

April 2025

As we come to the end of the Spring half term with the sunshine and daffodils in full bloom, it is hard to imagine the first week of January which saw heavy snow and ice closing the school for a week. The start of Spring has also come at a time of success for the school as we celebrate the unique community of children, young people, families and staff that make Appleton such a wonderful school.

Bradford Education Awards

On Thursday 3 April 2025, we attended the Bradford Education Awards following our nomination and shortlisting for Bradford Secondary School of the Year. It was a lovely surprise to be nominated and, as we do not receive information telling us who nominated the school, if you are the person who did so, we would like to thank you very much, we appreciate the recognition. I am pleased to report that, although we were nominated alongside some historically incredibly successful schools, Appleton Academy won the award, and we are proud to announce we are the Bradford Secondary School of the Year 2025! This is a tremendous achievement and a testament to the community we have become over the last 15 years and all of us can be proud of our contribution – students, staff, parents, our governors and colleagues at Exceed Academies Trust.

Artsmark Gold Award

The good news does not end there! We have also recently completed the process to gain the Artsmark Award, which is an assessment and recognition of the provision of creative arts within schools. Following our assessment, Appleton has achieved the gold standard based on criteria being met across both primary and secondary. The report from the awarding body recognises the following:

'Appleton Academy has successfully embedded the arts within its curriculum, leadership structure, and aspects of wider community engagement, ensuring that creativity is now a core driver of pupil learning, aspiration, and wellbeing.'

'Appleton Academy has positioned itself as a high-achieving, arts-rich school, ensuring that creative forms of education are integrated, celebrated, and valued across all key stages.'

We will continue to develop the creative arts and the awarding body have suggested the school should be *'exploring opportunities to mentor other schools, lead regional CPD sessions, or contribute to national discussions on arts education which would solidify its position as an influencer.'*

Solar Installation Project

Over the remaining months of the school year, we will see the completion of our solar installation project, which involves installing solar panels on the curved roof of the building. Over the past two years, we have been actively reviewing the building's sustainability, driven by both efficiency goals and a moral commitment to contribute to the transition towards a 'net zero' future. As we have all seen in our homes, energy costs continue to rise and this project will reduce energy bills for the school, promote sustainability, and educate students about renewable energy.

Installing solar panels demonstrates a commitment to reducing the school's carbon footprint and supports global climate efforts. Moreover, the financial benefits are substantial. The Academy can save on rising energy costs, reduce operational expenses, and allocate funds more efficiently. Savings can enhance educational programmes and improve facilities and other green initiatives, which will benefit the entire community.

After a lengthy project planning phase, we are in the process of agreeing a start date for this work with the contractor, but you should see the scaffolding begin to go up around the building at the start of the summer term. The installation will take place during the summer term with little disruption to the safe operation of the school. Ensuring the safeguarding and wellbeing of students remains our priority during this work and it has been planned in such a way that students will not come into contact with materials used for the work, or those carrying it out. This is a big project and will be exciting to watch over the next term and we will then be hoping for a lovely summer to allow the panels to begin generating energy.

Attendance and Summer Term 2025

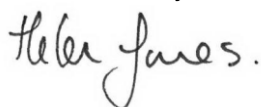
Thank you to all of you who have responded positively to our additional drive to improve school attendance. Although still not as good as it should be, attendance is improving and is in a stronger place than it has been for some time and we look forward to seeing this continue to improve.

Re-opening after Easter

A reminder that, due to a late Easter this year, the school re-opens to all students straight after the Easter Bank Holiday Monday, which will be on Tuesday 22 April 2025. We will have a small team of staff on site during the break, who you can contact should you need to. However, please be patient as there will be fewer people present than would normally be the case.

It only remains for me to wish you all a very enjoyable and relaxing Easter break and thank you once again for your continued support.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Jones".

Ms H Jones
Executive Headteacher