

The Appleton School

Croft Road, Benfleet, Essex SS7 5RN

Inspection dates

12–13 February 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have high expectations of pupils and staff. They were disappointed with the sudden decline in outcomes at key stage 4 in 2018 and have acted quickly to rectify this.
- Over time, pupils' outcomes at key stage 4 have typically been strong across most subjects. Pupils in the school now are making good progress.
- The progress of students following vocational courses in the sixth form is particularly strong. The progress of students on academic courses has improved and is getting closer to that of pupils on vocational courses.
- Most teachers have high expectations of pupils. They set challenging work and help pupils to deepen their understanding over time.
- Leaders provide strong careers advice and guidance. Pupils are well prepared to move on to their next steps when they leave school.
- Pupils generally behave well. They conduct themselves in a calm and orderly way, responding appropriately to adults' guidance.
- Some aspects of how leaders monitor the impact of their work are imprecise or underdeveloped. Leaders do not have a secure understanding of the effectiveness of some of their initiatives.
- In a minority of classes, pupils do not make the same rates of progress as most pupils because teaching is not as strong.
- Leaders do not monitor the provision for pupils educated elsewhere on their behalf as well as they should.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that governors and leaders across the school have a secure understanding of the effectiveness of all aspects of their work
 - improving the systems for recording and monitoring the provision for pupils who are educated on behalf of the school at other institutions.
- Improve pupils' outcomes at key stage 4 by ensuring that teaching, learning and assessment are strong across all classes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have high expectations of pupils. Over time, pupils' outcomes at key stage 4 have been high. When they fell in 2018, leaders and governors were disappointed and recognised the need for rapid action to be taken. Leaders quickly identified the reasons outcomes had not been as high as in the past. These included the way in which some subjects were taught and how well some teachers and leaders prepared pupils for the requirements of new GCSE courses. Leaders took immediate steps to improve the progress of pupils currently in the school. This has had a positive impact on the progress pupils now in the school make. While the quality of education is no longer outstanding, leaders have ensured that the quality of education is good.
- The careers advice and guidance pupils receive are a strength of the school. A well-planned programme includes, for example, trips to other education providers, researching career options and mock interviews. Throughout all key stages, pupils receive appropriate information and opportunities which raise their aspirations and enable them to make informed choices.
- Leaders provide good support for new members of the teaching profession. Newly qualified teachers speak highly of the help and guidance they are given, including the focused training they receive and the regular conversations they have with their mentors. They are confident that they have opportunities to develop their careers in the school. Trainee teachers praise and are grateful for the support they receive. One commented on how their mentor has been with them 'every step of the way'.
- Through citizenship, personal, social and health education, pupils learn about important aspects of life in modern Britain, such as democracy, justice, freedom of speech and rights and responsibilities. Pupils spoke articulately with inspectors about this regular feature of their time in school.
- Leaders' work to secure good behaviour is effective. They develop strategies to support pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour. These are effective because they are based on individual pupils' needs. Leaders' considered approach to managing attendance has improved the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and secured the ongoing good attendance of pupils across the school.
- Leaders use additional funding to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They have strong systems in place to ensure pupils' successful transition from primary to secondary school. They work closely with parents and carers. Leaders know what pupils' strengths and needs are. They give teachers information and guidance on how to address these and monitor the impact of teachers' work with pupils. This ensures that pupils' progress is not hindered by their individual needs.
- Many of the leaders' actions have been effective. For example, they reorganised the curriculum in science and engaged external experts to work with staff and pupils. Teachers have a clear focus on the key aspects of science pupils need to know and help pupils to understand how to use what they have learned. Pupils in the school now make good progress in science.

- Leaders' understanding of the impact of some of their work is not precise. For example, leaders' analysis of Year 7 catch-up funding is inexact. They do not have a clear understanding of its impact. Some middle leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment well enough to ensure that all teachers' work is of a universally high quality. While leaders' strategies for improvement generally have a positive impact, some are not as effective as others.
- Leaders do not monitor the attendance or progress of pupils in alternative provision well. They cannot give a clear or accurate account of how effectively this small group of pupils are being educated.

Governance of the school

- Those responsible for governance have a good strategic understanding of most aspects of the school's performance. They know which subjects are performing well and which are less effective. They seek further clarification when they require it and are keen to ensure that weaknesses are addressed quickly and well. However, as with senior leaders, their understanding of some aspects of provision is less secure.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have a well-kept record of vetting and recruitment checks for adults who work in the school. They have effective systems for reporting worries about pupils which allow them to identify patterns of concern. Records are well organised and show that safeguarding matters are followed up appropriately and in a timely fashion, including with external agencies.
- Pupils feel safe. They explained to inspectors that there is someone in school they can talk to if they are worried about something. Pupils say that bullying is unusual and that, if it happens, it is dealt with well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most teachers have high expectations of pupils. They set work which is challenging and helps pupils to move on well from their starting points.
- Pupils develop and deepen the knowledge they have gained by applying it to the tasks teachers set. In mathematics, for example, pupils' work over time demonstrates how they use mathematical concepts in different ways to solve complex challenges. In science, pupils learn scientific ideas before applying them to solve problems.
- Teachers often use questions well to check, challenge and develop pupils' understanding. This allows them to revisit ideas that pupils have not grasped and to enhance pupils' understanding when it is already secure.
- The relationships between teachers and pupils are typically positive. This encourages pupils to try hard and to welcome challenge and support. Pupils usually make good use of the opportunities they have to learn.
- Some teachers are not as effective as most. They have lower expectations and do not

check or match work to what pupils know and can do. In these teachers' classes, pupils are less focused, take less care to complete their work well and make less progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' well-being is promoted well. Pupils learn about topics such as healthy eating and the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Pupils recently received talks and lessons on how to stay safe online.
- Leaders promote and ensure a culture where pupils are free to be themselves. Pupils told inspectors that it is okay to be different. They spoke of the 'LGBTQ+ club', for example, and were clear that leaders would not tolerate bullying or discrimination. Leaders' records show that all incidents of this nature are recorded and treated seriously.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. A high proportion of pupils completing Year 11 continue in education or go into employment or training.
- Pupils are confident and have the self-assurance to speak well with visitors and to contribute their ideas in front of others during lessons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils around the school behave calmly and well. There is typically good conduct between lessons and during pupils' free time.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are higher than the national average and rates of exclusion are low.
- Pupils respond quickly and well to teachers' requests. There is little disruption to learning. However, pupils occasionally become distracted. This happens in classes where teachers do not meet their needs well.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes in the past at key stage 4 have been particularly high. In 2017, for example, pupils' progress in mathematics, science and humanities was significantly above the national averages. In 2016, this was also true in English and modern foreign languages.
- In 2018, there was a rapid and sudden decline in outcomes. In English and science, pupils' progress fell to well below the national averages. In mathematics, progress was in line with other schools nationally. Leaders were quick to recognise this and rapidly began to remedy the problems underlying this decline.
- Because leaders took swift action and worked effectively to improve the way in which subjects are planned and taught, pupils in the school now typically progress well in

most areas of the curriculum. Progress is strongest in science and mathematics.

- In a small number of classes, pupils do not make as much progress as they should. This depends on which teacher they have, not on which subject they are studying.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is a strength. Leaders accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and take effective steps to ensure that improvements are made. They recognised that the impressive progress students made on vocational courses has not been reflected in academic subjects over time. They have put effective strategies in place to resolve this.
- Leaders have provided training and support for teachers in the best ways to teach academic subjects. They have introduced new ways for students to work that require students to take more responsibility for learning fundamental concepts. Where teaching has been weak, leaders have held teachers to account for making improvements. Teaching across academic and vocational courses is strong. The progress students make on academic courses is increasing and is closer to the high standards achieved on vocational courses.
- The careers advice and guidance students receive in the sixth form build well on the effective provision in key stages 3 and 4. All students in Year 12 undertake work experience. They are given the opportunity to explore the different choices they face at the end of their time in school and are well prepared for their next steps. Retention between Year 12 and Year 13 is high. All students who left Year 13 in 2018 went into education, employment or training.
- Sixth-form students are positive role models for younger pupils. They support each other, organise charity events and have mature attitudes towards school.

School details

Unique reference number	136579
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10085481

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,576
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	181
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	The Reverend Peter Hillman
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Kerridge
Telephone number	01268 794 215
Website	www.theappletonschool.org
Email address	info@theappletonschool.org
Date of previous inspection	9–10 July 2013

Information about this school

- The Appleton School is part of the Benfleet Schools Trust, having converted to become an academy on 11 March 2011. The trust delegates responsibility for establishing the curriculum policy and setting targets for pupils' achievement to the local governing body. The headteacher is appointed and managed by the trust.
- The school makes use of the following alternative education providers: Children's Support Service (CSS) Langdon Hills Centre, CSS Fairview Centre, CSS Reintegration South, Red Balloon Learner Centre, BEP Academy and Kip McGrath.

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school and serves the area of Benfleet, Essex.
- The school has a lower-than-average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than average.
- There proportion of pupils with SEND is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is greater than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders and teachers. They spoke with three representatives of the trust by telephone and met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors, sometimes accompanied by leaders, visited lessons across key stages 3, 4 and 5. They reviewed written work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school, safeguarding records, behaviour records and records relating to pupils' education at alternative education providers. They considered the school's information on pupils' progress and attendance and the views of staff, as well as reviewing minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered the 85 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with pupils in a formal meeting, as well as individually and in informal groups. Inspectors considered the issues that gave rise to two qualifying complaints received prior to the inspection.

Inspection team

Andrew Hemmings, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Pardy	Ofsted Inspector
Jenny Carpenter	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Hood	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Tooze	Ofsted Inspector
Gerard Strong	Ofsted Inspector

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