

Abbey School

for Exceptional Children



A Day and Residential Special School for Children
with Autism and Special Educational Needs



Principal's introduction

Welcome and thank you for your interest in Abbey School for Exceptional Children.

Our independent day and residential school provides a unique environment of high-quality, evidence-informed education, nurturing and care to young people aged 4-19 with complex autism, learning difficulties and behaviours that may challenge. We offer a comprehensive programme of support that ensures that all of our pupils' individual needs are met through highly personalised learning.

We are privileged to benefit from a truly wonderful location. Our school is housed in stunning Grade II* listed buildings, part of historic Abbey Square in the heart of the beautiful city of Chester. Our fantastic team of architects have designed us a well-equipped and high-tech learning environment whilst maintaining the beauty of the buildings and surroundings for our pupils to enjoy. We make full use of our environment and location with a creatively designed curriculum that includes focused learning and enrichment activities that support wellbeing. This enables all of our young people to experience growth, development and success.

Our highly skilled and specialist staff team includes teachers, learning and behaviour specialists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. This transdisciplinary focus ensures that each pupil's individual needs are understood, accurately planned for and closely monitored as part of day-to-day school practice.



I am extremely proud to be the Principal of Abbey School, a place where pupil-centred practice is the norm and where the voice of the young people we support and their families is central to all that we do. It really is a very special place to work and learn.

I hope that you enjoy looking through our brochure, which gives just a taste of what our school has to offer. The best way to find out more about life at Abbey School is to get in touch for a conversation or a visit. We look forward to welcoming you to our school community.



Dr Katy Lee
Principal of Abbey School for Exceptional Children

Our story

Our vision

Our vision is that all children with exceptional needs receive a meaningful and fulfilling education that enables them to achieve their best possible outcomes and to make their own choices about the direction of their adult lives.

Our mission

Abbey School for Exceptional Children exists to promote and provide the best education possible for children and young people with autism who may have additional learning needs and behaviours that challenge.



Our values into action

We believe that every pupil is a unique individual with potential to learn, develop and experience a range of opportunities. **Our whole-school approach brings together everything that is known from special education research and best practice to maximise pupil learning and wellbeing.**

We are an innovative learning organisation. Our day-to-day working practices routinely inform research, evaluation and development through our partnership with Bangor and Warwick Universities. We have a bespoke curriculum, designed by us in partnership with leading researchers, specifically to meet the needs of our pupils.

Each pupil's learning journey through the curriculum is personalised. Approaches to teaching and learning are individualised, goal-based and precisely assessed. The curriculum is delivered by trans-disciplinary teams who benefit from a high level and intensive in-school training programme.

Our unique Abbey School APP and Active Support APP enable staff in planning and monitoring each pupil's learning journey on a moment-to-moment basis.

We are located in the heart of Chester city centre, which provides many fantastic opportunities for Abbey School pupils.

Our School

Abbey School for Exceptional Children is an independent autism-specific day and residential school for up to 75 pupils aged four to 19 years. Our pupils have an autism diagnosis and may present with additional learning difficulties – including behaviours that may challenge.

Our all-inclusive offer

Our expert trans-disciplinary team works to a unified model that places each pupil at the centre of support for his or her learning and wellbeing. Our specialist support staff includes **qualified teachers, subject specialists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and qualified behaviour analysts** to support specialised teaching and learning and function-based intervention for behaviour change through

a system of **Positive Behavioural Support**. We have a skilled team consisting of learning mentors, administrators, and ancillary persons on staff and our model extends beyond meeting the immediate needs of our pupils, to include family members and the wider community through direct and reverse inclusion. **All our pupils will benefit of the one-to-one support we provide as a standard part of our offering.**



The Abbey School Model

The **Abbey School Model** has five interrelated strands:

- **A bespoke, personalised curriculum for pupils with an autism diagnosis:** that is designed to ensure each pupil develops the attributes, skills, and knowledge he or she needs to live a fulfilled life in his or her community.
- **An inclusive expert trans-disciplinary team:** to deliver tailor-made access to our bespoke curriculum and provide evidence of progress against measurable objectives.
- **An expert capability in Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA):** to design, implement, and maintain a) specialised approaches to teaching and learning, b) focused interventions for behaviour change, and c) a nurturing and supportive social environment.

- **Our unique BAGS framework:** for staff to sense-check every decision they make and action they take against the increasing **B**elonging and connection, **A**utonomy and control, **G**ifts and talents, **S**peaking, listening and sense of self.
- **The Abbey School App:** a suite of programmes to digitally support the planning, delivery, and evaluation of learning opportunities for each individual pupil; to check the intensity and balance across curriculum and time; to observe and record behaviour; and conduct rapid functional assessment. A complementary Active Support App helps pupils and staff plan activities in the context of home and community within the residential provision. **Our bespoke apps interface seamlessly with Person Centred Plans (PCP), Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) plans, and Education Health Care Plans (EHCP).** App data provide evidence of school activity and pupil outcome to aid commissioning decisions and inspections.

Abbey Green: a home from home

Abbey School offers term-time residential provision for up to 30 pupils. We provide a high standard of accommodation and support that extends school-based learning through a waking-day curriculum of fun-filled activity at home and in the community.

Accommodation

Abbey School's residential accommodation, Abbey Green is located in beautiful newly-refurbished mews buildings on the Abbey School grounds in the heart of Chester City Centre. There is safe pedestrian access to the school via walled gardens. The building provides a safe, comfortable, and inviting living environment for pupils aged eight to 19 years. Furnished and decorated by award winning designers, each house has its own garden and outdoor space, along with a lounge, kitchen, and activity area as well as private bedrooms and bathrooms. Pupils are encouraged to personalise their own area of the house based on their interests and preferences.



Our houses

Pupils live in one of four terraced houses in family-sized groups with a dedicated team of support staff.

Our care team

Each house functions as a family unit. Pupils are supported by a highly skilled and well qualified team of residential care staff with relevant social care qualifications. The team comprises a home manager, keyworkers, and a high ratio of residential care staff. A waking-night staff supports pupils throughout the night. The residential care team work in close partnership throughout the academic year with school staff and with families and carers to ensure our pupils can enjoy a safe and nurturing environment.

Extended curriculum:

The residential staff offer a rich waking-day curriculum beyond the school day where pupils can use the knowledge and skills learnt at school within home and community setting. The focus is on social, personal care, leisure, and play activities; older pupils engage increasingly in developing daily living and domestic skills. Use of community facilities is frequent and regular for a range of recreational, social, and fun-filled activities including, clubs, swimming, cinema and open air theatre at walking distance, bowling, using the gym, climbing, and hiking.

The Abbey School residential model

The Abbey School Model ensures each pupil has access to seamless individualised support that connects with their family home and with school. A bespoke extended curriculum ensures each



pupil develops the attributes, skills, and knowledge he or she needs to live a fulfilled life in his or her community. A trans-disciplinary team delivers tailor-made access to the curriculum and provides evidence of progress against measurable objectives. Expert capability in Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) ensures a nurturing environment and focused support for teaching, learning and behaviour change. The BAGS framework sense-checks decisions and actions. Pupils and staff use our bespoke APPs to plan and record opportunity and engagement.

The stunning Grade II* listed Georgian building that houses Abbey School has been transformed into a contemporary school with outstanding facilities. All classrooms feature digital teaching and learning equipment such as smart boards, carefully selected by experts to enrich the learning experience. High-tech noise control systems reduce disruption and enhance learning. Air exchange systems powered by sustainable technologies moderate temperature and control air flow throughout the school. From a professional kitchen and using responsibly, locally sourced ingredients, our chef produces nutritious home cooked food served in two intimate dining areas.

The school offers ample outdoor space for students to enjoy - boosting physical and mental wellbeing. Children benefit from a variety of high-quality sports and leisure facilities. Externally, the school features a colour-coded multi-use games area (MUGA), jungle gyms for young children, and a gazebo. Stationary sports equipment is available for older children to exercise and enjoy - improving health and fitness.

Specialist teaching areas such as teaching kitchens provide students with valuable skills and learning, while a sensory room offers children the opportunity to entertain or calm their senses.

Both the school and residential accommodation are located in the grounds of the historic Chester Cathedral in the heart of the city.

Chester is a thriving leisure and tourism destination, with a strong cultural and retail sector set in the leafy county of Cheshire.

The school's location offers direct access to all of Chester's amenities, including retail and leisure, entertainment, and a range of wider cultural venues. This includes opportunities for trips to the local shops, parks, green spaces, the cathedral, library, cinema, theatre and much more. Strong partnerships with other schools and organisations within Chester help to create a positive wider community for pupils and the school has also forged close links with local businesses to support sponsored work placements for older pupils.

Transport links

The school benefits from outstanding transport links and is **10 minutes' walk from the central Chester Rail station - offering easy access to the UK's main cities. Birmingham and London are reachable in around two hours, and the North West hubs of Manchester and Liverpool under an hour away by train.** Chester has excellent motorway links and is easily accessible by car.

Transitional support

We recognise that starting a new school is likely to be a challenging experience for children and for their family members. The effects are likely to be that much greater for children leaving their family home. We are committed to ensuring pupils start their journey with us in the best possible circumstances.

Similarly, a transition at the end of a school placement may present challenges regarding changes in setting, people, and commencing a new phase in life. Pupils placed away from their area of origin may wish to return, and the placing authority may benefit from detailed assistance on service design and transitional support. This may be especially relevant when a pupil transitions to receiving support from adult rather than children's services.

Our dedicated transition team works closely with each pupil's family, school, care team, and other relevant organisations or individuals to create a **highly personalised and considered transitional support package** into and away from Abbey School for Exceptional Children.

Prior to placement, we would ensure we had met the child's family and that a full assessment and transition plan was in place – this includes



a comprehensive exchange of information with the relevant educational, care and support teams the child is moving from.

Supporting positive family and community relationships is central to helping children remain embedded and connected to their familial support system while developing and learning important skills that will enhance their ability to develop new relationships within their communities over their lifetime.

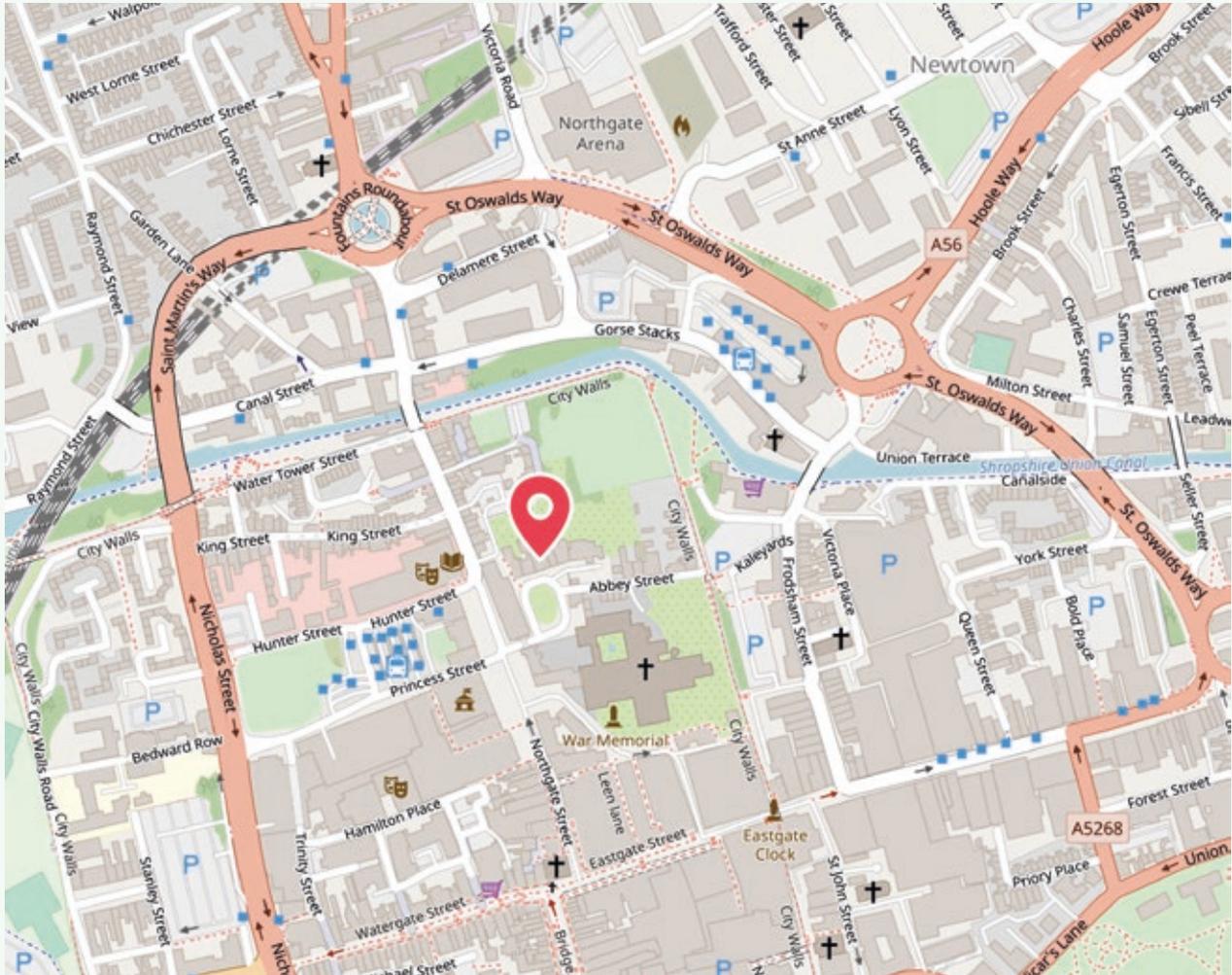
Families are closely involved in the transitional process to ensure the move to Abbey School is

as smooth as possible, and that our team has every detail - no matter how small - to help ease children into their new environment as quickly and comfortably as possible.

Our commitment

From learning a child's favourite colour or bedtime song, to ensuring our residential team know when there is a special cuddly toy that can't be misplaced, the entire staff is dedicated to ensuring children feel safe, secure, seen and heard from the moment they set foot in our school.

How to find us



To find out more or for placement enquiries,
please contact Abbey School Principal, Dr Katy Lee
via email at principal@abbeyschool.com
or call **01244 960 000**

Contact us by post:

Abbey School
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Chester
CH1 2HU

Or visit our website:

www.abbeyschool.com

For a virtual tour, visit:

<https://www.abbeyschool.com/home/video-tour>