

# Applefields School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134727
<b>Local authority</b>	York
<b>Inspection number</b>	381721
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 October 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marian Thomas

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	129
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	56
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Adrian Cook
<b>Headteacher</b>	George Gilmore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	05 February 2009
<b>School address</b>	Bad Bargain Lane York YO31 0LW
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<b>Age group</b>	11–19
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	19–20 October 2011
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 16 teachers and teaching assistants. Meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, school leaders and the medical team based at the school. The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at teachers' planning for lessons, school leaders' health and safety documentation and samples of students' work. They also took into account the views of the 56 parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the inspection team.

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

- How well students progress across the three key stages.
- How well teachers use assessment information to plan learning for students.
- The quality of the health, safety and welfare documentation and the associated systems.
- Whether the governing body is effective in supporting the headteacher.

## Information about the school

Applefields School is the City of York's secondary and sixth form special school provision. The school also includes some students from North Yorkshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire. All students have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of students have moderate or severe learning difficulties. Many also have more complex needs, such as profound and multiple learning difficulties, or autistic spectrum disorder. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. Nine students are looked after by the local authority, and a small minority is known to be eligible for free school meals. In 2010, the school was awarded Specialist School status for cognition and learning.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Applefields is a good school. The excellent standard of care, guidance and support and the success with which student's medical, emotional, social and learning needs are met enable them to make good progress both personally and academically. The majority of parents' and carers' views are reflected well in the comment: 'Applefields staff are excellent and my child is making progress at last.'

The school's leadership team has high expectations of what students can achieve and delivers the quality of provision necessary for them to succeed. The vast majority of students who attend the school have lower than average attainment because of their medical, social and learning needs. Because school staff are exceptionally good at supporting the complex needs of students, barriers to learning are minimised and students achieve well. Self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is good. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, sustaining its good levels of provision and making improvements in several areas. For example, the school has made good progress towards targets set as part of its Specialist School status by developing a new unit for its students in an adjacent mainstream school, and by providing special educational needs support to other schools. This continuing level of improvement demonstrates clearly that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Students enjoy school as evidenced by their positive attitudes and smiling faces. They are aware of how to stay safe and are exceptionally aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Behaviour is good overall because students learn how to control their emotions and make the right choices. As a result of highly effective transition arrangements, students are very well prepared for further education and the world of work. Attendance is above average overall and is high for some students. Students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding can be seen in their exceptionally caring attitude to each other and the environment. Although the majority of parents and carers feel that the school communicates with them well, there are occasions when communications breakdown so that a few parents and carers feel they receive insufficient information about their children's achievements and progress.

The majority of teaching in both the main school and sixth form unit is based on a good assessment of students' learning needs and, as result, all groups of students make equally good progress. However, in a number of lessons, planning for learning is insufficiently well focused because assessment data are not used well enough. Consequently, learning does not match the needs of all students and less progress

is made. The curriculum is good. It is closely tailored to meet the needs of each student and offers a range of exciting enrichment activities.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' overall achievement by ensuring that assessment data are used effectively to plan for the individual needs of each student in all lessons.
- Ensure systems for communicating with parents and carers are sufficiently robust and regularly reviewed.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
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When students join the school the levels at which they are working are generally much lower than those expected for their age. This is because of their high levels of medical, social, and academic needs. However, once they settle into the nurturing and supportive environment of the school, barriers to learning are minimised and all groups engage with learning well. As a result, the majority make good and sometimes better progress towards the challenging targets set for them. This represents good progress and achievement overall.

Behaviour is good both inside and outside lessons, largely because students respond positively to their personal learning programmes and because of the high expectations of staff. Many learn for the first time how to engage and cooperate with each other, as well as the tools important to learning, such as how to listen and concentrate. These important skills enable students to work consistently and achieve well across the curriculum. This was demonstrated in an outstanding design and technology lesson. Students with a wide range of needs were working on a project to produce printed textiles and ceramics using the students' own imaginative and colourful patterns. Several students were working in pairs to produce collaborative patterns designing tee shirts and cushions, assisting each other and making joint decisions. Other students with reduced mobility were exceptionally well supported by staff to produce patterns as independently as possible. The atmosphere in the classroom was harmonious, industrious and happy. The resultant work was to a very high standard and demonstrated clearly how much progress students had made in acquiring both academic and social skills despite their high levels of need.

Through the work of the school, coupled with highly effective partnerships with health care professionals, students learn to feel safe. They know that the staff are always there to support and guide them. Many say how much they enjoy school. A comment by one student sums up the feelings of many: 'Applefields is just brilliant. I would give staff 10 out of 10 for helping me.' Through participating in the very wide range of sporting opportunities and healthy eating options offered, students develop an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Students make a good contribution to the community within and outside school by listening to and appreciating the needs of others. For example, older students regularly host fund-raising coffee mornings attended by parents and carers and local residents. Students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in the exceptional way in which they react to each other and take care of the school and

local environment. Through outside visits and links with other schools, students develop a strong understanding of communities beyond those represented in the immediate locality.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

The majority of teachers in the school use assessment information effectively to set achievable targets for students. Students' work is regularly reviewed and appropriate feedback is given on how improvements can be made. As a result, students are clear about how to improve their work, which helps to ensure they make good progress. Lessons are planned conscientiously and, in the majority, good attention is given to ensuring work is modified to meet the different needs of students within the class. However, in a number of lessons, assessment information is not used as well, and planning is insufficiently focused on the needs of all students. In these lessons, progress is slower. Support staff are well deployed, ensuring a good level of support, particularly for the most vulnerable. All teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour, and this, coupled with strong relationships, ensures students engage with learning well.

The curriculum is well organised, and imaginatively enhanced by many visits and activities away from the classroom. These develop students' independence and self-esteem. Curriculum opportunities are securely focused on the needs of individual students and staff are creative in ensuring students have access to as many different opportunities as possible in order to expand their horizons. For example, students undertake a wide variety of residential visits. One such trip to an outdoor pursuits centre was described by one student as, 'The best time I have ever had.'

As a result of outstanding care, guidance and support, students feel there is always someone who will listen and help. A thorough assessment is undertaken when students transfer to the school and this is used to target support effectively. Staff work exceptionally hard at ensuring students' needs are met, always going the 'extra

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

mile’ to ensure students are included. Attendance is above average overall and has showed improvement since last year. Bearing in mind the complex medical needs of some students, this demonstrates clearly the enjoyment that students feel when coming to school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The high quality leadership of the headteacher and the assistant headteachers continues to move the school forward and to ensure good outcomes for students on a well-controlled budget. This, coupled with the high quality of partnerships developed with outside agencies, is driving improvement further. The members of the governing body have good levels of skills, knowledge and understanding and offer significant support and challenge to senior leaders. Policies and procedures ensure all safeguarding requirements are met and that practice is of a good standard. As a result, safeguarding issues are dealt with effectively by school leaders. This was clearly seen during the inspection when minor safeguarding issues that were raised were rectified immediately. The senior leadership team and staff have ensured that the school is a highly inclusive community. Systems to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination within the unit are exceptionally good and successfully eliminate any gaps in the performance of different groups of students.

Leaders have built highly successful partnerships with a range of organisations, which benefit students and the local community. For example, students regularly work with theatre groups and local businesses developing students’ drama and enterprise skills. Links with other schools and communities, including a school in Halifax, have promoted community cohesion well and helped to develop students’ good understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society. The school has a number of good ways to keep parents and carers informed about their children’s progress and their individual successes. However, these are not always as effective as they could be, and so some parents and carers feel that they do not get the information they would like. This weakens slightly the links between home and school.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

The vast majority of students at the end of Key Stage 4 continue on to attend the sixth form at the school. Largely due to this continuation of provision students settle quickly and because their needs are well understood make good progress towards a good range of accreditations and learning opportunities. Last years' leavers all left with an accreditation. Staff in the school and those in the post-16 provision work closely together and good use has been made of opportunities to develop joint learning ventures. For example, sixth form students frequently work alongside Key Stage 4 students undertaking options, such as art and design technology, ensuring close links as well as effectively developing social skills and mentoring opportunities. The leadership and management of the sixth form has been successful in forming strong links with outside agencies, ensuring students have good opportunities for work-related learning through work and college placements. This enables students to build on their experiences from school and grow in maturity and confidence.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

Responses were received by the inspection team from 56 parents and carers. This represented almost 50% of the parents and carers whose children attend the school. The majority of parents and carers felt that their children enjoy school, make good progress and are well looked after. However, a small number felt that there was insufficient communication between home and school. Observations from the inspection indicated that, occasionally, communication was not as full as it might be.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Applefields 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 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 129 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	64	20	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	79	12	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	57	21	38	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	50	23	41	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	68	18	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	55	20	36	4	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	57	21	38	2	4	0	0
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)	36	64	16	29	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	71	12	21	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	63	19	34	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	55	21	38	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	41	73	14	25	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	79	11	20	0	0	0	0

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](http://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 school'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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



21 October 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Applefields School, York, YO31 0LW**

Thank you very much for making all three of us feel so welcome when we inspected your school. It was lovely to meet you all. It was good to hear how much you enjoy coming to school and how much fun you have in lessons. We want to send a special 'thank you' to those of you who gave up time to talk to us at lunch-time, and told us how impressed you are with school. We agree with those of you that told us that you think your school is good. These are the things we judged to be particularly good:

- the friendly and polite welcome you all give to visitors
- the excellent way in which staff care for you and help you to make future choices
- the way in which you are all so caring and helpful towards each other.

In order to make your school even better we have asked your headteacher and teachers to:

- ensure that the work you are asked to do in lessons matches your ability and helps you to make even more progress
- ensure that your parents and carers are kept well informed about what you learn about in school and how much you achieve each day.

We want to wish you all good luck for the future and to remind you to keep on trying as hard as you can, just like you do when you sing so beautifully in choir practice.

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas  
Lead inspector

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