

# Appleby Grammar School

Battlebarrow, Appleby-in-Westmorland, Cumbria, CA16 6XU

**Inspection dates** 27–28 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement. It is not consistently good. GCSE results in 2012 and 2013 were lower than in 2011. Attainment was below average in 2013. Many students were catching up on previous underperformance, especially in English.
- Boys, particularly in English, and the most-able students in mathematics did not make as much progress as expected.
- Teaching requires improvement because it has not resulted in securely good achievement. Not enough teaching is outstanding. In some lessons the most-able students are not challenged to do their best.
- Teachers' marking does not always give clear enough guidance on how to improve. Students are not often expected to act upon guidance and make improvements.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Senior and middle leaders do not take sufficient account of the impact of teaching over time on students' progress when evaluating the effectiveness of teaching. There is variation in the effectiveness of middle leaders.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Achievement between subjects at AS and A level is too variable. New leadership has not had sufficient time to improve progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving quickly and is leading to rapidly accelerating progress, including in English and mathematics. During the inspection nearly all teaching observed was good.
- In some subjects in the main school, such as science, design and technology and vocational subjects, achievement is good.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very positive and are a key factor in their improving progress. Students' behaviour around the school is often exemplary.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. Students take on a wide range of responsibilities within the school and the wider community.
- The headteacher, well supported by governors and leaders, knows where improvements are needed. He has improved the quality of staffing and used external support wisely. As a result, much better teaching is quickening the pace of progress and raising attainment.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to 28 part lessons. Two of the observations were held jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors analysed students' workbooks across a range of subjects.
- Discussions were held with staff, students, a representative of the South Lakes Federation and a national leader in education who are supporting the school.
- An inspector met a group of governors, some of whom also serve on the Appleby Grammar School Foundation. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Documents looked at included the self-evaluation summary, the improvement plan, information on students' progress, records of students' behaviour and attendance, governing body minutes and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 60 responses to Parent View (the Ofsted online questionnaire) during 2013/14 academic year.
- The views of staff were received and analysed through the 42 staff questionnaires returned.
- During the inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact of the local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

## Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Adrian Biddulph	Additional Inspector
Alison Thomson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Appleby Grammar School converted to become an academy in September 2011. The governing body, under the instrument of government, is responsible for the operation of the school. Appleby Grammar School Foundation supervises Foundation Funds and maintains part of the site.
- The academy is much smaller than an average-sized secondary school.
- A well-below average proportion of students are supported through pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- A below average proportion of students are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- Alternative vocational courses are provided for many students in Key Stage 4 and a smaller number in the sixth form at The Appleby Heritage Centre, a short distance from the school.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.
- There have been considerable changes to leadership at senior and middle leader level since the previous inspection. A deputy headteacher has recently left the school to a promoted post and has not yet been replaced. Leaders of teaching, the sixth form, English and mathematics are relatively new to their role.
- The school receives external educational support from, and is a member of, the South Lakes Federation (SLF), which is a partner in the Cumbria Alliance of System Leaders and the Local Alliance of System Leaders, south area. A local headteacher, who is a national leader of education, provides support to the school as part of that provided by the SLF.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching further so that it is at least good, more is outstanding and leads to students making consistently good progress over time by:
  - ensuring that in every lesson tasks are organised carefully so that the most-able students are fully stretched throughout a lesson
  - providing more opportunities for students to develop the skills of independent learners through finding things out for themselves, discussing ideas with partners and groups and making decisions about their own learning
  - improving the effectiveness of teachers' marking so that in all subjects teachers give clear guidance on how to improve and that there is a clear expectation that students respond and make improvements
  - ensuring that students are well prepared to review and assess each other's work
  - sharing best practice in teaching and learning more frequently and widely within the school.
- Raise attainment and accelerate progress, especially for the most-able students in mathematics and for boys in English by:
  - setting consistently higher expectations of handwriting and presentation
  - using more practical tasks in mathematics to enable students to work out and understand

demanding concepts for themselves

- ensuring students at risk of falling behind receive extra support in plenty of time so that they can catch up before tackling examinations.

■ Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:

- ensuring leaders use a wider range of evidence, such as students' workbooks and information on students' progress, to evaluate the impact of teaching on students' progress over time
- improving the skills of some middle and senior leaders new to their role so that they hold teachers more rigorously to account for the progress of the students in their care
- ensuring that the progress of all different groups of students is taken into account when observing lessons
- improving the tools used for the observation of teaching so that observers make a clearer link between teaching and its impact on students' progress.

■ Improve the effectiveness of the sixth form by:

- raising attainment at AS and A level
- improving teaching further so that it leads to greater consistency in students' progress and achievement across subjects
- improving the guidance students receive when making choices about courses to study so that they have a realistic understanding of what they entail and more students complete their courses
- developing the skills of leadership needed to ensure that teaching and achievement are more consistently good across subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students' achievement requires improvement because in the past two years, too many students have underachieved in English and mathematics. The school has acted quickly to improve the quality of teaching and leadership in these subjects, so that students across all year groups are now making much better progress from their starting points and attainment is rising quickly.
- In English, many boys and some of the most-able students underachieved at GCSE in the past two years. Teaching is now setting much higher expectations of students. Work in students' books, information on students' progress and observation of lessons show that standards of attainment are rising across year groups. In Year 11, standards of attainment at A\* to C and A\* to A is already much higher than it has been by the end of Year 11 for several years. The proportions of students making the progress expected or better progress than this already has increased dramatically, including for boys.
- In mathematics, students' achievement at GCSE dipped in 2012 and 2013 from a much better position in 2011 when it was good. Inappropriate entry to the most demanding courses, early entry to GCSE examinations and support that was offered too late in the year were factors that held some students back from gaining higher grades, particularly boys and the most able.
- These factors have been tackled. With new leadership of the subject, teaching is improving quickly and additional support for students in Key Stage 4 and younger students at risk of underachieving takes place throughout the year. Consequently, progress and attainment in mathematics are improving rapidly. However, there are not enough pupils, especially the most able, reaching the highest A\* to A grades at GCSE and too few making better than expected progress.
- Overall, the progress of the most-able students is improving quickly, and at a faster rate in English than in mathematics.
- Achievement in some other subjects is more consistently good, for example in science, design and technology and vocational courses.
- Pupil premium funding is mostly used to provide students with well-targeted additional adult support. Students known to be eligible for free school meals are catching up rapidly on those who are not. In 2013, these students achieved similar standards of attainment in English and mathematics to students who are not eligible. These two groups make similar progress to each other in English. In mathematics, the progress of eligible students is a little behind that of others but the gap has decreased considerably compared with 2011 and 2012.
- Funding allocated to support Year 7 students who entered the school with below average attainment in English and mathematics is used effectively so that the vast majority of these students improve.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is improving quickly and is similar to that of other students. They are well supported in classrooms by teachers and teaching assistants who are clearly aware of their needs. Support in mathematics lessons is especially effective.
- Improved checking of students' progress alerts class teachers and subject leaders to potential underachievement quickly. This ensures that the school pays appropriate attention to equality of opportunity.
- Students are well prepared for the next stage of education. They have a wide range of literacy, numeracy and communication skills. Weaker readers are supported and improve. However, in some subjects students' poorly formed handwriting and carelessly presented written work is not challenged by staff.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. There is too much variation in progress between subjects. Performance in vocational courses is stronger than in AS and A level. Attainment at A level and AS has improved in 2013, at AS level especially, and it is broadly average. Overall, progress is in line with expectations but this masks variations between

subjects. The proportion of sixth form students who complete the courses they choose to study is lower than national figures. Guidance does not give all students a realistic enough understanding of what the courses entail.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **requires improvement**

- The impact of teaching on students' progress over time requires improvement. It has not led to securely good progress in all subjects, particularly English and mathematics, in recent years.
- Lessons observed and the scrutiny of students' workbooks show that teaching is improving strongly and leading to rapidly improving progress. This is backed up by information on students' current progress across year groups, particularly in English and mathematics. In the vast majority of lessons seen teaching was good; students were fully engaged in learning and were making good progress.
- In a few lessons, the most-able students are not fully challenged and stretched to achieve their best in all parts of each lesson.
- Students are not always encouraged to develop the skills of independent learners. Opportunities to find things out for themselves, discuss ideas with partners and groups and make decisions about their own learning are not extensive enough.
- Teachers' marking is too variable. Some gives very clear guidance to students so that they are able to improve their work. However, this is not always the case. The expectation that students must respond to comments and make improvements is not often clear.
- Some students say that they feel ill-prepared to make accurate assessments of each other's work when they are asked to review the work of their fellow students.
- In some lessons in mathematics, teachers do not use practical activities well enough to ensure students develop a secure understanding of underlying concepts, nor do they get to work out and understand concepts for themselves.
- Teachers create a positive atmosphere where students are not afraid to try things out, or have a go at difficult tasks.
- Students say that staff give lots of extra time to help them to achieve their best and they are always ready to explain when they have not understood. Older students recognise that teaching has improved in recent years.
- In most lessons, all students are fully challenged to do their best. Teachers' questioning of students probes and deepens their understanding. Students are expected to use their independent learning skills to develop and extend their learning.
- Teachers keep a constant check on students' learning. They adjust activities accordingly so that the most able are usually challenged further and others get the support they need.
- Teachers use their secure knowledge of the subject to plan activities that take students through sensible steps in learning. Homework is used well to support learning and encourage independent study including the sixth form.
- Teaching assistants and other staff in support work effectively alongside students and are particularly effective in mathematics.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement because it is not resulting in good progress across subjects over time. Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was good. Students are challenged and encouraged to work independently.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **are good**

- Students' very positive attitudes to learning are a key contributory factor in their accelerating progress. They apply themselves diligently to tasks in lessons. They enjoy working in pairs and groups and say this is when they learn the most. They support each other exceptionally well and benefit from sharing ideas and tussling with problems. Behaviour in lessons is most often good

and low-level disruption is uncommon.

- Students' behaviour around the school is often exemplary. They move sensibly down corridors, some of which are very narrow. Students are sociable in the dining areas. In the library, students catch up on studies or read sensibly. Outdoors, older students, trained in football leadership, organise football games. Exclusions are very rare.
- Students feel safe and secure. They say they all know each other and staff know them well, and so they feel part of a larger family. For this reason they say that bullying is very rare. They are confident that the adults in school will help should it be needed. Some sixth form students and older students are trained as mentors and educators, helping students to gain a full understanding of bullying in all its forms and how to tackle it.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe in many different ways including when using modern technology.
- Students take on a wide range of responsibilities. Students are represented at some meetings of the governing body. A recently formed student leadership group is focused on improving the quality of learning. Students contribute to many events in the local community. They raise considerable sums for various charities.
- Attendance is broadly average over time and is improving.
- Most sixth form students have a mature approach to their studies. They are benefiting from supervised study time during the school week. They are good role models for younger students.

## The leadership and management

## requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Although much has been achieved, some leaders are still developing the skills they need to bring about good achievement over time. Teaching has not been evaluated accurately for its impact on progress over time.
- The headteacher, well supported by leaders and governors, is ambitious for the school and the students. He has identified areas of weakness and acted robustly to make improvements to the quality of staffing and leadership. He has used support from a nearby successful school and a national leader of education effectively to improve management and the quality of teaching. Staff morale is good.
- Improvement plans for the school and subjects are helping to drive forward improvements. Priorities are based on accurate checks on students' progress. Self-evaluation identifies the right priorities for improvement. Some of the judgements do not take sufficient account of the impact of the school's work on students' achievement over time.
- All students have challenging targets and their progress is checked rigorously. Most middle leaders are using this information to hold class teachers closely to account for the progress of the students they teach. Not all middle leaders have fully developed the skills to do this effectively. The focus has been on students in Key Stage 4 and now leaders are beginning to extend their expectations to students across the school.
- Students at risk of underachieving are identified more quickly and additional support is helping these students to catch up. In mathematics, in the past, this support was not commenced earlier enough to make enough difference. This has been rectified this year.
- Close checks by senior leaders on improvements in English and mathematics are helping to raise ambitions and accelerate progress.
- Checks on teaching in lessons have not always focused closely enough on the impact of teaching on the learning and progress of different groups of students. Some of the tools used to check teaching do not highlight the importance of the link between teaching and its impact on students' progress.
- In making overall evaluations of the impact of teaching, systems do not take a wide enough range of evidence into account, such as students' workbooks and information on students' progress.
- However, the quality of teaching and the impact on students' learning is improving quickly. Staff have benefited from working alongside colleagues from a nearby successful school. Training and

professional development has focused tightly on the school's priorities and has also supported individual needs. There are a number of staff whose teaching has improved as a result of effective support and training.

- Increasingly, staff within the school are taking a lead on training. However, systems to share best practice in teaching within the school are not widespread.
- New leadership of the sixth form requires improvement because it has not yet had sufficient time to bring about consistently good achievement across subjects. Improvements made include more rigorous checks on students' progress and the introduction of supervised study time.
- The curriculum is well planned to meet students' different needs and aspirations. Students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form benefit from the range of vocational courses offered at the nearby Appleby Heritage Centre. The strong focus on improving literacy skills across all subjects is making a difference to students' skills. The curriculum provides a wealth of sporting, musical and other opportunities beyond the school day. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is strongly promoted across the curriculum.
- The South Lakes Federation and the Local Alliance of System Leaders have provided good support for this rapidly improving school.
- Arrangements for the safeguarding of students meet current government requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are well informed about the performance of the school in relation to the national picture. They hold leaders closely to account. For example, the leaders of English and mathematics were asked to present to governors convincing plans for improvement following results in 2013.
  - Governors are kept informed about the performance of staff. They have supported the headteacher in making improvements to staffing and in making decisions on salary progression in relation to performance. They set challenging targets for the headteacher.
  - They know how pupil premium is spent and the overall impact on these students' progress. They are less clear on which of the actions taken has made the most difference.
  - Governors bring a good range of skills to their role. They keep up to date with training. They seek the views of students and parents regularly. They offer a good balance of challenge and support to the school.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137251
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	426197

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<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>	566
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	84
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Saint
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Lund
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 September 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01768 351580
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