



Applemore College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116504
LEA Hampshire LEA
Inspection number 279844
Inspection dates 12 October 2005 to 13 October 2005
Reporting inspector Alan Marsh HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Roman Road
School category	Foundation		Dibden Purlieu
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Southampton SO45 4RQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02380848804
Number on roll	814	Fax number	02380848715
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs S Barns
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2001	Headteacher	Mr M Longden

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 12 October 2005 - 13 October 2005	Inspection number 279844
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Applemore is a small mixed comprehensive technology college on Southampton Waterside, one of three secondary schools in this locality. There are 814 students, 56 of them in the sixth form. Almost all students are White British. The proportion entitled to free school meals is below average. The number of students with special educational needs is high and the college also has a support base for students who are dyslexic. Students enter the college with just below average attainment. The college has a full staff complement and a new head teacher took charge in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The college is inadequate. The college has suffered from poor leadership and management for some years. The senior management team has been too large, expensive and ineffectual. Middle managers have been given little support in their roles. The voices of students, parents, governors and the local authority have not been heard. Despite this, teachers have ensured that students have made satisfactory progress, although at Key Stage 4 many under-achieved in 2004. The college has suffered from poor leadership and management for some years. The senior management team has been too large, expensive and ineffectual. Middle managers have been given little support in their roles. The voices of students, parents, governors and the local authority have not been heard. Despite this, teachers have ensured that students have made satisfactory progress, although at Key Stage 4 many under-achieved in 2004. The college is being redeemed by a new headteacher who took charge in September 2005. He has the vision, passion and management dexterity to implement his recovery plan and bring about fundamental change. Within five weeks he has already accomplished a great deal: through a number of dynamic actions he has convinced parents and students that this is their college and they have a fundamental contribution to make to its character and success. He has also re-established productive communications with governors and the local authority. Following a swift catharsis, both staff and students are now beginning to flourish in an educational community that hears and values their voices. As one parent wrote on her questionnaire, 'for the first time I have heard parents 'boasting' that their children attend Applemore.' With such optimism about the calibre of the new headteacher, the full support of a governing body committed to change and a local authority welcomed back into professional dialogue, the college has the capacity to improve. Teachers' care and support for students are good. Students also play their part in maintaining the college as an orderly community: they behave well and there is mutual trust and respect between teachers and students. A large deficit was allowed to accrue and the college is now facing financial difficulties. It currently represents poor value for money. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this college requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it could reasonably be expected to perform. The college is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to leadership and management, including the clarity and coherence of roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team; the consistency and rigour of assessment and monitoring; the accuracy and insights afforded by self evaluation; financial stability and value for money. The school also requires significant improvement in relation to its sixth form.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 4

The sixth form is inadequate. Leadership and management, achievements and standards, student retention and the curriculum all require improvement. The sixth form provides poor value for money and is being subsidised by funding which should properly be

spent on students aged 11-16. Some students achieve well, but many do not reach the standards they should and too many fail to complete their courses.

What the school should do to improve further

- * continue to work closely with governors and the local authority in pursuit of the recovery plan
- * continue to include students, parents and other partners in the regeneration of the college as an inclusive community
- * make self evaluation an accurate and rigorous process at the heart of the improvement of teaching and learning
- * reform the sixth form curriculum to create a richer, more coherent experience for students and take steps to ensure that it is financially viable within its properly apportioned budget
- * ensure that more students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form make better and more consistent progress in relation to their capabilities, particularly higher ability girls and moderate ability boys

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The progress that students make within and between key stages is satisfactory and some lower ability students make good progress. However, standards overall are below average. By the end of Year 9 standards are close to the national average and there has been a steadily rising trend in test results at Key Stage 3. Both boys and girls make equally good progress from their starting points in English and science. By the end of Year 11 standards are below the national average and have fluctuated a lot recently. In 2004 only 35% of students achieved 5 GCSEs at grade C or above compared with 53% nationally; but in 2003 and 2005 this measure was close to the national averages. When their previous standards are taken into account it is clear that most students do achieve at least satisfactorily, including those with special educational needs. Their relative progress in 2004 was better in English literature, physical education and music, and worse in English language, art and design, modern languages and history. Recognising this, the college gave close attention to helping students do better in these subjects and in 2005 the results in English language, in particular, improved markedly. Standards in the small sixth form are unsatisfactory. A level pass rates rose to national averages in 2004 but fell to very low levels in 2005. Too many students who start their studies do not even complete them. Benefiting from close individual attention in small classes, some weaker students do make good progress from their modest starting points; but many students are accepted onto courses with little prospect of success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' moral and social developments are good, with stimulating college assemblies making a strong contribution. Discussions around the prospect of the college becoming a Church school have enhanced students' spiritual sensibilities, and multi-cultural

awareness has been fostered by visits to local workplaces. Attendance and punctuality are good. The vast majority of students behave responsibly and considerately, weighing the consequences of their actions. They say they enjoy active learning best and some of them are frustrated that they do not get enough opportunity to work in that way. All students are now being much more actively encouraged to contribute to their college community. A reassuring environment has been created within which they can express opinions with confidence. One student summed up a prevailing view when he said, 'teachers now want to know what we think of the place'. Students have a clear understanding of what is safe and healthy. Many enjoy taking part in a range of extra-curricular sporting and recreational activities. They get enthusiastically involved in their wider community. For example, many took part in the latest local community arts festival; a group run a popular Saturday internet club for older people, in association with Age Concern. They have close links with local primary schools and a neighbouring special school. Opportunities exist for students to develop their business awareness and skills, although these could be further exploited. Students are prepared well for working life through the good personal, social and health education programme.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Throughout the college some students are able to learn well because teachers effectively stimulate them and encourage active, participative and collaborative work. For example, in a science lesson students were designing a greenhouse and were constantly questioning each other about their ideas. In an outstanding lesson on music and media, students of very mixed abilities were all kept highly involved in learning at their own levels by the teacher's skilful blend of practical activities and theoretical reinforcement. In good lessons students' contributions are sought and used and their understanding is regularly checked. Better teaching uses assessment well to measure students' progress and help them improve specific aspects of their work. In less effective lessons the purpose of what is being taught is often unclear and teachers fail to consolidate what students might have learned. For example, some good feedback given incidentally to individual students through a mathematics lesson was not summarised or repeated to the class as a whole, and so some students missed an opportunity to learn. Students often work at a pace that underestimates what some of them are capable of learning. Active learning is not used as much as it could be to engage and motivate students. Assessment and marking are done regularly by all teachers, but in too many cases they are neither rigorous nor consistent enough to ensure that students make as much progress as they might.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

At Key Stages 3 and 4 students receive a broad and balanced education. Those who are likely to benefit from them are able to take some vocational courses from Year 9 onwards. There are plenty of opportunities for all to do work-related learning, including through a range of new vocational GCSEs, and these make good use of links with local employers and further education colleges. The extra-curricular provision is satisfactory, with sports and recreational activities popular. The individual needs of students are taken into consideration in a number of ways: to extend those with high potential there are master classes in some subjects; to support those with social, emotional and learning difficulties there is a new initiative which is helping to raise the self-esteem and basic skills of some students; and the college has a very effective specialist base for dyslexic students. The sixth form curriculum is inadequate. A reasonable number of AS and A level subjects are offered but a lot of students are also retaking GCSEs. Many groups are too small to ensure a rich learning experience and the combining of Years 12 and 13 students in some subjects inhibits their development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Staff are highly committed to looking after all students and so they are very well cared for. Students know to whom to go if they have a problem, for example bullying, and their concerns are listened to carefully and taken seriously. Procedures are thorough, record-keeping exemplary. Key college staff involve parents and outside agencies well in their diligent and devoted attention to the needs of their students. Those who are particularly vulnerable receive sedulous, sensitive care that is coordinated across a range of services both in and out of college. An inclusion unit is being established and a young carers programme launched, but these are very recent initiatives and have not yet had a discernible impact. Guidance and support systems are more effective in their impact on personal development than on academic progress. Teachers' use of assessment targets to motivate and guide students is inconsistent and does not always give them a clear view of how to improve. Academic guidance for prospective sixth formers has been radically revised and is now satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management, both of the whole college and of the sixth form, are inadequate. Key actions to ensure continuous improvement have been neglected and the college is now considerably worse than it was when it was last inspected in 2001. The fact that, although standards have fallen, most students continue to make satisfactory progress and develop well personally is a testimony to the energy and

skills of the teaching staff who have been badly led and poorly managed. An excessively large senior management team has been neither necessary nor affordable. The college is significantly in debt. Self-evaluation is superficial and spurious. The final report, which pre-dates the new headteacher's arrival, lacks both quantitative and qualitative measures and offers little supporting evidence for its assertions. It is of little help to the college in bringing about change since it fails to identify weaknesses and over estimates strengths. Inspectors disagreed with 12 of the 15 judgements made of its own work by the college in its self-evaluation report. In June 2005 a recovery plan presented by the outgoing headteacher was held over until the new headteacher was in place and a stop was put on all contracts unless approved by the governing body. This followed a difficult period during which the governing body failed adequately to discharge its duty to hold the college leadership team to account. The new headteacher is radically reforming the college. He has only been in post since September, but teachers, parents and most importantly students are already feeling the widespread impact of his diligent, inclusive and inspirational leadership. The governing body, led by a passionate and resilient chair, has now assumed full and proper ownership of all its legal and financial responsibilities. A recovery plan that radically restructures the college is being assiduously pursued. A range of measures to focus on weaker aspects of the college's performance is already being embraced enthusiastically by a staff body eager for change. Their desire to be strongly led is palpable. Parents and students are now being fully involved in the management of the college, and a genuinely consultative climate prevails. Partnership links with other agencies are strong. The local authority has been invited in to support the college's development in a number of significant ways and vital consultation, guidance and specific audits are already in train. The college is in the early stages of substantial regeneration, but the legacy it carries still weighs adversely.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	No
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed visiting your school a few weeks ago to inspect it. Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us so honestly. We have now written our short report and hope some of you will want to read it but this letter is addressed just to you and sums up what we think of Applemore.

Now you have a new headteacher we think the school will soon become a good one but at the moment there are some important changes that need to be made: * The school has become too isolated and so it needs to work more closely with the governors, your parents, and other organisations. * Every year the school evaluates its own strengths and weaknesses and this year it has not done that very accurately. Of course, if it doesn't know what is wrong then it can't put it right, so it is vital to get this right. * Many of you make good progress in Years 7 and 8 but do less well in Years 9, 10 and 11. The school needs to help you fulfil your potential more consistently. We're very impressed with Mr. Longden and what he has done already this term. He's met most of your parents and told them how he'd like to run Applemore. He'll tell you more about his plans himself. He wants to involve you all in helping to run your own school. He'll talk with you and listen to what you have to say. In many other ways, you are already a credit to your school. Most of you attend regularly, behave well, and you show respect to each other and to your teachers. Some of the extra activities you do are impressive. The Saturday internet club you run for older people and the recent arts festival some of you took part in are good ways of getting involved in the community around you.

You can help to make the school more successful by working harder and asking for help when you need it, and by paying extra attention to what you know you are not so good at. We believe that your teachers can help many of you do better than you have done up until now. We hope you believe that too.