

Appleton Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135865
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	381940
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Bowles HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	883
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Wightman
Headteacher	Dwayne Saxton
Date of previous school inspection	2 March 2011
School address	Wilson Road Wyke Bradford BD12 9PX
Telephone number	01274 414380
Fax number	01274 414384
Email address	admin@appletonacademy.co.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Bowles	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ariane Roberts	Additional inspector
Michael Wardle	Additional inspector
Kathleen McArthur	Additional inspector
John Dunne	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days notice. Inspectors took account of responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning for the inspection. They observed 40 teachers teaching 41 lessons. They also saw some additional activities, such as tutor time and assembly. Meetings were held with five groups of learners, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and a range of academy staff. Inspectors observed the academy's work in the primary and secondary phase, and looked at a number of documents, including the development plan, records of monitoring and reviews, safeguarding and equality policies and logs of incidents. They also analysed the responses to 141 questionnaires received from parents and carers and others completed by staff and learners.

Information about the school

Appleton Academy opened in September 2009. It is smaller than the average secondary school but growing in size. A new building for the 3 to 19 age range is under construction, but at present the academy operates in two distinct phases, occupying the separate sites of the predecessor primary and secondary schools. The secondary phase has a sixth form which opened in 2010 and the primary phase has a nursery. The academy is sponsored by Bradford College and has a specialism in science and sport. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-above average. Most learners are of White British heritage. A fifth are from a range of minority ethnic groups, which is broadly average. Around five per cent of learners speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and those with disabilities is average. The academy meets the current floor standard set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
 Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	3
Achievement of children	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of children	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory academy. In its first two years, it has demonstrated steady improvement. Most parents and carers and the large majority of learners who gave their views are positive about the academy's work and the effect of improvements on teaching and behaviour.
- Results in GCSE and other examinations have risen and achievement is broadly as expected, but weaker progress in English and mathematics needs to improve. The new sixth form is satisfactory. Learners make securely satisfactory progress in the primary phase, where improvements need to be consolidated. Support for learners with special educational needs and those with disabilities is effective and as a result they make satisfactory progress.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, and more securely so in the primary phase. A minority of teaching in different subjects lacks the combination of challenge, pace and clarity needed for good progress over time.
- Older students have a choice of courses which takes good account of their different interests and aptitudes. However, opportunities are missed to develop the range of skills they need to perform well. In the primary phase, interesting topics involve and excite all learners and give them good opportunities to develop and apply their skills.
- Most learners behave well, but behaviour is better in the primary phase than the secondary. One reason for this is that younger learners have more good opportunities to work together. When given the right opportunities, all ages and groups mix well and help each other, because of the academy's emphasis on mutual respect. Older students' attitudes to learning vary with the quality of teaching. Any inappropriate behaviour is managed effectively and much less time is lost to learning than previously. Most learners say they feel safe and the parents or carers who responded overwhelmingly agree. Attendance has improved and is now average.
- Resolute leadership and the determination of staff to improve the quality of provision have made a positive difference to attendance, behaviour and achievement. However, some teaching is not effective enough to ensure good progress over time. This is being remedied but greater urgency is required.

- Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement to equal national expectations by:
 - increasing the proportion of students who make the expected three levels of progress between Years 7 and 11
 - sustaining improvements in the proportion of pupils who make the expected two levels of progress in mathematics between Years 3 and 6.
- Improve learners' engagement and the development of their skills by ensuring more high quality opportunities, across the curriculum, to think independently and communicate purposefully.
- Increase the proportion of teaching which leads to good or better progress through:
 - more extensive and rigorous monitoring of learning and learners' work against clear and high expectations of what they can achieve
 - drawing on the good practice which exists in the academy to provide more effective support for teaching where it is less than good.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory overall. In the large majority of lessons seen, learners were clearly committed to learning and making good progress. The progress learners make over time is improving in each key stage.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are overall slightly below those typically found at their age, particularly in personal and social development and in language and communication. Good provision ensures children make good progress as parents and carers overwhelmingly agree. By the end of their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage, most reach the levels expected for their age.

In the primary phase, pupils enjoy their learning and show keen enthusiasm. All groups progress at a similar rate to all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, and this reflects the opinions expressed by parents and carers. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 is securely average and rising. The proportion of pupils who can read at the expected level is broadly in line with the national average, and the proportion who can read at a higher level has notably improved. Attainment in writing and mathematics shows similar small variations. In Key Stage 2, the pupils have made slightly better progress in English and less consistently better progress in mathematics since the academy opened. More pupils have reached the levels expected in both English and mathematics. Attainment, including that in

reading, is average at the end of Key Stage 2. The current Year 6 is on course to meet their targets. Pupils' books show increasing confidence in writing. Year 6 pupils in particular write at length, using interesting vocabulary. Such quality is not found consistently in other classes and handwriting and presentation need to improve.

Achievement has steadily improved in the secondary phase and is now satisfactory overall. A smaller proportion of parents and carers of secondary-age students responded to the questionnaire, but most were satisfied with their child's progress. Attainment by the end of the secondary phase is rising and was broadly average on most indicators in 2011. More students in all groups now gain the qualifications which enable them to progress further in their chosen direction, including into the academy's own sixth form. The progress students make is now broadly in line with other maintained schools' overall and is maintaining improvement. However, in some key subjects including English and mathematics, progress has been below the national expectation. Progress varies between subjects and teachers, rather than for any particular group. Last year, for example, students with special educational needs and those with disabilities made the expected rate of progress overall, but relatively less in mathematics. Students with higher prior attainment progressed as expected, but less well in science. Sloppy presentation and basic errors in writing are too common. This patchiness in achievement reflects inconsistency in teaching. It is being rectified, although there is further to go. The current Year 11 has taken GCSE in English and mathematics early and demonstrated better progress at this mid-point of the year than the previous cohort had made by the end of the year. Although it is too soon to say that the academy will equal national expectations for progress in the current year, it is narrowing the gap.

It is too early to judge achievement in the sixth form clearly. Students' starting points are often lower than typical and students spoken to had made positive progress due to careful individual support. They and their parents or carers raised no concerns. The learning that was observed was satisfactory. Many of the first small cohort of students are taking two-year BTEC level 3 courses. The results achieved by the small numbers who took AS examinations in 2011 did not differ significantly from the national picture.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It varies considerably, with much that is good and a little which is inadequate. A slightly higher proportion of good teaching was observed in the primary phase. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with some strengths more evident in the primary phase. This reflects the views expressed by users. Many more parents or carers who have children in the primary (rather than the secondary) phase responded to the questionnaire. Most felt their children had been well taught. Learners' responses represented the whole age range. They were mainly positive, but a minority had some reservations.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, high quality care provides a welcoming, secure environment where children feel safe and happy and are consequently ready and eager to learn. Good teaching ensures children meet an exciting range of activities in all areas of learning. Consequently, they are curious and keen to explore their rich curriculum, whether planting flowers, growing vegetables from seed or acting out the

story of 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'. They particularly enjoy working outside, where the range of activities on offer, such as painting or building, mirrors those they find indoors. Activities are a carefully planned balance of those led by adults and those the children choose for themselves. Very occasionally, activities do not have a clear purpose. Staff track and assess progress and use their analysis to target support for both learning and personal development. As a result, all groups of children are fully included in activities.

Particular strengths of teaching in the primary phase were good systems for improving younger pupils' reading and communication skills and an effective emphasis on applying skills in all subjects. Relationships between learners and with adults were often very strong. Intense, purposeful talk in pairs and groups fostered curiosity, imagination and enjoyment of working out problems together. As a result, the curriculum and teaching in this phase had a striking effect on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In the good lessons seen across the primary and secondary phases, expectations were high. Teachers planned captivating tasks which motivated learners and matched them carefully to different needs so that all were challenged well. Teachers' concise explanations and probing questioning deepened understanding well. Weaknesses observed included teaching that was pitched at the middle level of the class so that not all learners were sufficiently challenged; and a slow pace, resulting from too much ineffectual talk by the teacher and rather less independent work by learners. Learning in these lessons was limited by too many closed questions and little substantial discussion between learners. There was little effective development of reading, writing and communication skills. Teachers did not check understanding well as the lesson progressed and marking was not effective. A minority of learners who responded to the questionnaire said that they sometimes did not know how well they were doing or understand how to do better, and feedback needs to be more consistent.

Behaviour and safety of children

Students in the secondary phase say very firmly that behaviour has improved considerably over time. Although a few of them and their parents or carers expressed concerns about incidents of poor behaviour which have disrupted learning, the weight of evidence shows that these are now fairly rare, because of the academy's increasingly effective strategies. Support and incentives to encourage better behaviour have shown a positive impact on boys, and are now being targeted on girls. The main obstacle to good learning in the secondary phase is now more often passivity rather than low level disruption. Pupils in the primary phase are more often positively enthusiastic about learning than they are in the secondary phase. Students know how to keep themselves safe because of effective teaching. For example, many Year 7 students have upgraded their 'Facebook' privacy settings because they were shown how easy it was for them to be unwittingly observed. Bullying is very rare and effectively dealt with: learners say none is based on prejudice about race or sexual orientation. Learners mix well across the age range and different social and ethnic groups, reflecting the respect they are shown by adults and influenced by consistent messages about tolerance and care. Attendance has improved significantly recently across all groups. Having been low, it is now broadly average, and shows particularly solid gains among younger age groups when compared with the academy's first term.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers in both phases have established a clear drive for improvement which has helped improve provision in several areas. Robust self-evaluation, suitable challenge from the governing body and a track record of improving outcomes for all learners demonstrate that there is a satisfactory capacity to improve. The narrowed differences in the performance of groups demonstrate the effective commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. However, there are inconsistencies in teaching and progress, particularly in the secondary phase. More concerted action is needed to ensure that all teachers and students fulfil high expectations for what they can achieve. Monitoring of teaching gives a fairly accurate picture of its quality, although action to improve it where it is not good has had variable effect. Particularly in the primary phase, rigorous evaluation has contributed well to improvement. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, leaders and managers have established a united and committed staff team who work well together to meet the unique needs of each child. In the secondary phase, performance management and professional development have given teachers a clearer understanding of higher expectations and teaching quality shows some improvement. However, strategies to improve performance where needed are inconsistently systematic and effective. Middle leaders are only now getting to grips with their responsibilities for promoting high professional standards among all staff and learners through rigorous monitoring and effective coaching.

With the governing body, leaders and managers maintain a steady focus on realising the academy's ambitious vision for all the community's young people. They make unflinching use of national benchmarks to set targets and test the academy's performance. There is a clear sense of direction for developing the satisfactory curriculum to eradicate the legacy of underachievement. Partnerships are helping: work with the sponsoring college has improved the balance and relevance of the curriculum for older students, with vocational as well as academic courses including in the specialist subjects. This has helped to boost the achievement and enjoyment of all groups of students. The primary curriculum is well matched to learners' needs and interests: those who need to improve their reading skills have well-coordinated support and themes and topics are used imaginatively to ensure pupils have many meaningful opportunities to use and develop reading, writing and communication skills. In the secondary phase, middle leaders are at an earlier stage in working together to improve these basic skills. The development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is satisfactory. There were good examples across the age range of teaching which promoted social skills, understanding of what is right and wrong, and respect for beliefs and values, but these were less widely seen in the secondary phase. The academy runs smoothly and arrangements for managing safeguarding meet current requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 January 2012

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Appleton Academy, Bradford – BD12 9PX

Thank you for your help in the recent inspection of the academy. This judged that the academy provides a satisfactory quality of education and is improving. Some key points were:

- attainment is rising at the end of the primary phase and is now securely in line with the national average. It is also rising in the secondary phase and is now broadly average overall
- learners make satisfactory progress from their different starting points, but more need to make the expected progress, particularly in mathematics
- teaching is varied. Much is good. Some needs to engage learners better and do more to develop their thinking and communicating skills
- your responses to the questionnaire showed most of you enjoy the academy and are satisfied with most aspects of its work. You made clear that there have been real improvements in behaviour and safety and all the evidence confirmed that these are satisfactory. Attendance has risen, and you are keen to earn your Vivos
- academy leaders know what is going well and what needs to improve. They need to help teaching improve further, by checking more rigorously that every teacher and learner is achieving all they should.

Most of you are doing your best to make the academy a success. This is an exciting year with the opening of the new, all-age building to look forward to. Your part is to become more independent learners who make the most of every opportunity and can be proud of your work. I wish you well.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector

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