

Inspection of Applemore College

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

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and staff value the recent changes at the school. Pupils appreciate the improvements made to the life skills programme. This helps them to explore other cultures, beliefs and differences. The school's values of believe, respect and determination are actively embedded in the fabric of the school.

Pupils thoughtfully reflect on equality and diversity as well as issues such as animal welfare and climate change. They can recall lessons about relationships and consent. Pupils are active and respectful citizens who have a wide range of leadership opportunities. This includes prefects, ambassadors, librarians and sports leaders.

Disadvantaged pupils, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are encouraged to aim high. They are well supported through an extensive extra-curricular offer as well as a comprehensive careers programme.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and commitment. This has resulted in improvements in behaviour and attendance. Relationships between staff and pupils are supportive and compassionate. Pupils are happy and safe. They say that inappropriate language is extremely rare, and any instances are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils say they have a trusted adult to go to if they have any concerns.

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

In most subjects, the curriculum is carefully planned and sequenced to ensure that content is broad, balanced and ambitious. The number of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate is markedly below the government's national ambition. The school has taken effective action to ensure that more pupils choose to study a foreign language. Triple science and further mathematics are adding challenge for the most able. The school appreciates that further work is needed to fully embed the curriculum and improve examination outcomes, especially for disadvantaged pupils.

A sense of purpose permeates the school. Whole-staff training is resulting in greater consistency in practice. Initiatives such as 'wisdom Wednesdays' allow staff to share ideas and best practice. External support is appreciated and valued. Teachers' strong subject knowledge is a key strength, and non-specialists receive support to develop their expertise.

The school works diligently to raise pupils' literacy levels and foster a love for reading. Literacy initiatives, including World Book Day, the literary festival and library ambassadors, are having a positive impact, especially for disadvantaged and older pupils. Staff training on behaviour management has resulted in high expectations. The sharp focus on improving pupils' behaviours is paying dividends. Staff and pupils clearly understand the school's new behaviour policy. This has led to calmer classroom environments with minimal confrontation. Suspensions have significantly decreased, although the school recognises the need to analyse patterns of misbehaviour and suspensions further.

More pupils are attending school on a regular basis. The school looks closely at pupils' barriers to attendance and works productively with families. As a result, attendance has improved. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils has also improved because of the school's work with pupils and their families. The school is working hard to reduce the number of persistent non-attenders but acknowledges that further work is required.

The life skills programme is a strength of the school. It is suitably focused on pupils' safety, health and well-being. Pupils are taught the value of respect and encouraged to engage with the school and local community. Pupils find out about apprenticeships, employers and further education. The careers programme supports them to prepare for their next stage of education or training. Pupils are fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, school improvement planning is not as sharp as it could be. Some school priorities and actions do not give leaders specific guidance. This limits leaders' ability to evaluate the impact of their actions and hampers governors' abilities to challenge and support the school. Ongoing training is helping them improve in this area.

Staff surveys indicate that leaders are considerate of workload and well-being. Staff feel that leaders are approachable and happy to listen. Staff say that they are proud to work at the school and are committed to helping all pupils reach their potential.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not adapt teaching sufficiently well to meet the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these pupils are not achieving well enough. The school should ensure that all staff have the knowledge they need to successfully adapt the curriculum to meet these pupils' needs so they achieve well.
- Too many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not attend school as often as they should. Consequently, pupils miss important learning and do not achieve as well as they could. The school should continue to review and develop strategies to engage these pupils so that their attendance improves.
- Leaders do not consistently use data to evaluate the effect of the steps they are taking to improve the school. As a result, they cannot pinpoint which actions are having the required impact and where their approach needs to change. The school needs to systematically analyse the impact of their actions in order to ensure they have the intended outcomes.

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

Unique reference number	116504
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10341464
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	524
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Chris Lund
Headteacher	Clare Williams
Website	www.applemore.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 July 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Pupils attend alternative provision at two registered education providers and three unregistered education providers.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 14 pupils with specific learning difficulties.
- Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the school leadership team, including the appointment of a new headteacher from September 2023.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders and visited a sample of lessons. They talked to teachers, spoke with pupils and looked at samples of their work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff, pupils and parents. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding which puts pupils’ interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed the policies provided on the school website. They looked at attendance records, behaviour logs, curriculum documentation and destination statistics. Inspectors met with leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met representatives of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority. He also had a telephone call with a representative of one of the alternative placement schools.
- Inspectors looked at the responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and additional written comments received from parents and carers. They considered the survey returns completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Simmonds	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Cullum	Ofsted Inspector

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