

Inspection of Ampleforth College

Ampleforth, York, North Yorkshire YO62 4ER

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at Ampleforth College. The school has made some considerable improvements of late, successfully addressing previous shortcomings with determination and vigour. Christian values underpin the promotion of equality, tolerance and respect. The school's 'Benedictine' principles are woven through all aspects of school life. Pupils are happy, courteous and resilient, and they try to be the best that they can be. They strive to reach the high expectations that leaders and staff set for them, academically and personally. Leaders expect pupils to behave well and they do. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that the arrangements for safeguarding are effective which, in turn, contributes to pupils feeling safe. Pupils, including those who have special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND), work hard and achieve well.

There is a strong sense of community at Ampleforth College. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the education and care that their children receive. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the excellent opportunities for character development through the Christian Living programme of personal, social, health and economic education. They relish participating in community work such as reading to pupils in a local primary school or visiting a residential care home.

Students in the sixth form feel privileged to hold leadership roles such as bullying ambassadors, food ambassadors, head boy and girl and house councillors. They are strong role models for the pupils in other year groups across the school.

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

Leaders, including governors, and staff all share the head teacher's vision of providing excellent pastoral care to pupils, alongside a strong, open culture of safeguarding. All adults are vigilant in their roles and responsibilities to realise that vision. Following the last standard inspection, leaders and staff have transformed the previously identified weaknesses into strengths. Leaders ensure that they have regular communication with the staff at Ampleforth Abbey. They have put secure systems in place to separate the school grounds from the abbey site. Staff adhere to stringent processes to ensure that all adults on the school site have undergone the necessary safety checks.

The curriculum is ambitious from Year 7 to Year 13. It is carefully designed, well sequenced and builds on pupils' prior learning across each year group. Pupils regularly revise and revisit what they have learned in all curriculum subjects. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, in part because leaders invest in high-quality training and professional development.

Leaders recently reviewed some aspects of the key stage 3 curriculum to build more precisely on pupils' different starting points or prior knowledge. For example, Year 7 and 8 pupils have changed from studying Latin to learning about the Classics. Leaders identified that this should support pupils as a foundation for later learning in

key stage 4. The reading offer has also been reviewed for pupils in the early stages of reading or for those who speak English as an additional language. Leaders made adaptations carefully, with all staff clear on how to implement these changes. The school is tracking and monitoring these refinements. However, these changes are not established fully and it is too early to assess how much knowledge pupils are acquiring. More time is needed to be able to measure the impact of these changes on pupils' learning.

Teachers are consistent in the way that they assess how well pupils with SEND are learning. They use this to refine what pupils will learn next. The school ensures that well-trained staff provide specific and effective support to enable pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum as their peers. For example, pupils who have dyslexia access high-quality decodable reading books with age-appropriate content. This enables pupils to read with confidence in classrooms alongside their peers.

Leaders liaise well with professionals from external agencies to provide effective and timely support for pupils who may be vulnerable. All staff ensure appropriate supervision of pupils. They know the pupils well and are tenacious in following up on the smallest of concerns. Pupils who feel unwell or have injuries receive expert medical care at the school's on-site infirmary. It is staffed by qualified professionals who ensure that pupils have appropriate and timely treatment.

An independent learning, thinking and coping approach provides motivation for sixth-form students. They select from a wide choice of academic subjects such as politics, economics and ancient history. They can opt for vocational courses such as a BTEC National Diploma in countryside management. Students participate in the debating society and linguistic Olympiads. They are prepared well for their transition into higher education or employment. Students receive impartial guidance on careers through a programme of visitors or work-related experiences. Pupils are aspirational, and they benefit from careers advice from Year 7 onwards.

Recent refinements to the reading programme promote increased reading for pleasure. Those pupils in the early stages of reading receive specific and effective support in the school's learning hub and in lessons. Developing pupils' vocabulary is a high priority. The library inspires reading enthusiasts with a wide range of high-quality novels. Research materials and reference books support pupils in every curriculum subject.

The Christian Living programme is at the heart of the curriculum. Cultural experiences, equality and diversity are woven through every aspect of the exceptional personal development programme. Pupils have a strong understanding of different faiths and cultures. They participate in a vehicle restoration project to develop mechanical and engineering skills. Pupils receive a plethora of high-quality sporting and musical tuition. Extra-curricular clubs include calligraphy, astronomy, poetry and psychology as well as academic subjects. Pupils develop leadership skills through organising fundraising events.

Staff are adept at supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language when they arrive in school. Leaders develop a specific learning programme in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Pupils soon become confident and proficient in English to achieve academically and participate in wider aspects of school life.

Governors are determined in their commitment to provide strong governance. They take their safeguarding responsibility very seriously. Governors assure themselves that all recruitment safety checks are carried out with vigilance when appointing new staff or volunteers. They assure themselves that any concern is recorded and reported with rigour and urgency. As the proprietor body, they ensure that the independent school standards are met. They ensure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. They commission a skills audit to identify training needs and skills needed when appointing governors. Staff morale is high because staff feel valued by senior leaders who are mindful of staff well-being and workload. The culture of high aspirations for all staff and pupils is palpable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

In key stage 3, some improvements to ensure curriculum content is precisely matched to pupils' needs and abilities are in the early stages of development. Teachers have not had sufficient time to assess how well these changes have improved pupils' learning or how to use this information to adjust what learning pupils require next. Leaders should continue to support teachers to assess how well the curriculum adaptations and refinements are securely and consistently meeting the needs of all pupils.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	121735
DfE registration number	815/6006
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10267706
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	399
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	190
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	St Laurence Education Trust
Chair	Edward Sparrow
Headteacher	Peter Roberts
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,120
Telephone number	01439 766000
Website	www.ampleforth.org.uk/college
Email address	head@ampleforth.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November to 3 December 2021

Information about this school

- Ampleforth College is a Roman Catholic co-educational boarding and day school. It is situated within the grounds of the Benedictine Ampleforth Abbey. The main school building adjoins the abbey. Since the progress monitoring inspection in October 2022, leaders have ensured that the grounds of the college are separated from the grounds of the abbey by a boundary wall and fence.
- Ampleforth College is part of the St Laurence Education Trust.
- The head teacher was appointed in January 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.
- At the previous aligned standard inspection on 30 November to 3 December 2021, Ampleforth College was judged to be inadequate with ineffective safeguarding and some independent school standards were not met.
- At an aligned progress monitoring inspection in October 2022, safeguarding was judged to be effective and the previously unmet independent school standards were met.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- This inspection was an aligned inspection. This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the boarding provision.
- Inspectors met with the head teacher, deputy and assistant head teachers, other senior leaders, curriculum subject leaders, the school's special educational needs coordinator, the leader for English as an additional language, the head of sixth form, early career teachers and their mentors, and a number of staff, including some staff who are new to teaching.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central register; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, music, politics and economics. Inspectors visited lessons with leaders, talked to pupils about their work, viewed pupils' work and spoke to teachers and pastoral staff. The lead inspector met with the leader responsible for reading to discuss how reading is promoted in the school.
- Inspectors spoke to several groups of pupils and sixth-form students, formally and informally, including some single-gender groups, to understand their experience at Ampleforth College.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and suspensions and the number of pupils who have joined or left the school roll.
- The lead inspector met with governors online and in person, including the chair of governors and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, curriculum leaders, the school's special educational needs coordinator and a number of staff, including some staff who are new to teaching and their mentors.
- The lead inspector toured the school premises with the estates manager, health and safety manager and a senior leader to check compliance with the independent school premises standards. This included a visit to the on-site infirmary which supports pupils when they are injured or feeling unwell.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through Ofsted surveys, as well as additional communication from parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Alison Aitchison, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Vellensworth	His Majesty's Inspector
Richard Jones	His Majesty's Inspector

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