

Applemore College

Roman Road, Dibden Purlieu, Southampton, SO45 4RQ

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school provides outstanding care for its students and relationships throughout the school are strong. Consequently, the great majority of students behave well, feel safe, and are happy to come to school.
- Most teaching is good or better and, as a result, the majority of students make good progress from their starting points.
- Students' achievement is good and the school's records and most recent examination results show that it is improving for all groups of students.
- The school's senior leaders and governors are totally committed to improving the school, especially students' achievement. They have successfully addressed issues concerning the quality of teaching that arose since the last inspection and, consequently, raised achievement.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of courses to provide all students with opportunities to gain appropriate qualifications. The school has worked hard to build good relationships with the local community and businesses. This further enhances students' opportunities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not high enough which is why students' achievement is good rather than outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher and two were with an assistant headteacher.
- The inspectors talked with students, looked at samples of their work, and listened to a group of Year 7 students read.
- Meetings were also held with teachers, a group of governors, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and the school’s middle leaders. A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority to discuss the extent and impact of support provided to the school.
- The inspectors took account of the 98 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), two letters from parents, and 34 questionnaires returned by school staff.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at many documents including minutes of governing body meetings, the school’s self-evaluation, the school’s development plan, performance management documentation, planning documents, monitoring and assessment information, school policies, and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

John Collins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fran Ashworth

Additional Inspector

Joanne Peach

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Faysal Mikadi

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Full report

Information about this school

- The college is smaller than the average sized secondary school and has a specialist dyslexia unit, currently providing education for 17 students. No other alternative provision is provided.
- The school has mostly four forms of entry per year but there are six classes in Year 7 due to increased numbers.
- The majority of students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is less than a quarter of the national average and very few speak English as an additional language.
- A high number of students join the school part-way through their secondary education.
- Approximately one quarter of the students are eligible for the pupil premium; this is in line with the national average. Pupil premium provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families.
- The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus are higher than average. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- There have been significant changes to the teaching staff and the senior leadership team over the past 18 months.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - raising the expectations of all teachers of what students can do, especially the more able
 - making more effective use of the school's information on students' progress to plan lessons that meet the needs of all students
 - marking students' work regularly and accurately and providing comments that help students to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' rates of progress and achievement underwent a dip in 2012 despite being above average for most subjects in 2010 and 2011. This can be attributed to disruption for two terms as a result of teacher absence and some temporary teaching inadequacies that have since been rectified. In addition a relatively high number of students joined the school part-way through Key Stage 4. School information and inspection evidence confirm that the current achievement of students is good.
- Many students enter the school with skills that are below average, particularly in literacy. They make good progress to average or better by the time they leave. Students in Year 7 who join the school with low reading ages are quickly identified and make rapid, sometimes astounding progress.
- Girls do better than boys in examinations, though in lessons and in students' work there are few observable differences. Positive action has been taken to ensure that all students achieve at least what is expected of them, especially in English and mathematics.
- Students are entered early for GCSE examinations at various times from Year 9 onwards. This provides an opportunity to build students' confidence and to showcase their progress. However, school records and other evidence show that doing so reduces the proportion of students gaining the highest grades and dissuades some students from taking the subject further.
- Increasingly effective use is made of additional funds to reduce the achievement gap between students supported by pupil premium funding and other students. Successful action using pupil premium funding has been taken to improve both numeracy and literacy, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. School records of progress show that the gap in achievement is closing rapidly in both areas. Although still below the national average, in September the average gap was three terms, currently eligible students are two terms behind.
- Students who join the school part-way through their secondary education make good progress from often low starting points. Also, students from service families make at least similar progress to other students and often better. This is as a result of close monitoring and good teaching.
- The small number of students on fixed-term exclusions or whose attendance is not good are provided with well-planned, strong support to help them catch up and most do.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including students in the dyslexia unit, make good progress because of the good teaching and additional support they receive.
- Parents, using the online survey (Parent View) and through the school's own survey, agree that students make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching seen during the inspection was mostly good and some was outstanding. A small proportion was seen to require improvement but no teaching was inadequate. Students' work and school records over time confirm this judgement.
- Most teaching is lively, interesting and makes effective use of students' ideas and answers to reinforce learning. For example, in a lesson based on a historical novel about the 14th century English Peasants' Revolt, students exchanged their ideas about what was happening as if seen through the eyes of an animal of their choice. This reinforced their learning of some of the events that took place and provided an opportunity for them to show their creativity.
- The majority of teachers have high expectations of their students and plan lessons well to take account of students' previous learning. This enables students to make good gains in their knowledge and understanding. However, in a few cases this is not the case and then the learning needs of some students, especially the more able, are not met. As a result, they make less progress than they could.
- Most teachers mark students' work regularly, accurately, and give helpful advice to help students improve their work. However, a small number of teachers mark infrequently and without helpful

comments, which adversely affects students' progress and attitudes to learning.

- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are well taught and make good progress from their starting points. For example, a small number of students that have great difficulty in reading and writing (dyslexia) have achieved good GCSE passes in science and mathematics while in Year 10. Some Year 7 students have made three or more years' progress in reading while in Year 7.
- Teaching assistants also provide skilful support in classrooms to disabled students and those with special educational needs. This helps students do things for themselves and enables them to make good progress.
- Across all subjects, good efforts are made to develop students' numeracy and literacy skills. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson students were investigating the relationship between students' heights and their hand spans. They discussed the problem with each other, plotted graphs and wrote explanations of what they believed the relationship to be. Many teachers display new vocabulary on classroom walls and explain what words mean.
- Students told inspectors they enjoy their lessons and like their teachers. The great majority of parents using the online survey were very positive about how their child is taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school was good during the inspection. Inspectors were impressed by the courtesy and good manners of students. They are respectful of, and helpful to, each other and adults. Younger students say they benefit greatly from the care older students provide them in school, including listening to and helping them read.
- Almost all students have very positive attitudes to learning; this is a consequence of their strong relationship with teachers and excellent pastoral care. They take part in learning activities enthusiastically, ask and answer questions confidently and competently, and they work well independently and with others. They take an active part in assessing and correcting their own work. For example 'fix it five' provides a daily five-minute opportunity for students to follow up the written comments made by their teachers.
- There are clear indications of the good impact of the school's values and caring ethos. For example, students regularly work with local churches to organise charity events and raise money to help others.
- Students know the various types of bullying and how to keep safe. They know about cyberbullying, and that name calling of any kind is hurtful and wrong. They are knowledgeable about e-safety and how to deal with dangers.
- The school has a very good tracking system for monitoring behaviour and clear and effective guidelines for the management of behaviour. Teaching and other staff apply these consistently and consequently the relatively few instances of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Racist incidents and bullying are kept to the minimum and in the rare instances they happen are handled well. Students know they can turn to an adult, and older students, especially mentors and prefects, give very good support to younger students. The school does much to create a culture of caring and the pastoral care system provides outstanding support for all students.
- Almost all students enjoy being at school and overall attendance is above the national and local averages. Relatively small numbers of students have repeated absences, including disabled students and those with special educational needs and a few that are eligible for the pupil premium. The recent appointment of an education welfare officer has already begun to improve the attendance of these students.
- Students, teachers, and the parents via the online survey say that behaviour is typically good and inspection evidence together with the school's behaviour and attitude records confirm this.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are passionate about the education of the students and are committed to ensuring high standards of achievement, behaviour and safety.
 - This had led to a review of teaching methods and behaviour management and consequently to improvements in the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance.
 - The school's own evaluation of how well it is doing is accurate and makes clear its strengths and weaknesses. The governing body takes an active role in this and is strongly supportive of measures taken for improvement, for example investing in new technology to both monitor and enhance students' learning.
 - The learning opportunities planned for all students ensure they make progress without gaps in their learning. This includes well-recognised vocational programmes, for example in catering. Well-planned and good quality additional support is given to students who find the work too hard, who have missed schooling, or have fallen behind for any reason.
 - There is a rich programme of extra-curricular activities both during and after school provided by the governors.
 - Links with large businesses such as Exxonmobil and with local churches provide additional opportunities to enrich students' learning and personal development.
 - The outstanding pastoral care provides extra support in many ways for students, for example for those who act as carers, enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities at home and continue with schoolwork. The school effectively seeks to ensure students are treated equally and that no one is discriminated against.
 - The school benefited from effective support and guidance from the local authority during the period of extended staff absence and staffing difficulties. However, generally, guidance and support are organised by the school and its governors, for example by employing external education consultants and agencies.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well trained and are very effective in supporting the senior leaders and holding them to account for the school's performance.
 - They are very active in the life and work of the school, for example through linking with a subject, meeting all staff for afternoon tea at the start of the academic year, and making frequent visits.
 - They participate in planning for improvements, policy making, and decision making about improvements in students' achievements. They know how the school compares with similar schools and use national information to hold the school to account.
 - They have been much involved in improving the quality of teaching through participating in checks on how well students are improving in their learning and approving the use of funds for new literacy schemes and the training of teachers in new methods.
 - Governors use safe recruiting procedures and ensure that teachers deserve any increases in salary before releasing funds. They use funds wisely to support the learning of those students eligible for pupil premium funding and question the impact of this on improving their achievement. They give strong emphasis to the safeguarding of students and meet all their statutory requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	116504
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	412743
Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	577
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sylvia Barns
Headteacher	Mr Roland Marsh
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 Oct 2009
Telephone number	02380 848804
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