

INSPECTION REPORT

APPLEBY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Battlebarrow, APPLEBY, Cumbria, CA16 6XU

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112434

Headteacher: Mr T Hobson

Reporting inspector: Mr Richard Lohan
4233

Dates of inspection: 16 - 20 October 2000

Inspection number: 223855

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 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Battlebarrow Appleby Cumbria
Postcode:	CA16 6XU
Telephone number:	017683 51580
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R J S Addison
Date of previous inspection:	16 October 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr R Lohan	Registered inspector	Equal Opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Mr G Hanniker	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils and students. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr J Brown	Team inspector	History Special Educational Needs	How good are curricular and other opportunities? Sixth Form
Mrs J Peacock	Team inspector	English	
Mrs D Sutherland		Mathematics	
Mr J Crossland		Science	
Mr D Mawson		Information Technology	
Mr J Bowden		Art	
Mrs J Hotson		Design Technology	
Mr N Ogley		Geography Music	
Mr R P Geoghegan		Modern Languages	Key Stage 4
Mr A McCarthy		Physical Education	
Miss A M Smith		Religious Education	Community Links

The inspection contractor was:

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House, 33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Appleby Grammar School is a smaller than average secondary school with 496 pupils on roll, of whom 86 are in the sixth form. There is a comprehensive intake to the school, from generally supportive backgrounds, and there is evidence of a rising trend of attainment of pupils on entry to the school. The entry in Year 2000 judged by standards achieved in key stage 2 national tests is well above average. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is relatively low. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is also relatively low, by national comparisons, although the percentage of pupils with statements of educational needs is in line with the average for the county. The percentage of pupils with ethnic minority backgrounds and of those having English as an additional language is very low. Appleby-in-Westmorland is a small town in Cumbria which draws on a rural catchment area. Provision in the upper part of the school is enhanced through an imaginative partnership with the Appleby Heritage Centre. The school makes a significant contribution to continuing education in the locality, and to the social life of the local community.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Appleby Grammar School is a good school. Pupils and students achieve high standards in terms of attainment and attitudes as a result of good teaching. The school is well led and managed and provides good value for money. The school has many strengths and a small number of weaknesses.

What the school does well

- It secures high standards of achievement.
- Mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, geography and music are particularly strong.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. Very good progress is made in the sixth form.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning, and their behaviour, personal development and relationships are very good.
- Two thirds of lessons involve good or very good teaching. Very few lessons are weak. Teachers manage pupils' learning very well.
- Pupils benefit from a very good range of extra-curricular activity.
- The partnership with the Heritage Centre is a particularly successful feature of the school.

What could be improved

- Consistency in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress.
- Sharing more widely the good practice in teaching in order to raise standards further.
- The progress and achievement of boys in English, history, art and physical education, and of girls in ICT.
- Pupils' access to better co-ordinated provision of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Promotion of further creativity and independence in pupils' learning.
- The clarity of the school's improvement planning process.
- Provision to meet statutory requirements for religious education in key stage 4 and post-16.

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 good progress overall since 1995. It has made significant advances in all the key issues identified in the last report, while there remains more to be done. For example:

- the school has extensively monitored and addressed the achievements of boys and girls, and has significantly improved standards achieved in public examinations;
- pupils are now very much more aware and appreciative of cultural diversity;
- the use of assessment to help pupils make progress is now good, and in the sixth form, very good;
- parents now acknowledge a much improved frequency and range of communications between the school and themselves;
- there is a much more systematic approach to staff development geared to whole school and department priorities and the quality of teaching is much improved;
- provision for personal and social education is now more successful and improving;
- better standards of ICT are being achieved than those reported in 1995.

Some further improvement is needed in the following issues:-

- continuing to address the different achievements of boys and girls;
- more coherent provision in ICT;
- regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching;
- meeting statutory requirements with appropriate time and provision for religious education in key stage 4 and in the sixth form.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
End of Key Stage 3 tests	A	B	A	A	

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	B	B	A	B	
A-levels/AS-levels	D	A	A	n/a	

The school's results in the national tests for 14 year-olds in 2000 are above the national comparison in English and mathematics and well above average in science. A smaller proportion of pupils reached the higher level in mathematics than in the other two subjects. The standards achieved are well above those in similar schools. The results show a rising

trend of improvement in recent years, generally in line with the national trend. By the end of year 9, pupils are attaining generally above national age-related expectations in the subjects of the national curriculum, and in line with the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus in religious education though some exceed these. The best standards are achieved in English, mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages and music. Pupils make good progress from year 7 to year 9.

Results in GCSE were above average in the 1997 - 2000 period by all national measures, and in 2000 were above those of similar schools. Above average standards were achieved in English, mathematics, science, graphics and resistant materials in technology, geography, information technology, French and, with fewer pupils entered, German, art and music. History and food technology had results below the national averages. Attainment in lessons exceeded national expectations in most subjects, and were at least in line with expectations in ICT and physical education. There is insufficient time in religious education for many to achieve the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus or the short course GCSE. Literacy and numeracy skills are well developed in both key stages. A level standards have improved and are high.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning, put in great effort and work highly productively.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour are very high, making the school an orderly and conducive place to learn.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils and students relate very well to each other, to staff and to members of the wider community. They exhibit very high levels of maturity and responsibility.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory but despite good systems for promoting it, has fallen in recent years. Punctuality is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Overall this is a strong picture. Teaching was at least satisfactory in ninety-seven percent of lessons, only three percent of lessons having unsatisfactory teaching. A third of lessons were good and a third very good or excellent. The management of pupils' learning and behaviour is a significant strength of the school, and coupled with pupils' very positive response leads to good progress across the school. Teachers' grasp of their subjects and predominantly high expectations gave pupils the confidence to work hard and at good pace. Where some teaching was less effective pupils were less clear about the progress expected of them and less able to work creatively and independently. Teaching is well focused on developing literacy and numeracy skills, but the impact of the subject on girls' and boys' progress needs to be addressed in some departmental teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad, well balanced curriculum, with the exception of religious education which has too little time beyond key stage 3. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for, across the school, in a variety of learning contexts. The school is inclusive in its aims, values and practices and committed to meeting the needs of every pupil.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school has a very good social climate which promotes and secures very good relationships. Moral development is well supported: pupils are courteous and caring. Pupils' opportunities to develop appreciation of other cultures and ways of life are good. Spiritual provision is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are well cared for. Their academic progress and personal development are increasingly well monitored in a very supportive climate for learning.

Teaching time meets the recommended requirements. The curriculum provided in school is enhanced through the partnership with the Heritage Centre which increases the vocational and ICT courses available, through a broader provision of courses than the size of the sixth form would normally warrant.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher demonstrates in practice his principled and inclusive vision for the school. Pupils, staff and parents respond to his care for them and give unstintingly of their time and effort. Other managers lead their teams well but need a more clearly focused school improvement planning process and more systematic monitoring of teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is knowledgeable and very supportive. It has suitable structures for effective oversight of the school. It uses best value considerations well in positioning the school to achieve its priorities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Overall the school has reached a satisfactory level of evaluation of its performance, and has access to an increasing range and quality of data. It does not yet have a thorough and detailed analysis of progress over time, and has only recently begun to evaluate teaching and learning.
The strategic use of	Financial management and control are very good, and all

resources	decisions are related to the impact they will have on pupils' standards, progress and access to benefits. Spending is very carefully monitored, though evaluation of impact is relatively under-developed.
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The governors and management of the school have acted effectively to support the raising of standards and access to a broad curriculum in this relatively small school. The school runs smoothly and is well administered by a committed team working to the Bursar. Teachers and support staff are well deployed and well matched to the demands of the curriculum. Sharper co-ordination is needed of pupils' continuing access to ICT in their learning. Governors and senior staff have plans for the improvement of provision and need to implement them rapidly. Despite constraints, the school gives good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good standards achieved and progress made by pupils. • High levels of care for pupils. • The very good range of extra-curricular activity. • The improved communications with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to more coherent ICT provision. • The standards achieved particularly by boys in some subjects.

Inspection judgements support the positive views parents express. They and the wider community value the school and view the headteacher as embodying the school's overall values of meeting the needs of every pupil, through a secure, caring and highly aspirational community of learning. They rightly appreciate the value of a school centred on their local community and working imaginatively to provide a wide range of opportunities for youngsters with different needs. Their main criticism about progress towards seamless provision of ICT is within the school's capacity to resolve.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The school achieves high standards in key stage 3 and 4, and very high standards in the sixth form.
2. In 2000, pupils' results in National Curriculum tests at the end of key stage 3, at the age of 14, were above the national comparison in English and mathematics, and well above in science. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher standard at level 6 was broadly in line with the national comparison in mathematics, above in English and well above in science. Girls generally obtain more of the higher grades than boys. When the results are compared with similar schools, English is below, maths well above and science very well above the average. The results over recent years show a rising trend of improvement in all three subjects.
3. In standards observed by the end of key stage 3, pupils are attaining generally above expectations in the subjects of the national curriculum, and in line with the requirements of religious education, though some pupils exceed these. In English, mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages and music, standards exceed national expectations for the end of key stage 3, whilst in information

technology, history, technology, art and physical education attainment is in line with national age-related expectations.

4. Good progress is made by more able pupils particularly in mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages and music. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in key stage 3 and achieve well, notably in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, and religious education. In modern foreign languages and music pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. The achievement of boys is similar to that of girls in mathematics, science, technology, ICT, geography, modern foreign languages, music and religious education. While there is still some underachievement by boys in English, history, art and physical education, the position overall is a satisfactory improvement over that reported in the last inspection.
5. Pupils achieve high standards in public examination at the age of 16. Over the last three years, pupils have achieved above the national average, with a rising trend of success, and at a rate above the national trend. There is a differential in attainment between boys and girls, with boys achieving above the national average while girls achieve well above the national average overall. The GCSE results in 2000 show a marked improvement in English, with performance slightly above the national average and well above in English Literature; above average in mathematics, where pupils generally do better than in other subjects; above average in science; above average in art; just above the national average in technology, with significant improvement in graphics and resistant materials, but below average standards in food technology; above national averages in geography, where again pupils often do better than in their other subjects; well below average in history overall, with girls performing better than, and boys worse than, the national averages; in information technology at GCSE, well above the national average, though relatively few girls opt for the subject; in French, results are well above the national averages, and pupils tend to do better in French than in their other subjects; results in German are similar but for far fewer pupils entered; in music numbers can be low, but performance is generally above average. The school's results are above those of similar schools.
6. Observations of lessons and scrutiny of work during the inspection reveal a similar picture of attainment by the end of the key stage above national expectations in most subjects, and in line with expectations in information technology and physical education. In religious education, there is insufficient time accorded to the subject to enable pupils to achieve the standards required by the Agreed Syllabus, though some may succeed in completing the short course GCSE requirements. An additional contribution to the standards achieved in the key stage is made by the staff and courses offered at the Heritage Centre, where, for example, year 10 pupils make significant gains in their ICT skills.
7. At A level, very significant progress has been made since the last inspection, with pupils' average points score rising from 13 to 19 in that five-year period. Performance is well above the national average. In the sixth form, boys do better than girls when average points scores are compared. Particularly good performance at A level was achieved in science, geography, modern foreign languages and music, while history students performed at levels below the national expectations. Observation of lessons confirmed this generally very strong picture, and the standards of work seen were very high. Pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs. More able pupils make very good progress in the sixth form.
8. Again, a very significant contribution to attainment post-16 is made by the staff and courses at the Heritage Centre, where students are able to develop some more vocationally-related skills and competences, and where, without this provision, some pupils would not have continued on into post-16 learning.
9. Attainment in numeracy is above expectations, and pupils had the opportunity to

practice and demonstrate their skills not only in mathematics but in other subjects such as geography and science. Standards in literacy are also above expectations and improving across the school. The literacy initiative is successfully developing pupils' skills in reading, writing for different purposes, and using extended writing in a range of subjects.

10. The school's progress towards its targets is good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The pupils' attitudes to the school are good and their values and personal development are very good. Their parents overwhelmingly think their children like the school. These aspects were strengths of the school at the last inspection, too. The attendance rate of the pupils is slightly above national averages but it shows a falling trend over the last three years, which is a concern for the school.

12. Pupils' enjoyment of most lessons is evident across a wide range of the curriculum, particularly in most English, science, design and technology, geography and music lessons, and in many of the maths and modern foreign language lessons. They appreciate the school has many good teachers, and they are happy to recommend it to siblings and friends. They are keen to learn, make good efforts to achieve their targets and sustain concentration well even with difficult tasks. They conduct themselves in a calm and purposeful manner when arriving at the school and during the school day. The pupils join the many extra-curricular activities in good numbers on the school's premises and elsewhere, for example, the house competitions, concerts and the theatre.

13. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is very good. They are aware of the school's code of conduct and what is expected of them and they behave accordingly. They appreciate the praise of their teachers and the awards for achievements. The older pupils, and in particular the sixth form students, show very good sense of self-discipline and they are a good example to the younger ones. The school does not tolerate oppressive behaviour and it receives the full support of nearly all parents who are contacted at early stages when problems become evident. When bullying does occur pupils readily confide in friends and ask assistance from the 'bullying committee' or staff knowing they will have sympathetic hearing and supporting action to their problems. As a consequence of all of these factors, exclusions are rare. There were only three fixed-term exclusions last year and no permanent ones.

14. The pupils are generally courteous to one another, listen well to others' contributions in lessons and in less formal situations, for example discussing ideas for the charity week in tutor time. They readily engage in conversation with adults and visitors. They trust each other and respect the property of others as they leave their bags and satchels unattended on the racks provided without fear of losing anything. The pupils also treat the school's equipment respectfully from an early age as seen in a year 7 science lesson where they handled expensive microscopes and fragile but cheap glass specimen slides with equal care. Their exercise books are tidy and they take pride in the quality of presentation of their work.

15. The personal development of the pupils is progressing very well. The sixth form students play an important part in the life of the school. They take on many responsibilities ranging from assisting teachers in year 7 classrooms, to acting as library assistants looking after the library during lunchtime and as prefects helping to maintain order at break time and on the buses. House captains keep tally of the house points and the house co-ordinators, not teachers, oversee their work. At the other end of the age scale year 8 students become 'buddies' to year 7 to help them with settling in to their new environment and answer questions and allay anxieties that the new pupils might not discuss with adults. A sixth form student guides the work of 'buddies'.

16. The pupils have very good relationships with each other and with adults. They work very well in pairs, in larger groups as well as in mixed sex groups though when not formally arranged boys and girls segregate into their own groups. Through a very well balanced educational visits programme they absorb a great deal of new experience. These include a variety of day visits locally as well as further away to places of historical and cultural interest; a residential trip to Ennerdale for year 7 students; French exchange for all Year 9; German exchange for all year 10 who study the language and expeditions to economically less developed countries by sixth formers, for example to Morocco. These visits together with the newly introduced PSHE (Personal, social and health education) programme and appropriate content throughout the curriculum make a significant contribution to the pupils' understanding of traditions, beliefs and values of their own and other people. The school has moved a long way in this respect since the last inspection.
17. The attendance rate of the students was satisfactory during the last reporting year; it was slightly above the national average but it declined gradually from a good attendance rate over the last three years. Unauthorised absence is rare. The students arrive at school on time though due to late buses some students inevitably come late. They are generally punctual to lessons during the day. The school makes strenuous efforts to improve attendance: it uses the services of the education welfare officer and of the local youth service well but it is not analysing trends of attendance overall and of various groups systematically.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching is good overall and good in each key stage. The impact of this good teaching is that pupils learn well in each key stage and across the school as a whole.
19. In lessons observed, about a third involved teaching which was very good or excellent; about a third of lessons were judged as having good teaching; and a further third involved lessons that were judged as satisfactory but requiring some improvement in teaching. Only a very few lessons involved unsatisfactory teaching. In several respects this shows improvement since the last inspection, where only a half of lessons were judged good or better, where half of lessons needed improvement, and where four times as many lessons were unsatisfactory as compared to this inspection. The overall improvement in teaching quality also means an increase in the number of lessons involving very good or excellent teaching. This range of quality of teaching is reflected almost exactly in judgements of the quality of learning. The range varies a little, however, across the key stages, with slightly more lessons in key stage 3 needing improvement, slightly more lessons in key stage 4 being good, and the vast majority of lessons in post-16 being good or very good. The same variation is reflected in the range of quality of learning across the key stages.
20. On the whole, teaching and learning are strengths overall. Teachers show good grasp of the subjects they teach, including basic skills, plan well with high expectations, use effective methods, make good use of time, support staff and resources, and make good use of homework. Teachers' management of pupils in lessons is a particular strength of the school and is very good in each key stage. A particular improvement since the last inspection is in the quality and use of assessment which is now good in key stages 3 and 4, and very good at post-16. Teachers show very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects in their sixth form teaching.
21. The impact of this predominantly good teaching across the school shows in pupils good acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding, their strong intellectual and physical effort, and high levels of interest and concentration. The amount of work

which pupils produce, and the good pace at which their learning proceeds, are very good and particular strengths of the school. Pupils' knowledge of their learning is good in key stage 4, very good in the sixth form, but, though satisfactory, needs to be better developed in key stage 3. Greater clarity in communicating the objectives of lessons and topics would help pupils to have a clearer idea of the intended outcomes of their learning.

22. While there are good examples of open-ended questioning and exploratory learning, for example in English and in science, there is too little emphasis on pupils' investigative, creative and independent learning. Pupils in good lessons are challenged to explain their thinking or make predictions about outcomes but in some weaker lessons space is not given to pupils to think for themselves, to be creative in their approach and to be confident in expressing their conclusions.
23. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught overall and make good progress across the school, including in the sixth form. They are particularly well provided for in English, when they are taught by the co-ordinator for special educational needs, and where their individual learning targets are directly related to the subjects. In other subjects, there is much variation in the extent to which their general targets are made specific to the subject. In this regard, the good practice in English, music, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education needs to be co-ordinated and disseminated more widely in the school.
24. The underachievement of boys which was highlighted in the last inspection, though it has continued to be reflected in overall examination results at GCSE and in key stage 3, has been addressed through effective teaching and learning in most departments. Teaching in mathematics and science, for example, has successfully engaged both boys and girls with the result that their learning is equally effective. In English and in subjects with a strong literacy element, teaching is addressing the learning of reading, writing and speaking and listening skills, and the development of a literacy strategy in teaching across the school is having an impact on pupils' learning, for instance in the use of terminology and technical language, and the use of extended writing. This is particularly helpful to boys who risk underachievement. Similarly, the teaching of numeracy skills across a number of subjects is good, and helping to secure progress for both boys and girls. There are however still features of teaching and learning which are not sufficiently engaging boys in particular, for example in history where questioning and discussion did not involve boys enough, and in art, where the cultural interests of boys are not sufficiently reflected in lesson content, leading to their lack of interest in the subject in many cases. Similarly, few girls are attracted to study computing at GCSE level.

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

25. The curriculum is generally broad, balanced and relevant at key stage 3, reflecting the school's aims, though Personal, Social and Health Education in year 9 are not yet offered. A narrowness of the provision in art restricts opportunities for boys in the subject.
26. In key stage 4 the school meets statutory requirements in the National Curriculum subjects, but there is insufficient time to deliver the agreed syllabus in religious education, and the time for modern foreign languages is barely adequate. Music is a particular strength in key stage 4 in the way in which it links the learning of music in the classroom with other activities such as orchestra and concerts. The provision at key stage 4 is enhanced by the provision of a GNVQ Leisure and Tourism programme. The provision for learning in ICT through two different types of computer systems results in pupils generally not having consistent coherent and continuous

access to learning in ICT. The school needs to implement quickly its plans for better co-ordinated provision. Appropriate use is made of disapplication from design and technology to allow a group of pupils to take up other subjects, particularly in creative arts. However, in the curriculum generally, though opportunities are provided for pupils to use creativity and independence in their learning in many subjects, through more open-ended tasks and problem-solving, this needs further development.

27. There is a modular Personal, Social and Health Education programme in years 10 and 11 which is effective and provides good elements of sex education and learning about the degrees of drugs misuse. The school meets statutory requirements in providing a well thought out careers education programme. Pupils participate in a good work experience programme in year 10, and successful work related programmes are provided for a small number of pupils for whom such an alternative curriculum is relevant. In year 12 a group of sixth form pupils participates in a challenging Young Enterprise project.
28. In the sixth form pupils have a choice of 16 A/AS level courses and General Studies which is more extensive than the size of the sixth form would normally merit. However, the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all in the sixth form is not met.
29. The sixth form programmes have been greatly enhanced by the addition of quality vocational options which pupils can study at the nearby Appleby Heritage Centre. Pupils can select from a menu of vocational options ranging from entry level to advanced level, and these can be taken as free-standing courses at the Heritage Centre or in combination with school based courses. These programmes offer some pupils a more convenient option than travelling to Carlisle or Kendal for further education, and they encourage some pupils to stay in education who might otherwise have ceased to participate after the age of 16.
30. The school meets the requirement to have 25 hours teaching time each week, and in fact there is some additional teaching time in lunchtimes for some GCSE and A/AS groups.
31. The school succeeds in providing a broadly inclusive curriculum for all its pupils. Little use is made of withdrawal for pupils with special educational needs, so they have access to the full range of curricular opportunities.
32. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities. These include sixth form expeditions to Morocco and China, a joint history/French trip to Bayeux, theatre trips, residential experiences, drama productions, and a range of activities in physical education and music. Many of these offer good personal development to pupils of different ages, and they are very well supported by pupils indicating that they derive benefit and enjoyment from their participation.
33. Pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative in several areas of the curriculum, notably in music, netball, science and the library, and through other initiatives such as the 'Buddy' system for year 7 pupils, the school newspaper, the Bullying Council and the Young Enterprise project.
34. There is good liaison with feeder primary schools and an effective induction programme involving pupils and parents, and curricular links are developing, including a Science and Mathematics trail located at Appleby Castle for both primary and secondary pupils.
35. The school is successful at making itself a major contributor in the local community. There is a thriving adult education programme at the school and community groups make extensive use of school premises. The link with Appleby Heritage Centre is still

- developing. As well as the sixth form provision some younger pupils now attend the Centre for ICT lessons, and other use is identified for work related learning and special needs education. The school is actively involved with the Appleby Alliance focussing on regeneration activities in and around the town. Representatives from the local community make good contributions within the curriculum in areas such as childcare and careers education. Pupils also make extensive contributions, both collectively and individually, to a range of local community activities and charities.
36. The mathematics department has adopted the national numeracy strategy in year 7 from September 2000, and the department is beginning to promote numeracy across the curriculum with support and guidance to other subjects.
 37. The staff have had training on teaching literacy, and subject departments are encouraged to develop the basic literacy skills of all pupils. This is reflected in the way pupil work is marked in some subjects, and during the inspection there were good examples of teachers targeting subject specific language.
 38. Provision for spiritual development is sound overall. Collective worship of a mainly Christian character is provided for the whole school twice weekly. This makes an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual development through providing for prayer and by exploring religious beliefs and values and their relevance for everyday living. However, provision does not meet the statutory requirement for daily collective worship thus significantly limiting the access for all pupils to opportunities for spiritual development. Provision for spiritual development across the curriculum is uneven. Religious education makes a powerful contribution through enabling pupils to explore fundamental questions of belief and lifestyle, the response of religions to these, and pupils' own views and responses. A positive contribution is also made in a number of other subjects, for example, history, geography and music. Overall however there is no cohesive policy on provision, and the quality and range of experiences is different for different pupils.
 39. Provision for moral development is good. It is well supported through the exploration of moral questions in religious education and in a number of other curriculum areas, for example, English, maths, history and geography and in person and social education. The school's behaviour policy, the way matters of discipline are handled by staff and the level of responsibility given to pupils are all very effective in supporting pupils' understanding of moral principles and how these support daily life.
 40. The provision for social development is very good. Pupils show a high level of self-discipline and commitment to helping others. Annually they organise fund-raising to support Save the Children and a range of other charities of their choice. Older pupils help support younger ones and sixth form pupils undertake a range of roles and responsibilities in supporting pupils and the school as a community. Across the curriculum there are opportunities to explore personal and social issues, especially in history, geography, modern foreign languages, religious education and personal, social and health education. The school also provides many opportunities for pupils to work together collaboratively, for example, through music, drama productions, sport, and through group work in class.
 41. Provision for cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. The school has significantly extended the opportunities for pupils to learn about cultural traditions other than their own through music and drama, including working with performers from other cultures and through visits and expeditions abroad. Good provision is made through a number of subject areas, especially English, geography, religious education and modern foreign languages. In addition pupils have access to a wide range of visits and opportunities for extra-curricular activities, for example, theatre visits, music/drama productions, and visits to museums and art galleries.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. The school looks after pupils' welfare, attendance and personal development well, and behaviour very well. Assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress is now also of good standard and it has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was identified as a weak point and a key issue for action.
43. The school provides a caring and supportive environment for its pupils. The teachers are well aware of their obligations with respect to child protection, and the procedures to follow are clear. They receive confidential information on a 'need to know' basis and general information when appropriate. The school's policy conforms to the area child protection committee's guidelines. The designated person briefs teachers new to the school and students coming for their initial teacher training about the school's practices and procedures and the induction includes child protection issues. Health and safety are well managed on a departmental level, for example in physical education. The governing body is actively involved in health and safety matters but neither they nor the school conduct overseeing inspections to compare the standards across all the departments.
44. Measures to promote good attendance are good. Form tutors diligently follow-up absentee records. The school investigates reasons contributing to a few students' poor attendance and tries to find solutions for these with the help of the education welfare officer. Attendance is also a regular item on the school's 'pastoral and services committee's' agenda where the education psychologist, the school nurse and sometimes the school doctor, the youth service manager as well as the education welfare officer also participate. The school is planning a series of 'attendance workshops' for each form in order to motivate all pupils to improve their attendance by emphasising its importance in their school career and later in life.
45. The systems for promoting behaviour are very good. The emphasis is on fostering self-discipline. Teachers know individual pupils very well which is aided by the practice of form tutors moving with their groups from year to year. Staff use the rewards and sanctions systems effectively and the students understand them very well. Pupils of all age groups are keen to contribute to the house points as well as to their own merit awards. Harassment and oppressive behaviour are not tolerated and appropriate records are kept of undesirable incidents. These are also investigated and discussed at the 'pastoral and services committee' meetings. The role of the 'bullying committee' is well publicised and its activities to reduce and, if possible, to eliminate unacceptable behaviour are promoted, for example, at year assemblies.
46. The school is at a satisfactory stage of development in using assessment data to monitor the academic performance of pupils, year groups, departments and the whole school. The school has just started individual target setting formally on an experimental basis. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress, using the assessment information for curriculum planning and monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are good though there is some variation across subjects.
47. The use of assessment data by departments to inform teaching and planning is now at an advanced stage in many subjects, but not consistently so across the school.
48. Support and guidance for the students' personal development to aid their achievement and progress through the years are good. The head of year 7 maintains close contact with the primary schools and the school uses the information received well, for example advanced provision for the disabled, formation of tutor groups. The boys' and girls' welfare tutors and the head of sixth form oversee pupils' personal development well through the years and guide the form tutors towards attaining the

school's declared aims. Pupils interviewed during the inspection stated clearly they knew how well they were progressing academically from the marking and comments of their teachers on their homework and completed assignments. They also appreciated how these reflected on them personally. The school takes seriously the opinions of pupils on topics discussed at the School Forum meetings and these influence the thinking and actions of the senior management team.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. The school now has effective links with parents, in contrast to the last inspection when it was identified as a weakness. Many parents commented on the significant improvement during the last few years in the quality of the reception they enjoy at the school. Furthermore, the school provides good quality information for the parents about their children and the school. Although most parents do not play an active part in the life of the school they show interest in their children's learning and support them well.
50. The parents have a positive view of the school. The overwhelming majority think their children like the school, make good progress, behave well, get the right amount of homework, and are expected to work hard and become more mature and responsible. They also feel that teaching is good, the school is well led and managed and they feel comfortable about approaching the school. Some parents are a little less satisfied with the range of interesting activities outside lessons, but even in this case fewer than one in five think so. The inspectors agree with the majority of parents' views and can affirm that the extra-curricular activities are good quality and have a good range both during breaks and after school.
51. Parents feel welcome to the school and they are satisfied it deals with queries promptly to most parents' satisfaction. The quality of information the school disseminates is also good. The information relayed to parents takes many forms, for example the prospectus and the governing body's annual report to parents, the various notes about events and achievements of pupils and school, and the regular Appleby Grammar School Feedback newsletter (AGS FEEDBACK). This is particularly informative: in addition to school news it contains a 'council column' for local news. The minutes of the School Forum are publicised thus parents see from a different perspective what their children are interested in and what their concerns are. The Homework Diary is often used to good effect to exchange information between home and school. The year-end report on their child's attainment and progress is generally informative and highlights the strengths of the pupil with additional comments though not so consistently the weaknesses, where the pupil could do better or how the parents may help. Some departments, for example English, indicate targets for pupils to aim for but it is not clear how these are followed up. A few departments do not provide this sort of guidance at all.
52. The school tries very hard to involve parents in the life of the school, for example by inviting them to sample the meals available in the school's canteen. This sort of invitation offers them another opportunity to see their children as well as the school in a different light. The school informs parents, through regular newsletters, about curriculum changes, and other planned activities and developments, and welcomes responses from them.
53. The very active group of Appleby Grammar School Friends provides good support to the school mainly through organising fund raising to supplement the school's resources and by organising social events for parents and staff. Parents' involvement in the school is satisfactory. They make good contribution to their children's learning by showing interest in their progress and work with the school effectively, for example

in relation to matters concerning behaviour. They attend open evenings, options and career meetings in high proportion, contribute financially to their children's many educational visits and follow their sporting activities with interest.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. Leadership and management of the school are good. The governing body, headteacher and key staff are effective in determining the main direction of improvement and development in the school. There are clear and explicit aims and values based on the principle of promoting high standards of achievement for every pupil. The headteacher gives good leadership, and is a good role-model in commitment to the aim of inclusive support for every pupil and in promoting the role of the school as a strong contributor to the life and well-being of the community around it. These aspects of the headteacher's leadership of the school are highly appreciated by pupils and their parents, who value the accessibility and thoughtful care that they receive at the highest level in school. The school's aims and values permeate its practice with the result that pupils and their parents with few exceptions view the school as an orderly and well-managed place in which to learn.
55. The governing body has a good level of effectiveness in fulfilling its responsibilities. Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are aware of how their own decisions about curriculum, staffing, special needs, finances and other aspects of the school have an impact on the main priorities for improvement. The governing body gives a strong lead in shaping the school's direction and in careful deployment of resources to best effect. Statutory duties are fulfilled well, with the exception of the provision for religious education in key stage 4 and post-16 which falls short of requirements, and collective worship provision which does not meet the requirements for a daily act for all pupils. The governing body has worked effectively to address the key issues from the last inspection, for most of which there has been considerable improvement.
56. The processes for monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and taking effective action are satisfactory but require improvement. A sound platform has been established for the analysis of performance data in order to set targets, and the school is developing its capacity to interrogate its data to highlight trends and patterns so as to inform future decision-making and action planning. However, there are two weaknesses which need addressing. Firstly, the school development planning process, though improved since the last inspection, does not provide a clearly focused strategy to enable the main priorities about raising standards to be carried through consistently in subject departments and individual classrooms. Secondly, arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and developing the quality of teaching are unsatisfactory. The school has plans to do this and needs to implement them. The recent round of classroom observation for threshold assessment purposes needs to be built in as a systematic and regular feature of school self-evaluation, without which the impact of the school's plans to improve cannot be gauged as effectively as possible. Increased clarity and better communication of roles, timescales, costs and evaluative criteria for success would help to improve the currently satisfactory delegation of management responsibilities and the effectiveness of senior and middle managers and heads of subject departments and pastoral teams.
57. The strategic use of resources available to the school, including grants and other income, is very good, and a significant strength of the school. Financial control is meticulous, with regular, systematic monitoring and assessment of the school's budget position. Financial decision-making is always made with a view to its impact on raising standards, improving teaching and learning, and increasing access to educational benefits. Relatively less strong, however, is evaluation of the impact of these decisions on standards and quality. Whilst income and expenditure is relatively

high compared to all maintained schools with sixth forms, unit costs are relatively low in comparison to other similar schools with foundation status. The school has achieved an imaginative solution for the staffing of small groups in key stage 4 and particularly in the sixth form, thereby widening access without prejudice to the overall budget. The school roll is being maintained, contrary to projections, but a dwindling carry-over is resulting in low contingency funding and capacity for flexibility.

58. Despite these pressures, the match of teaching and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. The partnership with the Heritage Centre extends pupils' access to specialist teaching, particularly in relation to vocational courses, key skills and, in key stage 4, especially ICT. Teacher contact periods are high, including those of senior staff, while teacher-pupil ratios in key stage 4 and in the sixth form particularly are often low or very low compared with those in key stage 3. Accommodation is good and sensibly deployed, with a rolling programme of refurbishment, though there are budget constraints on this. Learning resources are adequate and staff make careful use of them to achieve the good standards in the school. Provision for staff development, criticised in the last inspection, is now good and therefore much improved. There is a good range of courses and visits for staff in relation to whole school and department priorities. The school has satisfactory arrangements for appraisal and performance management but needs to improve them in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and its impact on learning.
59. The school is making good use of the principles of best value in determining its deployment of resources. There is good awareness of what its special characteristics are and of the unique identity it wishes to forge in the community. The views of pupils, parents and community partners are regularly sought and acted upon. There is a shared commitment to improve and a capacity to succeed, in order to continue to be the first choice school for the great majority of pupils and parents in the area. Whilst a satisfactory start has been made in its capacity to compare its performance with other like schools and to use that information to target improvement, there is a range of self-evaluation strategies which are currently underdeveloped in the school and which would help to sharpen its perception of the value it offers and the added value it achieves.

COMMUNITY LINKS

60. Strong links have been formed with the community through the Heritage Centre. This provides a wide range of adult education courses, both vocational and non-vocational for Appleby and the wider rural area. The school is represented on the regional Community Alliance by a sixth form student and students' contribution to local consultations on training and community needs is greatly valued by the Alliance and by the Heritage Centre.
61. An effective partnership has been established jointly by the school and staff at the Heritage Centre which enables pupils to access careers advice and work experience opportunities at key stage 4 and post-16. The Centre also provides access to an increasing range of VQ and NVQ courses, including advanced courses, for post-16 students enrolled in the sixth form at school. These courses include input on information technology and Basic Skills which brings together students and adults from the different courses at the Centre. In some instances students have been able to follow a combined programme of 'A' Level and vocational courses or to include attendance on twilight adult education classes to support specific career needs (for example in journalism).
62. Students following NVQ courses at the Centre in engineering or manufacturing have

the benefit of working on commercial projects to formally agreed business plans. Those involved in Leisure, Tourism or Sports Leadership NVQs work directly with organisations in the local community and with primary schools. Students' progress is carefully monitored by Centre and school staff who ensure that individual needs are appropriately met including those for personal and social development. The additional range of choices which partnership with the Centre provides, has enabled some students to enrol in the sixth form who otherwise would have left school at 16+.

63. Links with the community are further enhanced through primary school use of school premises for special events. There is also valued input to the curriculum through the local Police Liaison Officer, and the School Nurse. The theme of Citizenship forms the basis for much of the work on personal and social education recently introduced into year 7 and year 8. This helps to extend the valuable provision already in place in key stage 4. A good start has been made to provision in key stage 3 through a dedicated team of tutors. Plans are now being considered for provision in year 9 so ensuring a whole school programme up to 16+.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- (1) Monitor and evaluate more rigorously and consistently the quality of teaching and learning by carrying out
 - systematic classroom observations
 - regular scrutinies of pupils' work
 - further analysis of assessment and performance data.

(Paragraphs 17, 56, 59, 85, 92, 110, 130, 137 and 144)
- (2) Share more widely, within and between departments, identified good practice in teaching in order to raise standards further.

(Paragraphs 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 46, 47, 51, 115 and 116)
- (3) Improve the achievement of boys in English, history, art and physical education, and of girls in ICT.

(Paragraphs 2, 4, 5, 24, 25, 72, 93, 98, 99, 102, 122, 129, 155 and 170)
- (4) Secure pupils' access to better co-ordinated provision of information and communication technology (ICT).

(Paragraphs 24, 26, 76, 105, 110, 119, 137 and 160)
- (5) Promote more creativity and independence in pupils' learning by engaging them in more
 - open-ended questioning
 - exploratory and investigative work.

(Paragraphs 19, 22, 82, 92, 97, 103, 107, 110, 119, 132 and 142)
- (6) Improve the clarity and effectiveness of the school's development plan, so that the key priorities are
 - communicated clearly;
 - related to costings, time-scales and success criteria;
 - consistently reflected in the plans of departments.

(Paragraphs 56, 57, and 108)
- (7) Secure pupils' statutory entitlements to religious education in key stage 4 and in the sixth form.

(Paragraphs 6, 26, 28, 55, 163 and 168)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	150
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	28	35	33	3	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
	Number of pupils on the school's roll	410
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	26	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
	Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	76	4

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.5
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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	2000	38	41	79

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	22	25	28
	Girls	33	34	35
	Total	55	59	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (64)	75 (70)	80 (71)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (33)	48 (45)	47 (35)
	National	24 (23)	38 (35)	26 (20)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	10	18	16
	Girls	21	22	22
	Total	31	40	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (64)	85 (70)	77 (71)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (33)	51 (47)	48 (37)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

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	2000	36	32	68

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	20	35	35
	Girls	19	32	32
	Total	39	67	67
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57 (52)	99 (97)	99 (98)
	National	49 (47)	89 (91)	94 (94)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44 (42)
	National	39 (38)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	None	0
	National		0

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	17	24

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	23	17	20 (20)	2.4	2.4	2.4 (3.1)
National	16.7	17.6	17.2 (17.9)	2.5	2.8	2.7 (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	None	0
	National		0

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	None	0
	National		0

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	488
Any other minority ethnic group	8

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	3	0
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 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	28
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	125

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	21.5
Key Stage 4	18.8

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1361109
Total expenditure	1372886
Expenditure per pupil	2855
Balance brought forward from previous year	33506
Balance carried forward to next year	21729

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	496
Number of questionnaires returned	250

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38.0	57.0	3.0	2.0	1.0
My child is making good progress in school.	41.0	51.0	3.0	0.0	5.0
Behaviour in the school is good.	31.0	63.0	3.0	1.0	2.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24.0	62.0	7.0	3.0	4.0
The teaching is good.	28.0	64.0	2.0	1.0	5.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33.0	50.0	11.0	2.0	5.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60.0	35.0	1.0	1.0	3.0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62.0	36.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
The school works closely with parents.	34.0	43.0	13.0	2.0	9.0
The school is well led and managed.	50.0	38.0	4.0	1.0	7.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38.0	52.0	5.0	1.0	4.0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27.0	46.0	14.0	3.0	9.0

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents' and carers' responses are very positive, with no major areas of concern expressed through the survey.

Other issues raised by parents

In the parents' meeting with the inspectors, the same very positive views of the school predominated. However, there was general concern expressed about the coherence of provision for information technology, and a small number of parents were critical of the standards achieved by boys in physical education and extra-curricular sport.

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

ENGLISH

64. Results in key stage 3 tests in 1999, in comparison with all schools, were well above the national average at Level 5 and Level 6. However, when compared with similar schools the percentage attaining above Level 5 was lower than average and the percentage attaining Level 6 was in line with the average in those schools. In 1997 and 1998 the school's results at key stage 3 were in line with similar schools. In 2000 tests there was further improvement to seventy percent for Level 5 and above whilst the national average was sixty-three percent.
65. In 1999 fifty-two per cent of pupils achieved a grade A*-C in English and fifty-eight per cent achieved A*-C in English Literature which was at the national average for all schools. Results in 2000 show an improvement. 60.3% of pupils achieved an A*-C grade in comparison with 58.6% nationally whilst in English Literature 81.4% achieved an A*-C compared to 63.9% nationally. A significant feature of the school's success is the lack of the lowest grades in both English and English Literature with a full cohort entry.
66. Results in A Level English are in line with national averages. The subject is attracting greater numbers and there has been an increase in the higher levels over the last two years.
67. Standards achieved in work seen during the inspection indicate a rising trend in performance. Attainment by the end of key stage 3 is at least in line with and often above expectations nationally. At the end of key stage 4 pupils are attaining standards above national expectations. One strength of the department is the breadth of studies in language and literature. Pupils are guided towards an understanding of literary and non-literary texts. They are able to draw meaning, make deductions and to respond with empathy to books from a wide range of cultures. Achievement is above average in speaking and listening as pupils are able to articulate a point of view or express an opinion coherently. They have a clear understanding of the requirements of formal and informal spoken English and they use the appropriate form of standard English. Standards of handwriting and presentation are above average across all key stages. The quality of spelling is good and pupils have a range of strategies to gain competence in their spelling development.
68. Pupils who have learning difficulties achieve well for their abilities. They have a rich entitlement to a broad range of English studies and they make good progress, gaining skills in both writing and speaking and listening.
69. In lessons observed teaching was always at least satisfactory and nine out of every ten lessons were good or very good in equal proportions. Pupils' learning at all key stages is enhanced by the high level of teacher knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers teach the techniques and terminology to enable pupils to study the subject and to respond appropriately. The quality of teacher questioning is high and the pace and focus of the teaching are good. Teaching of pupils with learning difficulties is very good and the learning needs of these pupils is met with skill and sensitivity. Only rarely are pupils over-directed in whole class lessons. Occasionally there is the potential for passive learning. In the main teachers make very effective use of open-ended questions to elicit a response and they set challenging work for pupils to tackle in groups.
70. Although routine marking is done systematically at all key stages, the process of

using this information to help pupils understand their learning targets is not established. At key stage 4 work has begun on using assessment as part of pupils' self review. Monitoring of progress is also better at key stage 4 than at key stage 3. The use of assessment for pupils with learning needs is very well developed and the tracking of pupil progress is systematic.

71. The school has developed a cross-curricular literacy approach. The English department has steered this initiative and led staff development sessions for colleagues in all departments. Pupils are able to apply a variety of skills in written work in all subjects. There is systematic development of note-taking and drafting of writing and pupils learn the craft of writing in a range of literary and non-literary forms. All pupils are issued with a dictionary and extensive use is made of this resource in all subjects. Subject specific terminology and core vocabulary are taught explicitly and pupils undertake extended writing in many subjects including history, design technology, religious education, mathematics and modern foreign languages.
72. The school recognises the varying performance of boys and girls in several subjects including English. The literacy initiative has also provided good opportunities to consider the learning styles of boys and girls. Teaching approaches have been modified as a result of findings in this project.
73. In the previous inspection report (1995) oracy was a relatively under-developed area. Speaking and listening is now a strength at all key stages as there is planned and systematic inclusion of tasks to develop oracy skills, well executed by skilled and committed teachers.
74. Drama was regarded as an area for development in the last inspection report. Since the previous inspection the department has revised schemes of work to incorporate discrete role-play and drama at key stage 3 and key stage 4. The activities ensure coverage of dramatic conventions and progression in drama skills. Pupils have opportunities to take part in high quality drama performances as part of the school's extra-curricular provision.
75. Since the last inspection the department has produced documentation clearly presenting procedures and policies. This resource ensures conformity in practices and it states with clarity the department's values and vision.
76. Work has commenced to identify and plan for the development of skills in information technology. As yet there is a lack of consistency in ICT provision across all year groups. The use of information technology to produce resources for learning is a strength of the department.
77. The department has made good progress overall since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

78. Standards of attainment in mathematics at the ends of both key stage 3 and key stage 4 are above national averages and are in line with those in similar schools. In national tests at the end of key stage 3, standards were well above national averages in 1998 and above national averages in 1999 and 2000. In all three years, standards were in line with those in similar schools. Girls performed better than boys in the tests, but the gap is narrower in 2000 than it has been in the past. In GCSE examinations, standards are above national averages and pupils do well in mathematics compared to other subjects. In 1999, fifty per cent of pupils gained A*-C grades and this increased to sixty per cent in 2000. There is no difference between the performance of boys and girls at GCSE. The small number of pupils at A level makes comparisons with national averages difficult, but over the last three years A - C grades have risen from thirty-three per cent to fifty per cent and then to eighty per

cent.

79. Standards in lessons observed support the picture of attainment above national expectations at the end of key stages 3 and 4. Most pupils perform a range of calculations confidently and the introduction of ten minutes mental mathematics at the beginning of lessons is having a positive impact. At key stage 3 pupils extend their knowledge of co-ordinates to grid references and use co-ordinate diagrams in calculating perimeters and areas of shapes. They build on good understanding of number in algebra with pupils across the ability range dealing confidently with equations. Very good progress is made in understanding and interpreting scatter graphs and this is built on later in work on proportion at key stage 4 and in calculating measures of correlation at A-level. In GCSE coursework, pupils apply their mathematical knowledge confidently and high attaining pupils in year 11 begin to use A level techniques to solve problems. At A level, standards are at least in line with those of similar courses with some pupils attaining above expectation for this stage of the course. Pupils of all abilities make good progress, including those with special educational needs.
80. Standards in mathematics have a positive impact on numeracy across the curriculum. Pupils calculate confidently and have a good grasp of the use and interpretation of graphs. The timing of work on co-ordinates in year 7 is planned to support work on grid references in geography.
81. The quality of teaching is good overall. In more than two thirds of lessons seen, teaching was good or very good. In four out of every ten lessons, teaching was very good. In some of the lessons where teaching was sound and in two lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, there were areas for improvement. The quality of pupils' learning is also good and is a direct result of the opportunities created by good teaching.
82. In the good and very good lessons, teachers use their knowledge of mathematics well. They develop pupils' use of mathematical terms and symbols, helping them to discuss new ideas and clarify their thinking. This means that when pupils start written work they are confident and are willing to try out ideas. For example, year 8 pupils learning about scatter graphs, took part in a lively discussion and as a result were able to write their descriptions of the relationship quickly and clearly. Teachers use the common mistakes that pupils make to pose appropriate questions and make sure that they fully understand. They encourage pupils to ask as well as answer questions. In A-level lessons, pupils were confident enough to question each step in the teachers' explanations and were willing to contribute their own ideas. Weaknesses in teaching occurred in only a few lessons. In these lessons, too much of the work was done for the pupils. Teachers did not have a secure knowledge of the difficulties pupils might have, for example with fractions and percentages, and gave pupils examples to follow rather than helping them to develop their understanding. In all lessons, relationships between teachers and pupils were very good, with high expectations set for behaviour and involvement in both discussions and written work.
83. Homework is used well to support learning and the department provides opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities, notably a maths trail in year 7 and a maths challenge in year 8. These activities help pupils to see mathematics in context and apply the skills learned in the classroom.
84. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used effectively in the sixth form, particularly in mechanics where students use computers confidently to model problems. Good use is made of a range of graphs, charts and tables in GCSE coursework. In key stages 3 and 4 the new computer suite is beginning to be used, for example to link spreadsheets to work on scatter graphs. The department is now

planning to broaden the range of software available for mathematics in order to make full use of the new facilities.

85. Improvement in mathematics since the last inspection is good. Standards of attainment at key stages 3 and 4 have improved and there is a significant proportion of lessons in which teaching and learning are very good (forty-four per cent). Assessment is effective with teachers having a good knowledge of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and a system of record keeping has been introduced that tracks the progress of individual pupils. Although the head of department has observed teaching recently, more systematic monitoring of the work of the department would help to identify and share the good practice in the department as well as identify areas where support is needed.

SCIENCE

86. For the past three years, results in all external examinations have been rising. In 1999 key stage 3 results were well above National averages and those for similar schools. In 2000 these have improved particularly for the most able. The 1999 GCSE results were above national average. The 2000 results were a further improvement, particularly for boys' achievement. The 1999 results for biology, chemistry and physics A levels were above national averages and the 2000 results were well above. The science department adds substantially to the success of the school.
87. These results are substantiated by observations in lessons where standards are clearly at or above national expectations by the end of both key stages and sixth form. For example, during the inspection week, a year 8 class was studying sound waves and pupils understood the wave nature of sound. In a class studying the nature of matter they could make correct predictions of the outcomes from a chemical reaction by analysing the symbolic formula of elements and compounds. In year 11, the pupils understood the links between the needs of plants for dissolved nitrogen and the development of the Haber process for making ammonia. The year 12 pupils in their first practical titration demonstrated high levels of practical skills.
88. Teaching in all science lessons is generally good with no unsatisfactory lessons. In key stage 3 the teaching is generally good with some examples of very good teaching. For example in a year 8 astronomy class, the teacher arranged a series of practical demonstrations, including the use of the laser and computer models to explain how the concept of light travelling in straight lines can be used to explain day and night, the seasons and eclipses. In a year 9 class the teacher arranged a series of theoretical inputs and practical work to consolidate pupil understanding of their nervous system in respect to their own reaction times. In key stage 4 the teaching is at least sound with some good and very good teaching. For example in a year 10 group studying the structure of the periodic table, after a teacher oral input and completion of a purposefully produced worksheet, the learning was consolidated by a good quality video.
89. In the sixth form the teaching is consistently good. For example, in chemistry, the teacher gave an exposition relating the production of alcohol to the conditions of fermentation and the biology of yeast.
90. This good quality teaching, throughout the science department, produces a very good response and interest in the subject from the pupils.
91. Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress. It has steadily improved its results for all ages and abilities of pupils. Boys' achievement is close to the result for girls and not considered to be a significant difference. The department has improved its contribution to whole school literacy. Information and communication technology (ICT) has greatly improved and plans are in place to

consolidate this across all teachers. The scheme of work is being re-written and when it is completed and reviewed, should continue to support the improvement of teaching.

92. The strengths of the department are the quality of teaching and the support to learning by the technicians; ICT which is developing, particularly but not exclusively, in A level physics, and monitoring of pupil's progress, which is a factor in improved external examination results. There are no major weaknesses in the department. In this strong context, the teaching is not effectively monitored to ensure continuing improvement in teaching and overall the teaching lacked opportunity to develop pupil independence and creativity through investigative work.

ART

93. Standards of achievement in GCSE examinations in 2000 were good, being above national averages. These were a significant improvement on the previous year's results. However, there has been a decrease in the number of pupils opting for the subject and the overall trend in numbers is below the national average. There is also a consistent pattern of boys under-performance in comparison with girls in examinations.
94. Standards of achievement at advanced level are good, though the numbers are low.
95. Standards of achievement at key stage 3 are satisfactory or better in the majority of cases, and generally in line with national standards.
96. Standards of attainment are good in observational work and related design and decorative activities. Whilst use of two-dimensional media is well controlled, pupils are less confident in the expressive use of media. Pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of the visual elements of arts, though the level of understanding of pupils of critical studies concepts is variable.
97. The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in all cases, with some good or very good teaching being evident. There were no unsatisfactory lessons seen. All lessons were well prepared, and an appropriate range of teaching styles was utilised, though sometimes the emphasis was over didactic, at the expense of practical and exploratory activities. In good lessons pace was maintained through effective interventions with pupils which ensured progress. Learning activities in critical studies were hampered by whole class teaching using reproductions of art works that were too small for corporate viewing.
98. Pupils' response was generally good, and in some cases very good. Whilst most pupils remain on task and many girls were strongly motivated, some boys were rather uninterested in their artistic studies. Behaviour was satisfactory.
99. Documentation for the subject is thorough and well presented. The art curriculum concentrates on two-dimensional work using observed stimuli, and decorative and design work including textile activities. Limited construction activities take place and no modelling. The cultural concerns and interests of boys do not feature strongly in the curriculum at present. Though this curriculum motivates girls, boys are less interested in the subject as a result.
100. Facilities for the subject are good. There are two large classrooms, and one has been partitioned by the teacher to act as a sixth form work area which is good utilisation of this space. Storage is good and well used. There is an excellent kiln which only requires minor work to make it functional for firing clay. Capitation is a little below national averages.

101. The subject is well managed by an enthusiastic and committed teacher, who works hard to create a visually stimulating environment both in the department and throughout the school. Opportunities for professional development have been limited in recent years, though the art teacher is eager to extend the expertise and broaden the range of work.
102. In order to build on the sound foundation established for the subject, by motivating and raising boys' achievement, the department should broaden the stimulus offered to pupils to incorporate boys' cultural interests and concerns, and extend the art curriculum, by introducing a broader approach to media activities, which encourage more three-dimensional work, problem-solving and innovation.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

103. At the end of key stage 3 attainment is in line with national expectation. In 2000 there has been an increase in the percentage of pupils getting the higher levels. In lessons attainment is in line with national expectation and pupils develop a range of good making skills within a variety of projects. They use a range of materials including wood, plastic, card, electronics, mechanisms, structures, food and textiles. Design skills are underdeveloped, though pupils in year seven develop basic skills of drawing and sketching successfully. In food technology there is a significant lack of design work. Pupils are able to demonstrate competence in cookery skills but lack skills of investigating, testing and evaluating their products. For example pupils in upper key stage 3 were producing sponge flan cases but were unable to explain how their product could be changed, stored or developed to provide a range of different products or how this linked with earlier or subsequent work. However where lower key stage 3 pupils were designing and making a puzzle game they were able to select and use a range of large and small equipment safely, make choices about size, shape and colour, measure, mark and cut Perspex accurately and use technical vocabulary to explain what they were doing. Overall there is a lack of product analysis but where this was seen in lower key stage 3, pupils were able to use existing snacks to identify healthy options, talk about packaging and generate ideas for their own products.
104. At the end of key stage 4 standards are just above the national average and trends show significant improvement in graphics and resistant materials over the last 3 years. Standards in food technology are well below the national average and below other subjects in the school. Overall boys perform better than girls but girls gain the highest grades. In lessons standards in graphics and resistant materials are above national expectation and in food technology below. In upper key stage 4 pupils studying graphics show a good grasp of the design process and can explain why, where and when they require research, can produce an effective specification against which they can evaluate their design ideas and use ICT to inform their designing.
105. In both key stages pupils working with graphics and resistant materials use ICT effectively as part of their designing. Computer Aided Design is used to generate ideas which are then evaluated and remodelled. Use of ICT is limited in food technology, particularly in terms of using nutritional analysis for modelling and evaluating ideas.
106. Pupils make satisfactory progress over key stage 3 but some lack of continuity and planned progression restricts progress. At key stage 4 pupils make at least satisfactory progress and boys make better progress than girls. Graphics folders show how annotated sketches and drawings are used by pupils to communicate their

thinking and build on earlier ideas. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good.

107. Teaching is always satisfactory and often good. Where teaching is good prompt lively introductions to lessons are given, well structured questions are asked and pupils are involved in relevant and informative demonstrations. This was evident in the year seven lesson on puzzles where a range of activities were available and consequently pupils were challenged and motivated. Where teaching is less good pupils are presented with closed activities, objectives are not made clear and there are limited teaching and learning styles. This was evident in upper key stage 4 food technology project work. There was no clear structure or objectives, pupils were told to design rather than being taught how to design and consequently they worked without direction and had little understanding of what they wanted to find out in their research and how they could use the collected information. Marking of work involves oral and written feedback to the pupils but there is a lack of consistency in the use of assessment to inform learning. Where assessment methods are well developed pupils are provided with challenge and support which was seen in the year 9 electronics lesson where information from previous work was used to develop their knowledge of component and circuits. Where assessment is less developed work is not matched to pupils' needs which was reflected in the low level food technology work in lower key stage 4 and the lack of understanding which the pupils had of their previous work on raising agents.
108. Leadership and management are satisfactory for graphics and resistant materials but unsatisfactory for the food technology element of the department's work. The latter is inhibiting a whole department commitment to improvement and raising standards, as is evident in the variable practice of target setting and teaching methods in different material areas. Development planning is evolving but targets are not linked to school priorities and as a result professional development needs are not identified or met. There are inconsistencies in planning, assessing and recording across material areas as was evident by the lack of detail in the key stage 4 food technology scheme of work and the portfolio of work for agreeing standards at the end of key stage 3.
109. Since the last inspection provision and opportunities for ICT have improved. Investment in Computer Aided Design has provided pupils with increased learning opportunities in resistant materials and graphics. All GCSE course are now design and technology focused and schemes of work for key stage 3 have improved in format and detail.
110. To develop further the department needs to define clear roles and responsibilities in order to secure commitment for improvement. In addition planning for the consistent and progressive use of designing and the integration of product analysis, focused practical tasks and design and make assignments needs to be addressed. Opportunities for and application of ICT in food and textiles need to be identified and planning needs to be updated to meet curriculum 2000 requirements. Monitoring and evaluation procedures need significant development.

GEOGRAPHY

111. Standards of attainment taken from teacher assessments at the end of key stage 3 in 2000 are above those achieved nationally. This is supported by inspection evidence. At the end of key stage 4 in 1998 and 1999 standards continue to be above those achieved nationally. In 2000 68.1% of pupils achieved A*-C compared with 58.2% nationally. Many pupils achieve the higher grades. Pupils' performance at GCSE is better than that achieved in many other subjects in the school. Pupils opting for the subject at both 'A' and 'AS' level are performing at least in line with national expectations and are generally well above expectations with many achieving the

higher levels. Overall this indicates the continued good performance in the department since the last inspection.

112. All abilities make at least good progress in the subject and generally very good progress. Special educational needs pupils make significant progress as a result of departmental planning, effective target setting and teachers' very good knowledge of pupils and their needs. The department uses detailed planning to support pupils' progress.
113. At the end of key stage 3 pupils demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding of a wide range of local and global environments. They describe ways in which physical and human processes interact geographically. They recognise conflicting environmental demands. During inspection for example, a year 9 group successfully drew upon their own knowledge and understanding to investigate where earthquakes and volcanoes happen and the position of the earth's plates.
114. Pupils' attitudes towards learning range from good to excellent, generally they are very good. They respond best when teachers' expectations are highest. All teachers exhibit a caring but firm approach to pupils and as a consequence, pupils are responding favourably. Behaviour on the whole is excellent and very well managed by teachers.
115. The quality of teaching at key stage 3 ranges from good to very good. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form all teaching observed was very good. All lessons were very well prepared. Very good use was made of targeted questions, pace and differentiation. As a result pupils take great pride in their work. Teaching is a significant strength within the subject. This is due not only to very dedicated specialist practitioners but also to their use of appropriate strategies to monitor the quality of the department's teaching and learning. Teachers share each other's good practice and monitor each other's work. Differentiated work generally links well with an overall agenda of improving pupil progress and attainment. Pupils' work is very well monitored and marked in an informative way that informs both pupil progress and teaching practice. Teaching overall is very supportive, for example in a year 10 group that appropriately studied the physical features of national parks teaching was clear in expectation, supportive in style and encouraging in clearly raising individual achievement. As a result all pupils were involved and the very best learning took place. Excellent lessons are characterised by clear, shared learning objectives and the very best relationships that ensure that pupils are consistently on task. Teachers make very effective use of appropriate geographical language and imagery. This is extremely successfully used at GCSE and 'A'/'AS' level where teachers give excellent opportunities for pupils to express their responses in the fullest detail.
116. The curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages. Good coverage of the needs of examinations is in evidence in departmental schemes. The curriculum is supported by fieldwork at all levels. Experimental learning and geographical enquiry is generally very effectively taking place. There is a full, appropriate range of policies to support learning in place for both individuals and the curriculum.
117. The subject has an adequate allocation of funds and financial planning and spending are appropriate. The department has a satisfactory suite of rooms with appropriate storage space, convenient for the effective use of resources. Some resources, specifically textbooks, are outdated.
118. The department has continued at least to maintain the good standards of performance identified in the last inspection and often improve them. For example, better target setting is in place, the quality of teaching and learning is more systematically monitored, teachers have received more in-service training, fieldwork has developed (local, Lake District, Durham/Washington, River Eden, St Bees,

Carlisle) and the scheme of work for geography has been fully and appropriately revised.

119. In order to further improve standards for all, the department should more directly link its good special educational needs practice with whole school systems. It should further develop its good practice on enquiry based work for the younger pupils. It should look again at its good overall strategies to pace and extend all pupils specifically those for the very able and it should make fuller use of ICT.

HISTORY

120. Standards achieved by pupils at the end of key stage 3 are in line with national expectations for pupils of that age.
121. In the 1999 teacher assessments at the end of the key stage the percentage of pupils at Level 5 or above was below national averages. Whilst the performance of girls was broadly in line with national expectations, the performance of boys was well below. In 2000 the percentage of pupils at Level 5 and above was above the national averages, and the performance of boys improved.
122. Evidence from the inspection is that standards at the end of key stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations, though there are some significant variations in the performance of girls and boys. Pupils in some lower sets display standards which are above what might be expected on the basis of their prior attainment.
123. In most lessons pupils use source materials well, and some year 7 are able to appreciate the issue of the validity of evidence from different sources. Pupils of all levels demonstrate an appropriate recall of factual knowledge, whilst some higher attaining pupils are able to understand the reasons for changes and events. In year 7 the What is History module is quickly developing the essential skills.
124. In 1998 the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C in GCSE examinations was just below the national average, with no appreciable difference between boys and girls. In 1999 the percentage gaining grades A* to C was well below the national average. Whilst the percentage of girls gaining grades A* to C was above the national average, the percentage of boys with A* to C grades was considerably below the national average for boys. The level of pupils gaining A* to C in 2000 was little different to the previous year, and the difference between the results of boys and girls remains.
125. The evidence in the inspection is that standards in key stage 4 are at best in line with expectations, but the gulf between the standards of boys and girls is also evident in lessons. Whilst all pupils show a fair recall of knowledge, girls show the greater understanding, though the girls do tend to dominate the responses in lessons. The work with historical sources is generally good. Pupils can draw comparisons between past and present, they show empathy with ordinary people in the past, and some can understand change. Many of the pupils are more concerned with the amount they write than with ensuring their understanding.
126. In the A level results in 1999 the percentage of pupils gaining grades A to E was below the national average, but this was not significant given the small number of pupils involved. In 2000 the percentage with grades A-E was one hundred per cent.
127. During the inspection the standard of knowledge and understanding of sixth form pupils was difficult to evaluate in lessons because the pupils were often busy with taking notes, and therefore made little oral contribution to the lessons. The samples of work provided by sixth form pupils showed well reasoned writing, good subject

knowledge, good uses of evidence to support an argument and some mature use of language. In this the department has addressed the issue raised in the last inspection.

128. The teaching in the subject is always satisfactory and sometimes good. One lesson was very good. All lessons are well prepared, teachers show good and sometimes excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject, and they present the pupils with appropriate and good quality resources. In some lessons the resources have been specifically prepared to take account of the prior attainment of the particular pupils and progress their learning. Some lessons are conducted at a good pace and this maintains a high level of pupil concentration which contributes to their learning. On occasion both the pace and the content are challenging pupils to develop their learning. All teachers exercise good class control, and all make appropriate use of praise to encourage pupils.
129. However there remain some areas for improvement which would raise standards. The gender issue raised under standards is also an issue in some lessons. Some teachers have not developed strategies to distribute questions around the class, and boys are therefore less involved in these lessons. There is also a tendency in some lessons to over-emphasise the taking of notes before ensuring that the pupils have fully understood the material.
130. The leadership in the department is sound and improving. Some analysis of standards has been made, and changes have already been effected in the deployment of staff and the syllabuses taught at key stage 4. Changes have been introduced in the assessment processes and this will allow staff to monitor more closely the progress of pupils across the key stages. Scrutiny of pupil work has been introduced, and some lesson observation has been undertaken. These changes will have an impact in time but a more systematic approach to self-evaluation is needed. This would help further in raising standards in the subject.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

131. At key stage 4 the overall standards achieved by those pupils who complete the GCSE Information Systems course is well above national averages for the subject. This continues the level of success achieved in recent years. Relatively few girls opt for the GCSE course and efforts should be made to improve the subject's appeal.
132. At the end of key stage 3 pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national expectations for their age and ability. Most pupils are confident users of information technology. They understand the specialist vocabulary and terminology related to information technology and use it well to explain what they are doing, for example when designing a logo for a sports event. They are less confident when using information technology to test predictions and discover patterns and relationships, for instance when working with a spreadsheet. Attainment of pupils at key stage 4 is again in line with national expectations. Pupils following the information technology option courses are able to use available resources effectively to develop ideas and present information when working on coursework. Less well developed is their ability to use their initiative to find out about and exploit the potential of more advanced and new information technology tools.
133. Other subjects, such as science, music, mathematics and design and technology, provide a range of opportunities to develop and demonstrate pupil knowledge, understanding and skills throughout years seven to eleven. In design and technology, for instance, both year eight and year ten pupils make use of sophisticated computer aided design software to develop their design work.

134. The quality of IT teaching throughout the school is always at least sound and often good. Staff are secure in their knowledge and are competent at explaining the use of various software packages. There is effective general planning and preparation for lessons. There is little evidence of the use of assessment to inform planning of specific learning objectives, however, and the use of differentiation to link activities to the ability of pupils is underdeveloped. This area of planning needs more attention to ensure continuity and progression in development of the pupils' information technology capability. The use of questioning to engage pupils is also patchy. Good teaching allows the pupils to take the initiative and encourages them to make suggestions of how to proceed. An example of this was seen in an English lesson where pupils with special educational needs were able to make confident and independent use of information technology resources to help complete an activity.
135. Learning is satisfactory or good in lessons in all key stages. It is best when opportunities are provided for pupils to learn new applications and extend existing skills, for example in a year 11 music lesson where pupils make use of composition and performance software and hardware. Learning is less good where pupils are not clear about why they are doing particular activities as seen in a year 9 lesson where pupils were tackling an activity using a spreadsheet which was similar to one from a previous lesson. There are opportunities for all pupils to use the specialist information technology suites and science based resources during lunchtimes and after school. Pupils are increasingly encouraged to make use of home PCs by many subject areas. These opportunities contribute to the promotion of good progress.
136. There has been considerable improvement in IT provision since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved from unsatisfactory or sound to always sound and often good. Standards of attainment have been raised from in line or below national expectations to generally in line and in some cases well above national averages. The use of information technology in other subject areas has widened and the Heritage Centre and science, music and design and technology departments, for example now make considerable use of IT to support pupils' learning.
137. Continued progress depends upon the solution of a range of outstanding issues. Negative perceptions related to the extensive use of two different software platforms within the school should be tackled as a matter of priority. The taught information technology lessons, in key stage 3 in particular, do not currently provide sufficient support for the cross-curricular use of information technology and better co-ordination of the development of skills and knowledge of particular software applications with their use to support learning in other subject areas would further increase overall standards. The overall teaching and use of information technology, both as a subject and to support learning in other subjects, should be more carefully monitored and co-ordinated to ensure that all pupils receive an appropriate experience. The use of assessment and target setting to improve pupil performance is under-developed. The development of a whole school approach for improving resource provision, and staff training on these resources, and monitoring of information technology lessons to support development strategies and share good practice would also benefit pupils' learning and attainment.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

138. Results at GCSE show a steadily rising trend since the last inspection, from thirty-eight percent A*-C to fifty-five percent A*-C in French. Results in French in 1998, 1999 and 2000 are all around the fifty-five percent mark, which is well above the national average. Pupils score well in French compared to their other subjects. Numbers taking German are smaller but results compare well.

139. Results at 'A' Level are also strong: of 19 entries in French and German in 1998, 1999 and 2000, there has only been one student who did not pass, and several higher grades.
140. Judgements made during the inspection show that pupils display a wide range of attainment: overall by the end of key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils are above national expectations; and in the sixth form, standards are well above national expectations. By the end of key stage 3 pupils have a good grasp of vocabulary and are already able to handle grammar to form new sentences: they have a good sense of accuracy, good listening skills and some are already able to write at length. These strengths are well developed by the end of key stage 4 such that some pupils are capable of an impressive standard of writing. Extended oral work and reading are less in evidence in lessons but results show that these are also strengths. Standards in the sixth form are generally high with students displaying impressive listening, reading and writing skills. The maturity of some of the course-work is exceptional. Most of the pupils throughout the school achieve well or very well according to their abilities. A small number achieve less well because of weaknesses in the teaching of a small proportion of lessons. Pupils with SEN make very good progress throughout.
141. The quality of teaching overall is good: in almost two thirds of lessons seen, teaching was good, very good or excellent. In a quarter of lessons, it required some improvement and in a very small number of lessons it was not satisfactory. At key stage 3 and 4, much of the teaching is good or better. Teachers often display great enthusiasm and energy; their lessons have clear and appropriate objectives and learning is carefully secured by clear explanations, repetition, and memory work using a wide variety of strategies including question and answer, role plays, surveys, carefully devised information and worksheets. As a result, pupils are stretched and challenged, they learn the language well and make big strides forward. Teachers' expectations are high. In the occasional lesson, however, the reverse is the case and pupils make slow progress when the teacher has misunderstood their abilities and does not demand enough of them. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are generally very good: teachers pitch work high to stretch the students whilst at the same time explaining things well and providing excellent and up-to-date materials to learn from - as a result students give of their best.
142. Throughout the department, behaviour is good. Occasionally some pupils display rather passive attitudes and are reluctant to play their part in lessons. There is a slight tendency in some lessons for pupils to be so vigorously taught and for the pace to be so rapid that they do not have enough time to contribute at length orally. This restricts their capacity to be creative and to make imaginative contributions to lessons. Because of time constraints also, free reading is not given much focus. ICT, though not widely used, plays a sensible role, including desk-top publishing and the use of the Internet - its use will be further expanded now there is better access to computers.
143. Marking and assessment are generally of high quality - they are used by teachers to help them plan their next lessons and are useful to pupils to guide them in what they need to concentrate on to improve further.
144. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is a model of good practice and a great support to his department. However, the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching within the department need to be sharper.
145. The department has made very good improvements since the last inspection, including developments in the use of ICT.

MUSIC

146. This is a very successful department that sets the highest expectations for all pupils. Attainment at the end of key stage 3 in 1998 and 1999 is above standards expected nationally. Teacher assessment and inspection evidence confirms further improvement in attainment in 2000.
147. Pupil numbers opting for GCSE fluctuate yearly and can be relatively small. However, overall, attainment is generally above national expectations. This is supported by inspection evidence from the current year 11 group where pupils have individual standards of attainment in instrumental music ranging to Associated Examination Board grade 8. The number of pupils opting to study 'AS' and 'A' level music is small but all pupils recently entered for the examinations have passed.
148. Pupils' response to music is at least good and often very good. They build upon their previous knowledge and skills. Their work is clearly structured, well supported and developing in a very ordered atmosphere conducive to hard work. For example, pupils at the end of key stage 3 can improvise, compose and perform. They comprehend basic musical form, can use notation and recognise selected musical genres and styles. They confidently speak about their work and achievements. At key stage 4 pupils' progress particularly well in composing and performing. Listening skills could however be further developed.
149. Very good relationships are sustained in music. Pupils enjoy the creative freedom and practical approaches that this successful department offers. As a result pupils value and support each other. Above all else pupils enjoy what they do. The department computers with score-writing software are very successfully used to complement composing and listening strategies. Pupils are encouraged to purchase their own software at subsidised cost. They make improvements to their own and others' work using this strategy. Pupils perform significantly well in different styles and can adapt, improvise, develop and extend their ideas using various instruments. They very successfully encourage other members of the school to perform their compositions.
150. The quality of teaching overall is very good. Teachers are well-qualified specialists who promote the very best learning attitudes and behaviour in pupils through their care and concern. The very best teaching observed was well matched to pupils' needs and used very appropriate resources. Teachers know the pupils and have consistent high expectations. They plan well. In classes observed pupil instructions were very clear and lesson objectives shared. At examination level individualised work very appropriately fits tasks and targets to meet pupils' needs. Praise and encouragement are generally very well used. Errors in performance are sensitively corrected. This never limits creativity.
151. An effective and enthusiastic team of peripatetic instrumental music teachers further enhances pupils' experiences of music. Tuition is provided in a wide range of instruments including woodwind, strings, brass, recorders and guitar. Instruments can be borrowed. All instrumentalists are encouraged to play in the school orchestra and where appropriate in instrumental and choral groups. Pupils lead some instrumental groups and choirs. All pupils of all abilities are encouraged to learn to play instruments. There has been a significant increase in the availability of instrumental tuition since the last inspection. Tuition now takes place during most of the week which facilitates pupil access.

152. Since the last inspection good work has successfully been undertaken to improve the musical experience and attainment of the less able. Many very good examples of clearly differentiated work were seen during inspection. Specific topics have been designed for pupils of low ability. Pupils with exceptional ability are appropriately identified by the end of the first term in year 7 and are provided with more difficult musical tasks to complete alongside the class topics. Progressive, clear and informative targets are set for all abilities now. This informs planning, progress and attainment. It also identifies areas for further development. The needs of special educational needs pupils are very appropriately supported by teachers who are very aware of the best strategies, effective planning and the particular needs of individual pupils.
153. The school orchestra is a significant strength of the school. It meets weekly and performs regularly. Staff and peripatetic teachers are involved. It has 70 players. It performs in many concerts, musicals, plays and services. It has performed with the Northern Sinfonia. During the inspection it rehearsed to a good standard, "Star Wars", "Yesterday" and "The Royal Fireworks". The impact that the orchestra has on the whole school is very significant both socially and musically.
154. Resources in music are good and well used, specifically electronic keyboards. The music suite is very well used but practice rooms could be further enhanced with additional sound insulation, mirrors and more efficient heating. Classroom accommodation can be cramped. Fuller monitoring and evaluation of staff could even further enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Listening skills could improve further although some good progress is currently being made in this area. The successful peripatetic instrumental tutors should engage more pupils in group activities and become even more involved in class activities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

155. At the end of key stage 3 attainment in dance and gymnastics is in line with national expectations. By the end of key stage 4 attainment in GCSE lessons (gymnastics) is again in line with expectation. By the end of key stage 3 pupils are able to warm-up and cool down independently and suggest several reasons why this aspect of an activity session is important. Pupils are learning how to adapt stretch exercises for particular sports and activities. They create short sequences of movement in both gymnastics and dance and use this context to critically analyse their own and others movements. They use a single focus for evaluation well, but are not able to choose a focus for evaluation when using a range of criteria. Girls are able to use advice from peers more effectively than boys. Girls demonstrate satisfactory control, extension and body tension in their balances and travel movements but lack fluency and control when linking movements. Boys demonstrate good team-work in their dances, rehearse independently and improve timing and fluency. Boys' dances lack a range of dynamics, for example, changes of level and speed.
156. By the end of key stage 4, GCSE pupils have a satisfactory standard of performance in the required elements of the gymnastics programme. They show good control, fluency of movement and very good body tension when performing individual abilities, for example forward and backward rolls. They are prepared to accept the challenge of learning new vaults in order to gain better grades at examination. Pupils in key stage 4 lack the ability to technically analyse their performance and select a focus, or plan of action, for improvement. They have a sound knowledge of treatment of injuries, but lack an understanding of the ways in which injuries may be prevented. During the key stage pupils establish sound understanding of health related exercise, they give short answers to technical questions but do not expand their answers to develop areas of discussion about health.

157. In both key stages attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils make satisfactory progress in dance and gymnastics throughout both key stages.
158. The quality of teaching is sound or better in all lessons and is good or very good in twenty per cent of lessons. Where teaching is most effective, the teacher gives pupils high levels of responsibility for the management of the task, for example warm-up sessions. In these aspects of lessons pupils often lead the class through structured sessions. Here pupils demonstrate a good range of exercises and the teacher consolidates knowledge through the effective use of questions. Pupils develop real understanding of the task in gymnastics and dance when asked to explore movements (dance) and combinations of balances (gymnastics). Here pupils develop understanding of the importance of a firm base, usually a partner, and linking movements in creating flow in their sequences. In dance pupils learn how to develop fluency and timing through improved teamwork.
159. Teachers have good technical knowledge in both netball and gymnastics and this is used to develop a clear framework for evaluation. In the best lessons pupils use flash-cards and information on a whiteboard to check evaluation criteria. The best lessons are characterised by high levels of activity in which pupils attempt a task a large number of times, consolidating their learning. Where teaching is less effective pupils sit for long periods in theory based lessons. In these sessions the teacher finds difficulty in engaging the pupils in discussion or longer responses to questions, eg health related exercise and injury prevention. Teachers do not change their teaching styles to find practical ways of involving pupils. Progress is very slow at points in these lessons. In dance a lack of knowledge of the subject inhibits the development of quality motifs. Pupils produce a range of dances that lack dynamics, for example, changes in level and speed, and gesture. The roles of non-participants are under-developed. Pupils always have an observation sheet to complete, but they are rarely engaged in active evaluation with peers or used in officiating/judging or coaching roles.
160. Standards in the observed lessons have been maintained since the previous inspection. There is now a better balance of activity in key stage 3 with all pupils having access to an aesthetic element of the physical education curriculum. The subject has very good leadership, relationships are very good and the introduction of GCSE has sharpened the focus of teaching at key stage 4. The current approach to assessment is thorough and produces a range of useful information. The quality of teaching in theory lessons is unsatisfactory and there are few opportunities for pupils to develop a wide range of roles, for example, coaching, judging, organising, umpiring, especially during key stage 4. There is no formal post-16 provision for physical education. There is very little evidence of the use of ICT to enhance learning.
161. For the subject to improve further, the department should consider: developing the assessment policy to include advice on the use of levels, providing teachers with strategies for pupils to become more involved in evaluating and improving their own and others work; developing consistent approaches to teaching theory sessions; ensuring that pupils in both key stages 3 and 4 have opportunity to play a wider range of roles in lessons and extra-curricular activity and further developing the links that exist with community provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

162. At key stage 3, standards of attainment are in line with the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus and expectations nationally, and for some pupils they are higher. Pupils have a secure knowledge and appropriate level of understanding of the key aspects of the religions they have studied - for example, the use of symbolism in religion, the importance of the Bible to Christians and the significance of Bar Mitzvah for a Jewish boy. They are able to use religious language appropriately to talk about these and to express their own views and responses appropriately.

163. At key stage 4 standards of attainment are adversely affected by the very restricted allocation of time for religious education. A half GCSE course forms part of a group of subjects taught in rotation. The content is demanding and most pupils are responding at a level which is in line with, or above, national expectations, for example when exploring critically some of the arguments for the existence of God, using different perspectives. However, the time available means it is unlikely that many pupils will be able to cover sufficient work in the depth needed to enable them to achieve a GCSE or to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.
164. At both key stages pupils with special needs are well supported and many achieve above expectations. The needs of more able pupils are also well addressed but some would benefit from being challenged to develop their thinking more deeply.
165. Standards of attainment for 'A' Level religious studies are broadly in line with national expectations. However, at present there is only one student studying for 'A' level and the non-examination provision post-16 is through the very limited content of the General Studies programme. The school is therefore unable to meet the statutory requirements of the Agreed Syllabus post-16.
166. The quality of teaching and learning is mostly very good and good at key stage 3 and good or satisfactory at key stage 4. Particular strengths in both key stages are the use made within lessons of both challenging, open-ended questions and pupils' own questions and responses. These enable pupils to engage at first hand in their own learning, for example in exploring why people go on pilgrimage or how personal experience has influenced people's belief in God. Pupils show good recall of previous learning and apply this effectively to new work for example in exploring the significance of the Torah within Judaism, or the concept of the Bible as a special book for Christians. In both key stages pupils are well motivated and make good progress, especially where lessons maintain good pace and variety throughout. At key stages 3 and 4 the contribution made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is a strength of the school.
167. Regular formal assessment helps pupils to evaluate their own progress. Target setting has recently been introduced for pupils in key stage 3 and this could now usefully be further developed to ensure pupils go beyond numerical targets and identify specific strategies for achieving improvement.
168. No 'A' Level teaching was observed during the inspection, because of the absence of the one student. The quality of teaching within the general studies religious education module is good but its impact is significantly restricted by time constraints so that students do not always explore issues in sufficient depth, for example, the beliefs and values which lie behind moral stances on sexual behaviour.
169. Good use is made of a range of teaching resources including videos, input from visitors and pupils making their own artifacts. Greater use could be made of group work and of artifacts from the faith traditions. There are also, very appropriately, plans in place to develop the use of ICT resources to support pupils' learning.
170. The religious education department is well lead and managed with great care and commitment. More formal opportunities for staff to plan and share good practice together would help support and develop further the improvements already made since the last inspection in the areas of teaching and assessment.

OTHER SUBJECTS AT KEY STAGE 4

171. The school offers, in addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum, Child Development and GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) Leisure and Tourism Part One. There is also the possibility of studying Latin at lunchtime.

172. Child Development is a GCSE course covering the development and care of children from conception to the age of five and responsibilities of parents. There are nineteen pupils in the year 11 group and ten in the year 10 group. In both lessons observed the quality of teaching was good. The teaching was well organised and the teacher had a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Both lessons were enlivened by the presence of a mother and a baby of seven months making his second appearance so that pupils could observe and ask questions about his development from the age of 5 weeks when last seen. Pupils engaged well and made good progress. Attainment was in line with expectations. This course makes a good contribution to the broad, balanced curriculum offered at key stage 4.
173. GNVQ Leisure and Tourism Part One is offered to pupils at Foundation Level as the equivalent to 2 GCSEs at D-G. Higher attaining pupils can gain the qualification at intermediate level which is equivalent to 2 GCSEs at A*-C. There are 16 pupils in the year 11 and 22 pupils in the year 10 course. The quality of teaching in the three lessons observed was good. The teacher was firm and clear in her explanations, instructions and questioning, and demanded the participation of pupils. The subject matter was appropriately focused on the understanding and analysis of local leisure facilities so that it tapped into the pupils' own knowledge of the locality and what it offers. A particular focus in one lesson on Appleby Horse Fair was successful in promoting discussion; and the group will produce an improved tourist leaflet on this topic for the local tourist information bureau. Pupils' response to the subject was generally positive. This course is a good curricular offering at key stage 4, broadening the appeal of the curriculum, particularly to pupils who might be less motivated by less vocational subjects. Continuity is also offered into the sixth form through its strong links with the Heritage Centre: pupils can take any elements of the GNVQ in which they have been successful and build on them in the sixth form. Results in the Summer of 2000 (the first year the course was examined) were good, with all pupils passing at Foundation Level. At the moment only 2 hours per week is allocated on the timetable to this equivalent of 2 GCSEs. Now that the course is clearly popular and established, the school should consider whether a more generous allocation of time might be appropriate.

SIXTH FORM

Psychology A/AS

174. In 1999 and 2000 the proportions of pupils achieving grades A to E in the A level examination were above the averages nationally and the average points scores for pupils were in line with the averages for the school. In the lessons observed during the inspection pupils showed a good grasp of difficult concepts and language, and they demonstrated a sufficient understanding of the subject to be able to argue against accepted theory. Pupils are prepared to answer questions at length, and they are able to formulate an argument using references to their prior knowledge.
175. The teaching of psychology is very good. The teacher uses a lively, focussed style that relates the learning to the pupils' own experiences and knowledge. This down to earth approach to complex material engages the pupils, and teacher and pupils enjoy working together. This style is necessarily supported by good preparation and a good understanding of the subject material.

Business Studies A/AS

176. In both 1999 and 2000 the percentage of pupils achieving grades A to E at A level were above the national average, though few pupils achieved the higher grades A or B. During the inspection pupils showed good understanding of complex concepts and good prior knowledge of business structures and procedures. Several pupils in

Year 13 showed sufficient confidence in their own understanding to question solutions provided by the teacher.

177. The teaching in business studies is satisfactory. The teacher shows good knowledge of the subject, and the lessons are structured to support pupils in their preparation for the examination and to progress their learning. The teaching might be made more challenging for pupils if they were expected to feed back on their prepared work rather than the teacher talking them through the solutions.

General Studies A/AS

178. In 1999 the proportion of pupils attaining grades A to E at A level was broadly in line with the average nationally, as was the percentage achieving grades A and B. In 2000 the proportion achieving grades A to E rose slightly, but the proportion with grades A and B fell significantly. Pupils show a wide general knowledge, and some display a willingness to debate controversial or topical issues such as contraception. The pupils' prior knowledge of the subjects is varied as some may be taking a related subject at A/AS level, but this enables particular pupils to give a lead to others and encourages discussion.
179. The teaching in General Studies is good. The teaching is developing pupil understanding at an appropriate level, and the material is related well to the pupils' prior experiences. Pupils are encouraged to express a view on a range of subjects and there is no attempt to direct them towards any one perspective. It was significant in a modern foreign language module that a non-specialist linguist was able to help pupils towards an understanding of the meaning of passages in ways that suited their level of subject expertise.
180. The response of pupils towards the subject is good, and there is good collaboration between those who are studying a relevant A level and those who are not.