



Applefields School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134727
LEA York
Inspection number 282664
Inspection dates 3 May 2006 to 3 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Bob Thompson CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Bad Bargain Lane
School category	Community special		Burnholme
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		York, North Yorkshire YO31 OLW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01904 553900
Number on roll	147	Fax number	01904 553901
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr J Porteous
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr G Gilmore

Age group 11 to 19	Inspection dates 3 May 2006 - 3 May 2006	Inspection number 282664
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Applefields School opened in September 2004 on two sites following a reorganisation of the City of York's special school provision. In September 2005 the sites merged onto the present site. The vast majority of pupils are white British and all have a statement of special educational need. All enter the school with very low levels of attainment. The majority are from the City of York but the school also supports pupils from North Yorkshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire. Currently there are four looked-after pupils. Just less than one third of learners are eligible for free school meals. The main provision is for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and severe learning difficulties (SLD), but there is a large minority of pupils, almost one third, with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) or with complex autism.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an effective school which is developing well. Learners make good progress in communication, the development of social skills and independent living, so that by the time they leave school they are well equipped to cope with the next step in their education and life. Teaching is sound with some good and even outstanding teaching seen during the inspection. Learners enjoy school and the celebration of their success. The quality of care is good and families are well supported. The partnership between the school and its providers and outside agencies ensures that pupils are fully included in beneficial educational and developmental programmes. However, not all managers are fully involved in the process of classroom observations to evaluate the impact of initiatives. Information collected is beginning to be used effectively to evaluate pupils' progress.

The school recognises that it is significantly oversubscribed and the management and governors are working together with the local authority to improve accommodation.

Achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory, and it is good in post-16. Pupils are provided with a well balanced, relevant range of academic and developmental activities and well cared for in a safe and reassuring environment. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning and their enthusiasm for success are good. This is made possible by the overall sound leadership and management of the school, particularly well led and managed by the headteacher during a difficult period of consolidation. There is a dedicated group of skilled staff who share their expertise and experience. Resources are effectively and efficiently managed to secure sound value for money. The capacity to improve further is satisfactory, given that the school has been established on this site for only eight months, the commitment of staff, the high quality work completed in a short period of time, and how well the school understands what it needs to do.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision in the sixth form is good. Sixth formers make good progress in developing their basic skills. Their gains in work related skills such as decision- making and effective teamwork equip them well as they leave the safety of the school and enter the adult world of work and further education. The sixth form is well led and managed. A rich curriculum, good teaching and care builds up their confidence and self-esteem as they successfully develop essential life skills. They learn to shop on their own and cook a healthy meal. They are given space to learn in a safe and secure environment and the quality of care they receive is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve all managers in the process of classroom evaluation so that they can measure the impact of initiatives and improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Use information gained in evaluating pupils' progress more effectively to support personalised learning.

- Continue to work to improve accommodation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school places great emphasis on giving personal support to pupils. From well below average levels of attainment on entry to the school, pupils and students make satisfactory progress overall with some individuals making good progress. The targets set for pupils and students in their individual education plans (IEPs) and recorded in their progress files are appropriate and challenging. Since opening in 2004 the school has built up a database of pupils' progress through 'P Levels', a system of recording pupils' progress in small steps. Higher attaining pupils study for units leading to entry level awards. In addition, the school has introduced Performance Indicators Value Added Target Setting (PIVATS) to further assess pupils' achievement in more detailed small steps. As pupils move through the school, they develop well in the use of key skills such as communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). As learners develop in confidence because of the high quality support they receive, their social skills, including their behaviour, improve. Gains in independence are noticeable. Pupils in the two discrete classes for those on the autistic spectrum make good progress. Several pupils are receiving support from the York Independent Travel Scheme and are managing to travel to and from school independently by walking or public transport. Post-16 students achieve well by participating in extended curriculum activities such as link courses, work experience and preparation for work courses.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils is good and some elements are outstanding. This is a central focus of the school's work and has a very positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They enjoy coming to school and overall their attendance is satisfactory. The majority of authorised absences are due to unavoidable medical reasons. Pupils behave extremely well and any challenging behaviour which occurs because of their difficulties is managed particularly well, and disruption is minimal. Despite the recent merging of several schools onto one site, there are now strong bonds of friendship between pupils. An outstanding and deeply spiritual example of this was seen in the school choir where pupils exulted in the joy of singing and performing together. Almost all pupils have a very positive attitude to their work and leisure activities. Post-16 students are successful in their work experience and these opportunities have sometimes led to subsequent employment. Pupils are taught what to do if they are in vulnerable situations and how to make sensible and realistic lifestyle choices. They have a clear understanding of being healthy and the school council is promoting access to water bottles for all pupils. Pupils have many opportunities to help in the local and wider community; for example,

through fundraising for Water Aid and becoming an eco-friendly school. Notices to turn off lights and recycle are displayed around the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching overall is satisfactory with some good and outstanding lessons seen during the inspection. Staff know the needs of every learner and plan to ensure that they are met in lessons. Excellent relationships between teachers and learners promote learning. A range of 'hands on' experiences contribute significantly to learners' progress. Because teachers make good use of signing, symbols and speech, they successfully promote learners' communication skills. Teaching focuses on the development of learners' social and independent skills alongside the development of their communication, numeracy and ICT skills. Teaching equips learners to cope with confidence in the world outside school. Life skills are well developed. Assessment of learners' progress against targets on their personalised programmes, and use of PIVATS, is monitored regularly in lessons and is developing to inform planning and raise achievement. However, this is not yet applied consistently across all subjects. The school considers that the teaching meets the needs of the increasingly diverse and complex needs of learners. Inspection evidence agrees with this evaluation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The range and relevance of subjects offered fully meet statutory requirements. The primary drive of the curriculum is quite rightly to meet pupils' individual needs of communication, literacy and numeracy and to address their social skills and increase self-esteem and confidence as they progress through the National Curriculum. A rigorous personal, social, health and citizenship programme develops pupils' personal and health development well. The school is well supported by outside agencies such as medical and therapeutic staff. Extra-curricular lunchtime clubs such as creative and performing arts, cornet lessons and sports activities supported by the school sports coordinator enhance the curriculum. Post-16 students are fully involved in a wide range of extended curricular opportunities including link courses with a mainstream further education college, preparation for work, work experience and community work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is good, ensuring pupils work in a positive and secure environment. Staff work hard to build trusting

relationships with pupils and, in turn, pupils indicate that they are comfortable to turn to adults if they need help. Staff know pupils very well and are aware of their changing physical and emotional needs. Health and safety procedures are in place and regularly reviewed; for example, the manual handling team works closely with the physiotherapists to provide up to date manual handling risk assessments. All requirements for child protection procedures are in place and understood by staff. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that 'teachers stop things really quickly before it gets too far', if there is any anti-social behaviour. Staff have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing and what they need to do next. This information is regularly shared with parents, one of whom said 'together we are able to get our child through his difficulties and provide him with a more stable platform for future learning'. The school has made and maintained productive links with a wide range of professionals to support pupils' particular needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

In the short time this school has been established, inspection evidence shows that the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and that its self-evaluation is generally accurate. The senior management team has an enthusiastic and solid base for future development. The leadership team, with governors, is responsive to local needs and national developments. These are worked through with awareness of, and sensitivity to, the local context of the school. The principles of Every Child Matters are reflected in the priorities of the school and in its school improvement plan. The headteacher provides good leadership and has managed the amalgamation exceptionally well. He is concerned to secure improvements through rigorous planning, monitoring and evaluation, and setting challenging targets for all pupils and staff. The headteacher clearly delegates responsibilities to staff, but not all managers are involved enough in the process of evaluation at classroom level. Relevant data is being collected, but the school is not yet in a position to use this effectively to evaluate pupils' progress.

The school is heavily oversubscribed and the management and governors are working hard with the local authority to resolve aspects of accommodation.

Governance complies fully with statutory requirements. Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support to senior managers. The contribution of the large number of non-teaching staff is recognised and valued at all levels. Considering the school has only been fully functional on this site since September 2005, it is developing well. Because of effective leadership and management, achievement is rising from a very low base. Based on this, the whole school shows every sign of being able to build well on the current quality of teaching and learning, and is in a good position to make further improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

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

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?	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

As you know we recently visited you to find out how well your teachers are helping you with your learning.

Thank you for being so friendly and willing to talk to us. It was useful to know what you think about your school. We did enjoy chatting to you and particularly our visit to your choir.

There are some things that we think are really good about your school. These are:

- the enthusiasm that you and your teachers show in wanting to do well
- the progress you make in your work
- how well your headteacher and teachers know you so that they can plan exciting activities and lessons that will challenge you to improve even more
- your parents are happy with the school and all it does for you
- your behaviour is excellent and you are learning to be safe and have healthy lifestyles.

What we have asked your school to do now

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to improve a few things to make your school even better. These are:

- involve all the senior teachers in the evaluation of your work in class
- be clearer about how it measures the progress you make
- work with the local authority to improve accommodation.