



Jersey Schools Review Framework
Independent report of

Mont à l'Abbé School

La Grande Route de St Jean
St Helier
Jersey
JE2 3FN

Headteacher: Mrs E Searle
Review date: 9-11 June 2026

Summary

Mont à l'Abbé School is a joyful and highly inclusive place to learn. Leaders and staff know pupils very well and create a calm, caring environment where pupils feel safe, welcomed as individuals and are supported to take equal part. The school's vision, 'Motivate, Achieve, Learn', is evident in the way staff support pupils with complex needs to build confidence, independence and readiness for adulthood.

The curriculum is broad, ambitious and focused on skills for life. It is organised through phases and pathways that reflect pupils' cognition and learning, communication and interaction, social, emotional and mental health, and physical, sensory and medical needs. Communication, phonics, literacy and mathematics have been prioritised and are of consistently high quality. Other aspects of the curriculum, including personal, social, and health education (PSHE), physical development and aspects of assessment are being developed further so that pupils benefit equally highly from all curriculum areas.

Every pupil has 'a voice and a choice', reflecting the school and Jersey's commitment to children's rights. Expertise in communication is a major strength. Leaders have invested in augmentative and alternative communication, including talkers, low- and high-tech grids, symbols, signing, eye-gaze and other assistive technologies, supported by appropriate training. As a result, pupils learn to make choices, contribute to learning, take meaningful part in annual reviews and access the wider Jersey community with increasing confidence.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are a notable strength. Staff use relational, sensory-informed and therapeutic approaches with great skill. Consequently, classrooms and shared spaces are calm and orderly. Pupils are happy, confident and welcoming to visitors. Leaders understand the complex medical, anxiety and transition factors that affect some pupils' attendance. Leaders' planned next steps include analysing attendance, behaviour and safeguarding information more systematically so that patterns and the impact of actions are clearer.

Leaders are reflective, outward-looking and ambitious for continuing school development. They have strengthened curriculum and pathway provision, increased leadership capacity and prioritised the right next steps. Leaders know that sharpening evaluation and clarifying leadership accountability will contribute to making strongest practice even more consistent.

Staff are exceptionally proud to work at Mont à l'Abbé and parents are typically highly appreciative of the school's work. In the words of one parent: 'If anyone was in doubt of good that exists in the world, stand outside the door...and just watch...the staff as they pass those children over to their families, with love, care, joy and positivity.'

Contextual information

- Mont à l'Abbé School is a special school. It provides education for pupils who have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including moderate, severe and profound learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, social, emotional and mental health needs, and speech, language and communication needs. It is the only special school for children with learning difficulties in Jersey.
- The school admits children to the Nursery from the age of three and provides education for pupils and students through to the age of 19. Since the previous review, pupil numbers have continued to increase. There are currently 130 pupils and students on roll, arranged in 17 classes.
- Pupils are grouped in pathways, reflective of need type (across primary and secondary provision). A small number of pupils attend part-time or are educated off-site.
- All pupils have a Record of Need. Just under half of pupils are eligible for Jersey Premium (48% secondary, 44% primary). Many pupils are multi-lingual learners (MLL). In the secondary provision, 27% of pupils are MLL and, in the primary provision, the proportion increases significantly to 41%.
- The school is split site. The site for secondary pupils is co-located with a mainstream secondary school, approximately half a mile from the primary site. The school's post-14 facilities are to one edge of the primary site.
- The substantive headteacher is currently on secondment to CYPES for 80% of the time. The deputy headteacher is acting headteacher. The school does not have a governing body.
- The school previously achieved the silver level of the Rights Respecting Schools Award and are currently seeking reaccreditation of this. This award recognises and celebrates how it is embedding the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into their ethos and curriculum.

Information about the review

The Jersey School Review Framework (JSRF) was launched in 2018. Following a pause during the COVID-19 pandemic, reviews continued from September 2022. The first cycle of school reviews was completed for all Government of Jersey schools by July 2024. The framework was updated from January 2025. This particular review was conducted, and its report written, under this updated framework.

- Reviewers evaluated the curriculum, teaching and learning through sampling these subjects across all phases and pathways of the school: phonics, early reading and communication, language and literacy (CLL), including a specific focus on augmentative and alternative communication (AAC); mathematics; personal, social, and health education (PSHE); and physical development and sensory integration. For each subject, the reviewers discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their learning where possible, and looked at samples and records of pupils' work. The team also evaluated the post-14 Preparation for Adulthood curriculum and the Corbière pathway in the primary and secondary phases.
- Discussions were held throughout the review with the substantive and acting headteachers, the deputy and assistant headteachers, other leaders and staff to explore the various aspects of the school's work, including the identification of and provision for different groups and individual pupils.

- Checks were carried out on the school's safeguarding arrangements, including vetting arrangements and training for all staff.
- Reviewers met with groups of teachers and support staff. The views of wider staff and of parents were gathered through surveys conducted explicitly for this review. Pupils in the post-14 provision (L'Étacq) also completed a survey.
- The team visited a primary phase assembly and 'Wake up and Wiggle'. They observed pupils at the start and end of the day and during informal times. Reviewers also observed arrangements for lunchtimes including pupils' dietary and feeding requirements.
- The review team considered a wide range of documents, including: leaders' self-evaluation; their development plan; and behaviour and safeguarding policies, training and records. They also took account of information and policies on the school's website and data, including relating to attendance and the school's context, from CYPES.

Full report

Curriculum, teaching and learning

- The curriculum is organised through phases and pathways that take full account of pupils' ages, their stages of development and their range of SEND needs. Pupils at Mont à l'Abbé do not access the full Jersey Curriculum. Instead, they access an equally suitable, ambitious and uniquely tailored programme of learning. In Phase 1, extensive observations and assessments inform which curriculum pathway a pupil will follow.
- The curriculum, in all pathways and phases, is focused on developing independence, skills for life and preparation for adulthood. Adults use lessons, routines, personal care, breaktimes, lunch and community experiences as opportunities for pupils to practise, generalise and apply communication, literacy, numeracy, emotional regulation and independence skills. Learning happens throughout every part of the school day.
- Leaders and teachers are aware of additional vulnerabilities and potential barriers to learning. For example, which pupils are eligible for Jersey Premium, are multi-lingual learners, or access support from children's social care. This information supports teachers to plan activities that help pupils to learn well from their diverse starting points. Pupils may move between pathways if reviews and evidence indicate a different pathway would better suit their current learning needs.
- Across the school, teaching is typically highly personalised and adaptive. Staff know individual pupils very well and break learning into small, manageable, repeatable steps. Adults use their detailed knowledge of Records of Need, communication profiles, sensory needs and personal interests to adapt plans and activities so that pupils are motivated to take part and make progress.
- Phonics and literacy are established features of the curriculum. Reading is taught systematically, with pupils identifying sounds and blending these to read words. As their skills progress some pupils become competent readers. Staff use core texts to support learning, across the year. During the review, pupils were observed enjoying learning activities linked to the text, 'Somebody Swallowed Stanley'. Tasks supported pupils to develop listening and responding, speaking and early reading skills.
- Visits to mathematics lessons and scrutiny of workbooks, as well as staff observational notes, confirm that pupils make effective progress in number, calculation, shape and measures from their unique starting points. Adapted published schemes, concrete resources, real-life experiences and technology are used well to ensure that small steps of learning are accessible and interesting.

- In each pathway, communication and language are taught skilfully. Visual images, signing, low-tech grids and technological aids, including talkers, enable many pupils to take a fuller part in learning and develop their voice, agency and independence. Adults model communication naturally and consistently across the school day. As a result, pupils successfully learn to communicate needs and desires. Pupils in the school's post-14 provision (L'Étacq) were observed to use 'talkers' to hold independent conversations and to share jokes with their friends!
- Physical development and sensory integration are vital parts of the curriculum. All pupils benefit from physical therapies including hydrotherapy and rebound therapy as well as extensive, routine physical and sensory opportunities, including swinging, climbing and learning in the school's immersive suite. Curriculum documentation gives a helpful outline of skills to develop and suggested activities. Leaders are now making the precise knowledge and skills to be learned and assessment steps clearer, particularly in the primary phase.
- The curriculums for personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE), meet the requirements of the Jersey Curriculum and are becoming more carefully adapted to pupils' needs. Leaders have identified important knowledge, vocabulary and themes, including online safety, healthy relationships, consent, body changes and readiness for adulthood. Lesson-by-lesson guidance and shared resources are still developing.
- Staff use assessment well in the moment to adjust tasks and the environment. This helps pupils to sustain regulation and engagement with learning and consequently to make progress. For example, pupils were observed taking part in phonics sessions whilst simultaneously bouncing on a mini trampoline.
- Assessments are routinely made of pupils' progress in phonics, mathematics and towards Records of Need targets. Such assessments help teachers to identify small steps in progress and to plan future learning. Leaders rightly recognise that assessment systems need further refinement in order to evaluate the impact of provision more clearly and to inform next steps with greater precision. Nevertheless, the extensive evidence observed and scrutinised during this review demonstrates that, across the phases and pathways, pupils at Mont à l'Abbé School learn and progress well.

Behaviour, attitudes and attendance

- The school's relational approach to behaviour is highly effective. Leaders and staff understand behaviour as communication and use co-regulation, sensory-informed approaches and deep knowledge of individual pupils to help pupils recognise and manage their feelings. Pupils feel safe and emotionally secure because routines are predictable, relationships are strong and the environment and resources support them well.
- A small number of parents say that they would like greater consistency in behaviour management. Leaders are aware of these views and are seeking to strengthen parental confidence in the school's behaviour systems through clear communication and continued partnership.
- Classrooms and shared areas are typically calm. Classrooms look very different from each other, their organisation reflecting the differing needs of the pupil groups. Staff are warm, nurturing and respectful. They are skilled at noticing rising anxiety or tension and respond sensitively should pupils become dysregulated.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning and to social engagement. Across the school verbal and non-verbal pupils were keen to communicate with visitors. Older students in particular show increasing confidence in introducing themselves and taking part in

conversations. The school has a joyful atmosphere, and pupils are demonstrably happy to be part of the community.

- Leaders have secured a sharp reduction in the use of restrictive intervention, from 16 incidents in 2022/23 to one in 2025/26. The school does not exclude pupils, seeking instead to understand and respond to their needs. When pupils require personalised support, leaders plan flexible arrangements, including within the Corbière pathway, outreach, home learning, gradual transitions and work with families. As a result, there have been no suspensions this academic year.
- Behaviour incidents are recorded, but leaders recognise that they need a more effective system for aggregating and analysing information so that patterns, pupil groups and the impact of interventions are clearer.
- Leaders promote attendance carefully for pupils and students whose complex needs, medical needs or anxiety affect regular attendance. Support is individualised and involves families and other agencies where appropriate. Overall attendance has declined, reflecting the changing and increasingly complex needs of some pupils.
- Information relating to attendance indicates that pupils eligible for Jersey Premium attend less well than their peers and that lateness has reduced markedly. Leaders understand the need to interrogate attendance information more systematically so that they can distinguish unavoidable absence from absence that can be improved through support or challenge.

Personal development

- Personal development, including widespread opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are woven throughout the school day. Staff model patience, respect and positivity. All groups of pupils are supported well to communicate, regulate their emotions, make choices and develop independence. The quality of care shown by staff underpins pupils' strong social and personal development.
- Pupils are supported to be active members of the school and wider Jersey community. They take part in school council, eco council and community projects, including contributing views about the redevelopment of Fort Regent. Such activities promote moral and cultural development as well as positively enhancing wellbeing and self-advocacy. Non-verbal pupils are enabled to share their views through communication technology, so their voice is included in decision-making.
- The school promotes pupils' physical and emotional health carefully. Staff help pupils develop coping strategies, including accessing sensory-stimulating equipment, or calming spaces to calm themselves when they feel anxious or uncomfortable. Lunchtimes are used sensitively to support healthy eating, social interaction and individual sensory needs.
- The PSHE and RSE on offer is increasingly relevant to pupils' lives. Leaders have considered the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) report and are bringing work to promote awareness and eliminate VAWG into the curriculum. Pupils learn about keeping safe, online safety, sex and relationships, healthy relationships and appropriate shared language. Leaders know this work needs to be further embedded so all pupils receive an equitable, well-planned entitlement.
- Preparation for adulthood is central to the school's work. Careers education begins from Year 9 and, from around age 15, preparation for adulthood planning sits alongside annual reviews.
- Older students learn practical skills such as time, money, social understanding, relationships and eating for good health. They also benefit from work-related learning, community visits, Skills Jersey input, and links with adult services and wider agencies.

Such opportunities to engage in the community help pupils' communication devices, independence and confidence become tools for life, not simply tools for school.

- The school successfully teaches the transactional skills necessary for those everyday interactions which pupils may find stressful. As a result, pupils in the upper years of the school confidently introduce themselves, and ask visitors about their activities in school. They volunteer appropriate personal information about the work they are doing or about a recent experience out of school. Recently two pupils joined Jersey Music Service's ensemble following their success in Grade 2 euphonium examinations. A school senior leader accompanied those children to practice sessions until the two pupils told him that they no longer required his help to socialise.
- Opportunities, including taking part in music lessons, playing in an orchestra, trips to the beach, visits to places of interest and participating in school assemblies, widen pupils' experiences and further promote their spiritual development.
- The school's inclusive ethos helps pupils to learn respect, tolerance and responsibility. Parents typically value the school's care, relationships, strong communication and specialist support.

Leadership and management

- Senior leaders have created a highly inclusive, caring and ambitious school community. The school's vision of 'Motivate, Achieve, Learn' is visible in day-to-day practice. Staff share leaders' moral purpose and are positive about their professional development, workload and support for wellbeing. All staff are proud to work at the school. All agree that pupils are kept safe.
- Senior leaders, pathway and subject leaders have responded thoughtfully to the changing and increasingly complex needs of pupils. The development of curriculum pathways, the highly effective leadership and strengthening of phonics, literacy, mathematics and the significant work on augmentative and alternative communication demonstrate leaders' collective ability to identify priorities and take purposeful, effective action.
- Leadership of communication and of wider personal development is strong. Leaders have moved the school towards more systematic and ambitious approaches, including investing in training, high and low-tech resources. This is improving pupils' participation, confidence and independence across school and in the wider community.
- Leaders are reflective and ensure their own awareness of research, innovations and good practice in SEND provision. They seek professional networks with other special schools, and use monitoring, pupil progress meetings, peer observation, professional development and staff discussion to strengthen practice. As a result, leaders have increased capacity and quality across phases and pathways.
- Early career teachers describe strong mentoring, including developmental feedback. Support staff value the team ethos and professional development. Some would welcome clearer communication about changes to class deployment.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders place pupils' safety, communication and wellbeing at the centre of the school's work. The designated safeguarding team has been strengthened, staff receive regular briefings, and safeguarding is discussed routinely in meetings and with transport staff. Leaders make good use of external networks and agencies. Staff know the importance of listening carefully to pupils and reporting concerns promptly. Leaders should continue to check recruitment and safeguarding records systematically so that administrative records are as strong as the safeguarding culture.
- Leaders know the school well and are honest about what is still developing. For example, the array of information leaders hold, including relating to assessments of

pupils' progress, attendance, and behaviour and safeguarding is not analysed or evaluated sufficiently effectively to demonstrate the difference their work is making, or to support the identification of best next steps. Current self-evaluation and improvement planning focus more on the tasks to be completed, than on a precise evaluation of impact. Although phase and pathway leads support their teams and drive improvements well, their strategic role is insufficiently defined.

Notable strengths

The school has notable strengths in the following areas:

- Ethical, pupil- and family-centred leadership has established a shared culture of commitment, care and ambition.
- A relational, sensory-informed approach to behaviour creates calm, safe learning environments where pupils feel secure and ready to learn.
- The school's approach to communication, including augmentative and alternative communication, enables pupils to express themselves, participate and develop independence.
- Staff tailor teaching, routines and wider opportunities to pupils' individual starting points, supporting preparation for adulthood and participation in the wider community.

The review team recommend that the school seeks to share its learning and expertise in these areas with other schools on-Island.

Recommendations

The review team recommend that the school should take the following actions:

1. Continue to refine the curriculum so that: across all phases and pathways, learning plans identify the precise knowledge and skills to be learned, ensuring that learning is not conflated with the activity and that appropriate resources and guidance materials are readily available.
2. Further develop assessment systems so that teachers and leaders at all levels can evaluate pupils' progress and the impact of provision more precisely and use this information to support curriculum planning.
3. Sharpen strategic leadership so that roles, accountabilities and improvement priorities are understood and evaluated coherently by:
 - clarifying the strategic roles of leaders at different levels, including phase and pathway leaders
 - ensuring self-evaluation and improvement planning focus on the intended impact of actions on pupils
 - strengthening systems to analyse attendance, behaviour and safeguarding information, including for different pupil groups, so leaders can identify patterns and evaluate the impact of actions.

Information about the school

Age range of pupils: 3 to 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll: 130

Of which number in the sixth form: 11

Headteacher: Mrs E Searle

School telephone numbers: primary site 01534 875801, secondary site 01534 617526

School website: <https://montalabbe.sch.je>

Information about the review team

Jersey School Reviews take place over three days. The size and specialist experience of each review team reflects the size and the context of the school.

This review was led by an experienced off-Island school inspector/reviewer and consisted of a total of four reviewers. All members of the team are experienced inspectors of special schools.

Enquiries about this report should be addressed to the Head of School Review & Inspection, Children, Young People, Education and Skills, Government Building, Union Street, St Helier JE2 3DN.