

Appleby Grammar School

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

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The standard of education has improved since the last inspection. However, the quality of teaching remains variable and not enough has been done to address the gaps in pupils' learning caused by weaknesses in teaching over time.
- Year 11 pupils have not performed well in public examinations since the previous inspection. The 2017 examination results were particularly poor and below the government's minimum floor standards.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who join the school with low prior attainment have started to make quicker progress. Despite this, they continue to make less progress than other pupils at the school and nationally.
- The quality of teaching and assessment is inconsistent across and within subjects. In particular, too many teachers do not set pupils work which is challenging enough.
- Some teachers do not routinely use assessment information to plan learning that fills gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. This impedes the amount of progress that pupils make.
- Teachers do not typically have high enough expectations of pupils' handwriting and their use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are well behaved and proud of their school. The attendance of all groups has improved.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and ensures that the needs of the most able pupils are catered for well.
- The school's assessment system now provides an accurate view of pupils' progress.
- The sixth form remains a strength of the school. Students leave the sixth form for a suitable range of destinations, which involve employment and higher education.
- The capacity of the senior team to bring about improvement has been strengthened. Leaders and governors have developed a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have appropriate plans in place to improve the school further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the outcomes for all groups of pupils, particularly the disadvantaged and those with low prior attainment, by ensuring that teachers:
 - consistently provide pupils of all abilities with challenging work that enables them to make strong progress
 - make better use of the school's improved systems for assessing pupils to enable them to provide pupils with work that fills gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding
 - have high expectations for pupils' handwriting and their use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders, middle leaders and governors have ensured that the school has improved since the previous inspection. Their actions have brought about improvements to behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The appointment of a new chair of governors and a new assistant headteacher has further strengthened leadership and the impact of their leadership is already evident in the school's work. However, these improvements have not been reflected in pupils' performance in GCSE examinations even though pupils throughout the school have started to make better progress. Furthermore, leaders have made general improvements to the quality of teaching although too much variability remains in the overall effectiveness of teaching and assessment.
- Leaders have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have been supported by the South Lakes Federation to develop the depth and accuracy of their self-evaluation. This has enhanced leaders' capacity to bring about necessary and sustained change. Moreover, leaders have a clear and appropriate understanding of what actions need to be taken to improve the school further.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are firmly held to account for the outcomes achieved by pupils. The chair of governors has introduced new procedures for ensuring that the headteacher is closely monitored in his efforts to achieve ambitious targets for the school's development. Middle leaders are also being held to account more effectively and this is helping them to engineer improvements in their areas.
- The appointment of a new assistant headteacher has been a catalyst for the development of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have established a comprehensive system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching. This has enabled them to gain a balanced and nuanced understanding of how well pupils are being taught. It has also enabled them to select appropriate strategies for improvement. For example, a new assessment system has been introduced to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments and to encourage pupils to be more ambitious about what they can achieve. Leaders fully understand that there is still more to do to tackle the remaining inconsistencies in teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress further across the curriculum.
- Leaders have ensured that staff morale has remained high. They have created a climate in which staff feel determined to improve the quality of their teaching and the support that they provide to pupils. Leaders are becoming more adept at challenging teachers to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. They have prioritised the delivery of lessons by teachers who are specialists in the subject that they teach. Leaders make changes to the curriculum that are based upon a detailed evaluation of pupils' outcomes. For example, they have provided additional time for pupils to catch up in subjects that they fall behind in.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum meets the needs of the most able pupils. For example, these pupils are given the opportunity to study Latin or other additional GCSE subjects that enrich and extend their education. Leaders also provide a range of

vocational courses through the Appleby Heritage Centre, which help pupils to access further or higher education when they leave the school.

- The curriculum also helps to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The 'life skills' curriculum acts as a focal point for the school's work in this area.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is enhanced through the provision of a broad range of extra-curricular opportunities, which include international trips and opportunities for work experience.
- Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively. For example, they have used the funding to bring about improvements to the attendance of this group. Furthermore, the performance of disadvantaged pupils in GCSE examinations in 2017 illustrated that they had made stronger progress than their predecessors. Disadvantaged pupils are also making stronger progress throughout the school, which indicates that the differences between their progress and other pupils nationally are beginning to diminish.
- Parents have mixed views about the school. The majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, indicated that their children are happy, safe and well cared for. However, a significant number of parents raised concerns about the effectiveness of leadership and management, and a large minority of parents indicated that they would not recommend the school. Leaders recognise that they need to rebuild the confidence of some parents.

Governance of the school

- The new chair of governors is in tune with the local community. He is committed to ensuring that pupils receive the best education possible. He has increased governors' expectations of staff and he has challenged leaders to do better. He has been instrumental in ensuring that governors are provided with concise and accurate information about the school's effectiveness. In turn, this has enabled governors to hold leaders to account more effectively.
- Other governors are determined that the school improves. They have followed the chair of governors' lead and have become more critical of the information that they are presented with. Governors have also become more outward-facing. For example, they have increased their understanding of information about pupils' outcomes by working in tandem with a number of multi-academy trusts and external federations.
- Governors now have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They ask challenging questions of leaders to ensure that there is no complacency or lack of ambition.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The systems to check that adults in the school are safe to work with children are robust. Staff receive frequent safeguarding training on issues such as cyber bullying and radicalisation. Staff are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of neglect and abuse.
- Leaders have developed strong links with a number of external organisations in order

to make certain that pupils get the help and support that they need. For example, there are strong links with the local authority support service and voluntary agencies that provide support across a range of areas to do with emotional and mental health.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils and do not provide them with demanding work that challenges them to make strong progress. Although there are clear signs that teaching is becoming more effective, leaders acknowledge that too many inconsistencies remain. These inconsistencies impact negatively on pupils' outcomes and impede the progress that they make.
- Leaders have improved systems for assessing what pupils know and can do. These new systems have improved the accuracy of information about pupils' attainment. However, they have only had a small impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. This is because teachers do not routinely use information from assessments when planning new learning. As a result, pupils sometimes complete work that is too easy. Moreover, teachers do not pay enough attention to gaps in pupils' learning when setting work. Teaching is therefore not precise enough to compensate for the limitations in pupils' understanding that have been caused by weaknesses in teaching over time.
- Teachers do not typically have high enough expectations for the way that pupils present work and their use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Consequently, too many pupils do not take pride in their work. Furthermore, pupils do not routinely receive the consistent support and direction that would enable them to make stronger and more secure progress with the technical accuracy of their written work.
- Despite this, there is clear evidence to indicate that the overall quality of teaching is improving. Some teachers are using information from the new assessment system to closely match work to pupils' abilities. When this happens, pupils are motivated to do well and make good progress.
- Many teachers question pupils effectively to elicit what they already know and to deepen their thinking. Some teachers are highly skilled at facilitating thoughtful discussion among pupils.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour during lessons. As a result, pupils behave well and little time is wasted. Pupils appreciate the supportive relationships that they enjoy with their teachers. Pupils feel confident to ask for help and are not afraid of making mistakes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff work effectively to create a community-orientated school where pupils feel safe and secure. Staff know pupils very well. Pupils explained to inspectors how they want to do

well at school and how they appreciate the support that they receive.

- Bullying incidents are rare and staff deal effectively with them if they occur. Pupils are confident that if bullying does happen, they know how to get help. They also trust staff to stop it quickly.
- Staff support the pastoral transition of pupils from primary school effectively and, as a result, pupils quickly feel at home.
- Leaders recognise their responsibility for pupils' mental and physical health. They take effective steps to ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' wider needs. Leaders make appropriate referrals to external agencies should a pupil require specialist support.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Staff ensure that there are frequent opportunities for pupils to learn about fundamental British values through form time, assemblies and 'life skills' lessons.
- Pupils value diversity. They have respect for other cultures. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils experience different cultures through enrichment activities which include visits abroad. Pupils say that prejudice is very rare and that homophobia in particular is not tolerated.
- Pupils take pride in their appearance and their school. They show respect for the school site and there is very little litter or graffiti.
- Pupils are very confident in talking to visitors and are open and articulate in expressing their views. They are welcoming and polite, have good manners and treat others with respect.
- Pupils benefit from good information and advice about the options that are available to them when they leave the school. As a result, the proportion of pupils who leave the school for further education, employment or training compares favourably to national averages.
- Leaders ensure that the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision are safe, well looked after and taught well. They also ensure that pupils behave well and attend regularly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils understand what is expected of them in lessons and around the school; they follow the rules and behave well. Pupils move around the corridors in an orderly fashion and behaviour at break and lunchtime is calm.
- Pupils say that incidents of poor behaviour are unusual in lessons and that pupils typically behave well. As a result, exclusions are rare, including for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' attendance overall has improved since the previous inspection. Leaders have focused intently on improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those with a history of regular absence. There is clear evidence that this approach is paying dividends. In particular, there has been a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school.

- The majority of parents reported that their children are happy at school and feel safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' performance in public examinations since the previous inspection has indicated that most groups have not made good progress since joining the school. In 2017, outcomes declined further and the school did not meet the government's floor standards. Pupils, particularly boys, the disadvantaged and those joining the school with low or middle prior attainment, had made slow progress compared to other pupils nationally. Furthermore, the proportions of pupils attaining a standard and strong pass in mathematics, and a strong pass in English, were well below national averages.
- The 2017 examination results demonstrated that pupils had made slow progress in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. Furthermore, pupils' progress in their optional subjects was in the bottom 5% nationally. Previous examination results have indicated that pupils typically make broadly average progress in English and humanities. The outcomes at the end of key stage 4 reflect the inconsistent progress that pupils make across the curriculum. This reflects the variability in the quality of teaching.
- Despite pronounced weaknesses in historic outcomes, pupils are now making stronger progress throughout the school. Pupils' work is typically demonstrating more secure understanding and higher levels of attainment. Leaders' tracking of pupils' progress confirms that stronger progress is now being made, which reflects the general improvements that are being made to teaching.
- As pupils begin to make better progress, differences in the progress of groups such as the disadvantaged, boys and those with low prior ability compared to others are starting to diminish. As a result, differences in the progress of different groups are less stark.
- Leaders have prioritised improving boys' progress. They have ensured that all staff pay close attention to boys who are underachieving in their classes. As a result, boys are beginning to make faster progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The performance of disadvantaged pupils in the 2017 GCSE examinations indicated that these pupils had begun to make better progress than in the past. Leaders' information about pupils' progress and a detailed examination of disadvantaged pupils' work confirmed that rates of progress for these pupils have continued to quicken. This is a direct result of improved teaching and leaders' discerning use of the additional funds that are made available to support these pupils.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are also beginning to make quicker progress. This is partly because the school adopts creative strategies to ensure that the needs of these pupils are met. For example, a number of pupils are mentored by students from the sixth form.
- Pupils who join the school with high prior attainment typically make good progress. In contrast, pupils with low and middle prior attainment have done less well. This is because variabilities in the quality of teaching have been more pronounced for these pupils. However, pupils with low and middle prior attainment are now making quicker progress because more teachers are consistently pitching work at an appropriate level.

- Leaders have not done enough to ensure that teachers provide the consistent support needed for pupils to make stronger progress with their writing across the curriculum. Not enough attention has been paid to supporting pupils to develop the fluency and technical accuracy of their writing. This has been compounded by the low expectations that some teachers have for pupils' handwriting and the way that they present their work. As a result, there is a clear disparity between many pupils' level of understanding and the clarity with which they express themselves in writing. This has hampered pupils' progress across the curriculum.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Over time, students in the sixth form have attained well and made good progress. As a result, the large majority of students fulfil their ambition to gain employment or proceed to higher education. Over the last three years, nearly all students have gained entry to their university of choice.
- Leaders work closely with a range of partners to maintain a broad and balanced curriculum that offers students an appropriate mix of academic and vocational options. For example, leaders work with the Kirkby Stephen Grammar School and the Appleby Heritage Centre to ensure that students have access to courses that would not be viable to run at the school due to small class sizes.
- Leaders have created a culture in which leadership for the sixth form is considered an integral part of all senior and middle leaders' work. This delegation of responsibility has ensured that the challenging task of running a small sixth form effectively has been achieved.
- Students are very positive about the quality of teaching and the commitment of their teachers. Teachers understand the individual needs of students very well and provide the personalised support that helps them to make good progress and access destinations that are appropriate for their aptitudes, interests and ambitions.
- Students benefit from a range of interesting and useful enrichment opportunities. These are closely linked to students' programmes of study and include activities such as working with younger pupils, becoming sports coaches and being members of the school council.
- Students also benefit from a range of opportunities to gain work experience that is tailored to their aspirations. Some students, such as those studying health and social care, complete work experience as part of their chosen courses.
- Students have access to impartial careers advice and they are supported capably to apply for places in higher education. Leaders encourage students to be ambitious and aspirational through a number of visits to universities. Although the vast majority of students choose to follow academic pathways when they leave the sixth form, leaders nonetheless ensure that students have the opportunity to learn about the vocational options that are available.
- A very small number of pupils enter the sixth form without achieving higher grades at GCSE in English and mathematics. These students are supported well and improve their grades when they resit examinations.
- Students are encouraged to work collaboratively and are adept at working with others.

They say that they enjoy being treated as adults and value the relationships that they have built up with members of staff and each other. They feel safe. The strong sense of community in the sixth form helps to augment students' social and emotional development.

- Most students who begin in Year 12 stay on to successfully complete Year 13. Last year, all students who left Year 13 went on to further education, training or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	137251
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10045848

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	465
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	80
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mark Williamson
Headteacher	Andrew Lund
Telephone number	01768 351 580
Website	www.appleby.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	admin@appleby.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 May 2016

Information about this school

- Appleby Grammar School is a small comprehensive secondary school with a small sixth form. It is set in a rural environment.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school makes use of alternative provision for a small number of pupils at Appleby Heritage Centre taking engineering and health and social care courses. Some sixth

form courses are delivered in conjunction with Kirkby Stephen Grammar School.

- The school receives external support from its membership of the South Lakes Federation of schools, which includes support from a national leader of education.
- In 2017, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum national expectation for attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across almost all subject areas. Most of these sessions were jointly observed with members of the school's leadership team.
- Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised during lessons. In addition, inspectors reviewed pupils' work alongside the headteacher and senior leaders.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including minutes of meetings, information provided to governors, improvement plans, examples of performance management targets and records of leaders' monitoring activities.
- Inspectors spoke with senior leaders, middle leaders and teaching staff. They also spoke to seven members of the governing body and two representatives from the South Lakes Federation of schools. Inspectors held formal meetings with groups of pupils, including the school council, and met with pupils at break and lunchtime more informally.
- Inspectors took into account 71 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 68 free-text responses from parents. Inspectors also considered three letters and emails from parents, 38 responses from staff to the online questionnaire and 81 responses to the questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Andrew Johnson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Clive Hurren	Ofsted Inspector
Tanya Sheaff	Ofsted Inspector

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