

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Ampleforth College

Full Name of the School	Ampleforth College
DCSF Number	815/6006
Registered Charity Number	1063808
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Age Range	13 to 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	21st to 24th April 2008

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 The college's aims and objectives are embedded in its Benedictine foundation and beliefs that seek an atmosphere that is tempered in all things, so that the strong may have something to strive for and the weak nothing to run from. In essence it seeks to welcome and include each pupil, parent, member of staff and monk; to share with parents in the spiritual, moral and intellectual formation of their children; to work for excellence in all academic, sporting and cultural endeavours and to help its pupils grow up mature and honourable.
- 1.2 For over 200 years the Benedictine Abbey at Ampleforth has been responsible for independent schools and currently has charge of two schools. St Martin's, Ampleforth, is a co-educational nursery, preparatory and pre-preparatory school, and Ampleforth College, formally constituted as a Roman Catholic boarding school in 1900, is a co-educational senior school for pupils from 13 to 18. It continues to be primarily a boarding school but with some day pupils. Governance of the college lies with the overarching Abbot's Council, meeting as the trustees of the St Laurence Education Trust, and is supported by the Abbot's Advisory Committee on the Governance of Ampleforth College (AAC), which in many respects replicates the function of the governing body in other schools.
- 1.3 A total of 612 pupils (446 boys and 166 girls) attend the college, 259 of whom are in the sixth form and 514 who board. Numbers have increased from 539 at the time of the last inspection, and then the number of girls, all of whom were in the sixth form, was small. Since then, the college has gradually become fully co-educational and when the current Year 13 boys leave the college all pupils will only have experienced the presence of both boys and girls throughout their time in the college. Students are admitted from Year 9 onwards and 2007 was the first year in which girls who had entered at that stage took GCSE. The college identifies a significant intake into the sixth form each year, of whom about 60 per cent are girls.
- 1.4 Since the last inspection in 2002, a new headmaster and deputy head have been appointed and changes to the senior leadership team include the appointment of a head of middle school and a senior housemaster. Changes to the boarding accommodation reflect the need to provide effectively for girls. A new girls' boarding house has been completed, another house for boys has been converted for the use of girls and a new double boarding house has been completed. A new off-campus sixth form social centre has been provided.
- 1.5 The Common Entrance requirement for Year 9 entrants is being raised, and entry to the sixth form is now dependent on gaining five GCSEs at grade B.
- 1.6 Based on analysis of standardised data, the ability profile of the college is very wide and overall is above the national average. The ability of about a third of pupils is well above the national average and includes a small percentage of pupils whose ability is far above average. A quarter of pupils are of average or below the national average ability, with a tail of ten per cent who are below or well below the average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities in public examinations their results will be above the average for all maintained secondary schools.

- 1.7 Of 96 pupils for whom English is an additional or foreign language, the college identifies 38 who require support. English as an additional language (EAL) is offered as an option in the sixth form. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The college identifies 148 pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and 54 receive special support. Parents have to pay for learning support but the college provides individual education plans (IEPs) and has regard to the Code of Conduct, with all with LDD identified as requiring School Action.
- 1.8 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the college. The year group nomenclature used by the college and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

School	NC name
Fourth Form	Year 9
Fifth Form	Year 10
Remove	Year 11
Middle sixth	Year 12
Upper sixth	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The college offers a fine educational experience, which amply fulfils its aim to work for excellence in all endeavours, academic, sporting and cultural, and provides a broad curriculum that is well suited to the interests, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. An eclectic range of extra-curricular opportunities blends seamlessly into a well-planned and productive programme. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. The most able pupils in Year 9 now have the opportunity to study Greek without loss of any other curriculum subject, whilst the less able benefit from additional time devoted to English. The introduction of physical education (PE) as a curriculum subject, now offered at GCSE and A level, ensures that all pupils benefit fully from the excellent facilities and the available specialist tuition. In Years 12 and 13, more flexibility of choice is offered and the curriculum is extended through the series of headmaster's lectures.
- 2.2 Across the range of educational provision, all pupils benefit from a comprehensive variety of experiences that contribute effectively to their learning and development and hone their linguistic, mathematical, scientific and technological knowledge. The articulate voices of the pupils testify to the emphasis on speaking and listening skills, whilst careful development of literacy and numeracy is much in evidence in subjects such as the humanities and science. The development of communication skills is broadened on arrival in Year 9, when all pupils are allocated, usually by parental choice, to a second modern language in addition to French. A common strategy to develop literacy yet further has recently been adopted by all departments, stretching outside the curriculum into a fund-raising Readathon. The development of human and social skills is promoted well through topics covered in subjects such as history, geography and economics. Outstanding facilities and appropriate allocation of time are well set to enable pupils to reach high levels of physical, creative and aesthetic development.
- 2.3 Christian theology is a core subject throughout the college and seeks to provide a good grounding in the tenets of the Christian faith. At the time of the last inspection, the programme of Christian living, equivalent to personal, social, health, and citizenship education (PSHCE), was felt to be of inconsistent quality. To reflect the college's aims and ethos, this programme has now been re-launched and includes coverage of many aspects of health education. The provision does not at present use specialist input from external agencies to reinforce the clear intent of the college to eradicate abuse of alcohol and promote healthy living.
- 2.4 The curriculum is enriched by the many opportunities pupils have to learn and become proficient in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, the provision of which is managed well and closely monitored. Throughout their time in the college, all pupils are expected to take part in at least two activities and usually have a free choice. Most activities are recreational but societies such as historical bench, poetry society and opera society, initiated by heads of departments, occur regularly during the term and offer opportunities for pupils to further their subject interest. Popular activities such as the combined cadet force (CCF) and the Duke of Edinburgh's (DoE) Award also involve commitment at weekends and holidays. All pupils have an opportunity to represent the college in games' matches and most do. The extended fixture list includes matches for A and B teams. Weekend activities, such as house outings, adventure training and visits to the opera in Leeds, occur regularly each term.

- 2.5 Regular concerts take place throughout the year and provide good opportunities for pupils to experience performance and for others to hear what their peers can offer, the location of informal concerts offering a very enjoyable corporate activity. Pupils are appreciative of opportunities to travel overseas through music and sports activities and they enjoy undertaking geography and history fieldwork. More locally, science pupils' studies are extended through a visit to a power station and a brewery but other departments do not exploit local resources sufficiently to amplify the taught curriculum. Voluntary service features in the extra-curricular activities of many pupils, but opportunities for regular work experience are somewhat limited by the location of the college.
- 2.6 The college pays attention to the preparation of pupils for life beyond college in the context of preparation for each stage of their education, principally GCSE, AS/A level and higher education, and advice consists largely of guidance activities. However, apart from a one-day enterprise initiative in Year 10, there is no evidence of careers education as such. A series of Sunday seminars, given by parents, is beginning to redress this balance, but participation is inevitably limited by its timing and the fact that attendance is optional.
- 2.7 The curriculum policy and planning are developed in the light of the college's mission statement and aims and, in addition to academic, sporting and cultural endeavours, seek to help its pupils to grow up mature and honourable and to be educated in the tradition and sacramental life of the church. Since the last inspection, a comprehensive curriculum review has enabled carefully considered developments and efficient planning. As part of its development as a co-educational school, the college has introduced measures such as the development of a range of girls' games but acknowledges that there is the need for further development on this front, has consulted widely and is giving continued consideration to such curricular issues to ensure that provision fully meets the needs of all the pupils.
- 2.8 The college makes good provision for meeting the needs of the significant number of pupils requiring learning support and for its most able pupils. A specialist department ensures that learning difficulties are identified as pupils arrive at the college and that IEPs are devised and made available to all staff through the college database. Individual tuition is given when appropriate and the LDD department liaises with a specific member of each academic department to ensure that staff are increasingly aware of the individual needs of their pupils. Pupils whose fluency in English does not immediately enable them to benefit from curriculum English lessons are given specialist EAL teaching, and can take examinations which qualify them for university entry. The academic progress of the most able pupils is the responsibility of the three recently appointed heads of scholars. An interesting programme for these pupils, with open access for others who wish to attend, includes lectures and debates, aimed to develop the ability to think laterally and creatively. Prepared on a somewhat ad hoc basis, however, the programme currently lacks systematic input from all academic departments to ensure that these pupils are regularly stretched beyond the confines of examination specifications.
- 2.9 The college meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 Pupils of all abilities are educated to a good standard within the context of the public examination framework, which circumscribes four of the five year groups at the college, and through the substantial programme of activities. The Benedictine ethos permeates pupils' experience and is effective in developing their understanding of the importance of interpersonal skills, and respect and tolerance of others, in addition to the pursuit of academic, sporting and cultural success. Pupils generally work well in lessons and experience success across a wide range of activities. They take a pride in their achievements and produce work of a standard which is good in relation to their abilities.
- 2.11 Pupils are well grounded in the knowledge and skills that make for effective learning in the subjects and activities they follow. They apply these well and develop a suitable range of appropriate skills, academic, physical, creative and aesthetic, and learn to apply linguistic, mathematical and scientific skills and concepts effectively in a number of different settings. Pupils find much of what they do enjoyable. Throughout the college, they are highly articulate and in lessons they listen carefully and question each other, giving justified opinions and challenging information. Specialist and subject-specific terminology is used to good effect and accurately. Christian theology is much enjoyed by pupils, who leave the college well-grounded in the tenets of the Christian faith and able to debate and question at a sophisticated level in ways that are not always replicated across other subject areas, where they have fewer opportunities to apply logical and independent thought beyond the demands of examination programmes. Throughout their time in the college, pupils develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in a wide range of curriculum subjects and demonstrate a secure grasp of technological applications that enable them to progress smoothly into their A-level courses.
- 2.12 Overall, there are no significant differences in the performance of particular groups of pupils in relation to their abilities and the structured support provided to weaker pupils enables them to make good progress in line with that of more able pupils. In Year 10, written work in French and history, for example, showed that teachers had deployed a range of structured work sheets and writing frames to guide pupils' learning. In history, these began by collecting information and graduated towards understanding and explaining the reasons behind historical events and in French they moved from short phrases and simple sentences to build up a variety of tenses and the use of description, opinion and justification.
- 2.13 Over the past three years, results in public examinations have been good in relation to pupils' abilities and well above the national average for all maintained schools. During the same period of time, the average for all subjects has been in line with that achieved by pupils in maintained selective schools. Over this period, results at A level have been more variable than at GCSE but pupils have mostly performed well in relation to their abilities. Results have been above the national average for all maintained schools, with a majority being in line with achievement in maintained selective schools. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in the number of grades A/B achieved at A level from 60 per cent in 2002 to 69 per cent in 2007. Standardised tests that monitor pupils' levels of performance from Year 9 onwards demonstrate that they make good progress as they move through the college.
- 2.14 Large numbers of pupils are engaged successfully in the wide variety of extra-curricular activities and learn and become proficient in many. Some activities such as sub-aqua and karate lead to further qualifications. The CCF has a tradition of excellence in military awards and shooting competitions and one pupil has recently gained her gliding licence. Similarly, the DoE Award scheme has an exceptionally large number of pupils completing the gold award. The college's musical activities are widely valued and two pupils are engaged in

music at diploma standard. The Schola choirs are a distinctive, high quality feature of the college, not only within Ampleforth community but also within the north-east of England, where the choirs are regularly invited to sing in cathedrals and churches. Many pupils are selected for county, regional and national sports squads. Traditionally, sports teams have maintained high standards of success, particularly in rugby and cricket, and more recently other sports such as tennis, hockey, lacrosse and cross-country running have also achieved regional success. Individuals within teams are regularly selected for representative teams outside the college.

- 2.15 Drama productions are of a high standard and through the extensive opportunities to participate, pupils have been invited to join workshops at the National Theatre. Pupils are able to show initiative and pursue individual interests. Recently, at pupils' request, Country Sports have had an addition of falconry and have developed a link with the regional national park for activities on conservation and management of the countryside. A-level pupils have organised a foreign film society for the benefit of the sixth form.
- 2.16 Overall, pupils successfully develop the ability to work independently in many areas of the curriculum and many develop successful study and self-organisation skills, although this is not uniformly so throughout the college. At best, files in the sciences were well organised and Year 10 geography pupils used computers effectively for independent research, within a framework defined by their teacher. Evidence of able sixth form pupils using the internet for research and producing their own notes for written work was seen in French, and in Year 9 English pupils with LDD used laptops to make notes effectively and prepare an essay without any disruption to the flow of a lesson.
- 2.17 Pupils study and work well with others. Effective group work was observed in English and drama and in practical science lessons. Competing groups worked successfully in history, although the reluctance of some pupils to focus on pair work in Italian limited the effectiveness of the work of other pupils. Team work is strongly fostered through games and activities and makes for pupils' good understanding and effective participation where loyalty and trust dominate.
- 2.18 The positive relationships between teachers and pupils generate a willingness on the part of pupils to engage with the tasks set. Pupils tackle their work readily and are keen to do well. When confronted with a challenge, they rise to it with enthusiasm.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.19 The college's stated belief that 'true education is about the whole person' is fully exemplified in the outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual development and the overall good provision for their personal development. The strong Christian ethos informs and shapes all that happens within the college community and leads to the development of young people who have confidence in themselves and show concern for others.
- 2.20 The opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are outstanding. The physical setting of the college, both in its natural surroundings and in its proximity to the Abbey, provides a calm and peaceful environment that encourages inner reflection. Pupils share in the religious life of the college and the Abbey by attending morning and evening house prayers and regular house masses, as well as whole-school acts of worship, including the Sunday Mass, all of which ensure that pupils understand the centrality of prayer and the Benedictine rule which lies at the heart of the Ampleforth community. Regular retreats, confirmation classes and the ever-present role models of the monastic community all contribute to the pupils' spiritual awareness and understanding. Pupils spoke of the distinctive contribution that the teaching of Christian theology makes to their spiritual development, as they not only study a

range of religious and ethical issues but also develop the intellectual and moral freedom to wrestle with complex issues of faith and practice, all within a supportive Christian environment.

- 2.21 Pupils have a strong sense and understanding of right and wrong. They benefit and learn from the college's emphasis on giving praise and encouragement, accept its clear explanation of its rules and code of conduct and reflect the stress on respect for others which contributes to the development in pupils of a common courtesy and a good standard of behaviour. A range of contemporary moral problems is examined in Christian theology lessons and in other subjects of the curriculum. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, Spanish pupils talked about the changing nature of family life and divorce in Spain and the questions which this raised about the nature of family and commitment. The recently introduced Christian living course has widened opportunities for pupils to discuss a variety of topics, including a range of sexual and health issues, in a less formal way. In a lesson on forgiveness, pupils were able to discuss the practical challenges of forgiving others, with sensitivity and thought. The school is aware of the need to evaluate critically the effectiveness of this new course to ensure that it is meeting its highly laudable aims and genuinely engaging the pupils.
- 2.22 Pupils demonstrate a very good level of social awareness. They are self-confident, at ease with themselves and with each other. They take responsibility for their own behaviour and have a strong sense of service to others. Pupils make significant contributions to the wider community through the charitable activities of the largely pupil-led FACE-FAW (Friendship and Aid Central and Eastern Europe - Friendship and Aid World), which supports a number of diverse projects throughout the world. In a similar way the annual Pilgrimage to Lourdes exemplifies the strong commitment of service to others. Within the college, pupils relate well to each other and college and house monitors take their responsibilities seriously and show evident care for younger pupils. There is currently little that is done explicitly to develop a general knowledge of public institutions and services in the United Kingdom, although pupils have a good general knowledge of them through their reading of newspapers and certain aspects of the Christian living programme contribute to this.
- 2.23 A good level of cultural awareness is developed through exposure to the wide range of musical, artistic and dramatic events that contribute to expanding pupils' cultural horizons. A powerful Year 13 theatre studies production, *The Port*, opened minds to some of the challenges of inner city living. The Abbey's strong international links with, for example, Chile, enable pupils to have direct contact with people of other cultures and develop a growing understanding of cultural similarities and differences. The diversity of the college community in terms of the nationalities of pupils and staff gives pupils a wide perspective on the world. Many spoke very positively about the profoundly beneficial aspects of a culturally diverse, international boarding community.
- 2.24 The college meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.25 The quality of teaching is good and encourages and enables pupils, whatever their ability, to make progress in all areas of curricular and extra-curricular activities. The support for those pupils with LDD is highly effective. The good quality of teaching reported in the last inspection has been maintained and continues to enable pupils to increase their knowledge and understanding and to develop a wide range of skills.
- 2.26 Lessons are generally planned well, and teaching encourages a thorough and methodical approach to learning. This was especially evident in a classical civilization lesson where the teacher engaged the pupils by relating technical terms to specific examples in the text being studied. Time is used well, with most lessons characterised by an atmosphere of concentrated work, borne of teachers' expectations that pupils will, and do, behave responsibly and work hard. Much teaching provides pupils with an extensive range of well-prepared and informative work sheets which support their learning and enable a systematic and directed approach to learning. Teaching makes a marked contribution to the success of all pupils, including those with LDD and EAL, in public examinations. To this end they are well grounded in the knowledge and skills required and make good progress. The teaching generally shows a good understanding of pupils' needs. Difficulties experienced by pupils requiring support are identified carefully in order to give very helpful subject-specific assistance but there is some room for the further extension of the most able pupils.
- 2.27 In many ways the teaching encourages intellectual, physical and creative endeavour. It successfully encourages pupils to be interested in much that they do. Some lessons, such as mathematics in Year 10 where pupils were fully engaged in writing their solutions to questions on an interactive whiteboard, revealed the enjoyment which pupils experience in being closely involved in the development of their own learning. In an example of outstanding teaching in a Year 13 drama lesson, pupils were engaged in the final rehearsal of a complex and moving play and the teacher's role of advisor, not producer, ensured that the pupils had a strong influence on the quality of what was produced. Good examples were observed where teaching encouraged pupils to further their own learning, through the use of ICT, interactive whiteboards and practical work in a variety of subjects. In Christian theology, teaching was marked by the high quality of insightful questioning which was intellectually challenging. Nevertheless, pupils do not always benefit from more varied and adventurous approaches to teaching that take them beyond the boundaries of examination specifications and encourage them to think for themselves, as they did in a Year 9 biology lesson, where pupils were encouraged to participate in an interactive whiteboard exposition.
- 2.28 Pupils are taught by committed, hard working and knowledgeable subject specialists. A large number of new staff has been appointed since the last inspection and these new recruits bring with them a renewed interest in, and focus on, teaching methods and techniques, including the appropriate use of new technology in the form of data projectors, use of internet resources and interactive whiteboards.
- 2.29 Teaching rooms are usually of a good size and are resourced well. The good range and quality of resources to support teaching are used effectively. The provision of ICT resources is good, and their efficient use was fundamental to the success of lessons observed in music technology, design and technology and science. Nevertheless, the use of ICT is variable and the college recognizes that further work is needed to raise the confidence of all teaching staff in order to exploit its full potential and to encourage pupils to evaluate the work of others, for example when making digital presentations. The college library is housed in outstanding architectural surroundings located in the heart of the college and its stock is good. However, this excellent resource remains underused by pupils and staff.

- 2.30 Assessment of pupils' work is continuous and helpful, with many teachers giving appropriate guidance to individual pupils verbally in lessons, and in written assessment, and planning future work accordingly. Most pupils commented that they understood and appreciated the grading system applied in most subjects but there is inconsistency in styles of marking and assessment between and within departments. Some marking lacks specific information to guide the pupil, especially when few comments are added to a piece of work to justify a mark. At its best, when it gives clear advice, and enters into a constructive dialogue with the individual pupil, marking significantly enhances pupils' progress and is evidence of the use of a teaching aid in its own right.
- 2.31 Teachers are aware of the results of standardised tests that pupils undertake during their school career, and use these effectively to plan teaching and to monitor pupils' progress. Teachers' awareness of the needs of those with LDD is both marked and sensitive.
- 2.32 The college meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care is outstanding and the college is successful in meeting its aim to ensure good standards of welfare, health and safety for all its pupils. The care and support offered to pupils are a strength of the college, and the high quality of pastoral care identified in the last inspection has been improved upon.
- 3.2 The staff provide very effective support and guidance for pupils, much of which is based on staff understanding and interpretation of the Rule of St Benedict. Pupils' membership of a house gives them a sense of belonging and value. Housemasters and housemistresses set the tone and ethos of each house, and oversee the personal development of their pupils, working tirelessly to ensure that they fulfil their duties and acting as excellent role models to encourage a strong sense of community. They are ably supported by a team of tutors and a matron. Both the house teams and teachers are very caring, and pupils know that they can turn to a range of people if they need support or guidance.
- 3.3 The pastoral arrangements are cohesive and very effectively managed. Communication between the houses and senior management is regular and provides opportunities to promote and share good practice, as well as to ensure consistency of standards. Boarding staff undertake professional development and their appraisal process is well received and effective. The monitor and head-of-house systems allow pupils to take positions of responsibility and contribute to the welcoming family atmosphere that is clearly felt by visitors.
- 3.4 Relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves are excellent. The civilised and constructive climate of mutual trust is a distinctive feature of the college. Relationships formed are enduring, with many former pupils retaining links to the college. The support senior pupils give to younger pupils is a striking characteristic of the life of the college and helps new pupils to settle. The pupils are proud of their school. They comment upon its uniqueness and value the high all-round quality of their education.
- 3.5 There are effective strategies in place to promote good discipline and behaviour. A clear system of proportionate sanctions and rewards is in place and applied consistently, with the details accurately recorded on the college database. Pupils and staff are currently participating in a whole school initiative, 'Philippians', to develop consistent and appropriate approaches to gender equality, bullying and smoking. This initiative addresses concerns raised by parents and stronger measures have recently been put in place to warn of the dangers of smoking and alcohol.
- 3.6 Comprehensive and robust child protection measures are in place and are implemented successfully. The nominated child protection officer has received enhanced training which is updated regularly. All staff and monitors receive appropriate and regular training in child protection, and presentations have been translated for support staff for whom English is an additional language. A joint member of the Abbot's Council and the AAC has been designated to be responsible for child protection matters, thus ensuring that the governing bodies are well informed and fulfil their responsibilities for this aspect of provision.
- 3.7 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards and the governing bodies are well informed about health and safety matters. Risk assessments, electrical testing of appliances and fire drills are carried out regularly. Detailed health and safety policies are in place. An active health and safety culture is sought, with all staff

having a duty to be aware of their legal responsibilities, and in high-risk areas such as science, sport and educational visits, the approach is highly effective. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles, to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Of the 44 first-aiders, 30 have been trained to the higher level. The college has an excellent infirmary which is always open and staffed by three full-time and one part-time nurse. Experienced school doctors hold daily surgeries and specialist counselling is available; this very high level of care is appreciated by pupils and parents alike.

- 3.8 The college meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.9 The college maintains good links with parents and the wider community. Parents are happy with the quality of education that their children receive; they are well informed, receive useful reports and have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the college. Since the last inspection, particular attention has been given to electronic communications with parents, and to the quality of reporting. A number of good links with the wider community are continuing to develop.
- 3.10 In their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated much satisfaction with the education provided. In academic matters, they approve of the standards of teaching, the range of subjects offered, the information provided about their children's progress and the amount of work set outside lessons. In pastoral matters they are equally satisfied, in particular with the guidance given to pupils, the high standards of behaviour, the encouragement of worthwhile attitudes and views and the good range of extra-curricular activities. They believe that the college handles well any concerns, encourages them to be involved in its life and work, and makes good provision for boarders. The inspectors agree with these strengths identified by the parents.
- 3.11 A number of parents raised concerns in their responses, however. These mainly related to smoking and alcohol in the upper school, the relationship between the sexes, and some bullying. The college is already aware of these concerns, and is taking steps to tackle these issues in an innovative way, especially through the previously mentioned 'Philippians' initiative which is involving the various sections of the college community in forming policies and taking action. A few parents also felt that there is a lack of weekend provision for younger pupils but the inspection team found that the provision made is appropriate for the age group concerned. A very small number expressed concern about the curricular provision for girls, suggesting that subjects such as textiles should be integrated into the curriculum, and this is an issue that is recognised and constantly under review by the senior leadership team that operates as the College Committee.
- 3.12 The college is successful in meeting its aims to welcome and include each pupil, parent, member of staff and monk; and to share with parents in the spiritual, moral and intellectual formation of their children. Links with parents are strong and well established and there are numerous opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the college. Parents are encouraged to visit their children at the college at weekends, and some of them travel considerable distances to support games fixtures or to attend music or drama events. Others are involved in charitable fund-raising, voluntary work, promoting the college, or in careers talks to pupils. Parents' days take place annually and include the opportunity to consult subject teachers. They are supplemented by regular meetings in different parts of the country, where parents have the opportunity to meet the headmaster and some of his colleagues. Different areas also have parent representatives, who host meetings and act as a point of contact for new and existing parents. The college has made considerable efforts to

consult parents through surveys on various issues, for example recently the parents of a sample of girls were consulted about their experience of co-education in the college.

- 3.13 A wide range of published information is available to new and existing parents in both paper and electronic forms. This quality is good and regular communications, including *Ampleforth College News* and *The Diary*, keep parents well informed. The handbook for parents contains a wealth of useful information about the college, its policies and procedures. Information is also available through the attractive and comprehensive new website, which includes considerable information about the curriculum including departmental schemes of work and information about option choices.
- 3.14 The college produces half-termly grades for parents, as well as full and informative reports at the end of each term, providing useful information to parents about their children's progress and often including targets for improvement. All reports are now produced and distributed electronically.
- 3.15 The college has a coherent formal complaints procedure, which is rarely needed since most issues are dealt with rapidly and informally, and with a response which is well thought out and tailored to individual circumstances. Full records are kept from the point at which complaints are made but none has become the subject of a formal procedure in the last year.
- 3.16 The college successfully aims to inculcate in its pupils a sense of responsibility to the wider community. It has in recent years increased its links with the community, and is continuing to develop these links. There is an ethos of service, and many pupils are keen to be involved in service activities or charitable fund-raising. One impressive venture is the annual 'Friendship holiday', where sixth formers host pupils from a special school for a week. The fund-raising for this venture has involved local Catholic parishes and other schools. The main vehicle for charitable fund-raising is FACE-FAW, which raises money for projects such as those associated with schools and orphanages in Eastern Europe and further afield, and involves a number of pupils working on these projects in their GAP Years.
- 3.17 There are a number of partnerships with local maintained schools, both academic and sporting. One such initiative is the Music Outreach Project which successfully provides a programme of musical concerts for primary schools in the Ryedale district. Some departments have established links with their opposite numbers in maintained schools, and have hosted events for pupils or teachers at the college. An annual higher education conference for sixth formers in local schools is hosted at the college. The sports centre is much used by the local community, particularly for swimming by local primary schools.
- 3.18 The scope for community service is limited by the location of the college, but some visits to the elderly in sheltered accommodation take place in association with the Wilf Ward Trust.
- 3.19 The college meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.20 Boarding lies at the heart of the college and the quality of provision in this area is outstanding. The centrality of the Benedictine ethos shines through in the daily life of the boarding community. Since the last inspection, much valuable work has been done to ensure a consistency of aim and practice across all houses, whilst allowing them to retain their individual identities. The quality of care and relationships within the boarding community contributes very significantly to the personal development of pupils.
- 3.21 The quality of care and the quality of relationships within the boarding community at all levels are excellent. There are clear and effective lines of communication between boarding staff and senior management and within houses. Housemasters and housemistresses, both monk and lay, lead their houses with a vigorous sense of purpose. They know their pupils very well and a clear sense of mutual respect and trust is evident. Pupils speak extremely highly of, and with great affection for, the staff who work in their house. This is symptomatic of the strong loyalty which both boys and girls develop for their boarding house.
- 3.22 An extensive programme of activities is available to pupils throughout the week. Many are standard activities, but others such as fishing and game shooting add a distinctive side to what the college offers. Although there is only a limited range of activities on a Sunday afternoon, most pupils of all ages expressed pleasure at having a period of unstructured time at the end of a busy school week.
- 3.23 New houses provide outstanding accommodation for pupils, including many en-suite rooms, whilst a planned programme of refurbishment has had a profound impact on the interiors of the older houses. In some older houses, the junior dormitories are still a little cramped and some house recreation facilities are somewhat limited but overall there is a good level of provision of ICT equipment, kitchens for pupils' use and house libraries, all of which the pupils comment on favourably.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Structures and management arrangements related to the AAC are well defined and provide good oversight of the college's aims, its objectives, the quality of educational provision and the performance of its pupils. The members of the AAC represent a suitable spectrum of expertise, including the areas of business, finance, law and education; four are former pupils and six are parents of pupils. Meeting once each term, the AAC is supported by two appropriate sub-committees that meet in advance of the main meeting and is predominantly a lay committee that gives careful consideration to college issues and puts forward recommendations, the most significant of which have to be considered, and are usually ratified, by the Abbot. The body is aware of the need to consider issues of continuity and has been successful in recruiting male colleagues, and continues to work to increase female representation.
- 4.2 Within this framework, members of the AAC are fully aware of the need for the college to provide the best education in the context of the college's Benedictine foundation and are good guardians. The AAC offers good counsel to both the Abbot and the headmaster and minutes of meetings show thoughtful debate of issues such as academic performance, raising of the level of entry to the sixth form, and appropriate involvement in the school development plan. Members of the committee have a good understanding of their role, which is to think strategically and to support the headmaster of the college, to whom all day-to-day organization and management of the college is entrusted. They are well supported by the procurator who deals with all financial matters and has good systems to control expenditure and provide them with good financial information that enables consideration of effective educational provision and investment in human and material resources.
- 4.3 The advisers have good insight into the working of the college and are kept well-informed by reports from the headmaster and others as appropriate. They know and meet with senior staff and those who live more locally have the opportunity to visit the college more regularly and are seen around the college. From time to time various members of staff have the opportunity to make presentations to the AAC in support of a new initiative or explanation of a department's contribution to the college. Those advisers who are able to attend are pleased to note the range of performances they attend and enjoy.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 The leadership and management of the college are outstanding and are shrewd, perceptive and effective in providing clear educational direction. Acknowledgement of the traditions of the college balances its self-evaluation, which identifies the need for change and the wish to move the college forward. The high quality of the direction and purpose is seen in the education provided, in the care and concern for the pupils, in the ethos that values all members of the college's community and the achievement of the college's aims that are embedded in the Benedictine Rule.
- 4.5 Since his appointment four years ago the headmaster, supported by the senior leadership team, constituted as the College Committee, has set about identifying the needs and priorities of the college, including the need to deal with weaknesses identified in the last inspection, and have gradually put in place arrangements that have enabled progress. Clear analysis has effectively enabled a range of issues to be taken forward and successfully implemented. These include a full review of the curriculum that has made for well-conceived

- improvements in this area of provision. The development of the 'Philippians' initiative provides an example of lateral thinking that is aimed at addressing concerns expressed about issues that concern the college and some parents in relation to equality of opportunity, alcohol and smoking. Forward planning and effective decision making are evident through the school development plan and at best departmental planning is suitably linked to college-wide objectives. Wise and judicious use of pupil and parent surveys, as well as a clear approach to staff consultation and the use of working groups associated with specific initiatives, help to move initiatives forward or to identify need.
- 4.6 In practice, the College Committee delegates tasks to the network of committees that meet on a regular basis, so that management at all levels of the college is effectively drawn into the decision-making process and enables good representation of those with management responsibilities at all levels, cross-fertilization of thinking and involvement in implementation and development of procedures and policies. College Committee members are in constant communication with one another, both formally and informally, and different individuals chair or attend the various committee meetings, in order to monitor what is happening. The well-developed review of performance has enabled improved monitoring of both academic and pastoral provision and established a clear link with the provision of in-service training and professional development, which is effective and well managed. In-service training within the college has helped to improve tutoring and differentiation within lessons. Throughout the college middle management is generally good. The curriculum is suitably monitored by the academic policy committee and is available for all interested parties to see outlined in the prospectus and the pupil handbook.
- 4.7 The recruitment and retention of high quality staff are well managed and arrangements for checking the suitability of teaching and non-teaching staff, supply staff and advisers are thorough and effective. The college benefits from the wisdom and experience of some long-serving teaching and non-teaching staff. In recent times a number of staff new to the college have brought in fresh blood and new ideas. The college participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers, for whom good supportive arrangements are in place.
- 4.8 Financial resources are very well and astutely managed. The college is well supplied with materials and consumable items that support teaching, within grounds and buildings that are maintained to an outstandingly high standard that is conducive to learning.
- 4.9 The administration and central services of the school are highly efficient and specialist. Good professional advice and guidance on non-academic matters support the overall purpose of the college and ensure that financial, legal and regulatory matters receive proper attention. Routines within the school are well established and communication is effective. Both administrative and support staff are loyal to the college and constitute a significant group that contributes to the health and well-being of pupils and the effective running of the school in support of the teachers.
- 4.10 The curriculum policy seeks to offer a high quality of teaching and resources, although departmental handbooks vary in the amount of associated guidance offered.
- 4.11 The college meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The college participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Pupils benefit from the quality and high standard of maintenance of an environment that for many inspires respect, and for all a controlled, calm response as they move about the buildings and site. The Rule of St Benedict, and associated well-conceived aims for pupils' education, enable high levels of physical and spiritual nurture and care of pupils, good teaching and learning, and an extensive range of games and activities. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers are warm, encourage trust and are supportive within the houses and throughout the college. In addition to their teachers, pupils have a very wide range of adults including a chaplain, matrons, medical, counselling and support staff to whom they can, and do, turn for help and friendly advice. Attention to child protection is exemplary and to health and safety is thorough. The provision for boarding is outstanding. Provision for pupils requiring support for LDD and those with EAL is effective and accounts for the good progress and achievement that they make. Through the monitoring of performance, much is known about teaching and learning but there is scope to share best practice and to extend the range of teaching strategies beyond those that are set to meet the requirements of public examinations.
- 5.2 As a result of highly effective leadership and management, good governance and continuous self-evaluation, the college has seen considerable improvements since the last inspection. The curriculum has improved and now includes PE and more flexibility of choice in Years 12 and 13. The introduction of targets and work on assessment for learning supports pupils and directs their efforts to maximize achievement and to pursue the college's aim of valuing learning. Registration of attendance was found to be unsatisfactory during the last inspection but is now undertaken correctly. The college has invested significant resources into improving the quality of boarding accommodation since the last inspection. The last report recommended that, in order to improve management and communication, especially in relation to management of the houses, the precise roles of some members of the College Committee should be re-examined. Since then job descriptions for all staff have been examined and rewritten and are available in the staff handbook. The handbook for housemasters and housemistresses has been re-written and there is beginning to be much closer consultation between housemasters and housemistresses on matters of discipline to ensure consistency. All monitors are trained more effectively and uniformly and the school monitors' conference before the start of the autumn term has been revised. Also in response to the last report, the Christian living programme has been re-developed, there has been a renewed emphasis on the Benedictine character of the college and a document *Promoting Good Behaviour* has been produced and provides the basis of the college's system of rewards and sanctions. The head of activities administers the activities system and participation is recorded and monitored.
- 5.3 The college meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The college has many strengths but in order to improve its provision further it should:
1. continue to develop further, within and between departments, the sharing of good practice associated with teaching and learning;
 2. implement whole-school strategies to extend the academic curriculum beyond the confines of public examination requirements, by the further development of activities and teaching approaches that foster delight in learning.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 21st to 24th April 2008. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with members of the Abbot's Council and the AAC. They observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the infirmary. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the college.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Beryl Fawcett	Reporting Inspector
Mr Mark Bishop	Headmaster, HMC school
Mr Ian Brinton	Former head of sixth form, HMC school
Mr Steve Callaghan	Headmaster, GSA school
Miss Margaret Connell	Headmistress, GSA school
Dr Stephen Downes	Acting head, HMC school
Mr David Forster	Director of studies, HMC school
Mrs Anne Howarth	Former senior teacher, GSA school