

# Inspection of a good school: Applefields School

Bad Bargain Lane, Burnholme, York, North Yorkshire YO31 0LW

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Inspection dates: 12 and 13 June 2024

## Outcome

Applefields School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Applefields have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are taught within a pathway linked to their specific needs. Pupils make strong progress in all pathways.

There is a strong focus on supporting pupils to meet the targets in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. There are high expectations of what pupils can do and how much they can achieve. The school is highly successful at meeting pupils' individual needs. There is also a focus on developing pupils' independence and communication. The school ensures that a wide range of strategies are in place to help pupils to share their thoughts and feelings.

The school is a calm place. Staff interactions with pupils are tender. Pupils are well-natured and work well together. The school thinks deeply about how to help pupils to manage their feelings. Well-being is at the heart of the school's work. Staff care. As a result, pupils are happy and feel safe.

The school prepares pupils successfully for the next stages of their lives. In the sixth form, programmes such as 'we can grow' and 'we can make' help students to develop life skills. The 'coffee cart' and community café are integral to the life of the school.

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

Pupils' well-being is at the centre of the curriculum at Applefields. For example, the school provides for pupils' sensory and health needs effectively. What is more, the school has highly sophisticated processes to track pupils' behaviours. This helps staff to identify what may stop pupils from focusing in lessons. Plans are then put into place to help pupils to remain calm and continue with their learning. This is effective. Pupils in all pathways focus well in classrooms.

The school ensures that pupils' targets in their EHC plans weave through the curriculum. Teachers understand these targets and break them down into small steps so that progress can be measured over time. These targets can be linked to health, communication and readiness for adulthood, for example. When delivering the curriculum, teachers make sure that these targets are addressed in lessons. This works well. Pupils make strong progress towards their EHC targets over time. Pupils are ready for the next stages in their lives when they leave Applefields. This could be a college placement, community living or securing employment, depending on need.

The curriculums in each of the pathways are well considered. In mathematics, for example, the content that pupils learn is precise and builds over time. The smallest of steps have been identified so that teachers can help pupils to build their mathematical knowledge over time. Pupils' progress is then checked carefully and their next steps identified. In some subjects, such as personal, social and health education (PSHE), these small steps are less well defined. As a result, precise next steps for some pupils are less clearly identified.

Developing pupils' communication is a priority for the school. Pupils who need a more sensory approach enjoy sensory stories and experiences. They can make choices and express their thoughts through the use of switches and other methods of communication. Sign and symbols are used effectively in other classes. Where pupils are able to learn to read, the school has a chosen phonics programme and delivers this effectively. The books that pupils read are matched to the sounds that they have studied. Pupils who can learn to read do so well.

In the satellite classes, pupils attend some lessons with their peers in mainstream classes. At other times, they are taught with other pupils from Applefields. The curriculum that individual pupils receive matches their ability in different subjects. Pupils do well in satellite classes.

Most pupils attending 'enhanced' provision have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. The school helps these pupils to remain calm and focus on their learning. Where some pupils struggle to come to school, members of staff work with pupils on a one-to-one basis in an 'enhanced plus' provision. This is helping individual pupils to improve their attendance.

The school knows that pupils need to be as prepared for life after Applefields as they can be. Personal development runs like a rod of iron through the curriculum. There is a wide range of enrichment opportunities available to pupils such as horse riding, archaeology, orchestra and dance. In addition, skills such as cooking food and travel training are integral for students in the sixth form. Students in the 'Moving on Zone' focus on these, in particular.

Governors are highly effective in leading the school strategically. Staff say that school leaders are mindful of their workload. Parents have very positive opinions about the quality of provision at school.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, such as PSHE, the granular steps for pupils are not as precise as in other subjects. This means that, on occasion, the exact next steps for pupils are not identified when delivering the curriculum. The school should continue its work in refining these so that teachers can assess where pupils are with greater accuracy and help pupils to make even more progress.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2015.

## 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.

## Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134727
<b>Local authority</b>	York
<b>Inspection number</b>	10323015
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	217
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	23
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Adrian Fisher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Adam Booker
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.applefieldsschool.co.uk">www.applefieldsschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- All pupils at Applefields School have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils with a wide range of SEND. This includes those pupils with autism, those with severe learning disabilities, those with profound and multiple learning disabilities and those with SEMH needs. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils with SEMH needs on roll has increased.
- Some pupils attend 'satellite sites' for the majority of their time in school. Here, pupils are based in an area of the school, but some attend specific classes with other pupils from the partner schools and are able to socialise together. These sites are located in Manor Church of England Academy and Millthorpe School.
- A few pupils are on the 'enhanced plus' pathway. Here, pupils receive bespoke provision and activities in the community. This pathway is run by the school in different locations on a one-to-one tutoring basis. Pupils are on the school roll. Participation is

negotiated between York local authority and the school in order to support pupils to reintegrate into the school system or to avoid exclusion.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English and communication, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject and pathway leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and achievements, often electronically. Inspectors spoke to some pupils about their work, where this was possible.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, subject and pathway leaders, teachers and support staff. An inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors visited satellite provisions in the two partner mainstream schools. In addition, inspectors visited classes and spoke to students in the 'moving-on zone', where many of the sixth-form students are based.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils (where possible); and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. This included attendance figures, curriculum and pathway plans, school policies, plans to support individual pupils and the school development plan.
- Pupils' safety and conduct were evaluated on arrival at school, during lesson visits, at breaktimes and on arrival and departure in buses and taxis.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Michael Wardle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Christine Durand

Ofsted Inspector

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