

Appleby Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	137251
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	385584
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Lee Northern HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	653
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Saint
Headteacher	Andrew Lund
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 28 lessons, each taught by a different member of staff. Of these, two were observed jointly with senior leaders from the academy. A 'learning walk', consisting of short visits to a series of lessons, was conducted with the headteacher. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body and academy staff, and met with representatives from the local community. They observed the academy's work, scrutinised a range of documentation and examined evaluations undertaken by the academy to ensure that it meets statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding. Inspectors also visited the Appleby Heritage Centre which works in partnership with the school to provide a range of courses for students in Key Stages 4 and 5. In addition, 167 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised and inspectors also examined questionnaires returned by staff and those from a representative sample of students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which evaluation of performance is rigorous, benchmarked against national standards, and is used to target priorities to underpin an academy-wide drive for improvement.
- The effectiveness of actions taken to reduce any differences in performance – including in relation to boys' achievement, achievement in English and the progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other students whose circumstances might make them vulnerable.
- The extent to which provision – including through partnerships and in the sixth form - is highly-effective in promoting personal development outcomes that are at least good.

Information about the school

Appleby is a smaller-than-average secondary school serving a rural area in East Cumbria. It converted to academy status on 1 August 2011. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than that seen nationally. There are very few students who speak English as an additional language and almost all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than that seen nationally. Appleby is one of seven small secondary schools that make up the Rural Academy of Cumbria and has held technology specialist status since 2004. The academy also holds the International Schools Award, the Inclusion Mark, the Investing in Community Engagement Award and the Healthy Schools Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Appleby Grammar School provides its students with a satisfactory standard of education. Some aspects of its work are good, and the contribution made by students to the life of the academy and the wider community, and the promotion of community cohesion, are both outstanding. The motto of the academy – 'In the community, for the community' – exemplifies its considerable ambitions in this regard. Parents and carers value these aspects of the academy's work highly, and the comment 'we are very happy with all aspects of school life, for example, musical opportunities and trips – excellent out-of-school sporting activities' is typical of the views of many. The support and care for all students, particularly those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, is good and the academy works very hard in conjunction with a variety of partners to provide a broad curriculum that meets the needs of students well.

Levels of attainment, in all Key Stages, are in line with those seen nationally. From broadly average attainment on entry to the academy, students make satisfactory progress across a wide range of subject areas. However, within this picture of satisfactory achievement overall, there is some variation across the curriculum. Students make more rapid gains in the specialist subjects of design and technology because more teaching is effective in developing students' skills, knowledge and understanding. In addition, students reach higher standards in vocational courses and in science because the curriculum is better matched to the needs of all groups of students. However, achievement is lower in English, because provision promotes achievement more effectively for girls than it does for boys, and work to promote students' literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum is in its infancy.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, although there is considerable variation across the academy. In the best lessons, teaching promotes students' interest, engagement and active involvement in learning. Where teaching is less effective, activities are not sufficiently well adapted to meet the needs of all students in the class. Opportunities to provide greater challenge for more-able students are not always exploited well, for example, by requiring students to reason, justify and extend their answers during whole-class and small group discussions. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) by students and teachers is underdeveloped as a resource to promote interest and engagement in learning.

The senior team has established a clear vision and drive for improvement, which are widely shared and, as a result, staff morale is good. Leaders and managers at all levels are demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to improve further. For example, although there is a strong focus on the need to raise the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning, there is variation in the effectiveness of middle leaders in driving this improvement, as not all have the necessary skills to do so effectively. The evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching does not take sufficient account of learning and progress and, as a result, the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is over-generous. Development-planning at all levels focuses on an appropriate range of improvement priorities, although not all priorities make clear the impact of planned actions on outcomes for students, or are not sufficiently measurable for the effectiveness of actions to be more easily evaluated.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in English by:
 - ensuring that provision in English more effectively meets the needs of boys
 - strengthening the support for literacy across the curriculum.
- Raise the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that all lessons consistently meet the needs of all learners in the class and requires them more frequently to provide extended responses to teachers' questions
 - increasing the opportunities for students to be more actively involved in their learning
 - improving the skills of middle leaders in driving improvements to teaching and learning
 - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching places a greater emphasis on the quality of students' learning and progress in lessons.
- Improve the impact of development-planning at all levels by:
 - ensuring that identified priorities are more sharply linked to improvements in outcomes for students, in all Key Stages
 - identifying clearly-measurable success criteria and appropriate evaluation strategies for all planned actions.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enjoy their lessons, show good attitudes and are keen to do well. They appreciate the opportunities to work on tasks and activities in pairs or small groups and are mature and considerate when working collaboratively. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with that of their peers, although they make better progress in response to additional, targeted support than

they do in lessons, where learning activities are not always sufficiently well-adapted to meet their needs. Students are courteous and welcoming to visitors and their good behaviour in lessons and around the school makes a positive contribution to academy life. Students say they feel safe in school and they are confident that any issues they raise will be promptly and effectively dealt with by staff. The promotion of healthy lifestyles is good and students report that the opportunities for them to access enrichment activities – frequently through the specialism - are many, varied and popular.

Students' outstanding contribution to the academy and to the wider community is characterised by the range of opportunities that they actively and enthusiastically support. They are very proud of the academy and of the role it plays in support of the wider community. All groups of students show a great deal of commitment to a wide range of activities including support for charitable causes, work with local business and enterprise, primary schools and other providers. Students' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is promoted well through the curriculum and through the variety of opportunities to experience different faiths and cultures at first hand. Attendance is above-average and punctuality is good. All groups of students have access to a wide range of vocational courses and many benefit from the opportunity to extend their study into authentic work-related environments.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum is innovative and effective at meeting the needs and aspirations of students. In partnership with the Appleby Heritage Centre, the school provides a broad range of vocational and sixth-form courses. As a result, many students follow qualifications in engineering, salon services, culinary skills, technology, agriculture or land-based studies. Students say they enjoy these courses and they benefit greatly from the help of experienced and knowledgeable tutors and the personalised support that they receive. The good quality of the academy's provision for care, guidance and

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

support is particularly well seen in its work with students whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. Targeted support for individuals is effective in bringing about improvements in attitudes and achievement. The comment ‘great school - approachable, friendly, deals with problems and works with students’ needs – you know your child is cared about’ was typical of the views of many parents and carers. A considerable emphasis is placed on supporting students as they move from primary schools and, as a result, they settle quickly into the life of the academy.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, a variety of tasks and approaches is used to capture students’ interest and lessons proceed with a brisk pace that does not inhibit learning. In an outstanding Year 9 French lesson, students had ‘talk partners’ to help them rehearse their thinking before sharing their answers with the whole class. The quality of the teacher’s questioning ensured that all students were appropriately supported and challenged. In less effective teaching, students are unclear about what they are learning and why. Opportunities to extend more-able students by adapting tasks differently are missed and teachers are too willing to accept the first answer offered, or the balance of teacher-talk to student-talk reduces the level of students’ involvement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior staff are motivated and focused on achieving improvements and areas of previous underperformance have been successfully addressed. Procedures for quality-assuring the work of external providers are satisfactory. The system for tracking and monitoring students’ performance provides useful information and enables staff, through the programme of ‘assertive mentoring’, to provide support for all students, particularly those at risk of underachievement. Assessment information is shared regularly with parents and carers, who value the quality of communication with the academy and the reports they receive about their child’s progress. However, some parents indicated they would also welcome further guidance on how to help their child to improve. Target setting is realistic and motivates staff and students to improve standards.

The governing body provides satisfactory levels of support and challenge for the academy, although their knowledge of the academy’s performance in comparison to national standards is less secure. Effective systems for safeguarding staff and students are in place, including procedures for safer recruitment and the assessment of risk. The impact of multi-agency work is good. There is an impressive commitment to providing equality of opportunity and the academy works hard to ensure all groups of students have equal access to the activities and opportunities it provides. However, the academy also recognises that more needs to be done to close the differences in attainment between boys and girls in English.

The academy's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding and is built upon a thorough analysis of its needs and context. The impact of this work is seen to best effect in the range and quality of partnerships with schools and other organisations both nationally and internationally. A distinctive example of this is a project to develop a better understanding of traveller communities in the context of the annual Appleby Horse Fair. The academy provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account:	
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the academy's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

This is a satisfactory sixth form. Students join the sixth form with prior attainment which is broadly in line with that found nationally and they make satisfactory progress overall. However, there is considerable variation in students' achievement across different subject areas. Students say they enjoy being in the sixth form and say that the academy promotes their personal development well. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities, including leadership opportunities and through links with universities.

The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is satisfactory and students value the helpful feedback they receive on how to improve their work. Students benefit from a broad curriculum offer and the academy works hard to meet individual needs, including through partnerships with external providers. Targets are appropriately challenging and students receive regular mentoring which helps them to stay on track. However, sixth-form improvement-planning lacks sufficiently sharp success criteria and the evaluation of actions taken is not linked closely enough to standards seen nationally. Leaders and managers in the sixth form are demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to improve.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaire responses received from parents and carers was larger than that normally seen for secondary schools. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire was pleased with their child's experience at the academy, and feel the academy promotes safety and enjoyment very well. A similar proportion expressed the view that the school is led and managed well and that it meets individual needs well. While almost all parents and carers felt the academy provided regular information about their child's progress, a small proportion expressed the view that more could be done to help them support their child's learning at home.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Appleby Grammar School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 167 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 653 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	41	93	56	2	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	75	45	88	53	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	71	43	77	46	6	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	35	84	50	10	6	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	32	97	58	6	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	23	99	59	15	9	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	25	103	62	14	8	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	58	35	83	50	11	7	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	34	93	56	9	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	28	97	58	7	4	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	22	94	56	11	7	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	68	41	83	50	5	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	79	47	75	45	7	4	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a academy's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The academy's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Appleby Grammar School, Appleby-in-Westmorland, CA16 6XU

You will remember that a team of inspectors and I inspected your school recently. We took careful note of the views that you expressed in our meetings with you and in the questionnaires that you completed for us.

We have judged that the academy is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education. In your meetings with us, you said that you valued the caring and safe atmosphere that the academy provides. Older students said that the academy provides a wide range of courses that meets their needs and aspirations well. The work of the academy in promoting your involvement in community work – both near and far – is outstanding.

Levels of attainment at the academy are in line with the average seen for schools nationally, and the inspection confirmed that you make satisfactory progress in your lessons overall. However, you make better progress in science and the specialism of design and technology. Boys' achievement in English is lower than that of girls, and we have asked academy leaders and managers – and the governing body – to ensure that provision in English and the promotion of literacy across the curriculum improves.

We have also asked that you are given more opportunities for active learning in lessons and for teachers to ask more challenging questions that develop your understanding in greater depth. To improve the quality of teaching you receive, we have asked the school to ensure that all teaching regularly meets the needs of all students in the class. We have also asked that academy leaders place a greater emphasis on the outcomes you achieve across all year groups when they plan improvements to the provision you receive.

You can play your part in improving your academy by continuing to attend regularly and working hard. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector

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