

Inspection of Appleby Grammar School

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

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils, and students in the sixth form, enjoy school and take part in the wide range of activities that are available, including clubs and trips. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. During the inspection, all of the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that there is a trusted adult in school to whom they would talk about any concerns. Pupils and students said that this helps them to feel safe. They also said that teachers know them well and help them to learn.

The majority of pupils and students are polite and respectful towards others. They said that everyone is treated equally. They are keen to learn and know what is required from them to improve.

Most pupils and students are confident that teachers will deal with bullying if they know about it. However, a small minority do not think that anti-bullying has a high enough profile in the school community. The majority of pupils behave well. Most teachers quickly challenge the behaviour of pupils who do not meet the high expectations.

Clubs are open to all pupils and students. They told inspectors that the clubs are a welcome addition and allow them to develop new skills. Students enjoy the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and trips abroad to South Africa.

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

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the school. They have made significant improvements since the previous inspection, especially in the development of the curriculum. They have a good understanding of the areas that are less well developed.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for pupils, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This extends to the curriculum in the sixth form. Leaders have thought carefully about the order in which pupils and students need to learn knowledge and skills. Most teachers deliver the curriculum effectively. Pupils and students know and remember what they have learned. They achieve well. However, a small minority of teachers do not use assessment strategies well enough to identify errors in pupils' learning. This means that in some cases, pupils' learning does not build on what they already know.

Leaders have a detailed and structured approach to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders work well with families to make sure that they fully understand pupils' individual needs. This understanding is communicated to staff so that they are aware of any barriers to pupils' learning. This helps leaders and staff to provide appropriate support for these pupils. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well.

Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to support pupils who struggle with reading. Effective assessment strategies help to identify these pupils. The support that these pupils receive helps them to improve their confidence and ability to read and to access the wider curriculum.

All pupils have access to the full suite of English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects. Leaders think carefully about the subject choices available to pupils, within the limitations of a small school. They encourage pupils to consider EBacc subjects when appropriate.

Most pupils are very committed to their learning and use their time in lessons well. However, a very small number of pupils do not behave as well as they should. This sometimes disrupts pupils' learning. Most teachers manage this behaviour well. That said, a minority of teachers do not uphold the same high expectations for pupils' behaviour as other staff do.

The sense of community, support and care is a strength of the school. Teachers know pupils well and give them personalised support when required. Pupils benefit from a strong programme of personal development across Years 7 to 11. This ensures that pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Students in the sixth form can sign up to a diverse range of opportunities to develop their personal skills. Pupils and students also benefit from effective careers advice.

Governors are well informed about the key issues in school. They ask appropriate questions to hold leaders to account for the quality of education. Leaders support the well-being of staff across the school. For example, leaders reflect on the impact on staff's workload when changes are being considered.

One of the key challenges of the small sixth form is that some students are not able to choose the breadth of qualifications that they would prefer. However, pupils leaving Year 11 choose to attend the sixth form despite these limitations. Students informed inspectors that this is because of the tailored care and support that they receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know the community and families well. All staff know and use the systems in school to identify any signs that may indicate that a pupil could be at risk of harm. Leaders and staff work closely with external agencies to help and support pupils and their families when required.

Leaders make sure that pupils and students are taught about the risks that they may face in their local community. Pupils and students feel well supported to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A minority of teachers do not use assessment strategies well enough. This means that some pupils' misconceptions are not routinely identified and their learning does not always build on what they already know. Leaders should ensure that all teachers are provided with guidance or training to make the best use of assessment strategies.
- Although the vast majority of pupils behave well and treat each other with respect, a very small number of pupils do not behave as well as they should. A minority of teachers do not help these pupils to moderate their behaviour. At times, this causes some low-level disruption during lessons. Leaders should ensure that, where required, teachers receive training or support to help them manage pupils' behaviour more effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

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

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

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137251
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10212286
Type of school	Secondary (non-selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	377
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	48
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jane Taylor
Headteacher	Elaine Sargent
Website	www.appleby.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 to 6 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher and a new chair of trustees have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: design and technology, English, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs team, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the South Lakes federation of schools.
- The lead inspector met with trustees and governors, including the chair and vice-chair. Inspectors also considered the minutes of several governing body meetings.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding procedures, including the recruitment checks made on staff. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, staff and pupils to discuss wider aspects of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. They also considered survey responses from staff, parents and carers, and pupils on safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including that relating to the curriculum, pupils' behaviour, improvement plans and leaders' self-evaluation summary.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and staff survey.

Inspection team

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