Abbey School
for Exceptional Children

abbeyeschool.com

Prospectus

2020/21
What are we doing?

Abbey School for exceptional children aims to be the very best of its kind in the United Kingdom. We aim to improve the life chances of pupils with complex and challenging needs, and to extend the prospect of an improved quality of life for family members and others.

The Abbey School Model brings together everything that is known from special education research and best practice to maximise pupil learning and wellbeing. **We believe that what we are doing has never been done before.**
Why are we doing this?

We believe that education is the key to a better life, and that all children and young people are entitled to an effective education that enables them to achieve their full potential, regardless of the degree of special educational need or disability.

Together, we are unlocking potential and enhancing the lives of children and young people with special educational needs.

How are we doing this?

Our whole school approach brings together everything that is known from special education research and best practice to maximise pupil learning and wellbeing. The Abbey School Model is a synthesis of leading edge evidence-based practices that has been developed by us to deliver our bespoke curriculum, which constantly evolves and improves.

We are centrally located in the heart of the City of Chester which provides more opportunities for Abbey School pupils than are available to many other children.

Dr. Katy Lee - Principal
Prof. Sandy Toogood – Head of Clinical Services
Paul Longfield LL.B – Head of Human Resources
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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 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.

Unlike any other specialist school in the UK, we offer attractive funding solutions to placing local authorities, which can finance the school fees for all pupils attending Abbey School.

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 prospectus 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.
Abbey School
for Exceptional Children
Abbey School is an Independent Day and Residential Special School for young people aged 4-19 years with complex autism, learning difficulties and behaviours that challenge. We provide high-quality education and care in our beautiful Grade II* listed buildings in the heart of Chester. All young people attending Abbey School have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with school places commissioned and funded via local authorities. Choosing a school placement is a needs driven exercise, which we recognise is difficult for children and young people with complex learning needs in challenging economic circumstances. Weekly, half termly or termly residential school places are available for young people who would benefit from a waking-day curriculum. We work in close partnership with families and carers with support, information sharing and workshop opportunities available throughout the academic year.

Abbey School is aspirational for all of the young people that we support. This aspiration is captured in our vision, mission and values which are central to all that we do at Abbey School.
**Mission**

Abbey School exists to provide the **best education possible** for young people with exceptional needs.

**Vision**

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

**Values**

- Every pupil is a unique individual with potential
- Special educational needs and/or disability should not be a barrier to a valued lifestyle
- All children and young people without exception are entitled to access the best education and support available
- Best practices in education are evidence-based
- Teaching and learning decisions should be evidence-driven
- Clear goals make data-based decisions more numerous and effective
- Education is for everyone and for the whole of a person’s life
- Learning is enabling, empowering and extends the boundaries of autonomy
- If a pupil is not learning, it is the teaching that needs to change – the learner is always right
- The pupil voice should be heard and respected

**Values into Action**

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, specifically to meet the needs of our pupils.

Each pupil’s 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 APPs support staff in planning and monitoring each pupil’s learning journey on a moment-to-moment basis. We are centrally located in the heart of the city which provides more opportunities for Abbey School pupils than are available to many other children. We believe that what we are doing has never been done before.
Every decision we make is framed in the context of the Abbey School BAGS model.

**B**
Belonging and connection
Being part of a community and having a network of valued relationships.

**A**
Autonomy and control
Having influence over day-to-day and life defining matters.

**G**
Gifts and talents
Doing even better the things that are done really well, and learning to do things that are important but may not be done at all.

**S**
Speaking, listening and a sense of self
Communicating effectively in a variety of ways, not just speech, and having an identity that defines who I really want to be.
The Abbey School curriculum is central to a meaningful and effective education for all our pupils.

Through our bespoke and carefully planned curriculum we aim to ensure children and young people develop the attributes, skills, knowledge and understanding they need to become adults able to live the best possible life, with the greatest degree of autonomy and range of opportunities possible.

Our highly personalised curriculum is designed to be relevant, functional, broad and balanced over time, and to support pupils to develop skills, knowledge, understanding and interest in a wide range of areas across many contexts. Based firmly on our core values, the Abbey School curriculum aims to help pupils to become successful lifelong learners, effective communicators and confident and responsible individuals who play an active part in society.

The Abbey School curriculum is organised into two broad areas that support pupils to develop the academic and social skills necessary for successful lifelong learning. The core curriculum consists of the prime areas of learning that enable pupils to develop the essential knowledge, understanding and skills required for a safe, meaningful and fulfilling life beyond Abbey School. Through the wider curriculum areas, pupils access a rich, broad and balanced curriculum which helps them to make sense of the world around them.
At Abbey School we feel passionate about not placing limits on our expectations of pupils.

Core curriculum

- English for Life
- Maths for Life
- Personal, Social, Health & Economic Education (PSHE)
- Learning skills

Wider curriculum

- Science
- Humanities
- Technology
- Creative & Expressive Arts
- Physical development

Individualised learning journeys

The Abbey School curriculum is designed around three personalised learning journeys, known as the ‘Three Es of Differentiation’. These are: engaging, exploring and establishing.

Since many pupils with learning difficulties demonstrate strengths in some areas whilst exhibiting difficulties in others, each pupil will follow a highly personalised journey throughout school based on their unique and diverse needs.

At Abbey School we feel passionate about not placing limits on our expectations of pupils. For this reason, we intend for our learning journeys to be flexible, enabling pupils to make progress through the three Es of differentiation in each area of the curriculum in which they are working based on their individual strengths and needs and their stage of development.
Engaging

Pupils with complex needs learn through consistent routines, sensory engagement and interaction with adults. They build positive relationships which help develop a sense of security. Pupils develop an awareness of the world around them and develop the physical skills needed to control and explore the environment. Pupils develop behaviours through which they can express their feelings, make choices and communicate with other people and they experience life within the school community, responding to other people and sharing activities with them.

Exploring

Pupils learn through play, exploration, practical activities and community involvement. They develop communication skills that allow them to interact with other people, make choices, follow instructions and access the key concepts needed for learning. Pupils begin to engage in subject-specific learning and develop key skills in the wider and core curriculum areas. They learn to cooperate with other people, to build positive relationships and to take responsibility for themselves. Pupils learn the skills that will help them be more independent and learn about the world around them and the wider community.

Establishing

Pupils engage in subject-specific learning through the National Curriculum programmes of study, adapted to carefully match their individual needs. They build on prior knowledge, understanding and skills and apply their learning in different contexts to solve practical problems in real-life contexts. The curriculum supports pupils to develop effective methods of communication to interact confidently with other people and pupils develop self-awareness, increased independence, respect for others and a sense of responsibility, playing their part in the school and wider community.
Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and in Key Stage One follow a curriculum model based on the EYFS framework.

Early Years Foundation Stage & Key Stage One

While for typically developing children the EYFS curriculum is intended to run until the end of Reception and lead into a Key Stage One curriculum, the complex needs experienced by children at Abbey School mean they need additional time to develop and consolidate the early learning skills which enable access to the rest of the curriculum.

At this key stage, the framework for EYFS is taught to pupils by providing routine, structure and carefully planned, targeted play activities. Individual targets for children are set with the purpose of enhancing opportunities for learning and personal development and overcoming barriers to learning.

Carefully chosen themes are used to support pupils to acquire and consolidate skills, knowledge and understanding in the prime and specific areas of learning. Examples of themes include ‘People Who Help Us’, ‘Me and My Body’ and ‘Plants and Animals’.

Prime areas of learning are fundamental, work together and move through to support development in all other areas.
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development

Specific areas of learning include essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society.
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design
At **Key Stage Two**, pupils continue to receive a highly personalised curriculum which is based broadly on the National Curriculum programmes of study.

**Key Stage Two**

Pupils study the core areas of English, Maths, PSHE and Learning Skills discretely, practising and developing fluency in key skills within these core areas.

In addition to the core curriculum, pupils also acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in the wider curriculum areas of science, humanities, technology and creative and expressive arts, all of which are delivered through a programme of carefully chosen themes that build on those introduced in the earlier key stages. Examples of themes include ‘Transport’, ‘My Community’ and ‘Caring for Animals’.

Pupils build upon learning from EYFS and Key Stage One to use and apply skills in different contexts. Opportunities are included for pupils to further improve basic skills such as running, jumping, throwing and catching. Where possible, physical development sessions link to whole school topics. Pupils also have the opportunity to take part in outdoor adventurous activities at local community venues.

The development of communication skills continues to form an integral part of teaching across the curriculum, as does working on key learning skills to reduce barriers to learning.

Pupils who are not yet able to learn in a group context, continue to be taught on a one-to-one basis. Prerequisites for learning in a group setting are taught and practised across a variety of settings.
At Key Stage Three, the curriculum is completely personalised.

It builds on prior knowledge, understanding and skills acquired at Key Stage Two, and continues to be broad, balanced, relevant and functional.

Key Stage Three

The core curriculum areas of English, Maths and PSHE are taught discretely, but opportunities are planned for pupils to build on earlier learning to develop fluency and apply and transfer skills across a range of different contexts. Pupils work on the prerequisite skills for learning in a group setting and begin to learn in paired or small group settings when ready.

Each of the wider curriculum areas are taught through carefully chosen themes which build progressively on those studied in the earlier key stages and prepare pupils for transition into Key Stage Four. Examples of themes include ‘Changes’, ‘Healthy Eating’ and ‘Looking after Our World’.

In Key Stage Three pupils continue to be taught Physical Education lessons and wider opportunities through links with local providers and venues. These types of learning opportunities are supported by classroom activities, our outdoor areas and extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils build upon learning from Key Stage Two to develop understanding of how to use and apply skills in different contexts.

Communication skills and ICT are threaded through the curriculum and every opportunity is used to practise pupils’ key skills in order to reduce barriers to learning and address pupils’ specific areas of difficulty.
At Key Stage Four, pupils are introduced to the world of work through work-related learning topics which support the development of knowledge, skills and understanding about employment.

Key Stage Four

At Key Stage Four learning continues to be highly personalised with a greater emphasis on pupils learning in a variety of contexts with a less intensive ratio of support. Each topic includes practical, hands-on simulated work-related learning activities on the school site in the following vocational areas:

- Catering
- Office Skills
- Horticulture
- Hospitality & Events
- Retail
- Environment & Conservation

Each topic includes several opportunities for pupils to visit related places of work in the community, for example making visits to garden centres, offices or shops to learn about the types of jobs available in those work places.

In Key Stage Four, pupils access a wide range of community sport and leisure activities, designed to encourage them to develop lifelong interests and healthy habits. Weekly sessions are delivered in partnership with local partners and venues, including activities such as fitness, martial arts, cycling, climbing, water-based activities and bowling. Pupils also have the opportunity to work towards The Duke of Edinburgh Award of the Junior Award Scheme for Schools.

Throughout Key Stage Four, pupils’ achievements are externally recognised through nationally accredited awards and qualifications such as ASDAN’s Transition Challenge programme, a framework of activities designed to develop and accredit learning within the programmes of study for the Key Stage Four National Curriculum, along with activities to develop the essential skills required for adult living.
Work-related learning in the **Sixth Form** includes opportunities for work experience both in school and in supported community placements, along with termly enterprise projects.

**Sixth Form**

Pupils in the **Sixth Form** continue to follow a personalised curriculum with an increased emphasis on learning and applying skills in the community.

Although the core areas of the curriculum continue to be taught discretely, the majority of learning in these areas takes place through individualised vocational study pathways which make up the majority of the teaching time during the week. Discrete English, Maths and PSHE time is used to ensure pupils acquire, practise and build fluency with the skills, knowledge and understanding needed in order to pursue their vocational pathways successfully.

Work-related learning includes opportunities for work experience both at school and in supported community placements (for example through work experience in a local garden centre or café or membership at a local gym), along with termly enterprise projects.

Pupils work on an individualised study pathway during their time in the **Sixth Form**, where they choose to study a different employment pathway each year from the following options:

- Catering
- Hospitality & Events
- Horticulture & Environment
- Office Skills
- Retail
- The Arts

Pupils’ chosen employment pathways enable them to achieve against the four different areas highlighted in the Preparing for Adulthood Agenda: Employment and further education; Independent living; Community access; Improved health.

As part of their individualised study pathway, pupils build on the community sports and leisure opportunities introduced in Key Stage Four to develop and pursue particular areas of interest and enjoyment in sports and leisure. Activities vary according to a pupil’s preferences and interests, for example some pupils may benefit from working out at a local gym while others may enjoy swimming, cycling or running. The aim is to develop pupils’ interest in a form of physical activity that will be maintained as they become adults.

Throughout the **Sixth Form**, pupils’ achievements are externally recognised through nationally accredited awards and qualifications such as ASDAN’s Towards Independence programme, a framework of activities designed to develop and accredit personal, social, work-related and independent living skills.
Learning Skills

At Abbey School we recognise that many of our pupils experience challenges with the development of foundational learning skills, often referred to as ‘learning readiness’ or ‘learning to learn skills’. These pivotal skills include the development of attention, concentration, language understanding, taking information from visual stimuli, learning via the observation of others and learning how to learn as part of a group. Research indicates that these foundational learning skills are an essential component in children and young people’s ability to learn from their environment successfully. Therefore, the development of learning skills is a key component of the Abbey School Curriculum. Pupils are all assessed using the Abbey School Learning Skills framework and an individualised programme of skill development is implemented, designed around each pupil’s needs.

Together, we are unlocking potential and enhancing the lives of children and young people with special educational needs.
Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) is at the centre of the Abbey School mission to provide the best education possible for young people with exceptional needs.

PSHE is all about teaching pupils the skills and knowledge they will need to safely and effectively engage with the world around them, both online and offline. We aim to maximise each pupil’s potential for independence, taking into account their individual needs and abilities and to help them develop effective relationships, assume greater personal responsibility, cope with changes at puberty, make healthy life choices and manage personal safety. The PSHE curriculum introduces pupils to the wider world, including the world of work, economics and politics and enables them to make an active contribution to their community.

The curriculum provides both explicit and implicit learning opportunities and experiences which reflect each pupil’s increasing independence and physical and social awareness as they move through the school, building on skills previously learned. Although many aspects of PSHE are developed throughout each pupil’s time at school, emphasis on particular teaching areas will shift depending on the age group. For instance, early intervention in teaching personal care skills provides the basis for elaborating these skills as the pupil grows older.
Our **Wellbeing Programme** is designed to ensure successful learning and a quality of life is achieved for all pupils.

**Wellbeing Programme**

The emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils is fundamental to our philosophy and ethos at Abbey School. We have developed a bespoke wellbeing programme as part of our Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education programme which teaches pupils skills and strategies they need for maintaining positive mental health. The programme focuses on six areas of wellbeing which are evidence-based strategies from the field of positive psychology that have been shown to boost mental wellbeing and develop emotional resilience.

- Connecting with other people
- Being physically active
- Learning new skills
- Giving to others
- Embracing the present moment
- Caring for ourselves

Our wellbeing curriculum enables pupils to learn about, practise and evaluate a range of skills, strategies and activities related to wellbeing in an interesting, child-centred and age appropriate way.

Abbey School considers **Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)** an integral part of the PSHE and Science curriculum.

**Relationships and Sex Education**

We offer pupils a carefully planned programme on human development, personal relationships, sexuality and family life within a safe, comfortable atmosphere, taking full account of the rights of the individual. Each young person’s needs, with regard to Relationships and Sex Education are considered individually with account taken of the degree of cognitive awareness and understanding. By teaching pupils Relationships and Sex Education, we enable individuals to be safe and more able to understand their emotions and responsibilities as they grow up.

Information regarding our Relationships and Sex Education Policy can be obtained from the school.
At Abbey School we recognise that the personal development of pupils, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally (SMSC), plays a significant part of their learning and achievements. We therefore provide an education that affords opportunities to explore and develop:

• Values and beliefs
• Spiritual awareness
• Personal behaviour
• A positive, caring attitude towards other people
• An understanding of their social and cultural traditions
• An appreciation of the diversity and richness of their cultures

SMSC plays a significant part in learning and achievement at Abbey School and it is lived through the school’s ethos and values. We adopt a whole school approach to developing pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and we believe that all curriculum areas have a contribution to make to this area of pupils’ development.

Religious Education plays a significant role in the development of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is closely linked with other areas of the curriculum (for example PSHE, music, art and humanities) and is taught through an integrated approach which includes assemblies, celebration of religious festivals and school visits. Through RE, we aim to develop awareness of self, others and the world around us and to celebrate festivals which reflect religious diversity.
The Abbey School Model
The Abbey School Model (ASM) targets learning and development through **mutual engagement and participation** in a range of academic, social and functional activities.

A highly skilled team delivers a pupil-centred blended curriculum within a framework that is designed to achieve the following outcomes for pupils:

**Belonging and connection** requires a physical presence in the community and being part of a valued network of relationships.

**Autonomy and control** over every day and life-defining matters.

**Gifts and talents** by learning and applying an increasing range of knowledge and skills.

**Speaking and listening with a sense of self** by communicating effectively through a variety of means and methods.

We call this framework **BAGS**. Our staff provide just the right level and type of assistance a pupil needs to make **BAGS** real.

We facilitate learning and development using the Abbey School Model in a variety of ways that includes incidental learning (through opportunity and engagement in an enriched learning environment), semi-structured and fully-structured teaching plans.

Pupil engagement and learning are planned and evaluated continuously in real time using the Abbey School Model APP. We plan for, and test, how learning spreads to new situations and its durability over time.

The Abbey School Model seamlessly integrates **academic and social learning with Positive Behavioural Support (PBS)**.

PBS is a framework for assessing, promoting, and evaluating behaviour change in an ethical and culturally sensitive way. It is the most up-to-date, effective, and evidence-based approach to supporting behaviour change. PBS combines a comprehensive system of universal enrichment and nurturing, with focused support when that is required.

We believe that when a pupil is not learning it is because we are not teaching the right way - our learners are always right.

Designing and delivering a synthesised Abbey School Model requires a significant and sustained investment in knowledge and expertise from leading research-practitioners, as well as financial investment. Abbey School is committed to providing the very best in all respects, including the most effective programme of support for learning and wellbeing.
At Abbey School we recognise that to deliver the highest quality education possible we need a highly skilled and committed team of staff.

Our trans-disciplinary teams work together to assess each pupil’s strengths and development areas, prioritise targets and design personalised learning support plans for all pupils.

Our staff are our most valuable resource in ensuring that pupils reach their best possible outcomes and as such we prioritise investment in professional development. All staff receive regular training and supervision to ensure that they have the understanding, skills and knowledge to support our pupils effectively.

This includes a comprehensive in house training programme designed in strategic partnership with two leading UK universities, external training events and the opportunity to engage in postgraduate study.
Qualified Teachers

Our highly skilled teachers, with the support of their trans-disciplinary colleagues, are responsible for planning, delivering, monitoring and assessing teaching and learning for their class group. We also benefit from subject specialist teachers for both physical education and music, along with vocational pathway leads for our 14-19 work-related learning curriculum.

Behaviour Analysts

Behaviour Analysts are experts in understanding behaviour and how people learn. They work with class teachers and other trans-disciplinary colleagues to break down the curriculum and implement effective teaching and learning approaches/techniques for each pupil. They also lead on the assessment process and the design and implementation of positive behaviour support plans.

Speech and Language Therapists

Speech and Language Therapists work with each class team to assess each pupil’s speech, language and communication needs. They work with their trans-disciplinary colleagues to design individualised communication programmes for pupils and may work individually with pupils on a sessional basis dependent on individual needs.

Occupational Therapists

Occupational Therapists work with class teams and trans-disciplinary colleagues to assess and deliver support programmes for pupils to help them engage with learning opportunities, develop functional life skills and manage their sensory needs. They may also work individually with pupils on a sessional basis dependent on individual needs.

Learning Mentors

Learning Mentors form part of the class team and work under the direction of the class teacher and trans-disciplinary colleagues. They work with pupils both individually and in small groups supporting them to overcome barriers to learning, delivering teaching, providing positive behaviour support and delivering other focused interventions. A named Learning Mentor within each pupil’s class will act as their Key Worker.
How we assess progress and achievement

At Abbey School we have high aspirations for our pupils in all areas of their lives. Therefore, consistent monitoring and evaluation of progress is an essential component of our work.

We monitor progress in a multitude of ways at different points across the academic year.
**Admission**

Each pupil attending Abbey School has baseline assessments completed upon admission which incorporates a range of measures covering curriculum levels, behaviours of concern, communication, learning, daily living and socialisation skills. These assessments are completed through direct work with the pupil, discussion with the family and information from the previous education setting. This ensures that the first targets set for the young person concerned are relevant to their strengths and needs profile, and provide the right amount of challenge with the right amount of support. It also ensures that any behaviours of concern are identified and supported consistently across environments.

**Annually**

Assessments used at baseline are completed annually and a detailed progress report is provided for families and local authorities at the end of each academic year. Assessments are updated and shared at each pupil’s annual review of their Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to inform target setting and teaching or intervention decisions for the following year. Pupil progress is measured, recorded and reported in a number of ways including:

- Progress across their personalised curriculum
- Progress towards highly individualised targets (e.g. behaviours of concern)
- Progress towards nationally recognised qualifications/accreditation
- Progress towards key milestones (e.g. the ability to attend a residential trip)

**Termly**

Targets are set for pupils on a termly basis and detailed in each pupil’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). Pupil progress is formally reviewed and reported each term, with family members/carers invited into school to discuss their child’s progress. Families receive a written report each term detailing their young person’s progress in the context of their IEP.

**Daily**

Part of the Abbey School Model involves evidence-led decision-making on a moment-to-moment basis for all of our pupils. Personalised education plans are clearly articulated and measurement procedures are assigned for all targets so that staff can efficiently record and monitor progress on a moment-to-moment basis across the school day. Teaching staff are therefore able to review pupils’ performance with their personalised targets daily and make any necessary adjustments for the next day. Further information on our day-to-day approach to formative assessment is described in the Abbey School Model section of this prospectus.
Some pupils attending Abbey School may experience difficulties in transferring their learning into other settings and in trying new experiences.

For this reason, **an essential component of our model involves learning outside of the classroom with ‘hands on’, ‘real-life’ enrichment activities and events.**
Community Access

The location of Abbey School in central Chester means that all pupils are able to benefit from regular access to the thriving local community, which is prioritised within our curriculum model. This includes trips to the local shops, parks, green spaces, the cathedral, library, cinema, theatre and much more.

School Trips and Educational Visits

All pupils are enabled to access educational visits linked to their curriculum topics. All trips are very carefully planned with the needs of each pupil central to the planning process. A thorough risk assessment process is adhered to in order to ensure the safety of all concerned.

Residential Trips

Pupils in the secondary school and sixth form have the opportunity to enjoy residential visits. We are proud to facilitate and enable this for our pupils and are aware that for many it will be their first time away from home, making it a key milestone in their Abbey School journey. This starts with one night away moving up to a three-night residential trip in the 6th form.

National Learning Events

Abbey School pupils are supported to participate in national learning and charitable events such as Children in Need, Comic Relief and World Book Day in ways that are meaningful and relevant for each individual. We also celebrate a number of spiritual and cultural events at school such as Chinese New Year, Diwali and Easter, allowing our pupils to experience a variety of cultures.
At Abbey School we believe passionately in pupils having a strong sense of belonging and connection with their local community.

Belonging requires a physical presence in the community and connecting is being part of a valued network of relationships. We actively seek to involve all of our pupils in a variety of community activities, visits and supported work placements. Being centrally located in a busy and thriving city provides opportunity and ease of access.

We are establishing close relationships with a number of local schools with the aim of facilitating inclusion placements, buddy and mentoring initiatives with children and young people both in mainstream and specialist provision. These relationships allow for the sharing of good practice and will provide further opportunities for staff professional development.
Abbey Green is our residential provision which will open to pupils in January 2021.

Abbey Green provides a perfect setting for young people best suited to a waking-day structure of a residential school placement.

Housed across beautiful mews properties and overlooking the falconry and the city walls, Abbey Green enjoys an enviable location that provides direct access into the school building whilst being only a stone’s throw from all of Chester’s amenities. It really will be a special place for pupils to live and learn.

Pupils will live in small family groups within each house with a highly skilled and well qualified team of residential care staff supporting them. Each house has a lounge, kitchen and activity area in addition to bedrooms and bathrooms, all beautifully decorated and equipped as a home away from home. Pupils will be encouraged to personalise their own area of the house based on their interests and preferences.

Each house will function as a family group with a home manager, key workers and residential care staff. Waking-night staff will support pupils throughout the night.

Pupils will follow a waking-day curriculum, extending knowledge and skills learnt at school into their home setting with a focus on developing daily living, social, personal care and leisure skills. Pupils will have regular and meaningful presence in the local community with the opportunity to attend a variety of recreational, social and fun activities and clubs. A good range of special trips and events will also be planned such as swimming, the cinema, bowling, using the gym, climbing and hiking.

Relationships with family and friends will be supported for all pupils accessing a residential placement. Visits are welcomed along with regular phone and/or video calls.

Placements in Abbey Green are available for children in KS2 to KS5. This translates to the academic year in which a young person turns 8 up to the age of 19. Pupils have a number of boarding options available:

- **Weekly** - 38 weeks, excluding weekends and returning home for all school holidays
- **Half Termly** - 38 weeks, including weekends but returning home for all school holidays
- **Termly** - 41 weeks, including weekends and half term holidays but returning home for Christmas, Easter and Summer holidays
We are centrally located in the heart of the City of Chester which provides more opportunities for Abbey School pupils than are available to many other children.

Access to 1:1 learning support is included as a standard part of the Abbey School Model at a frequency individualised to each pupil’s needs and all our pupils are taught in small class sizes of up to 6 pupils.
Abbey School benefits from a **truly wonderful location**. We’re housed in stunning grade II* listed buildings within the grounds of Chester Cathedral.

We have a number of general classrooms and specialist teaching areas for particular parts of the curriculum (e.g. food technology). In addition, we benefit from a number of flexible rooms and breakout spaces that can be utilised based on the needs of our pupils; such as for paired and small group work, to request access to a calming space or to provide a base for a pupil who requires a gradual transition into the classroom setting.

We recognise the benefits that technology can bring to our pupils and as such, have invested heavily to ensure that the latest technologies are available throughout the school. All classrooms and teaching spaces benefit from interactive whiteboards, laptops and iPads for teaching and learning.

We recognise the important role that physical activity and spending time outdoors plays in the role of every young person’s education. Abbey School has well-equipped primary and secondary playgrounds, outdoor learning spaces, a kitchen garden and an outdoor sports area. In addition, due to our unique location, our pupils will have a regular meaningful presence in the local community.

The size of the class group depends on both age and stage of learning along with decisions regarding peer groups such as pupils’ communication styles. Each class group has a class teacher and a number of learning mentors who work with pupils on a daily basis.

The school balances the need for 1:1 support for learning and behaviour alongside the targeted transition to small group learning in preparation for adult life. In addition to the class teachers, the school has specialist teachers for particular areas of the curriculum.

Abbey School promotes the development of healthy choices for our pupils when it comes to food and nutrition. We have our own on-site catering team who provide a wide range of delicious meals for our pupils to enjoy. The menus reflect the high energy of the school week with fresh, nutritionally balanced and locally sourced produce.

Abbey School operates on the customary basis of three terms each year, the pattern of holidays reflecting those of Cheshire West and Chester local authority in which the school is based.
Our School buildings have been designed to provide a modern teaching environment within a historic grade II* listed setting. The Design Team were selected for their track record in delivering award winning exemplar projects for people with autism and they have worked with the Abbey School team to design a school that surpasses all expectations. The original buildings were constructed in 1750 as town houses for the clergy, with generous room proportions, high ceilings and ornate decoration. Each classroom therefore has a unique architectural identity but with careful planning they all contain the same modern interventions to provide an exceptional teaching and learning environment.

The School benefits from excellent classroom sizes and easy lines of circulation when moving around the building. The interaction between rooms meets the current best practice standard whilst the room sizes exceed the standards found in a new-build school.

The control of air within the building has been at the heart of the design philosophy with a significant investment being placed in the Multi-room Ventilation and Heat Recovery system (MVHR) together with air source heat pumps which combined run at a 400% efficiency.

This means that for every 1kw input there is a 4kw output, when compared to a standard domestic boiler at 98% efficiency. This system therefore provides a very modern and environmentally sustainable solution. The MVHR system provides heating, cooling and most importantly air changes to reduce CO2 build up in the teaching spaces. This ensures that the environment is consistently comfortable for pupils and staff, setting the optimal tone for teaching and learning.
Acoustic control within the classrooms is of high importance and has been achieved using modern techniques of absorption and reverberation control to provide teaching environments that exceed the current standards. The safety of the pupils and the robustness of the building has been carefully considered throughout the design process, with many modern interventions including reinforcement of plasterwork walls, secondary glazing with laminated glass and robust furniture and fittings. Small details have been extensively planned, for example, all light switches have hidden screws to prevent tampering. The result is a school that provides a robust, comfortable, modern teaching and learning environment within an aesthetically unique setting.

Abbey School buildings are of historic importance and while the original fabric has been retained and restored, the modern interventions have developed a built environment that responds to the needs of the pupils and provides a school building that is an exemplar in design for individuals with autism and behaviours that challenge.
Partnership with Parents
Partnership with Parents

At Abbey School we recognise that the involvement of parents and carers in their young person’s education is central to the progress of our pupils. As such the school’s relationship with parents and carers is considered as a partnership. Parents and carers are involved in discussions about their young person’s learning and wellbeing at all stages of their time at Abbey School. There are regular formal and informal opportunities for parents and carers to engage with us as a school and to access a range of support and information. These include:

Pupil Reviews

These are termly opportunities to meet with the team of staff supporting the young person concerned. Reviews are used to share progress, achievements and concerns both at home and at school. They are also an opportunity to problem solve and share information on support strategies to ensure consistency for pupils across settings.

Annual Review

This is an annual pupil-centred review of the Education Health and Care Plan. All of those inputting into a young person’s education will form part of the review process. Progress and concerns will be considered and targets for the year ahead set and agreed.

Home Visits

A home visit can be requested or suggested in specific circumstances in which it would benefit the pupil and family. For example, if the family are struggling with behaviour at home or if a pupil is learning how to use a new communication system across settings.

School Events

We welcome parents and carers into school at various points throughout the year to celebrate our pupils’ achievements. Examples include fairs, assemblies, sports days and Christmas events.

Home/School Communication Log

These books will come to and from school with each pupil containing key information that may be important to understand in order to effectively support the young person. For example, it is important for school staff to be aware of a lack of sleep or changes in routines at home that may be disruptive. Likewise, we recognise that many of our pupils are unable to come home and tell their family about their day, therefore, a few words about their school day is highly valued.

Parent/Carer Communication App

In between more formal reviews, parents and carers are kept informed about their young person’s progress via our school APP that can be accessed on any smart phone or tablet. The APP provides essential whole-school information and is also used to provide personalised information to parents/carers regarding their child or young person. For example, photographs, progress reports and skills generalisation suggestions.
Abbey School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and safety of all children and young people. We are sensitive to the special educational needs of our pupils and recognise the important role that schools play in keeping them safe from harm.

All staff employed at Abbey School are recruited under rigorous safer recruitment procedures including the requirement to undergo an enhanced disclosure and barring service check (DBS). It is a requirement that all staff receive training in safeguarding and child protection and such training is refreshed and updated at regular intervals.

The school has in place a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure, including the safeguarding of young adults. We have designated safeguarding leads and robust practices in place to ensure pupil safety. We take our responsibility seriously to safeguard young people at risk. Parents and carers should, therefore, be aware that if a staff member becomes concerned about a pupil’s wellbeing, such concerns will be reported to the Principal. In accordance with our safeguarding responsibilities, such concerns may be reported to the local authority safeguarding board.

The school has a number of qualified first aiders on site and clear systems are in place for recording and informing parents of any accident or injury sustained whilst at school. Through the school's ethos and targeted areas of the curriculum, pupils develop respect for others, however, where any form of bullying arises, it is taken seriously. Please refer to our Counter Bullying (including Cyberbullying) Policy for further information.

Due to the vulnerable nature of our pupils, security is a high priority at Abbey School. Pupils are supervised at all times by qualified and experienced staff who know them well. A fobbed access control system is utilised throughout the school to ensure that the buildings and grounds are secure at all times. Anyone visiting the school must use our electronic sign-in system within the school reception area. Visitors badges must be worn at all times when on school premises. In addition, anyone visiting the school must be escorted at all times by a member of school staff.
Abbey School welcomes visits from parents and carers who may wish to learn more about our school when considering a placement for their child.

Admission to the school depends upon a diagnosis of autism or related learning needs, and upon the child's local authority naming Abbey School in their Education, Health and Care Plan.

The admissions process typically involves:
1. A visit from the parent or carer to learn more about the school and have an initial discussion as to whether the school may be able to meet their child's needs.
2. The pupil's papers will then be sent from the local authority to the school for the school's admissions panel to consider.
3. If places are available in the pupil's year group then Abbey School will arrange assessment of the child or young person. This process involves a visit to their current school and/or the family home if the pupil is currently out of school. Where possible and supportive for the pupil concerned, visits to Abbey School will also be arranged.
4. If we believe that Abbey School can meet the pupil's needs then a formal offer of a place will be given to the local authority.
5. Agreement is sought from the local authority to fund the placement and name Abbey School in the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan.
6. An individualised transition plan is arranged with the family to support the pupil into school. This may involve home visits, visits to the child or young person's current provision and visits to Abbey School.

School Fees

Places at Abbey School are fully funded by placing local authorities. The only exception occurring where there is no statutory entitlement to such funding—such as for example, foreign nationals temporarily living in the UK. In such cases, an alternative source of funding, such as an employer, may be acceptable.

Abbey School is uniquely positioned to offer attractive funding solutions to placing local authorities. The advantages of this solution are immediate working capital benefit, as no school fees are payable up front for the academic year, as well as faster decision making, less administration and no delays.

Abbey School does not place charges on parents or carers for any aspect of school life that is essential in the delivery of education. We may, however, request a voluntary contribution to cover the cost of some additional activities. The inability to make such voluntary contributions will not preclude a pupil from participating in any activity or event. For further information, please see our Charging and Remissions Policy.
Abbey School is located in Abbey Square, next to Chester Cathedral, off Northgate Street in Chester city centre.

By road
From North (M6/M53/M56)
M56 - Take exit 15 to join the M53 Chester/Wrexham
M53 - Take M53 Chester/North Wales and continue South, where it becomes the A55 Take the A51 Chester/Nantwich exit and follow signs to A51W (Chester)

From South (M6)
Take exit 16 A500 Nantwich/Crewe and follow the signs to Chester
At the Cheerbrook Roundabout take the A51 exit Chester/Wrexham and then follow the signs to Chester City Centre.

By public transport
We promote sustainable travel and recommend that public transport is used where possible. Chester train station is a 10-15 minute walk away and is served by the following rail companies: Merseyrail, Avanti West Coast, Transport for Wales and Northern Rail.

Parking
There are Park and Ride facilities situated around the city centre, please visit the Cheshire West and Chester council information page for further information. Buses drop off at the main Chester bus interchange which is a 5-minute walk from Abbey Square.

City centre car park information can be found on the Visit Cheshire tourist information website.
How we are different

The Abbey School Model APP

Our bespoke Abbey School Model APP helps staff to plan, deliver and monitor provision for meaningful participation by pupils in activities of living and learning at school, home and in the community. It seamlessly interfaces with Person Centred Plans (PCP), Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Plans and Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP). APP data also provide evidence of school-wide activity and user outcome to aid commissioning decisions and inspections.

We believe that there is no APP available on the market that meets all of these needs.
Research and Development

The Abbey School Model (ASM) brings together recent research on the most effective ways of teaching skills and knowledge to pupils requiring additional focused support.

Abbey School has invested in a long-term strategic partnership worth over £1m with leading researchers from two internationally renowned UK universities, and remains committed to providing the most effective programme of support for learning and wellbeing.

Funding

Unlike any other specialist school in the UK, we offer attractive funding solutions to placing Local Authorities, which can finance the school fees for all pupils attending Abbey School.

We believe that this is a source of great support to Local Authorities wishing to place with us, and this has never been done before.