

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **THE APPLETON SCHOOL**

South Benfleet

LEA area: 881 Essex

Unique reference number: 115334

Headteacher: Mr. G.A. Naylor

Reporting inspector: Brian Oppenheim  
2686

Dates of inspection: 25-28 September 2000

Inspection number: 223818

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Croft Road Benfleet Essex SS7 5RN
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. G. Child
Date of previous inspection:	15/01/96

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Brian Oppenheim	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Fran Luke	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development (attendance)
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Andrew Marfleet	Team inspector	English	
Marguerite Presman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Graham Clements	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Val Girling	Team inspector	Art	How well does the school care for its pupils (academic monitoring)?
		Equal opportunities	
Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Paul Grey	Team inspector	Geography	
		History	
Geoff Strack	Team inspector	Information technology	
Charles Whitham	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Janet Dyson	Team inspector	Music	
Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
Ronald Cohen	Team inspector	Religious education	
Penny Holden	Team inspector	Special educational needs	How the school is led and managed
		English as an additional language	

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The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7-12</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>13-15</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>16-18</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>18-20</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>20-22</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>22-23</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>23-24</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>26-30</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>31-52</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Appleton School is a secondary school for 1141 girls and boys aged between 11 and 16 and is larger than average. The school is between Southend-on-Sea and Basildon in the Borough of Castle Point from where it draws about three quarters of its pupils. It also draws increasing numbers of pupils from the Basildon area. Just over nine per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals which is about half the national rate. Very few pupils have English as an additional language: they are nearly all fluent in English and the school does not receive extra money to support their language learning. Pupils come mainly from white English backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special learning needs is broadly average but the number who have specially identified needs is below average. When pupils start at the school their attainment is slightly below average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The Appleton School is an effective school that has made significant improvements since the last inspection: much more of the teaching is good and as a result standards have continued to climb and, despite a setback in 1997, are now average. The thoughtful leadership of the headteacher and senior staff mean that there is a strong commitment to improving teaching and pupils' learning further. The average amount of money spent on pupils and the average standards show that the school gives its pupils, and their parents, satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Teaching is good. It is at least satisfactory in 92 per cent of lessons and good or very good in 67 per cent: this is why pupils make good progress in their learning.
- Standards in art, design and technology, business studies and physical education are high.
- There is a strong commitment to raising pupils' achievements by using assessment and target setting thoroughly.
- Pupils' personal development is good and after-school clubs and activities extend their experiences effectively.
- Sensitive and thoughtful leadership and efficient management mean that the school has the right priorities for improvement.
- The school is civilised, safe and secure and puts pupils and learning first.
- The recent development of vocational courses is helping to cater for a wider range of pupils.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in mathematics, French and history, and the achievements of some boys.
- The small pockets of unsatisfactory teaching particularly in modern languages and history.
- The regular use of literacy and numeracy in subjects.
- The way the school develops pupils' spiritual awareness and their understanding of other cultures.
- Meeting the legal requirements for religious education and a daily act of collective worship.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made considerable improvements since the last inspection in January 1996. The proportion of pupils getting the highest grades has risen from 38 per cent in 1996 to 50 per cent in 1999 and the results for 2000 have increased to 52 per cent. The school has been very successful in tackling teaching, which was highlighted by the previous inspection as a big area for improvement. The school has a much more rigorous system for monitoring teaching and learning and identifying strengths and weaknesses. It has also developed a good system for assessing pupils' learning and for setting targets for their achievement. Together these two improvements have had a strong impact on making teaching and learning significantly better than at the last inspection. This is the main reason why standards at GCSE are continuing to rise. Improvements have been made to information and communication technology but the school still has some way to go to ensure that all pupils gain fully from new computers. The school has also done much to improve the accommodation so that nearly every subject area has its classrooms grouped together. The legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship and religious education are still to be met in full. The effective way the school is led, the efficient management and the strong commitment to continuing to raise the quality of teaching and learning mean that the school has the capacity and ability to improve still further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in:	Compared with				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C	well above average A average above average B average C below average D well below average E

The Appleton School achieves broadly average standards in its tests and examinations. In the GCSE examinations taken in 1999, when pupils left the school at the age of 16, results were average and as good as those for similar schools. Results were strongest in art, design and technology, and physical education where pupils' achievements were particularly high. Standards were also high in English literature and German. In science results were broadly average overall. Results were weakest in information technology and geography and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics and history. English language, drama and French results were just below average. The results for 2000, although not yet officially confirmed, have increased by two percentage points and show an improving picture. However, boys' GCSE grades dropped and girls' grades improved. The biggest differences between boys' and girls' achievements are in English and French. The inspection confirms that boys underachieve in French but that in English the gap is narrowing. This is because:

- in modern languages shortages of staff mean that some lessons have been taken by temporary teachers;
- in English, there is a new team of teachers this year which is tackling boys' underachievement well;
- boys are more demanding of their teachers and less likely to forgive poor teaching which they show by not concentrating on their work.



Over the last four or five years standards have remained average: a downturn in 1997 explains why grades have been getting better but at a slightly slower pace than they have nationally. The school is making good progress in meeting its targets: GCSE performance in 2000 was slightly higher than predicted.

The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9, in English, mathematics and science were average but below those for similar schools. The reason for this difference is that fewer pupils reached the higher levels in the tests than in similar schools. These standards have broadly kept pace with the national picture over the past four years but dropped in English in 1999. Provisional results for 2000 show that standards in mathematics and science have risen: in English they are still to be confirmed. Pupils' achievements and attainment when they start at the school are a little below average and some of the information the school collects suggests these have fallen over the past three years or so. Nevertheless, good teaching makes a strong impact on pupils' learning: this is why standards are average by the end of Year 9.

When the 1999 GCSE results are compared with the National Curriculum test results taken by the same pupils in 1997 the school is performing very well: this indicates that pupils make good progress in their learning between the ages of 14 and 16. The evidence from the inspection backs this up: good teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and standards are continuing to improve. Pupils of all abilities achieve appropriately, including those with special needs or particular talents. In design and technology, business studies, art and physical education standards in lessons are high and pupils make good progress. In media studies pupils make good progress. Standards in lessons in English, mathematics, science and information technology show a clear improvement because of effective teaching and are broadly average. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are sufficient but not developed in all subjects. In French, geography and history standards remain below average.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils often show enjoyment and enthusiasm for their work, and in most lessons, settle down quickly and work with interest.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: the vast majority of pupils are pleasant, welcoming and courteous but a few, often boys, can be disruptive.
Personal development and relationships	Good: pupils work, study and play together well, and the vast majority are prepared to listen and show respect for the views of others.
Attendance	Satisfactory: in line with the national average.

Nearly all pupils observe the school's code of behaviour and respond effectively to rewards. The challenging behaviour of a few pupils inevitably leads to their temporary exclusion from the school. As a result the number of fixed term exclusions during the last school year was slightly above average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teaching at The Appleton School is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection but there remains a small pocket that is less than satisfactory. Right across the school, from Year 7 to Year 11, including English, mathematics and science, teaching is effective in the vast majority of lessons: this is why pupils make good progress in lessons and learn well. Ninety-two per cent of lessons were at least satisfactory, 54 per cent good and 13 per cent very good or excellent. The work the school has done to improve the quality of teaching and learning has paid off: good teaching is now leading to good learning which in turn is helping to improve standards. Despite the strong improvement, teaching in eight per cent of lessons is still unsatisfactory particularly in modern languages and history.

The chief characteristics that make teaching at Appleton good are:

- the way teachers use their detailed knowledge of their subjects to make work interesting;
- the detailed way teachers plan their lessons so that pupils know what is to be learnt and what is expected of them;
- the successful way teachers use different teaching methods to break the lesson into easily digested parts: this means that most lessons move at brisk pace and pupils have little time to get bored;
- the effective way most teachers manage pupils: this means that pupils behave well and are ready to learn.

The main weaknesses that contribute to the unsatisfactory teaching are:

- a few teachers lack subject expertise and knowledge and find it difficult to motivate and enthuse pupils;
- these same teachers do not have a firm grasp of the different teaching methods they can use to keep pupils working and the pace of learning is too slow.

Work on literacy has been done with the whole staff, but at present has not had enough impact on literacy standards in subjects. Pupils have opportunities to use their numeracy skills but these are not always sufficient: as a result they do not have enough impact on pupils' achievements in number work.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: the school provides a curriculum which supports the needs of pupils well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory: pupils identified as having special educational needs have access to the full curriculum.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory: there are very few pupils learning to speak English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils' moral and social development, and personal, social and health education are good: cultural development is satisfactory and provision for spiritual development remains unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: the school makes good arrangements for the support, guidance and welfare of all its pupils.

Legal requirements for information and communication technology are not met in full: this is because some pupils do not study the subject in Years 10 and 11. Similarly, the legal obligation to teach religious education in Years 10 and 11 is only partly met because too little time is given to the course. There is a small range of vocational subjects which give pupils some different choices at 14: these are effective in helping the school meet the needs of all pupils.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The thoughtful approach to leadership ensures that teaching and learning is the school's main focus. The headteacher, the governing body and the senior managers have led the school well and improved the experience for the pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body gives the school good support and knows the school well: it keeps the school under review through monitoring exam performance carefully.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: the school makes regular and detailed analysis of how well it is working and what needs to be improved. There have been important improvements in teaching and standards since the last inspection: these are its most important priorities.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses all the funding available well to pursue its educational priorities.

The school and the governing body take good care to obtain best value in their spending, for example they have successfully taken over the running of the school cleaning staff, improving cleanliness and saving money.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children like school.</li><li>• The teaching is good and their children make good progress.</li><li>• The school helps pupils to mature.</li><li>• Support for special needs.</li><li>• The school gives a good all round education.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Behaviour is not always good.</li><li>• Pupils do not get the right amount of work to do at home.</li><li>• The school does not work closely enough with parents.</li></ul>

The inspection supports the generally positive views of parents. The inspection found that there are good links between the school and parents and that the information provided for parents is good. It also found that the vast majority of pupils are pleasant, welcoming and courteous but that a few, usually boys, disturb others. Homework is not always set in line with the school's timetable.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

##### **How high are standards?**

1. The Appleton School achieves broadly average standards in its tests and examinations. In the GCSE examinations taken in 1999, when pupils left the school at the age of 16, results were in step with the average achieved in all schools in England. The results for 2000, although not yet officially confirmed, have increased by two percentage points and look like also being similar to all other schools. Over the last four or five years standards have remained average: a downturn in 1997 explains why grades have been getting better but at a slightly slower pace than they have nationally. The school is making good progress in meeting its targets: GCSE performance in 2000 was slightly higher than predicted.

2. The GCSE results for 1999 were strongest in art, design and technology, and physical education where pupils' achievements were well above average for the top A\* - C grades. There were also strengths in English literature and German: here standards were above the average for England. In science, results were broadly average overall. Results were weakest in information technology and geography and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics and history. English language, drama and French results were just below average.

3. When the 1999 GCSE results are compared with similar schools – that is schools with a similar proportion of pupils who qualify for free school meals – performance is also average. In other words, the school does as well as most other similar schools in England. However, if the GCSE grades are compared with the National Curriculum test results taken by the same pupils in 1997, the school is performing very well: this indicates that pupils make good progress in their learning between the ages of 14 and 16. The evidence from the inspection backs this up: good teaching overall is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.

4. The 2000 GCSE results show a broadly improving picture for the top grades A\* - C: some subjects such as information and communications technology, music, drama and physical education have improved while others, including English, French and history have dropped. Results in design and technology are still to be confirmed but remain relatively strong. Science, mathematics and geography results are broadly similar to the previous year. There have been no religious education results for the past four years. One of the significant characteristics of these latest GCSE results is that compared with 1999, boys' grades have dropped and girls' grades have improved. It is the improvement in the girls' results that has boosted the school's overall performance but it has also had another effect: the gap between boys' and girls' results has become very large with girls achieving 23 percentage points above boys. Interestingly, it is English and French where this gap between boys and girls is most noticeable. The inspection confirms that boys underachieve in French but that in English this is starting to be halted. This is because:

- in modern languages shortages of staff mean that some lessons have been taken by temporary teachers;
- in English, there is a new team of teachers this year which is tackling boys' underachievement well;
- boys are more demanding of their teachers and less likely to accept poor teaching which they show by not concentrating on their work.

5. The school is aware of the drop in boys' results and believes that special circumstances last year contributed to this underperformance. Its monitoring of pupils' progress suggests that boys' results will improve in 2001: evidence from the inspection broadly supports this view.

6. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, in English, mathematics and science, were average but below those for similar schools. The reason for this difference is that fewer pupils reached the higher levels in the tests than in similar schools. These standards have broadly kept pace with the national picture over the past four years but dropped in English in 1999. Provisional results for 2000 show that standards in mathematics and science have risen: in English they are still to be confirmed. Pupils' achievements and attainment when they start at the school are a little below average and some of the information the school collects suggests these have fallen over the past three years or so. Nevertheless, good teaching makes a strong impact on pupils' learning: this is why standards are average by the end of Year 9.

7. The work seen in lessons confirms the picture provided by the test and examination results and indicates that standards are continuing to improve. Pupils of all abilities achieve appropriately, including those with special needs or particular talents. In some subjects there is a close similarity between achievements in lessons and examination results: those subjects that performed well in GCSE also have high standards in lessons. For example, in design and technology, business studies, art and physical education standards in lessons are high and pupils make good progress. In media studies pupils make good progress during Years 10 and 11. Standards in lessons in English, mathematics and science show a clear improvement. The decline in English has been halted and in mathematics standards of numeracy are improving. In science, there are some clear indications that Year 10 and 11 pupils are attaining above average standards. In modern languages, French standards remain below average, as do those in history and geography. These mostly good achievements are mainly due to the impact that the good teaching has on pupils' learning and the progress they make in lessons. Indeed, the work the school has done on improving the quality of teaching and learning has paid off: good teaching is now leading to good learning which in turn is helping to improve standards. The difference between boys' and girls' achievements remains in a few subjects. This is because a small number of boys lack motivation or enthusiasm: this slows the pace of their learning.

8. A literacy policy is beginning to be implemented in the school, led by the English department. Work on literacy has been done with the whole staff but at present has not had enough impact on literacy standards across the school. Pupils have opportunities to use their numeracy skills but these are not always sufficient: as a result they do not have enough impact on pupils' achievements in number work. For example, in science pupils are careful and accurate when measuring length, time, weight and volume but because their graphical skills are not developed enough they do not evaluate their experiments as accurately as they could.

9. Pupils who get extra support for their learning make sound progress in their work. Support teachers and assistants support them in lessons and this contributes effectively to their progress. The adults supporting pupils in class know their needs well and ensure that the work is matched to these needs.

#### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. The school's whole-school behaviour policy, which has been revised since the last inspection, sets out a highly structured and well defined approach to this aspect of the school's life. The responsibilities that members of staff have are clearly defined so that all

pupils and staff understand what is expected of them. This policy is set out in the school prospectus and included in the mission statement and school aims.

11. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. The school is tidy, graffiti is rare, and pupils' work is often conscientiously presented. Pupils often show enjoyment and enthusiasm for their work, and in most lessons, settle down quickly and work with interest to complete the tasks that are presented. Throughout the school there are displays of pupils' work which are very well presented. The school is an orderly community, pupils are generally well mannered, and the behaviour of most pupils is good.

12. The majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire reported that their children enjoy being in the school, and this is supported by most classroom observations. Most pupils are willing to learn and many make serious attempts to achieve a good standard of learning. Relationships between pupils, both inside and outside the classrooms are normally constructive, purposeful and provide a solid base for group activities.

13. Nearly all pupils are pleasant, welcoming and courteous but a small minority, often boys, are boisterous and very occasionally this disrupts lessons: teachers have to work hard to maintain good order in a few classrooms. Pupils observe the school's code of behaviour and respond effectively to the system of rewards. The challenging behaviour of a few pupils inevitably leads to their temporary exclusion from the school. Consequently during the last school year there were 44 fixed term exclusions, which is slightly above the national average for this size of school. The school continues to receive excluded pupils from other schools. The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and all reported incidents are quickly and efficiently dealt with and where appropriate, parents are involved. A good example of how the school works to stamp out bullying is the way older pupils listen to the younger ones who have had problems. During the inspection there were no cases of bullying.

14. Pupils' personal development and the quality of relationships amongst all groups are good. Most pupils work, study and play together well, and the vast majority are prepared to listen and show respect for the views of others. The willingness of pupils to show initiative and exercise responsibility is evident when they represent tutor groups as members of the school council. Many pupils are involved in a variety of responsibilities including working as library monitors, operating sound systems at school productions, organising school teams, speaking to local primary schools and acting as school representatives at many school functions. Years 10 and 11 pupils appointed as prefects, play a very effective part in ensuring the smooth running of the school and in the safe movement of pupils around the school. The senior prefect team are regularly consulted concerning school policies and procedures.

15. Attendance in 1998/99 was in line with the national average. According to the most recent figures this has dipped slightly, but is still above 90 per cent. The school is working closely with the education welfare service and has set itself targets to try and improve levels of attendance.

16. Pupils are generally punctual to school. One of the particular qualities about the way the school is run is that there are no bells to mark the beginning and end of lessons but lessons begin and end promptly throughout the day.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

17. Teaching at The Appleton School is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection but there remains a pocket of less than satisfactory teaching. Right across the school, from Year 7 to Year 11, teaching is effective in the vast majority of lessons: this is

why pupils make good progress in lessons and learn well. Ninety-two per cent of lessons were at least satisfactory, sixty seven per cent were at least good and 13 per cent were very good or excellent. The work the school has done on improving the quality of teaching and learning has paid off: good teaching is now leading to good learning which in turn is helping to improve standards. Despite the strong improvement, teaching in eight per cent of lessons is still unsatisfactory.

18. The chief characteristics that make teaching at Appleton good are:

- the way teachers use their detailed knowledge of their subjects to make work interesting;
- the detailed way teachers plan their lessons so that pupils know exactly what is to be learnt and what is expected of them;
- the successful way teachers use different teaching methods to break the lesson into easily digested parts: this means that most lessons move at brisk pace and pupils have little time to get bored;
- the effective way most teachers manage pupils: this means that pupils behave well and are ready to learn.

19. In the vast majority of lessons teachers know a great deal about the subjects they teach and are good at presenting new ideas or reinforcing old ones in a way that motivates pupils and encourages them to learn. This has a strong impact on pupils' learning. In a very good Year 11 business studies lesson, for example, the teacher reinforced the difference between gross and net profit using a simple but effective analogy of a full and empty jar. In an excellent Year 7 physical education lesson, where pupils were developing their netball skills, the teacher's very good subject knowledge ensured that a demonstration by the teacher was very effective: pupils were highly motivated, anxious to be involved in the lesson's activities and responded very well to the teacher's enthusiasm and energy. As a result pupils made very good progress in their learning, particularly with their ball skills. In a very good Year 10 mathematics lesson the work was challenging and the teacher's enthusiastic response to pupils' answers ensured that pupils worked hard throughout the lesson and made very good progress.

20. In most subjects and classes teachers plan their lessons effectively setting out clearly what they want pupils to learn by the end of the lesson. In the very best lessons these objectives are written on the board so that everyone knows what is expected. Often, in these very good lessons, teachers return to the objectives at the end of the lesson to check learning: by sharing them with the class pupils also know whether they have made progress and learnt enough during the lesson. In a very good Year 11 religious education lesson, for example, the plans set out exactly what the teacher wanted pupils to learn and to be able to do by the end. The teacher explained these aims clearly and, as a result, were understood well by pupils. Boys and girls worked together in small groups very effectively and because of this, and the way the teacher praised pupils, all achieved equally well. In another example, from design and technology in Year 7, lively and interesting explanations and demonstrations motivated and helped pupils prepare drawings for making a puppet effectively. Lessons have a clear structure: often an introductory session is followed by activities where pupils work with others or by themselves and ends with a final plenary session. These features help to ensure that the pace of learning is brisk and that pupils remain active and excited about their work until the end of the lesson. They also contribute strongly to pupils' attitudes to learning and their progress. In a Year 11 English lesson, for example, the well structured lesson provided a range of activities which helped to keep pupils involved and working and a brisk pace. The teacher's firm but friendly approach and the way pupils' work was reviewed at the end of the lesson had a direct impact on the good progress.



21. Nearly all teachers are skilled in managing pupils effectively. They treat pupils with respect and as individuals and expect high standards of behaviour. In a Year 7 personal and social development lesson, for example, expectations were made very clear and the excellent class management meant that pupils stopped work immediately they were asked. As a result of this effective management, learning was very good. In a Year 7 art lesson, the teacher had excellent relationships with pupils who responded very well to his enthusiasm for the subject by working hard. In a Year 8 science lesson pupils responded well to the very good introduction and used the bunsen burners responsibly to burn or heat chemicals.

22. Work on literacy has been done with the whole staff, but at present has not had enough impact on teaching and thus literacy standards in lessons. For example, most teachers have started to put lists of important subject words on walls but poor spelling of everyday words are not always corrected. Pupils with learning needs in particular find these word lists particularly useful, as they need the support they offer. The school has good guidelines for teaching numeracy and pupils have some appropriate opportunities to use their number skills: for example, in business studies and information technology where they create graphs or use spreadsheets to illustrate different circumstances. However, this does not happen in all subjects where such opportunities are not always sufficient: as a result they do not have enough impact on pupils' achievements in number work.

23. Overall, teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They are taught well where teachers devise work that is clear and set at a level that they understand and that challenges them appropriately. Teachers with particular responsibility for teaching pupils with special educational needs structure their lessons well to ensure all pupils within the lesson achieve well. Often learning assistants help pupils with learning needs plan and tackle their work in a logical way so that they get the most out of lessons. However, when teachers give these pupils exactly the same work and guidance as everyone else in the class they do not make as much progress as they could.

24. It is the lack of these factors that contribute to the unsatisfactory teaching:

- a few teachers lack subject expertise and knowledge and find it difficult to motivate and enthuse pupils;
- these same teachers do not have a firm grasp of the different teaching methods they can use to keep pupils working and the pace of learning is too slow.

25. Where teachers lack subject expertise it is often because they are temporary and are filling a permanent post: in common with other schools Appleton finds it difficult to appoint high quality staff with relevant subject knowledge to cover these posts. This is most significant in modern languages where poor teaching is responsible for pupils' lack of progress in a considerable minority of lessons. Here, lessons are insufficiently prepared, there are too few opportunities for pupils to make a spoken contribution and the subject matter is presented in a boring and unimaginative way.

26. Unsatisfactory teaching also happens in other subjects but is limited to only about five or six teachers. This is why teaching has been judged good: had the unsatisfactory teaching been spread more widely across the school, teaching would have been satisfactory. In these other lessons, a lack of subject knowledge is also a major factor: work is not planned effectively, pupils are unclear about what is expected of them and the tasks unchallenging. In a Year 11 GCSE ICT lesson, for example, the work was set at much too low a level for most pupils and as result they were bored and made very little progress with their learning. Often, this lack of clear planning and expectations leads to poor management of lessons. In a Year 11 French lesson, for example, the work was not nearly challenging enough. Here, time was

wasted at the start of the lesson and pupils quickly became bored by copying from a book: as a result pupils lost their concentration and made little progress with their learning.

27. There are also more general weaknesses that get in the way of pupils' learning. As a result pupils in some lessons make satisfactory progress but are not reaching their full potential. In too many lessons the work, the level at which it is set and the range of activities are the same for all pupils regardless of their particular needs or capabilities. This also links closely to boys' underachievement: where too little account is taken of the needs of boys, a few can quickly become bored and silly and disrupt learning for the rest of the class. Often this is about classroom management: where boys are allowed to sit together they are more likely to disrupt the lesson. The way homework is set and used is also linked to the question about whether work takes account of all the pupils' needs. In the best practice, homework is set carefully to extend or reinforce learning but this is not consistently done in every subject. Parents sometimes feel that the homework timetable is not followed closely enough and the inspection confirms this.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

28. The school provides a curriculum which supports the needs of pupils well. Pupils identified as having special educational needs have access to the entire curriculum. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught to pupils up to age 16, although requirements for information and communication technology are not met in full: this is because not all pupils take the subject in Years 10 and 11. There is good provision for personal, social and health education. At Key Stage 4 there is a small range of vocational subjects which give pupils some different choices at 14: these are effective in helping the school meet the needs of all pupils. Provision for the teaching of religious education does not comply fully with the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus: there is too little teaching time at Key Stage 4 to ensure adequate and effective coverage of the course.

29. The school has adopted a teaching week of 25 hours which is in line with that in most secondary schools, but the times allocated to information and communication technology at Key Stage 3 and to religious education in Year 11 do not allow sufficient attention to be given to all aspects of these subjects. At Key Stage 4 just over a third of pupils take double science which is well below the national average for maintained schools and is contrary to the government expectation as expressed in the Revised National Curriculum that double science should be taken by the great majority of pupils. At Key Stage 4, for pupils for whom the full GCSE is not appropriate, alternative accreditation is offered through short courses in design and technology and through Certificates of Achievement in French and German.

30. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups during Year 7: in Year 8 and 9 they are grouped according to how well they achieved in Year 7. This is effective because it helps teachers adapt the curriculum for each pupil so that it meets their individual needs. Some departments help to raise literacy skills, for example, by implementation of spelling policies, but there is not enough focus on the improvement of these important skills across the whole curriculum. At Key Stage 4, grouping pupils' by looking at their prior achievements ensures that the curriculum in each subject is appropriate to the needs of all pupils, including those of higher ability. Throughout the school, support for pupils identified as having special learning needs is good. There are individual education plans all pupils in Years 8 to 10 on Stages 2 to 5 of the Code of Practice. Learning objectives on these plans, particularly those set by the special needs department, are realistic and attainable, reviewed regularly and, where appropriate, new targets are set or existing ones modified. A few pupils follow special programmes that take place out of lessons to help develop particular skills which support their educational needs, for example, a touch typing course to help a pupil who used a lap top to work faster. This works very well to improve particular skills and because it is for a limited time teachers can make sure pupils do not miss important learning in the lessons they are

absent. GNVQ courses in art, business and information technology are provided to offer pupils a vocational curriculum.

31. All pupils gain some experience in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) from Year 7, and but there is insufficient encouragement to continue to make use of ICT throughout the school. Some pupils use their ICT skills to improve the presentation of their coursework but practice varies between subjects. The use of ICT skills in all GNVQ courses is more extensive and courses are complemented by relevant work experience opportunities

32. In addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum, the school provides a well designed, comprehensive programme in personal, social and health education. Form tutors teach this course and are supported by teachers who specialise in particular aspects of the programme as well as by numerous outside speakers. Careers education is very good. A structured careers programme is taught throughout the school. A range of up-to-date and appropriate leaflets is available in the careers library and pupils have access to videos for further information. All Year 11 pupils receive an interview with a specialist officer from the careers service. Regular industry days are arranged for most year groups and these are well supported by local firms. Work experience is provided for all pupils towards the end of Year 10 and most pupils successfully gain accreditation for this work. For some pupils this includes work experience in Germany.

33. A large number of extra-curricular activities are available to pupils throughout the school and they are well attended. Many sporting activities are provided and are not restricted to the most talented pupils. There is a variety of musical activities, computer clubs meet at lunchtime and after school, and there are many other clubs that meet regularly. GCSE geology is provided after school for interested Year 10 pupils. More linguistically able pupils are able to study a second modern foreign language by attending lessons after school. All these activities extend pupils' range of experiences and make a significant contribution to the sense of community within the school.

34. The school makes good provision for the moral and social development of pupils and provision for cultural development has been improved to a satisfactory level since the previous inspection. Provision for spiritual development continues to be unsatisfactory: there are a number of reasons for this. Although the quality of assemblies is good and broadly Christian in character, they do not always include the opportunity for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness. In a Year 8 assembly, for example, the very good way the story of the Good Samaritan was told gave a strong moral message; however, pupils were not really encouraged to reflect on how the story might extend their awareness of themselves or others. Pupils have an assembly once a week and this does not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship: this also limits opportunities to develop their spiritual awareness. The school has a programme of moral themes for each week that are intended as the focus for tutor group discussions during registration times at the beginning of the school day but these are not used by many tutors. As a result form tutor time is rarely used constructively to promote pupils' spiritual awareness.

35. Religious education makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development by effectively providing pupils with knowledge and insight into concepts of right and wrong, and asking them to apply these ideas to a range of fundamental issues which confront them in real life, such as the application of prayer as a means to how religion offers answers or solace to such issues. There is some study of other faiths which teaches pupils to appreciate the diversity of those faiths. Elsewhere there are more limited opportunities for spiritual growth, although some departmental planning contains provision for such opportunities.

36. Provision for moral education is good. There is a clear code of conduct and pupils are helped to distinguish right from wrong through strong, but fair, disciplinary procedures. There is a system of credits and commendations to celebrate achievement such as exceeding one's target level in tests. Sporting achievement is celebrated in assemblies. The personal and social

education programme includes health education as part of its remit and there are comprehensive policies on drugs and sex education. Teachers provide good role models and prefects are active in supporting younger pupils throughout the school. The moral development of pupils is sustained through the personal and social education programme where pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding of citizenship. Moral issues are also discussed in drama through role play and in geography, where environmental issues such as tourism in Kenya and the Amazonian rain forest are considered.

37. Provision for social development of pupils is good. Pupils collaborate well with each other and there is good rapport between most teachers and pupils based on mutual respect. Good relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves create a harmonious atmosphere throughout the school. There is a positive ethos in the school and the small percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups mix together freely and happily with others. There is a wide range of well-attended lunchtime and after school activities to improve the social development of pupils, including sports, music, drama, and computer clubs. Music contributes well to pupils' social development through the strong emphasis on working together in groups, the encouragement of respect for other people's work, sensitive evaluations and the good relationships in many lessons.

38. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is satisfactory and is promoted in many curriculum areas. It is supported in English and drama through theatre trips and events such as the poetry day, in food technology through exploring food and recipes from other parts of the world and in geography through comparison of less economically developed countries with Japan. In art pupils study different artists and music makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development by introducing them to a variety of music from different cultures. The modern foreign languages department organises work experience in Germany for several pupils

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The last inspection found that the school was successful in promoting its aim for the care, welfare and health and safety of all its pupils. This continues to be the case. The school continues to make good arrangements for the support, guidance and welfare of all its pupils. All staff show concern for the pupils. Tutors play a very important part in helping pupils develop their personal skills and achieve well. They build close links with students when they arrive at the school and remain with the tutor group as it moves up through the school, thus enabling good relationships to be built. Parents are happy with the help and advice that pupils receive. Monitoring of pupils' personal development through the personal and social development lesson and tutor groups, and the use of pupils' records, is good.

40. The procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour are good. Pupils are rewarded through awards given in assemblies; parents indicated they appreciated the fact that pupils were rewarded for more than just academic achievement. Pupils spoken to confirmed they know the school rules. Monitoring of behaviour is good. For example, poor behaviour is recorded on an incident slip and a copy retained by the tutor. Tutors get together daily on an informal basis, and fortnightly on a formal basis to discuss any children who give cause for concern. The school takes a firm stand with regard to bullying, and is monitored by senior staff. Pupils are happy that any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively; parents are also happy that any reported problems will be dealt with quickly.

41. The procedures for promoting and monitoring of attendance are good. A senior member of staff has overall responsibility for attendance, with form tutors dealing with any concerns in the first instance. The school contacts parents as soon as their children are absent: parents have responded to this well. The school has also set individual and whole-school targets to try and improve the level of attendance; in addition the school has funded a full time education welfare officer who works closely with the school in trying to improve levels of attendance.

42. There is good liaison between the school and its feeder primary schools. There is a good induction programme in place for pupils coming into Year 7. Staff visit all the primary schools and prospective parents are invited to Appleton with their children.

43. The school provides a safe and caring environment. A senior member of staff is the designated officer for child protection and all staff are aware of her role and the need to inform her immediately if they have any concerns. A school nurse is on site as well as the education welfare officer and both provide good support for the school. Appropriate procedures are in place for caring for pupils who are injured, and these are set out in detail in the staff handbook.

44. The health and safety policy has recently been revised, and a member of the caretaking team has responsibility for health and safety matters. Procedures are in place to ensure that any problems are identified and dealt with as quickly as possible. Risk assessment is carried out in the different areas around the school. Regular checks are made to grounds, buildings and equipment.

45. The school receives good support from external agencies as and when required, for example, to support pupils with particular learning needs such as visual impairment.

46. Assessment is good and procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are rigorous. The data collected from National Curriculum tests, and other tests given to pupils when they start at the school, is used effectively to identify targets which predict attainment at the age of 14. More data is added in Year 10 to produce targets for attainment

at 16 in the GCSE examinations. These targets have been fundamental in improving GCSE results over the past few years.

47. Teachers, pupils and parents are informed of targets and progress every term by means of a progress report. These are recorded in the pupil planner. This has a positive effect on attainment.

48. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is satisfactory. Most subjects are using this information but in history, geography and information technology at Key Stage 3 teachers marking is not always accurate. In history, for example, assessments do not always match what should be expected of Year 9 pupils.

49. The use of test results to predict attainment at Key Stage 4 is good and all subjects monitor pupils who are failing to reach their targets, especially those who are predicted to be just short of gaining the higher grades. Staff use this to target individuals and raise achievement well.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

50. The previous inspection found that the school placed a strong emphasis on partnership between home and school and had good links with parents. This continues to be the case.

51. Parents generally have positive views of the school. The parent questionnaire responses and comments made at the pre-inspection parents meeting show that many parents are supportive of the school. Most parents feel their children like school and consider they make good progress and that teaching is good. They feel their children are working hard and that the school is helping them to become mature. However, a number of parents feel behaviour is not always good, and that their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home. Some parents feel the school does not work closely with parents.

52. The inspection supports the generally positive views of parents. However, homework is not always set consistently and in line with the school's timetable. The inspection also found that there are good links between the school and parents.

53. The information provided for parents by the school is good. There are regular formal opportunities for parents to meet with staff to discuss their children's progress, in addition parents receive a great deal of information regarding their children's progress and attainment through end of year reports and progress reports which also set out what they need to do to improve. Parents are contacted if individuals are felt to be underachieving and letters are sent home to celebrate good work. The majority of parents confirmed that they feel they are kept well informed of their children's progress. Form tutors are always available to discuss any concerns, and parents confirmed that staff are always approachable.

54. The headteacher sends out a half termly newsletter, this gives details of dates of events as well as what is happening in school. This is supplemented with letters on more specific matters from either the heads of year or the form tutors; parents are appreciative of the information they receive. There is good communication with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents, whose children are receiving help for their learning needs, regularly contact the special needs co-ordinator or are contacted by her to keep their children's progress under check and review. The school prospectus and governors annual report for parents meet statutory requirements.

55. The impact of parental involvement on the life of the school is satisfactory. The parent-teacher association works hard to raise funds for the school, as well as arrange social events for parents. Parental support for pupils' learning at home is also satisfactory. A number support their children by helping them with homework. The home / school diaries are well used both by parents and staff as a means of communication. An interesting development is the courses for parents to improve their ICT skills. The school now plans to run an Internet course for parents of Year 7 pupils. The impact of this is twofold: it enables parents to gain some of the skills their children are learning and better support their learning.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

56. Leadership at The Appleton School is good and management is effective. The headteacher has a reflective and sensitive approach to his work and this ensures that the focus of the school is on learning. The school has been through several changes during the last decade including becoming grant maintained and has now returned to the local education authority as a foundation school. The headteacher, the governing body and the senior managers have led the school well through these different stages with the clear view of improving the experience for the pupils.

57. The governing body gives good support and knows the school well. It keeps the school under review through monitoring exam performance carefully and receiving regular reports from staff. It receives regular information about the school budget. Governors are committed to offering the pupils a broad education and have been instrumental in pursuing the school's building plans and the improvements in provision in areas such as information technology.

58. The headteacher, with the senior staff team, makes a regular and detailed analysis of how the school is working and then takes action to change what needs to be improved. The detail of this improvement is recorded in the school management plan. The school uses this plan well to allocate its resources to its priorities by costing each development. The plan which is substantial, as it also includes department plans, has been recently improved by the addition of a simplified overview 'the action plan', which focuses on learning and teaching and allows the clear priorities for the year ahead to be seen. It is not always easy to measure on the management plan whether a target has been met: some targets do not include a direct link to raising pupils' attainment. However, the developments made are significant: because they focus on the areas of highest priority they have helped the school make important improvements to teaching and standards since the last inspection.

59. To improve teaching the senior management team initiated a rigorous programme of lesson observation linked to staff training and development. Where teaching did not improve changes in staffing occurred. Responsibility for the routine monitoring of teaching rests within subject areas and it is particularly successful in ensuring continued improvement in English, performing arts and design and technology. Not all other areas are as effective in obtaining change but the appointment of a senior member of staff to standardise subject practices in monitoring and development is a very practical solution that recognises the discrepancies and builds on one of the school's strengths.

60. Pupils' attainment has risen partly due to the improved teaching and also because the school system of setting individual targets for pupils is effective. Teachers, pupils and parents are informed of targets and progress every term which has a positive effect on attainment. Pupils and parents value this information enormously.

61. In collecting the information with which to set targets for individual pupils, the school now has a wealth of data it can analyse to identify patterns in performance and highlight

necessary adjustments to provision. It has, for example, identified that boys did not perform well last year but that girls did very well in national examinations; its next step will be to link this with the school's development cycle to look at why this has happened within the classroom so that it can take action for the future.

62. In seeking better ways to do things the headteacher and senior managers have been open to change and are willing to be innovative in the way they approach solutions. The new management structure allocates responsibilities sensibly: for example, the way that staffing matters are dealt with by one deputy headteacher and pupils by another, is effective in keeping teaching and learning at the centre of the school's work. Other management jobs have clear responsibilities for improving teaching and standards. It is too early to say how this new structure is helping to improve standards but early indications are positive. A good example is the improvement in performing arts where good monitoring and support of teachers have led to consistently high standards. The terms used to describe individual jobs are particular to Appleton: area adviser, for example, implies a focus on improving quality across the school rather than in only one subject. The senior staff team and the governing body take good care to obtain best value in their spending, for example they have successfully taken over the running of the school cleaning staff, improving cleanliness and saving money. They use all the funding available to them well to pursue the school's priorities.

63. One of the main areas of development the school has embarked on is an ambitious long-term plan to improve the accommodation and this has been largely very successfully accomplished. Additional funding has been effectively sought through the sale of a pocket of land and through various bids to external funding agencies. The main improvement has been to site all the subject rooms together and to provide much enhanced space for physical education. The space for drama is the last area awaiting major work as it also serves as the school canteen. This joint use does have an impact upon the quality of education provided in drama and also restricts the time it is available. The new information technology rooms whilst generally well resourced are underused, as teachers do not yet have the confidence or training to use them as a regular planned part of their work. In mathematics the information technology room is also used as a classroom making it difficult to give pupils' enough opportunities to use the computers. The quality of display both around the school and in classrooms is generally good and contributes to learning well and provides pupils with good models of what can be achieved.

64. Resources are generally appropriate and adequate throughout the school but there is some variation from subject to subject. A great investment has been made buying computers whereas in science, for example, the overhead projectors are of such poor quality it is difficult for pupils to read them. History, geography and religious education are, by and large, not well resourced: for example, religious education is short of symbolic objects. In media resources are good and have a positive impact on the quality of education in the subject.

65. Staffing is adequate to deliver the current curriculum with some areas of weaknesses. When the school's grant maintained status ended, the school's budget was cut which resulted in some curriculum and staff restructuring. This has resulted, for example, in personal, health and social education being taught by non-specialist teachers. The vast majority of the lessons observed were good, which was partly due to the well-structured programme, therefore, the strategy was successful. The school has experienced some recruitment problems in subjects such as modern foreign languages and mathematics and this is affecting the progress of some pupils, such as those who had eight teachers during a modern foreign language course. In some subjects, such as the humanities, a few



teachers are non-specialists. The school has worked hard to recruit good teachers in these areas and continues to try every measure available to them to attract staff.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

66. The school should now:

- i. Improve the standards achieved in mathematics, history and French, and the achievements of some boys, by:
  - improving teaching in French and history;
  - continuing with the recent improvements in mathematics;
  - taking greater account of the needs of boys in the way classrooms are managed and pupils are grouped.  
(paragraphs 2, 4, 6, 7, 27, 84 – 90, 118 – 123, 129 – 135)
- ii. Improve the pockets of unsatisfactory teaching by:
  - increasing teachers' subject knowledge and understanding, and pupils' motivation, where necessary;
  - developing different teaching methods that maintain a brisk pace to pupils' learning
  - ensuring that homework is set carefully to extend or reinforce learning in every subject.  
(paragraphs 24 – 27, 121, 122, 133,134)
- iii. Improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy, and pupils' writing and number skills in all subjects by:
  - consistently implementing the school's policies and guidelines.  
(paragraphs 22, 75 – 77, 87)
- iv. Improve the provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development by:
  - planning opportunities for pupils to explore other cultures as part of their learning;
  - using the opportunities provided by assemblies to reflect on the spiritual aspects covered;
  - meeting the legal requirements for religious education and daily act of collective worship.  
(paragraphs 34, 35)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	203
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	12	54	24	7	1	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. Percentages are rounded so may not equal 100.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1141	0
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	101	0

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	185	0

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	34

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.6
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	106	127	233

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	70	61
	Girls	103	77	77
	Total	151	147	138
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65	63	59
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18	29	15
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	73	68
	Girls	100	88	91
	Total	149	161	159
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64	69	68
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13	35	24
	National	31	37	28

Percentages for 1988 have been omitted because many are unavailable.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	88	108	196

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	36	83	85
	Girls	62	103	107
	Total	98	186	192
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50 (39)	95 (96.9)	98 (n/a)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (n/a)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1988. n/a = not available

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	39 (36)

per pupil	National	38 (36.8)
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*Figures in brackets refer to 1998.*

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	17
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	1
Indian	6
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	2
White	1081
Any other minority ethnic group	5

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	12	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	43	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	59.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	473

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y6 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	0
Key Stage 3	26.6
Key Stage 4	21.4

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3,138,078
Total expenditure	3,257,057
Expenditure per pupil	2,906
Balance brought forward from previous year	345,039
Balance carried forward to next year	226,060

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1121
Number of questionnaires returned	316

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	24	62	10	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	29	56	8	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	51	13	4	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	55	17	5	6
The teaching is good.	18	63	6	2	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	47	12	4	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	45	7	3	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	46	2	2	4
The school works closely with parents.	21	52	15	5	8
The school is well led and managed.	24	57	5	2	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	54	8	2	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	52	3	1	9

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH**

67. Standards in English are broadly average. Taken over a period of time standards in English have improved since the last inspection but there have been fluctuations in test and examination results. Those in 2000 showed a decline in standards, but there is evidence from current work that the decline may have been halted.

68. The tests taken by pupils at age 14 show that in 1999 performance was average: a similar percentage reached the average level as in other schools in England but fewer reached the higher levels. The percentages declined somewhat in 2000. Even in 1999, the overall scores were lower than those in similar schools; the declining scores over recent years reflecting the changing attainment of pupils when they start in Year 7. The drop in 2000 may also be due to the disruption to teaching that resulted from some long-term staff absence last year.

69. This long-term teacher absence also explains the 2000 GCSE results, in which boys in particular achieved a smaller percentage of the higher grades A\* - C than average. The performance of girls was much better, as it had been in 1999 when more reached the higher grades than did their counterparts nationally. Boys under-performed in 1999, but were not so far behind as in 2000. The pattern of results in GCSE English literature is more encouraging. In 1999, pupils at the school exceeded the national average for reaching grades A\*-C, with boys close to the national average and girls doing very well. Girls again did well in 2000; fewer boys achieved A\*-C grades, but their performance was better in English literature than in English.

70. The standard of work seen during the inspection confirms standards are average and the optimism of the school about future results. Written work across the age range reflects a widespread of ability, but the higher achieving pupils are producing work of a good standard: well-written pieces of extended writing are typical of 16-year old pupils, for instance, who are proficient in redrafting work. The standard of work seen in Key Stage 3 lessons is close to national averages. Speaking and listening skills are sound; pupils can make useful notes and write in an appropriate style, although lower achieving pupils have difficulties with spelling. By Year 11, work done by pupils is also close to the national standard. A few pupils find the work difficult at this level, but most are reaching an appropriate standard of speaking and listening, reading and writing. A class was seen identifying stylistic devices in a Wilfred Owen poem. Another class showed a good understanding of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and seem well prepared to discuss the text in an examination. Oral work across the key stages indicates the ability of pupils to recall earlier work successfully. Pupils, in most lessons, work effectively in pairs and in groups.

71. Although not evident from the most recent examination results, progress in English can be seen in current work. Individual pupils progress in relation to their achievement at age 11. Progress is less evident at age 14, in test results, but by the time pupils reach the age of 16 they have improved in relation to their standards on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although in-class support is thinly spread because of the policy of mixing pupils from a wide ability range in most classes. Higher achieving pupils benefit from being creamed off into top sets, but pupils of average ability need to be given tasks appropriate to their ability. Too many of them have failed to achieve higher than Level 5 in Key Stage 3 tests or grade D in GCSE, with boys in particular under-achieving, but the problem is now being recognised and strategies are being put in place to halt the trend.

72. The standards of teaching and learning in English are now good. At the time of the last inspection, a quarter of Key Stage 3 lessons contained unsatisfactory teaching. The situation now is that all teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory and most is good. Teachers generally have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, for example pupils were seen learning more about *Macbeth* from a lesson in which the teacher's understanding of the text was very evident, and was applied through an appropriate use of questions to the class. Teachers have a good rapport with their pupils and can trust them to work well in small groups. At Key Stage 4, standards of teaching have also improved, with many lessons being good or better. Teachers are able to help pupils grapple with difficult pre-20th century texts or to analyse poetry. Some imaginative methods are employed. A lesson on the importance of setting in story-telling drew attention to the use of the senses; the teacher shrewdly pointed out that it is sometimes counter-productive to use a large number of adjectives. In another lesson, good teaching enabled pupils to identify important social issues in *An Inspector Calls*. Teachers use a variety of methods and resources to good effect: the construction of charts, the reassembly of cut-up poems, group discussions, video clips and role play – all are used effectively to enhance learning. Across the key stages, teachers manage their lessons well, although occasionally more pace is needed. Teachers are good at assessing the knowledge and understanding of pupils in their classes, but tasks are rarely differentiated by pupil ability. This is a deficiency, in the light of so many mixed ability teaching groups. Homework is set regularly and marked thoroughly but sensitively. Pupils are left in no doubt as to their level of achievement, and are aware of the targets towards which they are working.

73. Pupils throughout the school respond well to the good teaching they receive. Attitudes at Key Stage 3 are always positive, and are very good at times. Pupils relate well to their teachers and to each other and are keen to contribute to lessons. Behaviour is good, and enthusiasm is shown for the work. A similar pattern is found at Key Stage 4, although in one or two lessons a minority of pupils seem reluctant to concentrate. This is not allowed to disrupt class learning, however, and the overall picture is of very positive attitudes. Throughout the school, pupils are willing to learn and to put time and effort into their work – symbolised best by the Year 11 class who, almost without exception, re-drafted written work on computers without being asked to do so.

74. All pupils study English literature as well as English for GCSE; it is recognised, however, that language skills need to be developed more. The subject is well led, with management responsibilities being increasingly shared. There are several new members of the team who, though relatively inexperienced, are already making a significant contribution. The well-resourced suite for English provides an excellent environment for learning; it includes a drama space and an ICT room. The latter is a little under-used at the moment, but will surely assist future development of the subject.

## **Literacy**

75. A literacy policy is beginning to be implemented in the school, led by the English department. Other subject areas are becoming more involved, and now contribute to the development of literacy work across the curriculum.

76. An initial priority was reading, with an emphasis on important words. Lists of words can be seen on walls in most classrooms but poor spelling of everyday words remains a problem for many pupils. The latest emphasis is on writing and standards are being monitored in all subjects. Some teachers give pupils a step-by-step guide to help them write and other subject guides for writing are being developed. Pupils use a 'tool-box' booklet to help them with key skills, and important spellings are listed in pupil planners.

77. Work on literacy has been done with the whole staff, but at present has not had sufficient impact on literacy standards across the curriculum. Pupils can write appropriately and at length when required, and can use their knowledge and understanding of language to find information from books and computers. They have the fluency to discuss aspects of their work in all subject areas. Writing skills, however, need to be developed further.

## **Drama**

78. Drama, although used in English lessons, is a separate subject in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11. Standards are good in lessons, with pupils displaying a good range of skills in speech and movement. They plan, present and evaluate their work with much competence. Drama is a popular option at Key Stage 4, although the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\* - C has been below the national average, perhaps because of the cross-section of pupils who chose the subject. Those who opt for drama benefit enormously from the skills they acquire, including life skills such as working well with others and the development of self-confidence.

79. Teaching is good in drama lessons. The strengths of the specialist teaching include an excellent rapport with pupils, high expectations and an imaginative range of activities in lessons. Pupils respond to this well and there is a high level of co-operation and successful whole-class work such as the hot-seating activity based on *On the Sidewalk Bleeding*.

80. There are regular school productions and opportunities for extra-curricular drama. The main teaching space doubles as the school dining area, which creates some problems, including 'noises off'. The status of the subject will be raised when the new suite for drama is completed.

## **Media Studies**

81. Media studies is one of the subjects that forms part of the performing arts area and there is some good work in Years 7, 8 and 9. The good teaching means that pupils have an experience of working in teams and with media equipment, for instance to produce a television newsreel that is very worthwhile, even if standards are not all that high by the end of Year 9.

82. Pupils who choose the subject in Years 10 and 11 make good progress; they develop the skills they have begun to learn, showing very positive attitudes and good co-operation with each other. The teacher lays heavy emphasis on their learning by doing, and this proves to be effective; examination results are not far from the national norms, with this year's candidates looking very promising. In one lesson, for example, they were working on the production of a trailer for a soap opera with considerable skill.

83. The support of a technician in lessons and the use of several well-equipped rooms, including a studio and control room, contribute effectively to the quality of the subject, enabling pupils to get broad and worthwhile experience.

## **MATHEMATICS**

84. Standards of numeracy have improved considerably since the last report. In 1999, attainment of pupils at GCSE was below average, and below those in similar schools and other subjects in the school. In 2000, pupils' attainment in mathematics at GCSE was similar to results in 1999 but inspection evidence confirms that in lessons it is now broadly average. Towards the end of Year 11 pupils are set to reach average standards in 2001.



85. In 1999, at the end of Key Stage 3, results were average but well below those of similar schools. However, in 2000, at the end of Year 9, the results were much improved, in particular for pupils reaching the higher levels. This is also confirmed by the inspection: the standard of work in lessons is now average.

86. Pupils know their number bonds and some or all of their multiplication tables. They have a good grasp of number and can explain how they estimate an answer, or how they work out a numerical problem. However, some pupils still rely too heavily on calculators. In both key stages pupils study all the attainment targets. Standards of number and algebra are good, with a strong emphasis given to mental mathematics. Pupils know the aims of each lesson and at the end of lessons they recap these to judge whether they have achieved them. After homework, they write what they have learnt and what links that topic has with other subjects, such as links with engineering, astronomy or market research. This practice is well developed in most lessons. In a Year 8 class, for example, pupils used a computer program to draw polygons and investigate the angle sum of a polygon and the relationship between the exterior angles of a polygon. In a Year 10 class, pupils were plotting graphs and shading in areas that satisfy certain constraints. Pupils are beginning to use the computers but because they have only recently been installed, they have yet to be fully incorporated into teaching and learning.

87. The school's numeracy policy is concise and is designed to provide pupils with a consistent experience of numeracy across subjects and hence increase their opportunities to develop their number work. The guidelines are good and pupils do have opportunities to use their number skills: in information technology, for example, pupils create graphs while in business studies they draw conclusions from spreadsheet work. However, these skills are not developed sufficiently elsewhere. In science pupils have lots of opportunities to use graphical skills to report on their investigations but their graphical skills are not developed well enough: as a result pupils do not produce good line graphs and bar graphs. Nevertheless, pupils are careful and accurate when measuring length, time, weight and volume in science experiments. In design technology pupils use accurate measurement and draw to scale.

88. Pupils' attitude in mathematics lessons is almost always good and is sometimes very good. In only one lesson was the behaviour unacceptable. Pupils' good behaviour supports their learning well. Pupils respond well to their teachers' demands for good behaviour and to remain on-task throughout the lesson.

89. Teaching is good overall, with over two thirds of lessons good or very good. However, two in 19 lessons were unsatisfactory or poor. In the many lessons where there are strengths there is a good brisk start to the lesson, which pupils are used to and expect. Mental mathematics takes place at the start of most lessons and this has improved pupils' numeracy skills considerably. Teachers settle pupils quickly and start the lesson with clear instructions, sometimes by a quick revision period, which covers all the pupils need to know to be able to make the best possible use of the new lesson content. Teachers use good questioning to ensure pupils understand. They encourage pupils well and have very good relationships with them. In many lessons the pace of lessons is brisk. Teachers employ learning support assistants well, whilst ensuring that they are not giving too much help to the pupils. Most teachers' records of pupils' progress are good and show where progress is good and where extra support is needed. Pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 4 receive very good help from being in very small classes, with special needs assistants. However, in Key Stage 3, pupils with special needs are less well catered for, both in the mixed ability classes in Year 7 or in the larger setted classes in Years 8 and 9.

90. In lessons where there are weaknesses there is unsatisfactory behaviour, such as calling out and distracting behaviour from a small minority of pupils, mainly boys, which the teacher is unable to control. This spoils it for other pupils and slows down the pace of the lesson. There is a noticeable slowing down of pace when pupils start independent work in Year 7 and chatting distracts the learning. Some teachers do not ensure pupils stay on task when they are working on their own. In some Year 7 classes there is insufficient different work for different attainments in the class to ensure all pupils are suitably challenged. Some teachers are not sufficiently demanding of pupils and do not correct pupils who write incorrect algebraic terms or who incorrectly label axes of a graph.

91. Teaching is monitored both informally and formally and there are reviews of mathematics by senior staff. This monitoring has a positive effect on teaching and learning and is one of the reasons why standards are improving.

## **SCIENCE**

92. Overall, attainment in science is broadly average when pupils leave the school and at the end of Year 9. This represents improvement since the last inspection which has been particularly significant over the last two years. In all years target setting for individual pupils is having a significant influence on improving standards as it raises the expectations of teachers and increases the motivation of pupils.

93. In Years 10 and 11, contrary to government expectations that it should be taken by the great majority of pupils, much less than half of pupils take double science with the remainder taking single science. In 2000, 57 per cent of those entered for double science and 33 per cent of those entered for single science gained A\* - C grades. Overall, 42 per cent of Year 11 pupils gained at least one A\* - C grade in science in 2000. This was similar to the school and national percentage in 1999 and far higher than the school percentage for A\*-C grades in science in 1998. In 2000, 95 per cent of Year 11 pupils gained at least one A\*-G grade in science. As in previous years a few Year 10 pupils took GCSE geology for which they attended lessons after school. In 1999, of the 13 pupils entered, eight gained A\*-C grades.

94. There are some clear indications that the present Year 10 and 11 pupils are attaining above average standards: this is a direct result of good teaching. In particular, pupils' test results are generally higher than last year and they are able to apply their knowledge and understanding of scientific principles when answering questions in class. For example, Year 11 pupils are able to use their knowledge of sound waves to explain the properties of the noise made by earthquakes.

95. At the end of Year 9 the percentage of pupils reaching the nationally expected level in the National Curriculum tests in 2000, at 57 per cent, is almost equal to the school's result in 1999. As in previous years, there was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. However, in 2000 more than a quarter of Year 9 pupils exceeded the expected level which was a considerable increase on the previous year. The introduction of a new teaching scheme that provides extension materials for higher attainers was a major factor behind this improvement.

96. At both key stages pupils are careful and responsible when handling chemicals and scientific apparatus but there is room for improvement in their basic practical techniques, for example when using bunsen burners or handling corrosive chemicals. They have a satisfactory understanding of fair testing but their ability to make generalised conclusions from their experimental results is weaker. Factors contributing to this weakness are the lack of challenge in Year 7 investigations which do not build sufficiently on the skills they should have developed in primary schools and their weak graphical skills, particularly in producing

line graphs. At both key stages pupils have insufficient opportunities to use information technology, such as data logging equipment and Internet access although some teachers are beginning to use the good computing facilities that have just been made available. Several pupils use word processing competently to present their GCSE coursework to a high standard.

97. At both key stages pupils share their teachers' interest and enthusiasm for science and generally make good progress. In almost all lessons they are attentive, willingly answer questions and co-operate very well with each other at practical activities. In a few lessons, where the pace is too slow, the work is not challenging or the teacher does not demand good behaviour, their progress is unsatisfactory. Pupils make particularly good progress when, in the introductions to lessons, they are required to apply their knowledge to answer questions, for example of the types of joints in the human skeleton. Pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively by classroom assistants and by the provision of worksheets designed to meet their particular needs. These pupils generally make good progress.

98. The quality of teaching is good overall and much better than at the time of the previous inspection. This high quality is having a direct impact on the improvement of standards at both key stages. Teaching is very good or excellent in a quarter of lessons, good in two-fifths of lessons and satisfactory in most of the remainder. It is unsatisfactory in one tenth of lessons. Effective teaching practices have been discussed by the department and are used consistently in lessons. All teachers start their lessons promptly with a review of work previously covered and engage pupils' attention through questioning that tests not only their ability to recall facts but also challenges their understanding. For example, Year 8 pupils were required to distinguish between elements, mixtures and compounds and Year 10 pupils to explain the processes occurring in a leaf.

99. In the best lessons, teachers explain clearly the purpose of the lesson, provide an interesting variety of activities and set time targets for each activity to ensure a brisk pace throughout the lesson. Some features of very good teaching included the involvement of pupils in practical demonstrations, such as the properties of strong acids, or in explaining their ideas or experimental results to the whole class. In the unsatisfactory lessons the pace of work was too slow, the expectations of the teacher were too low and pupils were not challenged to think for themselves. Teachers put an appropriate emphasis on practical work but occasionally need to give pupils more help with experimental techniques, such as measuring the extension of an elastic band or choosing a suitable range of temperatures for enzyme reactions, to ensure that results are accurate and enable pupils to draw relevant conclusions from their data.

100. Science is managed well and morale is high. The subject action plan has appropriate priorities and targets for improvement but success criteria do not focus sufficiently on the outcomes for pupils, for example, there is no indication what computer skills and experience pupils will gain as a result of developments in information technology. The science department has made much improvement since the previous inspection and shares a common commitment to raise standards further.

## **ART**

101. Standards are well above average and have remained stable since the last inspection. All pupils achieve higher grades in art than in any other subject on the school curriculum. The most recent results show an upward trend.

102. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is well above the national average. Evidence from lessons confirms that standards are very high. For example, pupils in Year 7 are attentive

and interested in drawings inspired by Van Gogh. Other Year 7 pupils enjoy making faces from fruit and vegetables based on the weird and wonderful work of Arcimboldo. Pupils in Year 9 can create exciting and original designs based on the idea of the "Green Man" with a view to decorating a clay pot they will make. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is well above the national average. Although the attainment of both boys and girls is about 20 per cent above the average boys achieve less well than girls. Target setting has had a positive effect on attainment in all groups except ceramics where 30 per cent of boys in Year 11 do not meet their targets. This is because a small number of boys lack concentration and drift off task. Year 10 pupils can take photography seriously by using the studio sensibly to do "shoots" and by "shooting" photographs on location around the school grounds. Year 11 pupils in a GNVQ lesson show how they can interpret the depiction of stereotypes of men and women in the pictures by the artist Richard Hamilton. As one boy in the class said, "You can tell she's a bimbo 'cos she's got a lampshade on her head!" and "The man's in charge 'cos he's got big muscles." The development of GNVQ has had a positive effect on achievement in Years 10 and 11 where less able pupils are attaining good exam results.

103. Overall the standard of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and instructions are given confidently. Where teaching is satisfactory visual aids are not used effectively resulting in a lack of direction for a small number of less able pupils, more so at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Photography / graphics GCSE is the real strength of the subject and its popularity is responsible for the large numbers choosing the visual arts at GCSE. The teaching here is dynamic and pupils are enthusiastic. Staff and pupils alike are dedicated to success and work many extra-curricular hours resulting in very high levels of achievement. There is insufficient use of ICT at both key stages. New facilities are now available but staff have yet to undergo training.

104. Where there are visits, they have a positive effect on achievement and enhance pupils' work, for example, a Year 10 visit to the Tate Gallery stimulated interest in the subject. However, insufficient use is made of visits to places of cultural diversity or local sites of interest.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

105. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show that a significant number of pupils are achieving above average. The results show that 35 per cent of the year group are attaining higher levels. The Year 9 assessment results for 2000 show that pupils continue to perform very well. The GCSE results for grades A\* - C in 1999 were above average. When the pass rate is compared to other compulsory subjects it is above the school average. The GCSE results for grades A\* - C in 2000 were below those for 1999 but similar to the overall average GCSE results for the school. Girls perform better than boys at both key stages.

106. By the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment is above average. Teaching concentrates on developing skills in all aspects of the subject and this has ensured good quality products. Teachers have high expectations; the quality of finished products demonstrates an attention to detail, accuracy and precision. When making an electronic badge, for example, pupils fit their design to very specific criteria, select suitable materials and use construction processes confidently and with some accuracy. They become familiar with different mechanical systems when making a wildlife coin box. In textiles, pupils have good technical skills, contributing to high quality products as seen, for example, in a project making pockets. In food technology lessons pupils write a specification for making pizza and produce a product to a very high standard. Pupils are able to make decisions about suitable ingredients and have an understanding of what makes a healthy balanced diet. Teachers' planning ensures that knowledge of design technology increases steadily because pupils have opportunities to

solve problems and to develop their skills. In a lesson on making sponge cakes, for example, pupils made good progress because they were briefed in detail about what they had to do, listened to instructions carefully and worked in teams to specific time limits. Overall, levels of attainment of pupils entering Year 7 are average. In their early lessons, pupils make good progress in their learning because tasks are precisely structured with clear learning objectives for each week. They begin to develop information technology skills but this aspect is not fully developed.

107. Attainment in lessons by the end of Year 11 is above average and reflects the examination results. Teachers' high expectations ensure that pupils pay particular attention to accuracy, quality of finish and the selection of ingredients. In their design work, pupils develop an understanding of construction techniques and presentation of work is of a high quality. The quality of design drawings and illustrations are of a high standard. Pupils have opportunities to design electronic circuits using the computer, and to use the Internet to research their projects, but experience of control technology and computer aided design is limited at present. Their designs provide a wealth of detail and they are able to make informed decisions on the choice of ideas. Their work shows attention to accuracy and pupils work to a rigorous specification. The quality of teaching ensures that pupils make good progress. Lessons are planned enabling pupils to strengthen their learning and build up their skills of designing, solving practical problems and their knowledge of food preparation. Pupils quickly learn how to judge their standards and how to improve using the targets set for them. Pupils can design and make packaging for different products, use mechanisms and control systems to solve problems as seen in a project for an electronic security system. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when extra support is provided in class.

108. The behaviour of pupils and their attitude to learning is always good. Pupils show an interest in their work and maintain good levels of concentration to work to their best standards. They listen attentively and watch carefully to understand what they must do and show pride in their achievements. They respond well to teachers and they are able to work without close supervision. There are opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity and imagination. They take responsibility for their areas of work and in organising their tasks.

109. Teaching is always good. Teachers use appropriate strategies and have a good subject knowledge to expand and develop ideas. The thorough planning ensures that lessons have suitable pace and challenge. Practical activities are well organised and the supervision of lessons effective, with appropriate interventions to support and sustain individuals pupils' learning and maintain appropriate expectations. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson where pupils were preparing soup using fresh vegetables and in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were investigating the use of mechanisms. Teachers' expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour are high. Learning objectives are clearly stated and work is flexibly planned to provide for pupils' different levels of attainment and interests. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and teachers give helpful comments. This is a strength. Individual targets are used to inform pupils what they need to do to improve their work. For example, in Year 11, teachers review pupils' examination work and set targets for improvement; this has a positive impact on achievements. Homework is set to reinforce the content of lessons. A lack of resources restricts teaching in computer aided design and control. The department helps to improve literacy across the school by the use of key words to develop vocabulary.

110. Leadership and management are good, with a clear vision and direction leading to effective strategies to promote improvements. good progress has been made since the last inspection. The technician staff make a significant contribution to the organisation of the department and on occasion work with specific groups of pupils to support practical work, providing helpful advice.

## GEOGRAPHY

111. When pupils are 16 years old they achieve below average standards and the 1999 GCSE results were also below those in other schools in England. GCSE results were similar in 2000. Over the past five years, since the last inspection, standards have remained static. Relative to other subjects pupils taking geography perform significantly less well. By the age of 14 standards are also just below average.

112. Inspection findings reflect these standards. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning as they move from Year 7 through to Year 9 but in some lessons progress is good. In Year 7, for example, pupils learn how to carry out an investigation into the school environment and develop skills of observation and recording. These skills are refined through the work on settlement in Year 9 when pupils undertake a shopping survey in Benfleet. Pupils develop a sound understanding of physical processes through the study of volcanoes and earthquakes. They learn and use important key concepts that are on display in geography classrooms. Over time, in studying different locations such as Italy, Bangladesh, Kenya and Brazil, pupils learn to make basic comparisons and explain differences and similarities. Pupils debate environmental issues using the Amazonian rainforest as a case study. Here, they analyse the points of view of the Kayapo Indian, the European tourist and the Brazilian mine owner in relation to development issues. Improvements since the last inspection have been since satisfactory: there are improved opportunities for pupils to develop their fieldwork skills by, for example, the Year 7 visit to Rochester.

113. A weakness in pupils' learning in Years 7 to 9 is that they do not have regular and planned opportunities to use computers to write longer pieces or to develop arguments, descriptions and explanations. This is usually because pupils are given work that needs short fragmented answers: sometimes the longer pieces of work are copied from the board or from textbooks. This is one the reasons why standards remain below average.

114. Year 10 and 11 pupils make broadly satisfactory progress but boys work at a slower pace than girls because they tend to lose concentration more easily and show less application. Across Years 10 and 11 pupils undertake a range of investigations into issues such as urban decay, population and tourism. In the case study of the Docklands, for example, pupils learn the differences between urban renewal and urban regeneration and have secure understanding of how the area has changed since 1980 in relation to housing, shopping, industry and recreational facilities. The new field visit to Bradwell in Essex is proving valuable in helping geographers build upon the fieldwork skills they learned in Years 7, 8 and 9 by investigating coastal erosion and shopping patterns.

115. Pupils' attitudes towards geography are satisfactory in all classes. Most pupils like the subject and understand its value. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils were enthusiastic about their work on the school environment. They take pride in their display work and some use their computers at home to generate relevant graphs and diagrams to show the results of investigations. However, pupils are not always willing to take part in discussions or answer teachers' questions.

116. Overall, teaching is satisfactory and makes an appropriate contribution to pupils' learning. In good lessons, particularly in Years 7 – 9, skilful questions provide a focus for learning and pupils are involved in practical activities. In these lessons brief instructions, clear explanations and tasks with time limits result in a brisk pace to the learning. In Year 7, for example, pupils were given responsibility for organising themselves and setting their own homework to answer the question: 'Is The Appleton School a good environment to work in?'

The imaginative use of resources, such as the model of a volcano or a colourful slide, captures the attention of pupils and ensures they engage in activities.

117. Where teaching is less effective learning objectives are imprecise or are not shared with pupils: often the class know what they are doing but not what they are learning. Except on rare occasions, day to day marking does not help pupils understand what they have achieved and what they need to do to make progress. Most comments were positive in tone but focused almost exclusively on presentation and literacy issues. In lessons when teachers speak for too long, pace and challenge fall away and some pupils lose concentration and behave inappropriately. The transition between one activity and the next is not handled well in some lessons; learning is hampered where teachers introduce a new task to the class while several pupils are still working on the previous one.

## **HISTORY**

118. GCSE standards have improved since the last inspection but remain below average. Although the 2000 results fell by 10 percentage points those for 1999 are better than at the last inspection in 1996. The history results are significantly lower than other subjects. By the age of 14 standards are also below average.

119. Evidence from the inspection confirms that standards in lessons in both key stages are below average and that pupils do not make enough progress in their learning. Pupils consolidate what they have learned about the twentieth century world in, for example, Year 9 and consider some interesting issues such as the 'stab in the back' controversy at the end of the Great War. However, pupils are not always set challenging tasks and this makes it difficult for them to achieve well despite their keenness for the subject. Sometimes achievement is limited because too much work is about recording facts about people and events and too little is structured around key questions that require the use of skills. For example, pupils' books include headings such as 'Mary Queen of Scots' or 'Elizabethan Britain', and there is too little emphasis on use evidence critically to analyse causes and to interpret changes.

120. Pupils' attitudes towards history are satisfactory at both key stages. Most pupils like the subject and enjoy learning about people in the past. In a Year 9 lesson on the industrial revolution, for example, the demanding work helped to keep pupils interested. Some use their computers at home to write reports for classroom display; the day visit to Rochester is one such example. However, pupils are not always keen to answer teachers' questions and contribute to discussions.

121. Overall, teaching is unsatisfactory at both key stages but with good teaching in some lessons. Where teaching is good activities have time limits, and pupils are challenged to think and talk with others. As a result they make sufficient gains in their learning. In one Year 9 class, for example, pupils using an account of 19<sup>th</sup> century factory conditions by a child worker, Robert Blincoe, compared it to the new regulations set out in the 1802 Factory Act: 'Was the factory owner breaking the law or not?' This question challenged the pupils to apply their knowledge and understanding and as a result they made good progress.

122. Teaching is less effective when teachers talk for too long; some pupils lose concentration and then behave inappropriately. Sometimes tasks are just too simple and not matched to their abilities and needs. In one instance GCSE pupils were asked to write about the causes of the Wall Street Crash but, because they were not asked to identify the causes or justify their decisions, they were not really challenged enough: this limited their progress. Marking does not always help pupils understand what they need to do to improve and they are thus not sure how to make progress.

123. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets all the statutory requirements but pupils have few opportunities to use ICT which limits their learning. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory: assessment arrangements have improved and a portfolio of moderated pupils' work is being developed. Other improvements include the Year 7 visit to Rochester to see the cathedral and the castle as part of the study of medieval Britain.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

124. Standards at the end of both key stages are now close to the average. Good progress has been made in raising standards in the information technology course in Years 10 and 11. Results have improved from 29 per cent of pupils attaining A\* - C at GCSE in 1999, which is below average, to 61 per cent in 2000. This looks like being above the national average. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 for 2000 indicate that standards are well above the national average but this is not confirmed by inspection: the evidence indicates that standards are lower than this. This is partly because most pupils are working at a level that is slightly lower than average and because there is not enough time to allow the National Curriculum course to be covered in depth. Examples of these average standards include Year 7 pupils who are able to enter text and change the font and colour of the text when writing a report for children who might choose the school. Other pupils are able to add a picture of the school badge or photographs of the school. They are beginning to develop a sense of audience for their work. In the computer club, a number of pupils have produced presentations using advanced programs that include animation and sound. They have learnt to do this at home but the school is yet to exploit the potential of this.

125. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are able to work confidently with a commercial database. One pupil had designed a report to record the performances of girls in athletic activities. A number of pupils at this key stage do not follow a course that includes the teaching of information and communication technology skills. Consequently, they do not progress beyond the standard attained at the end of Year 9. Standards at the end of Year 11 are close to the average overall. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in information technology.

126. Teaching at both key stages is good. Teachers mostly have good knowledge and competence and provide an accomplished model of practice while giving pupils sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their own capability. A good example of this was in a Year 7 lesson where the teacher was showing the class how to create tables in a word processor. This also provided an opportunity for a technician to support half of the class and enable pupils to proceed at a faster pace. In a Year 8 lesson, the teacher provided an opportunity for pupils to share with others the way in which they were going to desktop-publish their work. In sharing ideas, pupils were able to improve their own understanding. Pupils show a high level of autonomy in the use of the computers and are able to work independently. The information technology lessons are well organised and managed. In a large Year 11 German lesson, the pupils worked well together sharing the resources in order to access the German National Railway's website in order to complete the set task.

127. Where there are weaknesses in teaching these are often related to a lack of subject knowledge: work is not planned effectively, pupils are unclear about what is expected of them and the tasks are unchallenging. Other constraints on learning include the lack of a suitable system that enables all pupils to view a single screen. A whole class, or even half a class, gathered around a single computer screen means that not all pupils can see what is being demonstrated. Information technology teachers have been on courses about examinations but not on the teaching of the subject or use of software.



128. The department is well led and standards are steadily improving: improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Over the last year in particular, new schemes of work, an assessment policy and procedures for tracking pupils' progress have been introduced. It is apparent from the development plan and from the reviews of teaching and learning that this improvement will continue.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

129. Standards overall are below average but GCSE results in German have improved steadily since the last inspection and pupils did better in German in 1999 compared with their performance in other subjects. In 2000 results also improved. GCSE results in French, on the other hand, have varied widely over the past few years. In 1999 they were broadly average but pupils did worse in French compared with their performance in other subjects. In 2000 there was a significant drop in the proportion of pupils achieving the highest GCSE grades. Much of this drop is because of the large difference between the attainment of boys and girls: 17 per cent of the boys achieved the highest grades compared with 50 per cent of the girls.

130. End of Year 9 National Curriculum assessments in modern languages for 2000 show pupils overall, as well as boys and girls separately, to be achieving in line with the national average for 1999.

131. The inspection findings show that in lessons standards overall are below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. The reasons for differences between GCSE results and National Curriculum assessments are twofold: in common with many areas of the country the school has had difficulty in recruiting modern languages teachers; the 2000 results and assessments relate to last school year's Year 9 and 11 whilst the evidence from lessons concerns this year's pupils.

132. In the majority of lessons pupils behave well, are interested in what they are doing, respond well to questions, and achieve in line with expectations. They concentrate well, work hard and react positively when given challenging tasks. When opportunities are created for pupils to work on their own, in pairs or in groups they follow instructions without fuss and carry out the task set in a responsible and mature fashion. In a significant minority of lessons, however, many pupils, in particular boys, do not attain in line with their abilities. They lack motivation or enthusiasm, fail to engage with the content of the lesson and work very slowly. As a result they make little or no progress.

133. Teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 is just satisfactory but in Years 10 and 11 it is unsatisfactory: overall teaching in modern languages is unsatisfactory. The rate at which pupils progress in lessons is always closely related to the quality of teaching. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory or good teachers have prepared carefully, learning objectives are clear to pupils and there is a clear focus on targets for learning, either in terms of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. Teachers start lessons promptly, engage pupils' attention through clear instructions and explanations, motivate pupils through the use of interesting activities and resources and give pupils plenty of opportunity to take part in the lesson, both in whole-class question and answer work and in individual, pair and group work. Good use is made of available resources and equipment, including textbooks, overhead projectors, audio and video recordings and computers.

134. In a significant minority of lessons, however, poor teaching is responsible for pupils' lack of progress. Lessons are insufficiently prepared, there is too much reliance on teacher talk and the textbook and there are too few opportunities for pupils to make a spoken contribution. The range of resources and equipment used is too narrow, the subject matter and the way it is presented and developed is boring and unimaginative and the tasks set are

often not properly matched to pupils' abilities or gender. This is why boys do significantly less well than girls. In some cases the teacher's subject knowledge is insufficient.

135. The department has experienced problems with staffing over the last year and this is a major cause of less than satisfactory teaching. The school finds it extremely difficult to engage high quality supply staff with relevant subject knowledge and some classes have suffered greatly because they have had a succession of short-term supply teachers. The acting Area Adviser has worked very hard to maintain the enthusiasm and commitment of the team in the face of these difficulties. However, policies are not always reflected in everyday practice in the classroom. The use of the target language, for example, is not consistent across the department and in many cases pupils' records of their independent reading are not completed. Regular exchange visits with France and Germany and opportunities for older pupils to take part in work experience in Cologne contribute well to the pupils' learning.

## **MUSIC**

136. The quality of provision for music has improved since the previous inspection. All the issues raised in the previous inspection report have been addressed satisfactorily. Attainment has improved and the majority of pupils are on course to attain the national expectation by the time they are 14. Pupils in Year 7 have had differing prior experiences of music, with some pupils not having experienced some aspects of the national curriculum. However, despite their unequal starting points, in lessons where teaching was strong, Year 7 pupils were achieving well, and were in line with expectations for this stage in the year. They are developing their ability to keep a steady beat, and were able to evaluate their own and others' performances, making responses such as: 'they were a very fluent group', and 'there was eye contact'. In Year 8 attainment is in line with expectations except where the poor behaviour of a minority affects the progress of others. Where teaching was very good pupils in Year 8 performed notated rhythms and were developing their ability to combine with other groups to perform together. This was a challenging task which they found difficult but all improved with practice and made good progress. Year 9 pupils are developing improvisation skills through work on the Blues scale, for example.

137. Pupils at the start of the GCSE course are achieving above expectations. They have a good understanding of the musical elements as a basis for their composing and arranging tasks. Many have good instrumental skills. In Year 11 where there is a broader range of ability in the GCSE group, pupils are achieving at national expectations. The most recent examination results show that two thirds of pupils achieved B or C grades. The number of pupils entered is too small for national comparison.

138. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. In Years 7, 8 and 9 it is more variable, ranging from very good to occasionally unsatisfactory but good overall. Effective teaching is characterised by very good planning which ensures that pupils experience all aspects of the curriculum. In some lessons there is a very good understanding of how to maintain the pace and flow, for example, getting off to a brisk start with Year 7 pupils by asking them to respond to the register with 'musical words', involving them in a range of tasks and activities designed to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in performing and composing, listening, and ending with an opportunity for them to listen to a professional performance of the song they have just learnt. Transitions between activities are managed smoothly. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own and each other's work and suggest ways in which it can be improved. They are good at this. The good level of challenge and the high expectations of teachers in many lessons in both key stages has a positive impact on learning, and leads to good progress. The majority of pupils improve with practice during lessons. In Years 10 and 11 there is good monitoring of individuals and groups. Relationships are good. The teaching effectively extends pupils' understanding and skills in performing, composing and arranging.

139. Where teaching had weaknesses in some Key Stage 3 lessons these related to loss of pace when changing from one activity to another which resulted in pupils losing interest and motivation. In some lessons there were problems in managing the behaviour of a small minority of disruptive boys which adversely affected the progress of other pupils in the classes.

140. Attitudes are positive where teaching is effective and unsatisfactory in lessons where a minority of pupils influence others because their behaviour is not managed satisfactorily. Some Year 7 pupils did not work well together in groups, showing poor communication and lack of co-operation. This was also the case in one Year 9 group and in a Year 8 class where one pupil directly challenged the teacher's authority. In contrast other Year 8 pupils work well in groups, co-operate, discuss, identify ways to improve and refine their work. They discuss music they have heard and are often receptive and willing to express and explain their thoughts. Pupils following the GCSE course have very positive attitudes and work well both independently and together.

141. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 now meets statutory requirements. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to take part in choirs, orchestra, band and other instrumental ensembles. The range of opportunities and the number of pupils involved have increased since the previous inspection. Sixty pupils have instrumental tuition in a range of instruments and they are taught well. Music contributes well to pupils' social development through the strong emphasis on working together in groups, the encouragement of respect for other people's work, sensitive evaluations and the good relationships in many lessons. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of music which, during the inspection, included Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, Blues, minimalist music and a variety of songs.

142. Assessment has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Targets are clearly explained to pupils and assessment sheets and those set for GCSE pupils are appropriate and agreed with pupils who are expected to evaluate their progress and identify targets themselves. The subject is effectively managed.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

143. In the 1999 GCSE physical education examination 62 per cent of the pupils gained A\* to C passes, and 100 per cent gained grade A\* to G passes. This is above the national average. In the July 2000 examination there was a significant improvement in the pass rate and 73 per cent gained A\* to C grades.

144. The level of attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 continues to be in line with national expectations, with a significant minority achieving even higher levels. This judgement is in line with the teacher assessments made by the school. Pupils perform well in a wide range of physical activities. In dance pupils arrive at the school with only limited experience, but quickly respond to the good quality teaching, so that by the end of the key stage most pupils are able to take responsibility for developing a story line, choreographing it, and performing it with fluency and control. In games activities, particularly in netball, hockey and soccer pupils are confident performers and display a range of skills which are executed with accuracy and understanding. Swimming is a strength. The vast majority of pupils swim confidently and with good techniques in a variety of strokes. Pupils also have good levels of achievement in life saving and personal survival techniques. Due to problems with the gymnasium floor at the time of the inspection, it was not possible to observe gymnastic lessons, but inspection of video recordings, pupils' records and the success of the school's gymnastic teams in inter-school competitions would indicate that pupils are performing at national expectation levels with some doing even better. Pupils understand the necessity of warm up exercise and have a good understanding of the safety aspects associated with various activities and apply them appropriately.

145. The overall attainment at the end of Year 11 also continues to be average with many pupils, especially those in the examination groups, achieving higher standards. Good levels of skill development are clearly evident in a wide range of activities, with most pupils having a good understanding of simple tactics and strategies, and are able to apply them in games situations. In health related education pupils are attaining an understanding of fitness issues and practices, with some pupils able to devise their own fitness programmes. Pupils in the examination groups are developing their understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and are given much support both by teaching staff and other pupils, and reach a very satisfactory level of achievement. Many school teams participate in local inter-school competition and gain much success often winning local and county competitions. A number of the pupils have represented Castle Point and Rochford District and some have also represented Essex. A few pupils have gained international honours.

146. The overall quality of teaching continues to be at least satisfactory with no unsatisfactory teaching being observed. In 70 per cent of the lessons the teaching was either good or very good with some excellent teaching of netball observed. This has a very positive effect on the achievement of the pupils and of their enjoyment of the subject. The teachers have a good command of their subject, and teach at a pace that is purposeful and vigorous. There is an expectation that pupils will behave well and perform to the best of their ability, and in the majority of lessons this expectation is being fulfilled. Pupils respond to the teachers' energy and enthusiasm with high levels of motivation and commitment of their own. Teachers are encouraging their pupils to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their work, but in order to meet national curricular requirements this aspect needs developing.

147. The balanced curriculum meets statutory requirements and allows pupils to take part in a wide variety of activities. A large and enthusiastic group of pupils have taken the opportunity to study for a GCSE in the subject. Pupils can also opt to take the Junior Sports Leaders Award, which is a nationally recognised qualification in physical education for young people under 16 years old. The procedures for assessing and recording pupil attainment are very comprehensive. Strong leadership, clear direction, high expectations and a positive ethos characterise the management of the subject.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

148. There have been no GCSE results at Appleton since 1997. The current Year 11 are the first group for four years to take the examination: therefore, comparisons of results with national figures are not possible.

149. Levels of attainment achieved by pupils in the lessons observed during the inspection at GCSE are average. Pupils know some of the conceptual beliefs of Christianity and can use them to attempt to provide answers to the fundamental questions of life. Year 11 pupils, for example, can relate with sensitivity and poignancy the Christian concept of work as a form of service to the greater good.

150. Standards attained by pupils by the end of Year 9 are above those found on average in similar schools. Pupils not only know the central beliefs and practices of Christianity, but can relate them as underpinning aspects of the lives of major world leaders of the twentieth century. For example, Year 9 pupils in their study of Martin Luther King can correctly and effectively evaluate and examine the force of Christian beliefs which governed King's life and work.

151. Pupils who have strong analytical ability consolidate their prior learning with appreciation of concepts such as the application of prayer as an act of devotion. Pupils who are strong in learning facts consolidate their prior knowledge with additional information about artefacts used in religious ceremonies and customs. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well at all stages between Years 7 and 11. However, gifted and able pupils are not always fully stretched.

152. Throughout the school, there is a small minority of pupils, mostly of lower ability, whose behaviour is not conducive to good learning. However, the response of the vast majority of pupils is good. Pupils show application to their work. They settle to, and remain, on task, and they show pride in their work, although some pupils' presentation could be improved. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by study and discussion of a range of ideas about their own and other people's values and beliefs, to which they demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance.

153. Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good with no lessons being less than satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Lessons are well planned and well prepared and clear aims and challenging activities improve pupils' learning. In the best lessons, planning is augmented by the use of a range of teaching strategies and resources which stimulates the pupils. Teachers have high expectations both of pupils' work and behaviour and there is a strong correlation between good teaching and good behaviour. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on Christian attitudes concerning forgiveness, which the teacher conducted sensitively, pupils who might have had behavioural problems sustained concentration and were able to construct their own poignant prayers of forgiveness and read them with feeling to their classmates. Their interest led to their sustained concentration and thus to their learning. In the weaker lessons, teachers do not use their teaching methods or classroom organisation sufficiently to motivate and challenge pupils. In these lessons, pupils are often "teacher-led" and not always sufficiently encouraged to become independent learners. Homework is set and marked regularly.

154. For the first three years of school, religious education is planned effectively and follows the syllabus which has been agreed by all schools in the borough. This meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. At present, there is not enough time in Years 10 and 11 to ensure full and effective coverage of the course. This means that the provision does not comply with the requirements set down by law. This is a feature of the last inspection report which is not yet addressed.

155. Religious education contributes very effectively to the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It gives pupils knowledge and insight into concepts of right and wrong and asks them to apply those concepts to the range of issues which confronts them in real life, such as prayer. There is some study of other faiths which teaches pupils to appreciate the diversity of those faiths.

156. Assessment is still not yet satisfactory and target setting has not yet been satisfactorily established. Due to lack of access to computers and staff training there is insufficient use of information technology to support pupils' learning. Since the last inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement and although not all pupils are taught religious education at the moment, they will be by September 2001.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

157. Pupils attain high standards in their business studies courses. In 1999, 62 per cent of pupils achieved the higher grades at GCSE which is above the national average. At GNVQ at the Intermediate level, standards and completion levels are respectively on a par with those achieved in other schools across the country.

158. At GCSE pupils have appropriate levels of skills and confidence when discussing concepts involved in their work. For example, Year 11 pupils speak with confidence about different sources for finance for a business while Year 10 pupils understand the different business sectors. At the intermediate level of GNVQ, students have good information and technology skills and have a good understanding of their use in business. Pupils have a good grasp of the key communication skills. Pupils are now developing the art of writing evaluations, although this continues to be the weakest of their skills. The standard of pupils' portfolios is good. Most are well organised, well structured and well presented.

159. Learning is good in both the GCSE course and in the intermediate GNVQ course. At the intermediate level of GNVQ, progress in lessons and through modules and projects is good overall: although some weaker pupils find it more difficult to maintain these standards, they all respond well to the challenging work given to them by teachers and are enthusiastic and eager to do well. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils worked hard to understand the different types of industry and by the end could explain the part each plays in the economy. Pupils' progress is especially good where they are actively involved in learning and encouraged to explore ideas and make decisions for themselves. A good example was a Year 11 intermediate GNVQ lesson where pupils prepared the accounts for a small chocolate making business: here they made good progress because they were expected to work hard and interpret the information for themselves.

160. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work. They are attentive, respond well to questions, remain on task, maintain concentration and take pride in their finished work. Sometimes students listen passively rather than take an active part in lessons and this restricts progress a little.

161. Teaching is good and contributes very effectively to pupils' learning. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subjects they teach to present ideas in interesting ways so that pupils are well motivated and understand. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, the teacher explained the difference between gross and net profit in an amusing but very clear way: as a result pupils had a good grasp of the concepts. Another particularly strong feature of teaching is the effective way lessons are planned: because teachers are very clear about what they want pupils to learn, lessons are tightly focused. As a result pupils learn effectively, are well motivated and make good progress. It is this tight focus that leads to another strong feature of teaching: lessons are well structured and start with a clear

explanation of the work, move briskly to pupils working on their assignments and end with the teacher checking learning and setting homework. Whilst pupils work on their projects teachers are very adept at intervening with additional supportive teaching points whilst allowing and encouraging pupils to learn independently. This happened effectively in a Year 11 lesson where the teacher went around the class assessing progress by asking questions to stretch their thinking and test their understanding. A common answer to pupils' questions was to reply with the question "Why?"

162. Good progress has made since the last inspection. Marking and assessment of pupils' work is particularly effective and used well to help plan future lessons. The subject is efficiently and effectively managed and this has resulted in a strong commitment to high achievement.

## **GNVQ PROVISION**

163. The school has an effective and growing GNVQ programme for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Currently the school offers provision in information technology, art and design and business studies and in both these latter two subjects, at least one full group has completed the course of study. The attainment in both subjects is above national expectations. Staffing for the courses are adequate and staff have suitable and appropriate qualifications which enable them internally to monitor and evaluate the courses and the pupils' progress. In September 2001 a course in Leisure and Tourism will be added giving pupils further opportunities and choices. The success of the courses has helped to increase choice for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 and also increase their access to learning which is relevant and appropriate to their needs.