

Inspection of Applemore College

Roman Road, Dibden Purlieu, Southampton, Hampshire SO45 4RQ

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Applemore College appreciate the fact that their teachers know them well and encourage them to do their best. Pupils enjoy their lessons as well as opportunities to learn outside of the classroom, for example by attending educational visits and workshops.

Pupils benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs on offer here. These include sports clubs such as rugby and athletics as well as opportunities linked to subjects, such as a programming club. There are lots of opportunities for pupils to develop independence and leadership skills by taking on roles and responsibilities in school.

Despite recent improvements in pupils' behaviour overall at the school, some pupils remain concerned about bullying and sexual harassment. Although they know who to speak to in school if they need support with this, they sometimes choose not to. This is because they lack confidence in some of their teachers and leaders to make sure that unkind behaviour does not continue. Most pupils say that they feel safe in school, but some feel less comfortable during lunchtimes and breaktimes in those areas with less adult supervision.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about what pupils should learn in each subject. The resulting thoughtfully sequenced lessons help most pupils to learn well. Teachers deliver the curriculum effectively. They keep a keen eye on what pupils know and can do. They use this information well to adapt activities and feedback to meet the needs of pupils, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make sure that pupils themselves know what they need to do next to improve their knowledge and understanding in each subject. Teachers return to the most important ideas to help these ideas to stick in pupils' memories. Leaders recognise that many more pupils would benefit from studying a more ambitious curriculum as represented by the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). While they have increased the numbers of pupils taking geography, there has not been similar success in languages.

Leaders have also developed comprehensive plans for what pupils will learn in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, although these are not fully embedded. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic means that some cohorts of pupils have significant gaps in their learning. In particular, some pupils need more information about healthy relationships. Although pupils learn about equalities and diversity, they do not always put this into practice in the way that they treat each other. Pupils receive some guidance about careers and next steps, although this is better developed in key stage 4. Leaders are in the process of introducing a new careers guidance programme for younger pupils.

The behaviour and attitudes of pupils at lunchtimes and breaktimes have improved following determined work from leaders. This has reduced the number of physical incidents between pupils, including fighting and rough play, which are now uncommon. However, a minority of pupils continue to use unkind, racist, homophobic or sexualised language towards each other. In some cases, this has become normalised and pupils do not recognise the negative impact that it has on others. Leaders have rightly identified that there is work to do here and are in the process of providing additional training for all staff.

Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Of these pupils, a significant proportion are disadvantaged or are pupils with SEND. Some pupils are being educated at home and are not receiving the equivalent of a full-time education. Senior leaders have put in place strategies to improve pupils' attendance and support those who find it difficult to come into school. Despite some improvements for individual pupils, these strategies are not yet having a significant enough impact overall.

Governors and senior leaders work closely together. They have a clear and shared understanding of the school's priorities. They have rightly identified those areas, such as behaviour and attendance, that need their attention. However, they have not addressed these matters with enough urgency. Although leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance and behaviour, they have not been successful in making sure that these are reinforced consistently.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place regular training so that all staff have up-to-date knowledge about safeguarding. Governors also have safeguarding training and carry out their statutory duties by checking that safeguarding arrangements in school are effective. Leaders ensure that the necessary pre-employment checks are carried out on new staff and volunteers.

Staff understand the importance of reporting all worries, even if they seem minor. Leaders act on these concerns and put in place timely support for pupils. This support includes making use of external agencies when needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils do not attend school often enough. A high proportion of these pupils are disadvantaged, vulnerable or are pupils with SEND. Leaders need to put in place plans to address this urgently so that pupils are in school more consistently and benefiting from a full-time education. Governors should check

that leaders' actions to tackle persistent non-attendance are having their intended impact.

- Leaders have not been effective enough in tackling bullying and sexual harassment. Although they have made a positive impact on some aspects of behaviour, this remains a prevalent concern for some pupils. Some pupils describe homophobic, racist and sexualised language as common. Leaders need to take more decisive action to deal with these issues and ensure that there is a more consistent response from all adults in school.
- The curriculum for many pupils is not ambitious enough. Although leaders have been successful in increasing uptake in some EBacc subjects, the number of pupils opting to study languages is too low and is not increasing significantly. Leaders should take action to ensure that more pupils continue to study languages into key stage 4.
- Leaders' plans for teaching careers and PSHE are promising but not yet fully implemented. As a result, some pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that the plans they have developed are introduced quickly and effectively so that all pupils are better equipped to face life's challenges and important decisions with confidence.

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	116504
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10226963
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	619
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Chris Lund
Headteacher	Alan Chipping
Website	www.applemore.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been a change in headteacher since the last inspection.
- The school includes a resourced provision for pupils with SEND.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause by ensuring that pupils receive impartial advice about their next steps in education.
- The school makes use of two registered and one unregistered alternative provision.
- Some pupils, including some with SEND, continue to receive remote education and home tutoring following the pandemic.

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 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.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, languages and physical education. For each deep dive inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Lessons were not available to visit during the inspection.
- Inspectors judged the effectiveness of safeguarding by scrutinising written records, meeting with leaders and talking to pupils, teachers, staff and governors about this aspect of the school's work.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils, teachers and leaders. They considered survey responses, including those submitted by parents through Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and the local authority.

Inspection team

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