to regulate when needed. Despite this, variability in how staff implement expectations means that not all pupils experience consistently calm or safe conduct around the school.

## **Curriculum and teaching**

**Needs attention** 

While leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad and balanced, its ambition is not realised consistently in the classroom. Teachers do not routinely check pupils' understanding or address misconceptions. Errors remain uncorrected, and pupils' basic knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics is not always secure. In some lessons, the work provided is not well matched to the intended curriculum goals.

Although guidance is available for staff to support pupils with additional needs or those who are disadvantaged, some staff do not use this information reliably. Some staff implement strategies effectively, but in some areas adaptive practice is variable. As a result, these pupils do not always access the curriculum fully and achieve less well than others.

The school has developed processes to begin addressing gaps in pupils' reading skills, with some positive impact. Leaders have strengthened professional development and quality assurance processes, ensuring that staff have secure subject knowledge. Middle leaders understand the knowledge pupils need to secure and how it builds over time. In several subjects, teaching supports this through clear explanations, effective modelling and the use of assessment to identify gaps in knowledge. Leaders recognise that further work is required to secure this across all areas of the curriculum, including ensuring that pupils who have not

yet secured strong foundations in reading, writing and mathematics receive effective support to catch up.

## **Inclusion**

**Needs attention** 

Leaders have identified that provision for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is too inconsistent. They have taken steps to strengthen support; however, these improvements are not yet embedded securely. Despite clearer systems for identifying pupils' needs, staff do not apply expectations reliably. Some use pupil passports, reading-age information and recommended strategies well, but others are less consistent, which means that the needs of many disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are not fully met. As a result, pupils' access to the curriculum varies too much between subjects, and inconsistency in teaching adaptations slows how securely they learn over time.

Leaders have strengthened targeted interventions, including English, mathematics and nurture provision, and these programmes help pupils develop their skills. Pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from structured support and dedicated spaces that help them to engage socially and academically. Leaders work closely with families, social workers, virtual school professionals and external agencies to coordinate support for pupils with more complex needs. They monitor the impact of interventions and provide training in putting in place a structured approach to ensure pupils get the right help. Leaders use additional funding to address challenges. They provide access to counselling, mentoring and essential resources, but much of this work is in the early stages and needs more time to embed.

## **Personal development and wellbeing**

**Needs attention** 

The school's personal development provision does not have a consistently positive impact on all pupils' wellbeing or sense of belonging. Although leaders have set out ambitions for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the impact of this work varies. Pupils' understanding of different faiths, cultures and some protected characteristics is superficial, particularly among older pupils. Assemblies and tutor activities introduce these themes, including elements of fundamental British values, but pupils do not recall this learning with confidence.

The school has a planned personal development programme, including personal, social, health and economic education, and this meets the required guidelines. However, it does not have a consistent impact. Although pupils are taught about consent, healthy relationships and staying safe online and offline, they do not always remember or apply this learning securely. This means the programme does not yet support pupils' wider personal and social development as well as it should. The curriculum reflects identified local priorities and teaches pupils how to make informed decisions. Pupils develop social skills and learn about being responsible members of the community, but their cultural understanding varies. Pastoral support for vulnerable pupils is positive, with structured spaces available to help pupils regulate their emotions and feel supported. However, these strengths do not fully compensate for gaps in pupils' broader development.

Participation in extra-curricular activities is also inconsistent. Opportunities such as drama and sport are valued, but too few pupils benefit from the full range. Although the wider offer is expanding, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs take part less often than their peers. Leaders monitor attendance at these activities and continue to work to ensure equitable access.

The well-developed and embedded careers programme is a strength. The structured offer provides enhanced transition support for vulnerable pupils and ensures that pupils are prepared for their next steps.

## Post 16 provision

Needs attention 

The quality of the curriculum for post-16 students is uneven. In several subjects, the most important knowledge is not identified clearly enough. When this happens, teachers do not consistently focus on the ideas that matter most, and students do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders have strengthened staff training, but this has not yet secured consistently effective teaching across the post-16 offer.

Support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving but is not yet fully effective. While some students receive helpful adaptations, others do not receive support closely matched to their needs.

Leaders have reviewed study programmes and introduced clearer expectations about what students should learn and how learning should build over time. In some subjects, this work has improved the order in which ideas are taught, helping students understand new content more securely. Outcomes vary across subjects and programmes.

The supportive learning environment and positive relationships with staff help students grow in confidence, ensuring they are generally well prepared for their next stages of learning. Many take on leadership roles that allow them to influence aspects of school development. Students speak with pride about contributing to the wider community and enjoy being role models for younger pupils.

## What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Most pupils feel welcomed and supported when they arrive at school each day. Breakfast club helps many to start the morning calmly, and staff know pupils well. Pupils typically say that they feel safe and know who to speak to if they are worried. When bullying occurs, they trust staff to take their concerns seriously and act on them. Pupils report that discriminatory language is not tolerated.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually calm, although corridors can sometimes feel less orderly. Where routines are well established and expectations are applied consistently, pupils remain focused and follow instructions. They learn well when teachers explain new ideas clearly, check understanding and adapt activities so that all pupils can take part. Pupils' experiences vary when teachers do not notice quickly enough if

some lose concentration. These inconsistencies interrupt learning and reduce how securely pupils remember important knowledge over time.

Pupils' enjoyment of learning depends on the teaching they receive. Many speak positively about lessons where teachers model new learning clearly, ask helpful questions and provide the right support. Others, particularly pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), say that work can be too difficult to access when adaptations are not made. As a result, pupils experience uneven quality across subjects.

Generally, pupils feel that they belong to the school community and value the pastoral support available. They appreciate safe spaces, such as inclusion rooms, and the help they receive to manage their emotions. Attendance is variable for some pupils, which affects how well they benefit from the school's offer. Pupils participate in lessons and activities that help them understand the values, knowledge and skills they need for life in modern Britain. However, inconsistencies in teaching mean that some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have SEND, are less well prepared for their next steps in education.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff apply high expectations and effective strategies consistently so that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive reliable support and access the curriculum securely.
  - Leaders should ensure that teaching is consistent across subjects, particularly in checking understanding, addressing misconceptions and matching work precisely to curriculum goals.
  - Leaders should improve how well pupils secure foundational knowledge so that all groups, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, achieve more strongly across subjects.
  - Leaders should ensure that attendance systems and routines are consistently applied so that persistent absence reduces and all pupils benefit from a calm learning environment.
  - Leaders should ensure that the personal development programme enables pupils to remember and apply key knowledge, particularly regarding relationships, sex and health education, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and fundamental British values.
  - Leaders should ensure that essential knowledge is clearly identified and consistently taught so students in all subjects achieve well and receive adaptations closely matched to their needs.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of Creative Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Nicole McCartney, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Abbie Churton.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with senior leaders, a range of pupils and staff, members of the trust and the CEO during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 6 alternative provisions, including 2 that are unregistered.

Principal: Henry Gowney-Hedges

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### **Lead inspector:**

Nyree Parker, His Majesty's Inspector

### **Team inspectors:**

Joanne Ward, Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Long, Ofsted Inspector

Gary Carlile, Ofsted Inspector

Damian Painton, Ofsted Inspector

## **Facts and figures used on inspection**

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 20 January 2026

## **School and pupil context**

### **Total pupils**

**1,358**

Above average

### **What does this mean?**

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

### **School capacity**

**1,350**

Above average

### **What does this mean?**

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

### **Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)**

**26.03%**

Close to average

### **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

### **Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan**

**1.47%**

Below average

### **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

### **Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support**

**15.24%**

Close to average

## What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

## Location deprivation

### Above average

## What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

## Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

### No resourced provision

## What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

## All pupils' performance

### English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	41.8%	45.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	44.3%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	31.3%	45.3%	Below

## Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>2024/25 (provisional)</b>	43.9	45.9	Close to average
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	43.7	45.9	Close to average
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	40.1	46.3	Below

## **Progress 8**

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	0.03	-0.03	Close to average
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	-0.29	-0.03	Close to average

## **Disadvantaged pupils' performance**

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

### **Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above**

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>2024/25 (provisional)</b>	17.2%	25.6%	Close to average
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	18.2%	25.8%	Close to average
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	17.0%	25.2%	Close to average

### **Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8**

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
<b>2024/25 (provisional)</b>	30.8	34.9	Close to average
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	29.7	34.6	Close to average
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	32.2	35.0	Close to average

### Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	-0.75	-0.57	Close to average
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	-0.67	-0.57	Close to average

### Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

### Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
<b>2024/25 (provisional)</b>	17.2%	52.8%	-35.6 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	18.2%	53.1%	-34.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	17.0%	52.4%	-35.5 pp

### Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	30.8	50.3	-19.5
2023/24 (final)	29.7	50.0	-20.3
2022/23 (final)	32.2	50.3	-18.1

### Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.75	0.16	-0.92
2022/23 (final)	-0.67	0.17	-0.83

### Destinations after 16

#### Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	87%	91%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	94%	Average

## 16 to 18 performance

### A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	24.82	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.43	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	36.96	34.16	Close to average

### A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	-0.4	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.4	0.0	Below

## Absence

### Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	8.7%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.8%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	11.1%	9.0%	Above

## Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	21.5%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	25.1%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	31.0%	26.5%	Close to average

## Our grades explained

### Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

### Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

### Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

### Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

### Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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