



# Applemore College

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 116504  
**Local Authority** Hampshire  
**Inspection number** 294576  
**Inspection dates** 1–2 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Lynn Bappa

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Roman Road
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Dibden Purlieu
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Southampton SO45 4RQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	02380848804
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	661	<b>Fax number</b>	02380848715
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sylvia Barns
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Matthew Longden
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 October 2005		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–16	1–2 November 2006	294576

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Applemore is a small mixed comprehensive technology college on Southampton Waterside. Almost all students are White British. The proportion entitled to free school meals is below average. About one third of students have learning difficulties and disabilities and the college has a support base for students who are dyslexic. The college received a Notice to Improve in October 2005. The sixth form is due to be closed in July 2007. There are no sixth form students on roll.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Applemore College is a good school which has improved significantly since the new headteacher was appointed in September 2005. Major weaknesses have been eradicated and the college is now on a far firmer footing and well placed to continue to improve. It is now well regarded by its students and their parents, with just cause. When describing what makes the college special, one student said, 'it is a really good community now'. A parent described the headteacher as a 'breath of fresh air, with the vision, determination and willingness to lead the school into the 21st century.'

The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. He has a real heart for his work, and his clearly articulated vision is widely shared by adults and students alike. A real strength of the college is the high quality of teamwork and commitment which ensures that everyone plays an integral part in moving it forward. As one senior member of staff said, 'we are all on the same bus now'. In the year since he was appointed, the headteacher has put strategies into place to raise standards, reduce the large deficit budget, improve teaching and the curriculum and establish good communications with parents. He has been successful in all of these things.

The college has done a good job in improving standards. National test results for 14 year olds in 2005 were broadly average and they rose further this year. Standards at the end of Year 11 were below average in 2005 but improved significantly in 2006 and are broadly average. Most students achieve well and make good progress in their time in the college. Senior leaders make very good use of data to identify groups of students who may be at risk of under-achieving. In 2005, the college identified higher attaining girls and average attaining boys as two groups who were making relatively slower progress than other learners. The more able girls are now making good progress but more remains to be done to ensure that boys of moderate ability achieve as well as other students. Teaching has improved and is now good. Students enjoy their lessons and want to work hard. There are limited opportunities for them, however, to learn independently and take responsibility for their own learning, especially as they get older. Where students are offered these responsibilities, they respond very positively.

The college's emphasis on personal development encourages the students to be responsible and caring citizens. They have a good sense of right and wrong. They know that their ideas are taken seriously. Although there is a very strong commitment towards making every student feel valued and fully included in every aspect of school life, the rate of fixed-term exclusions is too high. The college has begun to tackle this issue with some success but knows that it needs to do more to ensure that students who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are given the support they need to stay in school. There is a shared commitment at all levels within the college community to provide an interesting and relevant curriculum for all learners. Students are well cared for, and feel safe and happy in college.

The college's specialist status in technology has added an extra dimension to students' education. It has enabled the school to enrich its curriculum, extend its community provision and develop links with feeder primary schools.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the achievement of average attaining boys so that they make the same good progress as other groups of students.
- Support students to become more independent and responsible for their own learning.
- Reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2005 were close to the national average and there has been a steadily rising trend in test results at Key Stage 3. Standards have risen again this year. Although standards were below national expectations for GCSE A\*-C passes in 2005, there was a significant improvement in Year 11 examination results in 2006. The standards obtained by this year group were similar to the national average for 2005. The proportion of students gaining A\*-G grades is above the national average and few students leave the college without any qualification.

Taken overall, students achieve well although average attaining boys, currently make only satisfactory progress. Those who are vulnerable or who have learning difficulties make good progress because they are supported well. The college is on track to meet next year's challenging targets for Year 9 students in the national tests and for Year 11 in the GCSE examinations.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The students' personal development and well being are good. Most attend school regularly, enjoy lessons and other activities and make good progress in their personal and social skills. Students testify to the clear boundaries that are now set for them and were quick to say that behaviour is generally good. The new Inclusion Unit is beginning to provide effective support for the small minority of students with challenging behaviour, but there are still too many fixed-term exclusions. Students have positive attitudes to learning. In some lessons, however, they are too dependent on the teacher and would benefit from being given more opportunities to do things for themselves.

Students say that they feel safe in school and know that there are adults who they can turn to if they have a problem. The college council provides students with an effective voice and has been good at making changes in the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students willingly take on responsibilities around the college and work very hard to support others through events such as charity

fund-raising. As a result, they make a significant contribution to the college and wider community. They enjoy assemblies and reflect well on matters of right and wrong.

Students enjoy playing sport and are keen to be involved in local clubs and competitions with other schools. They report that they appreciate the improved healthy lunches, despite the cramped dining accommodation. They are well prepared for further study or the world of work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The drive to improve teaching and learning, and thereby raise standards of achievement, is at the heart of what the school is trying to do. Teachers know their subjects well and form good relationships with their students, helping them to gain in confidence and achieve well. The majority of lessons are well planned to match the needs of students. The level of challenge is good for most groups of students, but not consistently so for average boys. When students are given the opportunities to become active learners they react very positively. This was seen in an outstanding information and communication technology (ICT) lesson where students evaluated how websites are used to promote leisure facilities such as Thorpe Park. In this lesson, all groups of students, including average boys, made good progress with their learning because they found the tasks interesting and challenging and had to find things out for themselves. There are still too many lessons, however, where teachers direct students' learning rather than giving them opportunities to develop their own problem-solving skills.

The quality of assessment is good. On a day to day basis, students receive good feedback on their work and they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The college has a good curriculum that provides a broad range of subjects and activities well matched to the needs and interests of all its students. Senior leaders have reviewed the curriculum over the past year and introduced many successful initiatives. Students appreciate the opportunities, for example, to study subjects such as textiles. The curriculum offers students good opportunities to make choices and decisions with confidence and flexibility. In Years 10 and 11, it is flexible and offers a growing choice of vocational and academic subjects. The formal curriculum is enriched well through a good variety of clubs and out-of-school learning which greatly benefit students. The large deficit budget, however, means that the college can only afford a limited number of visits and trips for students.

The Dyslexia Support Base and the new Inclusion Unit provide good support for a small but diverse group of students with learning or behavioural difficulties or who are vulnerable in other ways.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care is good. It contributes well to students' enjoyment of school life. Vulnerable students are highly valued and sensitively supported. There are very good links with outside specialists and agencies. Students feel safe. Arrangements for safeguarding them are good and up-to-date. Senior leaders have improved procedures for supporting students who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour, but the number of fixed-term exclusions is still too high.

School leaders make very good use of data to track the progress of students in different year groups and subjects. Learners receive clear guidance that enables them to make informed choices about their future education and employment. Recent initiatives, such as the delivery of specialist French and physical education lessons in neighbouring primary schools have started to build up good community links and this helps new students settle quickly into Year 7.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good and have improved significantly since the last inspection when they were judged to be inadequate. The headteacher sets very high expectations and is an inspirational leader who is very well supported by a dedicated and talented leadership team. They maintain a high profile presence in the college's daily life and parents, students and staff appreciate their open and communicative style.

Senior leaders have developed good procedures for monitoring the school's work. The drive to improve standards is fully supported by subject leaders and other middle managers but not all are yet fully effective in improving teaching and learning in their areas. The school has begun to provide training to help them to become more involved.

Self evaluation, judged at the time of the last inspection to be inadequate, is now accurate, honest and based on a very good knowledge and understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. There has been good improvement on the issues raised in the last inspection. The governance of the college has improved significantly since the last inspection. The governing body is now well organised and governors take an active role in planning improvement for the college and ensuring its success in the future. Financial management has improved and is now good. The college has made an extremely good start in reducing its large deficit budget.

Parents are very pleased with the work of the college. As one parent commented, 'the school has gone from strength to strength'.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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

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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much to all of you who spoke to us and answered our questions during the recent inspection of your school. We very much appreciate the help that you gave us. Now that we have finished the inspection I am writing to tell you of our findings. We have decided that your school no longer requires a 'notice to improve' because it has improved so much over the last year. We think that the college now provides you with a good education. Your headteacher is an excellent leader who wants the very best for all of you and he is well supported by the senior leadership team and by other staff. You also told us that you think he is doing a good job at improving your school. You are taught well and most of you are making good progress. Your teachers also take good care of you. You told us you feel safe and secure while in school. You get on well with each other and behave well. You told us that teachers listen to you now and take your views seriously.

Although your school is good it could become even better and so we have identified three areas for improvement. Some of the boys who are getting satisfactory results could do even better. We have asked your teachers to help them to speed up their progress. Some teachers do not give you enough opportunities to work independently. You can help by always taking responsibility for doing homework promptly. The college is reducing the large number of fixed-term exclusions but needs to do more to help those who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour so that they stay in school.

You have a very committed group of staff who are seeking to improve your college even further. We wish you well and look forward to hearing good things about you all in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Lynn Bappa

Lead Inspector