

Inspection of Appletree School

Natland, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7QS

Inspection dates: 3–5 December 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a warm, welcoming and caring place for pupils. Many pupils have already faced significant barriers to learning before they arrive at Appletree. Staff enable them to make a fresh start. Everyone wants the best for pupils and values them as individuals. Leaders and staff build relationships with pupils that are strong and positive. This helps pupils to feel secure and ready to learn.

Teachers have high expectations for all. Pupils know that their teachers expect them to listen carefully and to work hard. Teachers explain things clearly so that pupils know what they must do. This helps pupils to get on with their work. Pupils' behaviour is typically good. Well-trained staff know how to support them if any difficulties do occur.

Pupils enjoy the many trips and visits away from the school. For example, they travel to Manchester to sing in the Young Voices festival and enjoy the socialising with other young people. They take part in outdoor learning activities in the Lake District. These experiences help pupils to develop teamwork and problem-solving skills.

Pupils are safe and feel happy. They know who to talk to if they need help. Pupils say that bullying is rare at Appletree. They trust teachers and staff to deal with any bullying that does occur.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders provide a broad curriculum for pupils covering a wide range of subjects outlined in the national curriculum. Appropriate schemes of work in most subjects enable teachers to plan lessons which meet pupils' needs. Pupils build up their knowledge and skills over time.

All pupils are welcome and included in all activities. Most pupils have education, health and care plans. Leaders and teachers understand pupils' learning, behavioural and emotional needs. They use this knowledge to make adjustments to their teaching. For example, pupils who lack confidence at reading aloud in class are able to practise reading in a quiet space. This means pupils achieve well.

Pupils learn to love reading at Appletree. Pupils particularly enjoy listening to their teachers read to them. Teachers choose books that introduce pupils to new vocabulary and which excite their interest. This motivates pupils to use this new vocabulary in their writing. For example, pupils listened avidly to the poem, 'The Spider and the Fly' by Mary Howitt. They then created their own poems using similar vocabulary.

Disruptions in their earlier education mean that some pupils join the school with gaps in their phonics skills. This means that they struggle to break down and build up the order of letters to read words. Well-trained teachers use their subject knowledge in phonics to identify and support those pupils who are falling behind and

need to catch up quickly.

The curriculum in mathematics is clearly organised. Teachers make learning interesting and relevant to pupils' future lives. For example, pupils learn to carry out calculations involving money. This enables them to work out the change they should receive when shopping. Occasionally, some pupils do not remember what they have learned in earlier lessons. This is because teachers do not provide enough opportunities for these pupils to consolidate their knowledge before moving on to the next topic in mathematics.

The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is effective. Pupils learn to build healthy attachments and safe friendships. Older pupils learn about changes to their bodies associated with adolescence. These experiences contribute positively to pupils' personal development.

The curriculum in most subjects matches the ambition of the national curriculum. However, it is less well developed in music than in other subjects. Pupils sing and use their voices. However, they do not learn in sufficient depth about other aspects of music.

Strong relationships between pupils and adults have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. Teachers set clear expectations for pupils' conduct. Staff are highly skilled in using a range of strategies for supporting pupils' behaviour. These strategies help pupils to stay focused on their learning. Pupils' attendance at school is above the national average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Pupils learn to care and show concern for others through charitable works. Well-established links with a local primary school enable pupils to work and socialise with their peers. These experiences help pupils to prepare for the next stage in their education.

Pupils' learning about a range of religions is enriched by visits to places of worship, such as a Buddhist temple or a mosque. Pupils discuss topics of current interest, for example the forthcoming general election. This helps to promote their understanding of democracy, diversity and the rule of law. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Appletree Treatment Centre acts as the proprietor. A member of the board ensures that the independent school standards are met and holds school leaders properly to account for their work to improve the school.

The school building is clean and well-resourced. Pupils have access to a spacious outdoor area including a fenced area for ball games.

Leaders ensure that they follow all health and safety requirements. The school provides information on its website about policies and about admissions. The school's accessibility plan sets out how the school supports pupils with disabilities to

access the curriculum. The school does not exclude pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that pupils' safety and welfare are a priority. All staff undertake a range of safeguarding training. This helps them to be vigilant and to recognise risks to pupils' safety. Staff know how to report any concerns they may have. The checks on the suitability of new staff to work with children are thorough.

There are strong working relationships with parents and with professionals from a range of agencies, including local authorities. The ethos of the school is caring and nurturing. Pupils feel safe to express their views. They trust adults in the school to help them with any difficulties.

Pupils learn how to use the internet safely. They are clear about what to do if they see anything that worries them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum for mathematics is clearly structured so that pupils learn in a logical order. Teachers plan lessons and sequences of lessons that follow this order. However, on occasions teachers move onto the next topic too quickly. This prevents some pupils from having enough time to consolidate their learning. When this happens, pupils struggle to remember some of their learning. Leaders now need to make sure that teaching consistently provides enough opportunities for pupils to practise their new skills, before moving on, so that their learning is committed to their long-term memory.
- The curriculum in music is not as clearly organised or planned as it is in other subjects. Pupils do enjoy their regular experiences of singing together and of taking part in public performances. Pupils respond enthusiastically when given the chance to use musical instruments. However, these opportunities are too infrequent. Pupils do not learn enough about wider aspects of music such as its history through time or about the works of great composers. Leaders need to establish the curriculum in music so that it is of the same standard as that of other subjects, so that pupils are able to learn and to achieve well.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	130367
DfE registration number	909/6048
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10112064
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd
Chair	Clair Davies
Headteacher	Rob Davies
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,000 (£187,200 including therapy and boarding)
Telephone number	01539 560253
Website	www.appletreetreatmentcentre.co.uk
Email address	clair.davies@appletreetc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–9 March 2017

Information about this school

- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school caters for pupils with learning difficulties and emotional, social and mental health issues.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent

school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- During the inspection, I spoke with the headteacher, the senior teacher and members of staff. Discussions were held with staff which focused on safeguarding arrangements.
- I spoke with a member of the board, alongside the principal.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including that relating to the independent school standards, the curriculum, school development and improvement, safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- I considered eight responses to the pupil survey and 16 responses to the staff survey.
- I spoke to pupils about their work and school life, and about the books they like to read.
- The inspection focused in detail on reading, mathematics, PSHE and music. For each of these subjects, the inspector held discussions with leaders and teachers, visited lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work and talked with pupils.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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