

Appleby Grammar School

Address: Battlebarrow, Appleby-in-Westmorland, Cumbria, CA16 6XU

Unique reference number (URN): 137251

Inspection report: 12 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Over time, pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 11 have been close to national averages. The school's small size meant that the performance of a minority of pupils had a disproportionate effect on published examination results in 2025. However, most pupils attained well across a wide range of subjects. This includes for disadvantaged pupils, who typically achieve as well as comparable pupils elsewhere in the country.

Current pupils achieve well overall. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, remember what they have been taught and apply it to new learning.

On the whole, pupils develop the literacy and numeracy knowledge they need to access the curriculum. Some pupils who find reading, writing and mathematics more challenging benefit from the school's programme to help them catch up. By the time they reach key stage 4, most do.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their lives. For example, in 2025 all pupils who left the school moved on to appropriate further education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed robust systems to keep careful track of attendance. The strategies they employ have been effective in raising pupils' attendance rates. These are typically close to the national average for all pupils and for those facing disadvantage. Persistent absence has also reduced. Leaders are aware of the further work that is needed to help a minority of pupils to attend school more often.

The school's new values and rewards system supports pupils' improved behaviour. This system is well understood by pupils and valued by staff. Mutually respectful relationships are evident in how pupils interact with their peers and adults. There is a calm learning environment around the school and learning is rarely disturbed. Pupils usually display positive attitudes to their learning and this is reflected in their engagement in lessons. Pupils enjoy socialising together during breaktimes, playing sport and other activities such as chess with their friends.

Pupils consistently show respect for difference and diversity. Any derogatory language is not tolerated. Pupils know how to report bullying and are confident it would be dealt with. They speak positively about how quickly staff respond to concerns.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the curriculum and the quality of teaching. Pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Subject curriculums are typically well designed so that pupils can build their knowledge in a logical way. All

pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), access the same ambitious curriculum.

Leaders have prioritised professional learning for staff. This has helped to ensure that the curriculum is generally taught well. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. They use questioning well to deepen pupils' understanding. Staff generally adapt activities effectively to meet pupils' needs, including for those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. This supports pupils in securing their understanding and applying their learning.

In the main, teachers use checks on learning effectively to find out what pupils know and understand. Teachers explicitly teach subject-specific vocabulary. Misconceptions are usually identified and addressed quickly. However, this practice is not fully consistent across the school. On occasions this limits the achievement of some pupils.

Leaders identify pupils in each year group who have not yet secured the necessary skills in numeracy and literacy. Leaders keep track of how well these pupils are supported. On the whole, the support they receive equips them to access the rest of the curriculum.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders hold high expectations for all pupils, including those who face barriers to their learning. Leaders have established effective working relationships with a number of local primary schools. This has strengthened and supported the smooth transition for pupils into Year 7.

Pupils' additional needs are quickly and accurately identified. Leaders have a clear approach to addressing the barriers these pupils face. Staff receive high quality training and support. They are kept up to date when pupils' needs change over time.

Leaders closely monitor how well pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are learning. The help that these pupils receive is regularly updated. Teachers typically make appropriate adaptations to meet pupils' needs in lessons. This supports pupils in accessing the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Overall, pupils with SEND and those facing other difficulties achieve well.

Leaders work with families and other agencies such as the local authority to improve the opportunities and experiences of pupils who are disadvantaged. A suitable pupil premium strategy sets out positive steps to help these pupils to succeed. Leaders regularly review its impact. They know that it is making a positive difference to the attendance and academic achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Alternative provision is used sparingly and appropriately for the very small number of pupils who require it.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, together with governors, share an ambitious and unwavering commitment to every pupil in this close-knit school. They act in the best interests of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. New leaders have

wasted no time in taking decisive action to raise standards. The impact of this work is already visible. Improvements in pupils' behaviour, attendance and achievement demonstrate the positive difference that leaders and staff are making. Leaders and governors have a sharp awareness of the school's key priorities. They are outward facing in their approach and actively engage with external support. This is helping them to further strengthen the school's provision for all pupils.

Governors are passionately committed to the ethos of the school and its place within the heart of the community. They bring a wealth of skills and experience to their role. They challenge and support leaders in equal measure. Staff welcome the variety of professional learning opportunities that are available to them. For example, joint training days with other schools in the federation have supported staff's professional development. Leaders' quality assurance processes are helping to refine this further.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders are conscious of their wellbeing and actively support them with managing their workload.

Parents and carers are particularly positive about the support and care that their children receive. Leaders understand the importance of the role the school plays within the wider community.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The personal development programme is thoughtfully designed and makes a meaningful contribution to pupils' character. Pupils are confident and well-informed about how to stay safe online. They know how to reach a trusted adult should they need support. Pupils benefit from highly effective pastoral support. Pupils typically demonstrate a secure understanding of fundamental British values. Many pupils speak with confidence about equality, tolerance and respect for differences between people. Pupils have a detailed understanding of world religions. They are given opportunities to explore their own spirituality through assemblies.

Beyond the classroom, leaders and staff nurture pupils' interests and talents through clubs, including arts, chess and gardening. Dramatic productions give pupils the chance to shine. Competitive sports build pupils' confidence, resilience and teamwork. Leaders carefully track pupils' participation to ensure that everyone benefits from these activities, which are open to all. An inclusive sports club ensures that pupils who may have previously had limited access to sport and fitness can now represent their school.

Pupils benefit from an impressive range of memorable trips that bring learning to life. For example, a trip to an open-air museum enhanced pupils' understanding of democracy. Leaders have developed useful links with the local community. Pupils take their part in contributing to local shows and competitions in aid of charities.

Pupils in every year group benefit from careers advice and guidance. This helps to ensure that they are well informed and prepared for their next steps. Work experience helps pupils to explore their aspirations for the world of work. Careers fairs, employer visits and engagement with higher education institutions give pupils rich opportunities to discover the

pathways available to them and the skills they need to succeed. All pupils and students successfully move onto appropriate destinations.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the sixth form. This is underpinned by a suitable programme of study that is regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the needs and aspirations of students. Students study a broad range of academic subjects. Subject curriculums are typically well designed. Students benefit from increasingly effective teaching. Teachers generally use well-chosen strategies to support all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the main, students build secure skills and knowledge across the curriculum. They are able to articulate and recall their learning with confidence. Students' attainment and progress on A-level courses are in line with national averages.

Students have many opportunities to prepare for life beyond school. They learn about essential life skills, such as budgeting, healthy relationships and consent. Students take an active part in their wider community, including volunteering in a local primary school and at an animal rescue centre. They enjoy taking on leadership roles, such as listening to younger pupils read. This enables them to develop a sense of responsibility.

Students benefit from a range of careers advice and guidance that prepares them well for their next steps. This includes work experience that is tailored towards students' aspirations. Students speak positively about visits to universities and careers fairs with local employers and apprenticeship providers. These help to raise their ambitions. In 2025, all students in the sixth form successfully progressed to appropriate destinations.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils live out the school's values of kindness, respect and community. Pupils and students feel a strong sense of belonging in this relatively small community school. They feel this helps them to build close working relationships with their teachers and receive personalised support which they value.

Pupils feel safe, happy and genuinely listened to by adults in school. Pupils are confident in raising concerns and believe that staff will address any issues promptly. Bullying is rare and when it does occur, it is dealt with effectively. Sixth-form students serve as positive role models for pupils in the main school.

Pupils receive encouragement and guidance from staff. This helps to remove any barriers to learning and or wellbeing that they may have. Pupils attend regularly and enjoy learning. They have positive relationships with each other and with their teachers. They listen carefully and work hard. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils typically achieve well.

Pupils are typically polite, welcoming and well-mannered. They get on well with each other. Pupils generally behave well in classrooms and during unstructured time. This creates a

calm, orderly and purposeful environment where all pupils can flourish. The use of inappropriate or derogatory language is not common. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of each other.

A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities are available to pupils. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award alongside many sporting activities. Pupils benefit from trips to local museums and art galleries as well as visiting cities overseas. They take pride in contributing to the creative show which demonstrates their learning in art and design and food technology. Pupils are encouraged to join in with a variety of clubs. Numerous leadership roles allow pupils to take an active part in school life. These are open to all. Together, these experiences help pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils leave well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should build on their work to ensure that teachers make use of assessment information to revisit any gaps in learning so that over time pupils remember what they have been taught more securely.
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About this inspection

This school is a single-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The headteacher also acts as the chief executive officer of the trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jenny Bell.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. The lead inspector met with trustees and governors, including the chair. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the South Lakes federation of schools. An inspector spoke with representatives of the alternative providers that the school uses. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils, staff and Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 2 unregistered alternative providers.

The headteacher was appointed in September 2024.

Lead inspector:

Ahmed Marikar, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Emma Jackson, Ofsted Inspector

John Cowper, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 12 May 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

360

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

750

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

21.54%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.94%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

18.06%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	29.5%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	49.2%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	32.1%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	40.7	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	45.5	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	40.8	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.01	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.15	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	25.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	22.2%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	36.3	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	40.1	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	37.4	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-1.07	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.28	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	25.0%	53.1%	-28.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	33.3%	53.1%	-19.8 pp
2022/23 (final)	22.2%	52.4%	-30.2 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	36.3	50.4	-14.1
2023/24 (final)	40.1	50.0	-9.9
2022/23 (final)	37.4	50.3	-12.9

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-1.07	0.16	-1.24
2022/23 (final)	-0.28	0.17	-0.45

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	91%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	97%	93%	Not available
2021 leavers (revised)	90%	94%	Not available

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	32.10	35.00	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	25.17	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	21.11	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	-0.1	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.2	0.0	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	8.2%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.5%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	9.4%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	23.9%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	31.5%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	28.8%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional 

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard ●

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard ●

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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