

# Applefields School

Bad Bargain Lane, York, North Yorkshire, YO31 0LW

**Inspection dates** 10–11 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are an effective team and are ably supported by senior leaders. Leaders, managers and governors have a very positive impact on the teaching, learning and achievement across the school.
- Most staff have high expectations of their students in many aspects of the school's work. They are committed to ensuring the students achieve their best.
- Leaders focus on driving improvement in all areas, especially the quality of teaching. Students' individual progress is monitored well. Governors review this progress every term. Those individuals who are not making rapid progress are identified and supported. This has been effective in English and communication.
- Leaders use the alternative provision, the support staff and transition team to target help effectively to ensure that students achieve well.
- Students' personal, social and emotional development is supported exceptionally well by all staff. As a result, students flourish.
- Staff teamwork is very strong and this makes a significant difference to students' learning. Adults do everything that they possibly can to help and support them.
- The curriculum offers a broad range of rich experiences, work and activities. A good range of opportunities allows students to gain qualifications which are relevant and worthwhile.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding; their attitudes to their learning in class are exemplary. The care and support for students have a significant impact on their excellent attitudes to their learning.
- Students' attendance and behaviour improves dramatically during their time at the school. Parents interviewed confirm the transformation in their children's response to the school's support, which enables them to progress with their learning.
- Students say they feel exceptionally safe at the school. Safeguarding is managed extremely well and any issues are dealt with swiftly.
- Sixth form provision is good and builds on the firm foundation of previous teaching and learning. Links between years are strong across the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in mathematics is not as strong as in English because many students do not have enough opportunities to extend their skills in other subjects.
- The new leader of mathematics does not have sufficient opportunity to monitor and evaluate provision in the subject and consistently check students' work.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons, taught by approximately 20 different teachers and many of the teaching assistants. There was a joint observation carried out with the headteacher. Walks around the school were conducted and learning was observed separately in many different areas with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. The inspectors observed students reading in lessons from Years 7 and 11. The inspector observed support for students in whole-class sessions and with individual students.
- One inspector visited the specialist 'Satellite' provision for students from Key Stages 3 and 4 on roll at Applefields which is based at a mainstream academy nearby.
- The inspectors looked in detail at the work in students' books, files and online from across the school. Two meetings were held with groups of students where they talked about their work and their perceptions of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, teachers and support staff, and different groups of students and individuals. A meeting was held with the leader of the transition team who support students to move on at the end of Year 11, the school nurse and the physiotherapist. Meetings took place with administration staff. An inspector interviewed representatives from the governing body.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation including: the school's summary of its view of its own performance; the school development plan; policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding; information about students' attendance and behaviour; records of the monitoring of teaching and learning; information about students' achievement; and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- There were 29 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and the inspectors looked at summaries of school questionnaires sent out to parents and students recently. Some parents made a telephone call to speak to inspectors and others wrote in. The inspectors also took account of the 30 responses to the staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Jean Tarry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Irene Lavelle

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Applefields School caters for students with multiple learning difficulties, autism spectrum and specific learning difficulties. Some students' special educational needs range from moderate to severe and profound learning difficulties, and many have multiple learning difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is the City of York local authority's community co-educational day special school for secondary-aged students with a wide range of needs. Most students transfer from the local primary special school in York and a small number are from mainstream primary and secondary schools. The school makes provision for students from York and the surrounding area of North Yorkshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire.
- The Satellite provides specialist provision for Applefields School students who are based full-time at Manor Church of England Academy, a mainstream secondary school in Nether Poppleton, York. The provision is for students in Key Stages 3 and 4. There are 16 students from Applefields who are based at the academy full time. They are taught by staff who are Applefields School staff and who work exclusively at the Satellite.
- The school is situated in York and students are transported in from the surrounding areas.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those supported through the pupil premium, is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.

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

- Improve teaching further and so raise attainment and the rate of progress in mathematics, by:
  - ensuring teachers plan more effectively for students to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum
  - ensuring rigorous assessment of students' knowledge, skills and understanding is consistent across the school
  - ensuring students know exactly how to improve their work and know what they have to learn next to achieve rapid progress.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by providing the new leader of mathematics with sufficient time to check on the quality of provision and students' achievement in the subject to aid continued improvement in these aspects.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very effective leadership. Their continuous drive and ambition to provide a high quality of education for all students are impressive. The deputy headteacher and senior leadership team continually share ideas and look for ways to improve the school's work. English and communication are strengths of the school; however, mathematics is good but not as strong.
- The quality of teaching is checked and, as a result, has improved throughout the school. Much strength is now evident, especially in English. Training is provided when a need arises. Improvement is clear although aspects to improve remain, especially in mathematics. In mathematics, teachers' marking is inconsistent and students do not know precisely how to improve their work.
- Leaders ensure that the evaluation of students' work takes many different forms depending on their individual special needs. Checks on students' progress are effective and lead to students' targets being challenging; this raises attainment. Leaders ensure effective spending of pupil premium funding. This leads to good achievement in all subjects for these disadvantaged students.
- The students with very complex needs and profound learning difficulties all have targets to achieve to ensure progress is good. The students with severe autistic spectrum disorder are equally well challenged to achieve through individualised targets, and these ensure good progress especially in communication skills. However, senior leaders do not always rigorously check on students' progress in mathematical work, particularly in other subjects.
- Overall, the work of middle leaders is effective. They ensure that there is much that enriches the curriculum and strive to make learning as exciting as possible. Leaders ensure that progress since the previous inspection is good, especially in the provision for communication and English and across other subject areas. This effective practice is less evident in mathematics because the leader is new and has not had enough opportunity to monitor and evaluate provision.
- Leaders and managers at all levels constantly strive to make provision better for the students. Some students achieve beyond all expectations, due to effective leadership systems and management processes. For example, with support from the school when it is needed, some students move confidently and successfully to develop social independence in training or college.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum includes well-planned experiences with qualifications and opportunities to follow their interests. Students in Years 10 and 11 have choices as in mainstream schools. The health and education care plans are tailor-made for individuals so that provision suits their specific needs. Students have the opportunity to gain external qualifications and they learn French, design and technology, art, drama, science, music and food technology. A series of transition meetings for students ensure they move smoothly from one key stage to the next.
- Leaders continually strive to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Students are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They are reflective when attending the Monday Citizenship Group, collecting and buying for a homeless charity. The school tuck shop is run by students so they learn the skills of buying and selling. Students learn about other cultures and investigate and reflect upon life in Ghana through work with charities. The school council is active with its charity work and environmental projects, and this enables students to understand and learn about British values.
- The management of teachers' performance through setting targets linked to students' performance is well organised and has a positive impact on students' learning. Salary rewards are linked to achieving these targets.
- Leaders' checks of the school's performance ensure that they have a good understanding of what is working well and what requires further attention, such as in mathematics. Action plans are discussed regularly at meetings of the senior leadership team to ensure improvements take place.
- The students who attend the alternative Satellite Provision enjoy and achieve very well indeed. They have the opportunity to experience well-supported learning activities in a mainstream setting and this makes a significant contribution to their outstanding behaviour and safety. The criteria to access this provision are clearly outlined on the school's website. These students make good progress from their starting points in English and mathematics.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Leaders and managers are consistently committed to promoting good relations and tackling discrimination. Overall, there is no significant difference in the progress of different groups of students.
- Leaders ensure that sustainable and positive relationships are established with the school's many different partners, particularly with parents and employers. Work with parents and partners is good as information, advice and guidance are all in place. Parents enjoy a welcome break with coffee mornings, invitations to

assemblies and organised school trips. They feel very involved in the life of the school and attend regular review meetings about their child's progress.

- The procedures and policies for safeguarding students are comprehensive and fully meet requirements. This aspect of the school's work results in outstanding safety for students.
- The local authority has provided effective support for this school, especially in mathematics. The school works closely with the local primary special school in the authority to support effective transition. The authority and outside agencies continue to seek places at the school because of successes in the past with other students. The headteacher works very closely with other providers to share the staff's expertise in many different areas of special educational needs. The school is held in high regard by the local authority and often supports students and staff in other schools with training, such as the management of behaviour.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body knows the school well and uses all information and data about students' progress effectively to compare the school's performance with that of similar schools locally and nationally. Governors provide support and challenge for improvement. The governors know the quality of teaching in the school is good and that it is stronger in English than in mathematics. Their plans have addressed aspects of this subject and they have appointed a new leader of mathematics who is already making a positive impact on the outcomes for students. They know the importance of teachers being set targets linked to their performance management and pay progression. Governors make sure that teachers only receive financial reward if they meet their targets.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Their attitude to their work is often exemplary considering their range of needs. This makes a very positive contribution to their often good and sometimes outstanding progress in English and good progress in mathematics. Teaching often challenges and interests them. In the main, they know how to improve their work, but this is not consistent across the school, particularly in mathematics.
- Students thoroughly enjoy their work. Students enjoy the competitive nature of the mathematical software programme that they use. They value the awards and qualifications that they achieve at different stages during their time at the school. The visits and events that they take part in often develop their teamwork skills and support them with their social anxiety and emotions. When asked what was special about the school, students said: 'The trips that we go on to the theatre, the cinema, forest, farm and the different museums. We love the sporting events like boccia, disports or the swimming events with the staff. We enjoy coming to school because of the activities we do with staff. They help and support us to achieve the best we can.'
- Students are very proud of their school and of their achievements. A typical comment was: 'This school teaches us to be the best we can and to use our talents well such as drumming or typing. The teachers make a difference to us as they help us learn.' Overall, students agree that the school is helping them to improve their academic achievement, behaviour and social well-being. Students who have severe autistic spectrum disorder are often successfully encouraged to communicate in their own way. With this effective communication, they are frequently able to relax much more successfully, to enjoy and achieve using the light-room facilities, or to use car racing games for number work.
- Students know about and follow the school's effective policy for behaviour. Students understand very well what is acceptable behaviour. Adults are excellent role models for students to follow, particularly in relation to attitudes to their work. The students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties are very clear about their learning intentions and given appropriate resources to enable them to communicate effectively with adults and each other. This means they know exactly how to behave in and out of class.
- Students are very polite and well mannered to each other, to staff and to visitors. They help and support each other in the dining room and outside on the playground. Students reflect during lesson or assembly time. For example, when the Archbishop of York visited this term, the students delivered a presentation to him on aspects of Fair Trade and the sale of chocolate at Applefields School. They listen to music and the school choir, which helps them to relax and to reflect about life in other countries.
- The students who attend the Satellite Provision are very well cared for in a safe environment and their behaviour is outstanding in this provision.

## Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. There are many aspects of this work which are exemplary; for example, the individual education and health care plans and transition meetings, which provide all staff with an overview of students to ensure they are kept safe and well. The Rebound Therapy work is a particular favourite for students. They also enjoy the hydrotherapy provision as they say they feel safe and secure due to extremely well-organised high-quality provision by well-trained staff.
- Often students recognise the difference between bullying and falling out. They inform inspectors that bullying rarely occurs and when it does, staff are vigilant to sort it out. Students confidently approach adults in school if they need help to resolve any issue, particularly with the internet. Aspects such as learning about different types of bullying are exceptionally well planned for in assemblies and in lessons.
- Students always know how to ask for help from the different staff. Attendance issues are addressed very quickly. Staff have regular contact with parents and this establishes excellent attendance at school. The school has effectively impressed upon parents the need for their children to attend school regularly and this has paid dividends. Students unanimously enjoy coming to school. They enjoy receiving awards and praise for good attendance and realise the need for good attendance.
- The school council ensures that staff listen regularly to their views about matters such as safety. Students say they feel safe and very well cared for in school, in the mini-bus, on their residential trips, with their Out-and-About initiatives, when they go to visit a charity that provides support for the homeless or to the York Theatre Royal to complete their Shakespeare project. They very much appreciate the wealth of support they receive from all the different staff.

## The quality of teaching

is good

- The impact of the quality of the teaching over time is good. Teachers focus on improving students' speech and communication development throughout the day. Students' individual targets are now linked well to the different tasks provided for them in class and this enables them to learn more effectively.
- The teaching of English is strong throughout the school because of well-matched provision, particularly for the most able with autistic spectrum disorder. Students are supported to communicate effectively using alternative communication, technology, signing and symbols as appropriate. They are provided with activities and challenges that stretch their skills effectively. A range of practical or software activities engage students at an appropriate level to ensure that they make good progress, depending on their special needs.
- The teaching of reading and writing is good because the tasks given to students build on what they already know and can do, and meet students' varying needs and abilities well on a daily basis. There have been improvements in the teaching of phonics (the linking of letters and the sounds that they make). These have had a positive impact on standards in reading across the school. Students, particularly the most-able students, are always challenged with their reading tasks and enjoy the range of material on offer. They are encouraged to read accurately and fluently.
- Marking is supportive and is sometimes verbal, depending on the special needs of the student. For example, different approaches are used successfully with students to improve their communication skills.
- Learning support assistants are well trained and have the skills to support students in English and mathematics. They are crucial in building important relationships with the students. They are kept well informed of what students are expected to learn and so progress is good. Students appreciate the valuable input of the support staff, which enables them to make good progress.
- Since the appointment of the new mathematics leader, teaching in mathematics shows signs of improving; expectations are rising. Work now often meets the needs of the students so they are motivated and engaged by their tasks. Overall, teaching is now effective although there are still aspects to improve. At times, progress slows when students do not have enough opportunities to practise their skills in the other subject areas. Sometimes, teachers' assessment of students' work is not consistent and students receive work that does not match their need or is too easy for them. Students are not really sure how to make improvements to their work or misconceptions are not addressed, and therefore they do not learn from their errors.

## The achievement of pupils

is good

- All groups of students in all key stages achieve well. Progress is good overall in reading, writing and mathematics considering their low starting points. However, progress in mathematical development is not as rapid as it is in English. The school has made efforts to address this but there is still more to do in this

area. Often students do not have enough opportunities to practise their skills acquired in mathematics in other subject areas.

- Students' efforts in lessons and group work ensure they make good progress and help them to catch up when they fall behind. In English and communication lessons, for example, students were engaged and motivated to complete their tasks. They knew exactly what it was that they had to achieve during the lessons. Their efforts were recorded so that the assessment of students' progress was instant. This kept them on task and ensured that their progress was rapid.
- Achievement in reading is good. Students make good progress with their reading skills during their time at the school, considering their needs and starting points, as a result of effective teaching and support. School books are often used well to encourage a love of reading. Those who find reading very difficult are supported well to make good progress. Students follow their interests when choosing their reading material. Achievement in writing is good as often tasks are well matched to students' needs.
- Achievement in mathematics took a dip last year. Leaders have put many measures in place to ensure that progress is now good and attainment is rising. The most-able students gather relevant information and work well together by discussing the different ways to accomplish the set task and, as a result, they learn quickly.
- By the end of Year 11, attainment is usually below average. However, all students make at least good progress. A wide range of accreditation is gained. A small number of students access GCSE courses through inclusion links and entry level certificates in mathematics, English, science, information communication technology (ICT) and food technology. Effective transition arrangements aid students' readiness for the next stage in their education. A typical parental comment is: 'I never thought my child with all his needs would achieve so much. The school has opened so many doors for him and I never thought this would happen. He has performed in front of others and gained so much confidence from all that he has achieved at Applefields.'
- There is very little difference between the performance of different groups of students. The numbers of students in each group is so small that an analysis to compare their performance does not generate meaningful statistics. However, inspection evidence, along with students' work, confirms that all groups of students are making at least good progress. For example, disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students achieve equally well over time.
- Some students work closely with different support staff, therapists or counsellors to achieve the best that they possibly can. The school has various programmes to support students if they are underachieving.
- At the school, the most-able students make good progress as their work often provides an extra level of challenge so that they are stretched and achieve their potential.

### The sixth form provision

**is good**

- Good achievement means that most students reach their potential considering their starting points and their often complex needs. Most students continue into the sixth form from Applefields and this key stage builds on the firm foundation that has been established further down the school. In 2014, students achieved a wide range of qualifications. Students achieved accreditation in entry level adult literacy, numeracy and functional Skills. Some achieve City and Guilds qualifications in employability and personal development. Some are working towards independence and personal progress qualifications.
- The team work of staff in the post-16 provision is effective. There are joint learning ventures, such as the Foundation Learning Days that take place each week. The older students work alongside Key Stage 4 students in technology, music, food preparation, and art and design projects. These valuable opportunities allow the older students to support younger students with their work and social development. The older students are outstanding role models and this develops their own self-confidence and their self-esteem. A typical student comment was, 'We might have a special need but that doesn't mean we don't have dreams and aspirations like everyone else.'
- Students develop their personal skills at a good rate. They use and apply them in a wide range of adult situations, such as cooking meals, going shopping, gardening, working on charity projects, cycling or helping other people with special needs in other settings.
- Students' attitudes and their behaviour are outstanding in the sixth form. They always try their very best to meet the high expectations of the staff. Some students are now involved in the pathways placements to prepare them for moving on at the age of 16 with the help and support of the adults at the school and the transition team.
- Teaching is consistently good. The students enjoy expressing their views and exploring their choices. For example, they learn how to reflect, ask questions and then answer in an interview situation.

- Similarly, arrangements to prepare students for their move to post-19 provision are good. Strong links have been established with the local authority's transition team based on the school site. They support students and their families with applications for post-school provision. Students integrate slowly into their new situation, as well as experience the world of work in areas such as catering, car maintenance or working with pets. Strong links are developed with outside agencies, ensuring students have a wide range of opportunities for work-related learning through work or college placements. This means they grow in confidence and maturity through well-thought-out placements and pathways.
- Sixth form provision is led and managed effectively by a knowledgeable senior leader. All safety and welfare requirements are exceptionally well met, resulting in an exceptionally safe, welcoming, warm and caring environment. As a result students are settled and secure. Teamwork between staff is a considerable strength and has a significant impact on students' good achievement. Leaders acknowledge that there is more work to be completed with a review of the curriculum provision and promoting even more independence for some students.



## 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>	134727
<b>Local authority</b>	York
<b>Inspection number</b>	449507

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community Special School
<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>	144
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	65
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Woolven
<b>Headteacher</b>	George Gilmore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 October 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01904 553900
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