

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

Old Hall Comprehensive  
High Street  
Kimberworth  
ROTHERHAM  
S61 2BD

LEA area : Rotherham

Unique Reference Number : 106950

Headteacher : W A Bainbridge

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Reporting inspector: Mr W J Law

Date of inspection: 28/09/1998 - 02/10/1998

Under OFSTED contract number: 700951

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

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## Information about the school

Type of control : Comprehensive all-through

Type of school : County

Age range of pupils : 11-16

Gender of pupils : Mixed

School address : High Street  
Kimberworth  
ROTHERHAM  
S61 2BD

Telephone number : 01709 740232

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Appropriate authority : Rotherham

Name of chair  
of governors : Mr R Finney

Date of the previous  
inspection: 31/10/1994 - 04/11/1994

## Information about the inspection team

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Law\_\_The Efficiency of the School

Leadership and Management

The Curriculum and Assessment

Attainment and Progress\_\_Chris Farris

\_\_Partnership with Parents and the Community

Attendance

Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development\_\_Ian Anniss

\_Physical Education\_Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources\_\_Susan Cameron

\_Mathematics\_\_Norman Farmer

\_History, Geography\_\_Carol Goddard

\_\_Special Educational Needs

Equal Opportunities\_\_Linda Grainey

\_Religious Education\_Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development\_\_Peter McKenzie

\_Modern Foreign Languages\_\_Philip Ramsden

\_Science\_\_David Tuck

\_Design and Technology

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\_Art\_\_

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## **Main Findings**

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

Old Hall School is a very good school providing education of a good quality for all pupils.

Pupils make good progress and attainment is above the national average.

- Pupils' attend regularly and their attitudes to learning are very good.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and their relationships with teachers are excellent.
- More than half the teaching is good and often very good and the great majority of the rest is satisfactory.
- Teachers show a strong commitment to pupils and their care and to the success of the school.
- The school provides very well for the needs of pupils with special educational needs.
- The school is very well led.
- The school's partnership with parents is strong.

The school makes very good use of its available resources. \_\_

### **Where the school has weaknesses**

Some shortfalls in providing what is nationally required mean that some pupils miss out in some learning in information technology and religious education at

Key Stage 4.

Fullest use is not made of how pupils are attaining to help set personal and school targets and to help shape learning programmes.

- Providing for pupils' spiritual and cultural growth needs to be more fully developed across the school.
- The school does less well in mathematics than in the other core subjects of English and science; though the most recent mathematics GCSE results show significant improvement at Key Stage 4.
- The school does not monitor what it does as fully as it should to provide information to help it develop further.

Science and drama accommodation and the outside fabric of the school buildings are poor. \_\_ The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

### **How the school has improved since the last inspection**

The school has made sound progress since 1994. Notably it has been awarded technology college status. Some recommendations have been made good in full. An anti-bullying policy has been developed and is in place. Job descriptions of staff are now detailed and middle managers have been trained. Ineffective use of afternoon registration is no longer an issue. In other areas action is still needed. Some improvements have been made in assessment and reporting matters, but aspects remain to be tackled. Weaknesses the last inspection pointed up in collective worship and in arrangements for arts subjects



largely remain. Technology accommodation has been greatly improved, but for several other subjects there are still problems. The school has realistic targets and priorities and is well placed to sustain its development.

## Standards in subjects

The following table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1998.

| Performance in: _____               |   | Compared with                       |     |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-----|
| all schools _____                   |   | Compared with similar schools _____ |     |
|                                     |   |                                     | Key |
| well above average                  | A |                                     |     |
| above average                       |   | B                                   |     |
| average                             |   | C                                   |     |
| below average                       |   | D                                   |     |
| well below average                  | E |                                     |     |
| Key Stage 3 test English _____ GCSE |   |                                     |     |
| examinations                        | B | B                                   |     |

Results in Key Stage 3 tests are better in English and science than in mathematics. In GCSE examinations mathematics results have been poorer than most other subjects, though in 1998 this gap has been significantly reduced. The overall above average scores stem mainly from the good quality of teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Nearly all subjects in the school are strong. Attainment at GCSE is consistently above the national results and has improved since the previous inspection. Nearly all subjects in the school are strong. Pupils attain well and make good progress, reaching levels above those that would be expected on the basis of the achievement levels on entry to the school. Mathematics is an exception. Here the time given to the subject is a limitation, and some teaching is weak. In religious education at Key Stage 4 pupils achieve too little, again because too little time is given to the subject but also because teachers are not specialists.

## Quality of teaching

Overall quality Most effective in: Least effective in: Years 7-9 Good Design  
and Technology, Information Technology, Art, Mathematics Years 10-11  
Good Design and Technology, Information Technology, Art, Music, Mathematics,  
Religious Education English Good Mathematics Satisfactory

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

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of lessons seen. In over 50 per cent of lessons it was good and in almost one in five lessons very good. There is no poor teaching. The quality of teaching is consistent across all year groups. Teaching is a major strength of the school and all teachers are very hardworking, enthusiastic and committed.

## Other aspects of the school

**Aspect** **Comment** Behaviour

Very good. Pupils' attitude and behaviour are a very major strength of the school. Attendance

—

Good, unauthorised absence well below national figure. \_\_Ethos\* \_Very positive: pupils are keen to do their best; they co-operate well with each other and relationships with staff are excellent; staff commitment is clear and pays dividends.\_\_Leadership and management

\_Very good: the school pursues its aims vigorously; governors, headteacher and senior team lead positively; some aspects of the school's work need monitoring more closely.\_\_Curriculum\_Good overall, but arrangements for arts subjects and time for mathematics and religious education are weaknesses.

\_\_Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development \_Social and moral growth is well catered for, but provision for spiritual and cultural development is not well enough co-ordinated, though individual arts subjects contribute well on the cultural side.\_\_Staffing, resources and accommodation \_Staffing, resources: Staffing is good, with nearly all specialist teaching except in religious education at Key Stage 4. Accommodation is variable: good for technology, but sub-standard for science and limiting in art and drama. Information technology equipment is better than in most schools.\_\_Value for money\_Very good. The school makes very good use of its resources. It adds a good level of value in all year groups.

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\* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

## **The parents' views of the school**

### **What most parents like about the**

### **school\_What some parents are not**

**happy about**\_\_its values and attitudes have a positive effect on their children

- . it enables their children to achieve a good standard of work
- . it ensures that their children are well behaved and well cared for
- . it gives a clear picture of what is taught
- . it encourages parents to play an active part in the school

it is easy to approach with questions to do with their children and handles complaints well

it gets pupils involved with lots of activities

- . it sets enough homework for most pupils

it provides very well for pupils with special educational needs\_it doesn't set enough homework\_\_

Inspectors' judgements support parents' views. The school is welcoming and staff are very caring. The high quality of support and guidance staff provide is a key feature and strong links with parents and the community are sustained.

## **Key Issues for Action**

In order to raise further the standards of pupils' attainments and further improve the quality of the school's provision the governors, senior managers and other staff should:-

1 Ensure that all statutory requirements and government regulations are met

with particular reference to:

- increasing the amount of teaching time to enable religious education at

Key Stage 4 to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus (35, 154)

- provision for pupils in Key Stage 4 who do not follow the GCSE information technology and business studies courses to receive their

information technology entitlement (35, 60, 123)\*

- teacher comments on records of achievement which currently do not

provide sufficient specific information about pupils' attainments

(56)\*

- fulfilling the requirements for collective worship (60)
- fulfilling the requirements for teacher appraisal. (60, 68)\*

2 Make more systematic use of assessment information and data about pupils'

attainment by planning its collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination to:

- provide more detailed information about academic attainment to pupils, teachers and parents (41, 52, 56)\*
- matching curriculum planning and teaching to the outcomes of assessment, particularly with reference to matching work to pupils' abilities and setting targets for pupils (41, 92, 115)\*
- (29, - tracking pupils' progress in relation to National Curriculum targets 41)\*
- establishing more rigorous systems for school target setting and monitoring of effectiveness and value added. (41,76)\*

3 Improve provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development through:

- improving the quality of teaching of religious education at Key Stage 4 (159)
- systematically planning for provision through subjects and other aspects of school life (45, 47, 116)
- developing provision for collective worship (45, 46)\*

4 Improve procedures for monitoring key aspects of education provision particularly:

- quality of teaching (63)\*
- quality of assessment and reporting (63)\*
- interpretation and implementation of key whole school policies such as marking of pupils' work and completion of attendance registers. (54, 63)\*

5 Improve the quality of mathematics, especially at Key Stage 3. In particular:

- (3,107) - review the time allocated to the subject on the school timetable
- improve teaching by better matching work to the needs of individual pupils in some lessons (104, 105)\*
- continue with strategies to develop numeracy skills at Key Stage 3 (102) \*
- develop the use of information technology in mathematics lessons. (110)\*

- 6      Review the provision of the Creative and Performing Arts programme at  
Key      Stage 3 in order to improve coherence of the programme components.  
(33,      98, 129, 141)\*
- 7      Overcome the serious shortfalls in specialist teaching accommodation in  
science and drama and in the external fabric of the school building by  
consistently representing at the highest level the pressing need for  
external  
sources of capital monies to meet replacement and refurbishment costs.  
(71,      99, 117, 118)\*

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important areas should be considered for development and for inclusion in the action plan:

- 1 Introduce more strategies into teaching, particularly in mathematics, science and religious education at Key Stage 4 to challenge and fully meet the needs of more able pupils. (105, 115, 157, 159)\*
- 2 Review teaching methods in lower ability sets for modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4 in order to raise levels of pupil motivation and achievement. (163)\*
- 3 Develop the use of information technology to support and enhance learning in more subjects across the curriculum. (81, 110, 117)\*
- 4 Increase the range of opportunity in lessons for pupils to take greater responsibility to manage their own learning and to develop initiative. (22, 29, 83, 104, 115)
- 5 Improve the quality and consistency of marking pupils' work in a range of subject areas. (29, 92, 106, 125, 158, 188)\*
- 6 Improve the planning of schemes of work in science at Key Stage 3. (115)\*
- 7 Improve curricular liaison with local primary schools. (39)\*
- 8 Further develop curricular links with industry and commerce. (57)\*
- 9 Improve the book stock in the library. (74, 80)

Numbers in brackets refer to paragraph in the report where key issues are discussed.

\* = Key issues which the school has already recognised and is tackling within the School Development Plan.

## **Introduction**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1 Old Hall Comprehensive School is a mixed 11-16 comprehensive school serving the North West community of Rotherham. It is one of three comprehensive schools in the locality. The school was awarded Technology College status in 1996. There are 1149 pupils on roll showing a continuing steady increase in size since the previous inspection under OFSTED regulations in 1994. The school is very popular in the locality and is heavily oversubscribed.

Parents are attracted by the school's ethos and reputation for good performance in GCSE examinations. There is a good balance between the numbers of boys and girls attending the school. There are six pupils from homes where English is not the first language and 12 who are not categorised as 'white'. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is 13 per cent which is below local and national averages. The majority of pupils are drawn from the Kimberworth and Thorpe Hesley areas of Rotherham, a catchment which is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. The housing is a mixture of owner occupied and council rented accommodation. Tests administered by the LEA at the end of Year 6 coupled with the results of tests in National Curriculum core subjects at the end of Key Stage 2 show that the academic ability of the school's intake is close to the national average and slightly above the LEA averages.

There are 144 pupils (12.5 per cent) on the school's register of special educational needs which is below the national average of 16.6 per cent. There are 23 pupils (2 per cent) with Statements of Special Educational Need which is broadly in line with the national average. The major disability areas for statements are specific and moderate learning difficulties, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. A physical disability unit has been integrated into the school catering for ten full-time pupils, all with Statements of Special Educational Needs. The school is on one site. There have been some improvements to the school buildings since the last inspection. Technology College status has enabled substantial development in Technology and ICT provision; including a new technology block. Accommodation provision for science, drama, media and music has not improved.



## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>-</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year\_Year\_Boys\_Girls\_Total\_\_1997\_125\_96\_221\_\_

**National Curriculum Test Results**\_\_English\_Mathematics\_Science\_\_Number of pupils\_Boys\_65\_70\_94\_\_at NC Level 5 or\_Girls\_77\_60\_68\_\_above\_Total\_142\_130\_172\_\_Percentage at NC\_School\_64.3 (67.1)\_58.8

(53.3)\_73.3

(67.6)\_\_Level 5 or above\_National\_56 (57)\_60 (56)\_60 (56)\_\_Percentage at NC\_School\_29 (31.4)\_28 (20.5)\_30.8 (19.5)\_\_Level 6 or above\_National\_23 (26)\_37 (33)\_29 (21)\_\_

**Teacher Assessments**\_\_English\_Mathematics\_Science\_\_Number of pupils\_Boys\_78\_71\_96\_\_at NC Level 5 or\_Girls\_75\_70\_77\_\_above\_Total\_153\_141\_173\_\_Percentage at NC\_School \_74\_67 \_79 \_\_Level 5 or above\_National\_59 \_63 \_61 \_\_Percentage at NC\_School\_36 \_22 \_45 \_\_Level 6 or above\_National\_28 \_37 \_29 \_\_

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<sup>-</sup> - Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

## Attainment at Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting

year: \_Year\_ Boys\_ Girls\_ Total\_\_\_1997\_103\_113\_216\_\_\_

**GCSE Results**\_\_\_5 or more grades A\* to C\_5 or more grades A\* to G\_1 or more grades A\* to G\_\_\_Number of pupils\_Boys\_n/a\_n/a\_n/a\_\_\_achieving\_Girls\_n/a\_n/a\_n/a\_\_\_standard specified\_Total\_110\_203\_210\_\_\_Percentage achieving\_School\_52\_94\_97\_\_\_standard specified\_National\_43.3\_88.5\_94\_\_\_

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such*\_\_\_Number\_% Success rate \_\_\_*pupils* who achieved all those they studied: \_School\_n/a\_n/a\_\_\_National\_n/a\_n/a\_\_\_\_\_

3

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year\_\_\_%\_\_\_Authorised\_School\_6.5\_\_\_Absence\_National comparative data\_8.3\_\_\_Unauthorised\_School\_0.1\_\_\_Absence\_National comparative data\_1.1\_\_\_

4

### **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age)\_\_\_Number\_\_\_during the previous year :\_Fixed period\_16\_\_\_Permanent\_2\_\_\_

5

### **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is :\_\_\_%\_\_\_Very good or better\_17.2\_\_\_Satisfactory or better\_93.1\_\_\_Less than satisfactory\_6.9\_\_\_

## PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

### **Educational Standards Achieved by Pupils at the School**

#### **Attainment and Progress**

6 Attainment of pupils when they enter the school is close to the national average for comprehensive schools. At the end of Key Stage 3 in English and science pupils' attainment in the national tests is above the national average and well above average in comparison with similar schools. In mathematics the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 or above is in line with the national average and the percentage reaching level 6 or above is below. Pupils' performance in the mathematics tests is well below average in comparison with similar schools. At Key Stage 3 girls out-perform boys in English and mathematics but not in science. In the other National Curriculum subjects attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectations in Information Technology (IT), and music, and above national expectations in art, physical education (PE), modern foreign languages, geography, history and design technology.

7 By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is above average. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades is consistently above the national average and well above the LEA average. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs A\* to G is well above both the LEA and national average. The GCSE points score obtained by pupils is above the national average and is showing a rising trend broadly in line with that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils leaving school with no passes at GCSE is lower than the national average and has declined. Standards in GCSE performance overall have improved since the last inspection. Girls are attaining slightly better than boys at GCSE but the difference is not as great as that seen nationally. This indicates a closing of the gap between boys' and girls' attainment at GCSE since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils obtaining higher GCSE scores in English and science in 1996 and 1997 was mainly above national results. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher GCSE grades in mathematics in the same two years is below the national average. This represents a fall in GCSE standards in this subject since the previous inspection. In the most recent GCSE results of 1998 the proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C grades in mathematics has improved significantly and for the first time in several years is well above the national average. GCSE results are very good in business studies, computer studies, design technology, geography and music. A significantly higher proportion of pupils attain A\*-C and A\*-G grades in these subjects compared to the national averages. Compared to other subjects in the school pupils also achieve relatively well in GCSE English literature and history. Pupils achieve relatively less well in GCSE Art and Design and PE, though in both subjects GCSE levels are close to the national results and in 1998 the proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C grades in PE

exceeded the national results.

8 Attainment is at or above national expectations in nine out of every ten lessons in Key Stage 3 and in just over two-thirds of all lessons at Key Stage 4. This shows an improvement since the last inspection at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils achieving national expectations has fallen slightly. Attainment is generally in line with expectations of class groups in those subjects and year groups where pupils are allocated to classes on the basis of their ability. In lessons with the top sets most pupils achieve above national expectations but in a small number of these lessons a minority of pupils, usually boys, achieve below their own capabilities. Pupils with special educational needs and those with lower ability attain well in relation to their own capabilities in all subject areas. Girls attain better than boys in several subjects, including mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and geography at both key stages. However boys and girls are attaining equally well in most other subjects. This is a positive outcome of strategies introduced since the last inspection to tackle underachievement in boys. Good attainment, where pupils are achieving their best in lessons irrespective of their ability or gender is most often in evidence in design technology, history, PE, music and IT.

9 Pupils attain national expectations in English at both key stages with evidence of higher than average standards in some years. Standards in reading across the curriculum are average and pupils are generally fluent readers. Standards in writing across the curriculum are average. Higher attainers write fluently in a range of styles and as they move up the school they write more analytically and at greater length. Average attainers are often fluent but do not provide the same level of analysis, detail and accuracy in their writing. A minority of less able pupils have weak spelling and handwriting. Standards in speaking and listening are good. Learning is enhanced in all subjects by pupils' ability to listen well to their teacher and to use informal discussions to exchange ideas and come to decisions. Overall standards in English Language and literacy skills are similar to those reported in the previous inspection.

10 In mathematics pupils are matching national expectations in much of their classwork at both key stages although many lower attaining pupils lack basic number skills. This represents a fall in standards in mathematics since the previous inspection and the school is necessarily carrying out a major review of provision in this subject. Numeracy skills are satisfactory elsewhere and sufficiently developed to enable full access to the curriculum for the majority of pupils. Most subjects contribute to the reinforcement of numeracy but the degree varies.

11 In science pupils are working above national expectations at both key stages. They can follow instructions and carry out investigations safely but their skills of investigation design are less well developed. Overall standards in science are similar to those reported in the previous inspection.

12 In design technology, food technology and graphics attainment is good at both key stages and often higher than national expectations. Pupils' design work is of a good standard and they are able to use equipment and materials competently and safely. Pupils are able to accurately explain the processes they have followed during designing and making and can evaluate their own work. By the end of Key Stage 4 they are expanding their range of design and evaluation skills and are able to use a variety of research techniques.

13 Attainment in IT at Key stage 3 is in line with national expectations overall and in many lessons is higher. At Key Stage 4 pupils studying GCSE information technology or business studies attain above national expectations in IT capability. For the remainder of pupils at Key Stage 4 experience of information technology is dependent upon the extent of its use in subject areas. This varies in quality across the school and is insufficiently developed in many subjects. In modern foreign languages attainment at Key Stage 3 is consistently above national expectations. Pupils learn the use of the target language in a range of learning contexts. At Key Stage 4 attainment in modern foreign languages is more variable. Pupils in top sets attain above national expectations, especially in German where GCSE results are consistently good. A small minority of uninterested pupils achieve low standards of attainment.

14 At Key Stage 3 attainment in geography and history is good with many pupils attaining above national expectations. At Key Stage 4 attainment within lessons is in line with national expectations and is often good. GCSE results exceed the national average in both subjects. In music attainment is in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3 and above at Key Stage 4. In art attainment is above national expectations at Key Stage 3 and consistent with national standards at Key Stage 4. The overall standard of attainment in work seen in PE is at least in line with national expectations, with a significant proportion of pupils in both key stages achieving at a higher level. In RE at Key Stage 3 attainment is broadly in line with expectations of the Rotherham Agreed Syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils attain standards which are unsatisfactory in relation to this syllabus. This is largely due to the inadequate period of time allocated to RE at this key stage.

15 Overall pupils make good progress at both key stages and in almost all subjects. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, progress well relative to their own capabilities. Gains in knowledge and in the broadening and deepening of understanding are sound in at least nine lessons out of ten and good in about half of them. Progress overall is better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. In the small minority of lessons where progress is unsatisfactory some pupils, mainly boys, fail because of lack of attention and inability to concentrate rather than purely lack of effort. In a minority of lessons in several subject areas, including mathematics, science and RE at Key Stage 4 the pace and content does not challenge more able pupils.

16 Pupils' attainment in all three of the core subjects when they join the school in Year 7 is close to the national average. In English pupils of all abilities make at least satisfactory progress at both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is well above average. GCSE results in English language and literature are in line with or above national results. A good level of value has been added to pupils' attainment in English. In mathematics pupils of average ability make satisfactory progress but more able pupils make insufficient progress at both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is below average. GCSE results in 1996 and 1997 were below the national results but much improved and above the national average in 1998. In science pupils of all abilities are making good progress in lessons and over time at both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is well above average and GCSE results are well above national averages. A good level of value is added to pupils' attainment in science.

17 Pupils of all abilities make good progress at Key Stage 3 in design technology, IT, art, PE, RE, modern foreign languages, history and geography. In music progress is satisfactory at this key stage. Pupils of all abilities make good progress at Key Stage 4 in design technology, art, music, PE, history and geography. Progress in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4 is variable. It is good in German and in about half of the French sets. In the other sets progress is less evident. Progress with pupils' IT capability is good in GCSE IT and business studies courses. Progress with IT capability for other pupils is insufficient and is dependent upon an uncertain level of experience gained in other subject areas. Pupils are making unsatisfactory progress in RE at Key Stage 4.

18 The great majority of parents are of the view that children in all year groups achieve good standards of work and make good progress at school. Parents are less satisfied with attainment in mathematics than in other subjects. Parents of children with special educational needs are happy with the progress made by their children. The inspection findings support these parental views. Overall the school has maintained the above average standards of attainment and good rates of progress reported in the previous inspection.

### **Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development**

19 Pupils throughout the school have positive attitudes to work. They have a pride in their school which is well justified, and they treat it with respect. They settle down quickly in lessons and respond well to good teaching. They concentrate hard on their tasks, apply themselves and meet challenges well. They work successfully individually as well as in pairs and groups in all subjects showing tolerance and respect for each others' views. Pupils in all years are willing to ask questions and are ready to produce reasoned arguments when expressing an opinion. They listen to their teachers and to one another



courteously, thus learning from perceptions that are different from their own. The quality of working relationships is very good and contributes to a very purposeful, happy atmosphere in lessons with pupils wanting to learn and improve. Pupils with special educational needs are well regarded and fully integrated into the work of all subjects. They also benefit from working in an environment where the attitudes to learning are very positive. Pupils take good advantage of the many extra-curricular activities the school offers and take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award in good numbers at all levels of the award.

20 The behaviour of the pupils in and around the school is very good. This judgement confirms the views of almost all parents. Teachers spent very little time on dealing with behaviour problems in lessons. Thus the teaching time is effectively used and pupils' learning is rarely interrupted. Pupils observe the school's code of behaviour showing high levels of respect and tolerance for each other and all adults working in the school. They wait sensibly for the arrival of their tutors and teachers at the beginning of the lessons, chatting amicably and showing self-discipline. They are friendly and polite and offer their help willingly whenever the occasion arises. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and appreciate the advantages of an orderly school. Lunchtime is a civilised occasion in spite of the crowded conditions in the dining-room and the long wait for many pupils. There is no evidence of harassment or bullying. It is the opinion of both pupils and parents that bullying does not occur often and if it does, the matter can be discussed with teachers in confidence and the problem will be resolved. Exclusions are well below the national average and are applied only as a last resort.

21 The excellent relationships between pupils and staff are a strength of the school. Tutors provide good pastoral support and staff are excellent role models, treating the pupils in an adult manner. The caring ethos of the school is reflected in the pupils' attitudes to others. They relate well to each other and give willing support to pupils with learning difficulties or with physical disability. They recognise the achievements of others and celebrate their successes with them. They welcome visitors, are friendly towards adults and talk easily with them. They keep their own property and uniform tidy and are proud of the quality of their work. The school is well cared for by pupils and all display work on walls and exhibited in public areas of the school is respected.

22 Pupils take responsibility for their own work well when the opportunity arises. They organise their work schedules, using their individual planning diaries, which engenders good self discipline. Pupils undertake classroom duties, run the reception desk and are responsible for organising their own Work Shadowing which increases their confidence and self esteem. Many pupils in Year 11 organise their own work experience programme which demonstrates increasing maturity and independence. Prefects are responsible for the maintenance of good order during lunch and break times. Pupils have started an environmental group which helps to keep the site tidy and promotes recycling. They are also involved in a range of fundraising initiatives for

charities including an annual sponsored walk, which has raised over £100,000. Pupils' responsibility and initiative is enhanced by involving them in the decision-making about which local, national and international charities they will support. Pupils organise costumes for the school play, take initiative when composing music and there is good evidence of extended personal study at Key Stage 4 in English, art, PE and design technology. The range of opportunity pupils are given to show initiative and be responsible in deciding how they will learn could be extended to more curriculum areas.

23 In RE, at Key Stage 3, pupils are clearly developing a sense of morality as well as knowledge and understanding of religion. The school has a particularly interesting and innovative Christian Union organised and run by the pupils themselves. Commitment of these pupils to raising the profile of the spiritual dimension of the school is noteworthy. Generally, however, pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. There is evidence across the curriculum and in the PSE programme of pupils developing their own beliefs and values. Whilst pupils appreciate their own cultural traditions, they are less able to talk about the diversity and richness of other cultures.

24 The pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development remain a key strength and a major asset for the school. They contribute significantly to the sustained high standards of academic achievement.

## **Attendance**

25 Attendance of pupils at the school is very good and above the national average. Unauthorised absence remains well below the national figure. The level of authorised absence is also relatively low but has risen since the last inspection due to the increase in the number of families taking holidays during term time. The school is justifiably concerned about this and is working with parents to try and reverse this trend. Punctuality to school and to the start of lessons is good. This is a credit to staff and pupils in overcoming the difficulty of moving across a school site which has become very congested due to increased pupil numbers.

## **Quality of Education Provided**

### **Teaching**

26 Teaching is a major strength of the school. It is satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons. It is good in half of the lessons and in almost one in five it is very good. There is no poor teaching, though there are unsatisfactory features in a minority of lessons. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Teaching is consistently good or very good in design and technology, information technology and art and is generally

good at both key stages in all other subjects. In music, teaching is good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Overall, teaching is satisfactory in mathematics at both key stages, though about one lesson in five is unsatisfactory. In RE, the teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4.

27 Teachers are very hard working, enthusiastic and committed. They have extensive and secure subject knowledge and understanding. This is most evident in the best lessons where teachers use their subject expertise to considerable effect in a wide range of teaching methods which includes some very good interactive whole class teaching. Teachers set clear objectives, give clear explanations and provide a good pace for learning. Teaching is well planned with a good balance and range of activities. Expectations are high and teachers are particularly skilful in their use of questions. In the best lessons teachers involve pupils actively in learning and pupils participate in evaluating progress. Teachers focus effectively on individual pupils and provide work and learning resources that are appropriate to the range of abilities within the class. The use of fieldwork in geography and the use of real-life tasks in information technology are particularly successful.

28 Many of these features are also present in lessons which are satisfactory. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils and classes are generally managed very well. Homework is taken seriously and is set regularly. It is used well to promote pupils independence, particularly in coursework at Key Stage 4.

29 A relatively frequent weakness is in several aspects of the quality of assessing and recording pupils' attainment. Most teachers mark pupils' work regularly in line with school policy. However, marking does not provide sufficient clarity about individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses; or sufficient information about their progress in specific skills or how they might improve on a piece of work. The use of information technology in lessons to support and enhance learning is variable. It is used well for a range of purposes in only a few subjects, namely geography, history and design technology. In a minority of subjects, the balance between whole class teaching and pupils' independent work is inappropriate and there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning through investigative work. Unsatisfactory teaching in RE is due to insecure subject knowledge and in some mathematics lessons work is not satisfactorily matched to pupils' needs and abilities. The quality of teaching in the school's tutorial programme is good and satisfactory in equal measure.

30 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Assessment of pupils on the SEN register is good and is used to inform teaching plans. Small group teaching is effectively focused on specific skills and is conducted with good pace and enthusiasm. Planning which targets specific pupils for short-term learning programmes is both innovative and effective. In-class support and learning resources provided by teachers and non-teaching

assistants are good and benefit both individual students and the class as a whole. Lesson planning between subject teachers and special needs staff is good. In a few subjects teachers have inadequate access to pupils' individual learning targets. Where available, the use of information technology is especially effective in encouraging pupils with special needs in their writing.

31 The school has maintained the overall good quality of teaching identified in the last inspection. There have been notable improvements in the planning of art and some improvement in the range of teaching strategies in music. Since the last inspection the school has increased the quantity of teaching of RE at Key Stage 4, as recommended.

## **Curriculum and Assessment**

32 The school publishes a clear curriculum statement which emphasises the value of technology college status. Modern technology is being introduced to enhance teaching and improve curriculum provision in many subjects. Considerable thought is given to the structure, content and balance of the curriculum and significant alterations and adjustments have taken place. Despite this some of the points raised in the last inspection have yet to be tackled. The management structure of the school has been reorganised in order to provide maximum opportunity to plan and promote curriculum development. Senior management decisions concerning curriculum planning are influenced by discussions within the curriculum committee and good communication with the curriculum support team. The great majority of parents are happy with the curriculum provided for their children.

33 The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad, fairly well balanced, and relevant for all pupils. Statutory requirements are met with all National Curriculum subjects and RE included. Pupils are taught for 25 hours per week which is one hour more than the national recommendations for this key stage. In several curriculum areas there are significant differences between the school's time allocations for individual subjects and those recommended nationally. The generous allocation of time to technology reflects the specialist school status and contributes to the good levels of attainment in this subject. Similarly, the higher than average allocation of time to modern foreign languages has a positive outcome by enabling pupils to study a second foreign language from Year 8. Mathematics is taught for less than the recommended percentage of time. Since pupils in Key Stage 3 consistently attain least well in this core subject, the time allocated should be reviewed. Provision for the arts at Key Stage 3 has some unsatisfactory features. Art, music, drama and part of the PE curriculum are taught within an integrated creative and performing arts programme. However, there is no evidence of benefits gained from this and the timetable arrangement of the course hinders progress in the art and music components of the programme. This is a weakness which was reported in the previous inspection and it should be treated as a priority for curriculum

development.

34 There is a timetabled weekly tutor period for all pupils which includes activities for raising achievement as well as work on a wide range of pastoral themes. These lessons make a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development.

35 The Key Stage 4 curriculum is broad and is relevant to pupils' needs. It meets statutory requirements for all subjects of the National Curriculum except in information technology where there is no certainty that those pupils who do not study the GCSE IT or business studies courses cover all parts of the programmes of study. Current time allocation does not permit sufficient coverage of the locally agreed syllabus for RE. This is an outstanding issue since the previous inspection. The organisation and structure of the curriculum at this key stage have been reviewed and revised since the last inspection and the curriculum offers a better range of subject choice, including satisfactory provision for creative and performing arts subjects. The quantity and range of subjects pupils can select from has been expanded and now includes business studies, IT, Music, Art, Spanish, PE and vocational General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses in manufacturing and in health and social care. These courses vary in popularity but are motivational for pupils, enriching the relevance of provision and preparing them well for post-16 courses. There is a weekly tutor period for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. Work from Key Stage 3 is extended covering a wide range of pastoral themes reflecting the growing maturity and interests of pupils. Careers education and guidance and work with tutors on Records of Achievement are components of the tutorial programme at this key stage.

36 Provision to support pupils with special educational needs in experiencing and benefiting from the curriculum is generally good. Schemes of work are generally appropriate and accessible and the needs of individuals are known to teaching staff. Curriculum planning is beginning to tackle the needs of the most able pupils but not all subject areas include planned opportunity for such pupils to progress to higher levels of attainment. There is planned withdrawal of pupils with special educational needs from a small number of Key Stage 3 lessons each week to support literacy and basic skills. This results in minimum infringement of their entitlement. At Key Stage 4 pupils with special educational needs have access to a greater range of accredited courses and this increases relevance and value. Individual education plans are used effectively to identify specific subject learning targets and to manage progression between key stages. This practice is not fully or consistently implemented though and in a few subject areas greater monitoring of practice is required.

37 There is good equality of opportunity for experiencing the school curriculum and the timetable is carefully managed to provide good access for pupils of different levels of ability. The grouping of pupils in subjects according to their prior attainment has a positive influence on teaching and learning in both

key stages and is used to good advantage in most subjects. The system works well for pupils with special educational needs. The increased investment in staffing has enabled the school to reduce the average size of teaching groups by increasing the number of sets at Key Stage 4. This improves the quality of teaching and attainment in most subjects. Curriculum planning is good in most subjects. However, there are unsatisfactory features in some subjects, including science at Key Stage 3 and religious education at Key Stage 4, where schemes of work need further development to ensure a better match of content to pupils' educational needs. The Governing Body maintain an overview of the curriculum by meeting with subject staff and visiting the school on a regular basis.

38 The curriculum broadly reflects the aims of the school and promotes intellectual, physical and personal development of pupils. The school emphasises major cross-curricular themes, including economic awareness, health education and citizenship and lessons on these themes within the tutorial programme make a worthwhile contribution to pupils' social and moral development. An up-to-date policy establishes sex education within the tutorial programme and science at both key stages and is adequately covered in the schemes of work. The school has a scheme of work for drugs education and has adopted the LEA policy for dealing with drug-related incidents. The school aim to enable pupils to acquire an understanding of a multi-cultural society is less well catered for in terms of curricular provision. The school places an emphasis upon the use of modern technology throughout the curriculum. As a result of being granted specialist technology college status in 1996 the school has been able to invest extensively in new information technology equipment. Along with training for staff in all curriculum areas to use this technology to enhance curriculum provision the school is now well placed to use this specialist facility to increase the effectiveness of learning and further raise standards.

39 Links with primary schools are sound and arrangements for induction of Year 6 pupils into the school work well. Information about pupils' prior attainment in National Curriculum core subjects is assembled along with the scores of standardised tests administered by the LEA. This information allows for planning provision for pupils with special educational needs. Curricular liaison with primary schools is weak. There is an absence of procedures to enable subject teachers to build upon knowledge of pupils' previous curricular experience and levels of attainment. Curricular arrangements for providing well-judged steps in pupils' learning within and between Key Stages 3 and 4 are sound, though in need of further development in most subject areas. The school provides good support for pupils preparing for transition to further education and employment. There are strong careers education elements in the tutorial programme and a series of well-planned events including work experience which is thoroughly prepared and monitored. Care is taken to fit experience to the pupils' vocational interests. Pupils benefit from thorough and impartial careers guidance which matches individual requirements. There are strong links with local industry and the school works closely with local colleges and the Business Education Partnership to increase pupils' motivation to gain skills and

qualifications for adult working life.

40      Extra-curricular provision is good in most areas of the school. There is an extensive range of opportunities for pupils to engage in extra-curricular sport during lunch-times, after school and at weekends. The many activities, which include traditional team games, athletics, aerobics and gymnastics, are well attended by boys and girls. All year groups are involved in local inter-school leagues and competitions which are well supported by staff and parents. The percentage of pupils participating in one or more sporting activities during the year is high. The school has been particularly successful in extra-curricular sporting achievement with disabled pupils, achieving five gold medals at last year's Yorkshire Disabled Athletics Championships. Extra-curricular provision is also very good in music and RE and good in, modern foreign languages, history, geography, drama and technology. Staff in these subjects willingly give their time and work hard to extend pupils' interests and motivation. Many teachers provide extra support with coursework for pupils out of lesson time. The annual school drama production attracts large numbers and the school band has enjoyed success at national level. There is scope to increase the level of extra-curricular activity in a few subjects. Pupils take part in trips to art galleries, exhibitions, and theatres and there is a well-planned residential experience in the Peak District for all Year 7 pupils in the autumn term. This enriches curriculum provision, as does the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme which is made available to older pupils who frequently achieve Bronze, Silver and Gold levels. There is field study in geography and the school has a programme of residential visits to all three countries whose languages are taught. Parents and pupils are both of the view that the school provides a good range of extra-curricular opportunity.

## Assessment

41 The school has responded to the recommendation in the previous inspection report to develop assessment policy. There is now a clear whole school policy on assessment, recording and reporting. This places the main responsibilities for putting in place, monitoring and evaluation of school policy upon curriculum area and pastoral leaders under the overall responsibility of the senior management team. Most subjects have adopted the policy but the implementation and range of classroom practice is variable and should be more effectively monitored. Procedures for assessing achievement within subjects are usually good and at least sound in most cases. However, in several subjects assessment is not always used effectively to assess pupils' work against specific National Curriculum targets. As a consequence pictures of attainment in these subjects are incomplete and pupils sometimes have a blurred image of their progress. More generally assessment is not used effectively to monitor trends in academic attainment over longer periods of time and there is a need to create a system for tracking pupil progress overall in relation to National Curriculum targets. A few subjects, such as English and modern foreign languages, are building a collection of carefully assessed pieces of pupils' work in which the different samples are representative of work at particular National Curriculum levels. The practice should be extended across all curriculum areas. Tutors and heads of house collate individual pupil assessments and use the data to assist target setting for particular pupils.

42 There is a school marking policy but it is not implemented consistently and needs to be monitored more rigorously. The quality of marking of pupils' work is variable. Good marking is evident in geography and history and in most other subjects there are some teachers who mark well. However, in many subjects pupils' attainment within the National Curriculum programmes of study is not clearly established by all teachers and as a consequence there is insufficient use of assessment to inform pupils of their academic progress or to set targets. This has an adverse effect upon progress.

## **Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

43 The ethos, through the moral and social development of its pupils, is a strength of the school. The school is particularly effective in encouraging pupils to relate positively to others, in that relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Attitudes of courtesy and respect are strongly encouraged and very evident. In particular, pupils listen to each other with respect and they are used to being listened to and respected by staff. There are many practical examples of the principles of the school's code of practice, 'other people matter', being promoted. There is an annual sponsored walk, which has raised over £100,000. Pupils vote to support a local, national and international charity. This year monies raised have gone to Sheffield Children's Hospital, Shelter and World Vision. There is evidence that pupils maintain communication and relationships with the charitable organisations over some period of time. Discussions with



pupils about these activities demonstrate clearly that the school's tradition of promoting concern for others is well developed.

44 Attitudes of responsibility are further developed through commitment to, and involvement with, the local community. Pupils regularly visit a local home for the elderly, take parcels at harvest time and talk with considerable warmth and enthusiasm about the Christmas party which the school organises for the residents. Through the community service programme pupils develop links with local primary schools and a sense of responsibility for younger children in the community.

45 The spiritual and cultural development of pupils is less well developed. Assemblies are well planned and effectively promote and develop the values of the school. Since the previous inspection the school has extended provision to two assemblies per week for all pupils. There are, however, no policy, guidelines or termly programmes. Assemblies clearly focus upon developing a moral code as a basis for behaviour and principles which distinguish 'right' from 'wrong'. In order to meet statutory requirements the school should consider developing assembly themes in tutor time. The school should also look to develop an approach which enables pupils to participate in assemblies, through presentations and responding to questions. The school must also provide opportunity for reflection and prayer.

46 The school's stated reasons non-compliance with statutory requirements for collective worship remain the same as those in the previous inspection report: shortage of accommodation and insufficient members of staff prepared to lead assemblies which incorporate collective worship.

47 The development of planned opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum is currently under review. The inadequate provision of RE at Key Stage 4 is a weakness with regard to this aspect of provision. The art department makes a good input to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the work of major artists where the themes of these artists are explored in some depth - war, cruelty, death, fear and anguish. There is also a well-developed unit on non-western art at Key Stage 3, with evidence of good pupils' work on Asian and African art. There is evidence across the curriculum and in the PSE programme of pupils being provided with opportunity to develop their own beliefs and values. The effectiveness of the school in enabling pupils to appreciate the beliefs and practices of others is less well developed. There is adequate provision for pupils to develop appreciation of their own cultural traditions but insufficient opportunity provided for them to talk about the diversity and richness of other cultures.

48 The school has a particularly interesting and innovative Christian Union organised and run by the pupils themselves, although monitored and supported by the headteacher. Activities are extensive, encompassing a wide range of

human experience. The commitment of these pupils to raising the profile of the spiritual dimension in school is impressive.

### **Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare**

49 Concern for pupils' welfare is a strong feature of the school with considerable effort being made to maintain an effective support and guidance system. Support for individual pupils is provided by a pastoral system of tutors who know their pupils well. Heads of year co-ordinate the work of the tutors and the whole system is overseen and led by an assistant headteacher. Communication between tutors, heads of year and assistant head is good with concern about individual pupils being dealt with efficiently and effectively and at the appropriate level. Parents believe their children are given good support by tutors and most are happy with all aspects of guidance.

50 Form tutors teach the PSE programme, which is well planned and resourced. Quality of provision is maintained by co-ordinated planning, the use of external speakers where appropriate and in-service training opportunities for all staff to develop their skills. There is a thorough and substantial programme of careers education and guidance and work experience for all pupils. This draws on valued support from the careers service, Education Business Partnership and local employers.

51 The formal pastoral system is effectively underpinned by good positive relationships between teachers and pupils. The expectation of good behaviour, positive attitudes and respect for one another permeates relationships at the school and the vast majority of pupils respond well. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated within the school community with teachers responsive to individual needs. Medical care for some pupils who need it is provided on site.

52 The school has a code of conduct and procedures for monitoring pupils' behaviour, effort and attitude to work. Alongside a system of merits this provides a structure and motivation for pupils to progress. A system of recording achievement is well established and pupils are given the opportunity to reflect upon their progress and set themselves targets. This is generally at the level of effort and motivation and needs to be developed to ensure review of specific learning outcomes. Whilst the pastoral system is effective in identifying pupils who significantly under-achieve or lack commitment, there is a need to create a system for tracking all pupil progress in relation to National Curriculum targets.

53 The school has developed a policy on bullying following identification of this as a key issue for action in its previous inspection. Its message and possible sanctions are understood by pupils who are satisfied that instances of bullying, which are few, are dealt with quickly and effectively by teachers. The assistant head responsible for the pastoral system is the designated child

protection officer. Procedures are clear, liaison with external agencies are effective and confidentiality is assured. Staff are informed only on a strictly need-to-know basis.

54 The school has detailed and well-established procedures for ensuring that the health and safety of pupils are promoted. Procedures for dealing with most day-to-day health and safety issues are documented and distributed to staff and are evidenced in their working practice. There is a designated staff member who has defined responsibilities. Risk assessments are in place as appropriate and the school nurse is present throughout the school day. Registration is carried out quickly and efficiently. However, school procedures for recording absence are not fully implemented and these should be monitored more rigorously. The school effectively follows up absences, using the valued services of the education welfare officer.

### **Partnership with Parents and the Community**

55 There is a good partnership between parents and the school. Parents are kept well informed of events by letters from the headteacher and via the parents, teachers and friends association (PTFA) which meets regularly. The PTFA raises significant funds for the school via a range of social events which are well supported. Full details of school activities are listed in the excellent prospectus and there is an informative governors' annual report.

56 Pupils' annual reports combine self-appraisal by the pupil with comments from the teacher. This format is good for the self development of the pupil and they are informative and valued by parents. However, the content of teachers' comments on these documents should be monitored, since they do not always provide sufficient specific information about pupils' attainments in the National Curriculum to meet statutory requirements. A great majority of parents attend the formal parents' evening to discuss their children's progress and there is good attendance at other informal events to explain details in the curriculum, for example drugs and sex education. Parents are kept closely in touch with their children's work and are asked to sign the pupils' weekly planners to confirm that homework has been completed.

57 There are good links with the community. Local clergy take occasional assemblies and pupils attend the carol service in the parish church. Pupils entertain senior citizens at Christmas and at Harvest Festival parcels of food are given to local residential homes. Year 11 pupils gain in experience by helping in local schools and nurseries as part of the community service work. There are sound links with local primary schools and a programme of visits eases transition to Old Hall at age eleven. There are good links with colleges of further education, with members taking part in the annual Careers Convention, making presentations of their range of activities to pupils and holding open days. The school has very good links with industry and commerce and works hard at

preparing pupils for their career after leaving school. Over 40 companies and training agencies attend the annual careers convention. Measures are in place throughout the school to assist pupils in preparation for their careers, with the teaching of key skills in Year 7, the choosing of options and work shadowing in Year 9, mock interviews in Year 10 and work experience in Year 11. Agencies such as Lifetime Careers help support the excellent work of the careers staff. Pupils benefit from this and gain in confidence - and around a third of all Year 11 pupils arrange their own work experience. Links with industry are less in evidence at a curricular level, and this should be expanded to reflect the school's development as a technology college.

## **The Management and Efficiency of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

58 The school benefits from very good leadership which contributes significantly to its popularity and success. Senior managers work very well together and share a clear vision for the school based upon mutual values. They work collaboratively with governors to maintain a clear educational direction through ambitious school aims, an open but firm management style and energetic promotion of the school's work. Senior managers are approachable and accessible. They are open to other people's ideas and encourage quality and high expectations within a climate of achievement and support. Management of the school is good at all levels and staff morale is high. There are clear lines of communication and very good relationships between staff. The reasons for decisions are understood and commitment to the school and to high standards is secure.

59 The governors are highly dedicated to the school and its community. They combine extensive local knowledge with a good understanding of their role and the school's educational systems. This enables them to carry out responsibilities proficiently and to fulfil most of their statutory duties effectively. They provide the headteacher and staff with active support in striving to fulfil the school aims and policies.

60 Relationships between governors and school managers are open and positive. Governors are closely involved at a number of levels with staff and pupils and, as a consequence, the decisions they take regarding future development and the day-to-day business of the school are pragmatic and well informed. Their positive influence upon the compilation of the school's bid for technology college status is a good example of appropriate involvement of governors in planning. They actively argue the school's case for further improvement to facilities. They meet frequently and have a well-organised committee structure dealing with finance, personnel, premises and curriculum matters. Meetings are appropriately focused on important priorities which are drawn from the school development plan. Minutes clearly document the business and the decisions made. Governors have developed relevant and practical policies covering all key areas but some statutory obligations regarding provision of RE and IT at Key Stage 4, a daily act of collective worship, and teacher appraisal are not fully met. Amongst otherwise broad and successful provision, these shortfalls have an adverse impact on pupils' fullest attainment. By receiving detailed financial reports at each meeting they are able to monitor expenditure carefully and make well-informed budget decisions. A governor has been appointed to oversee special educational needs issues. The work of the governing body has become more effective since the last inspection.

61 The school has clear aims and values which are applied in all of its work. For example the school's code of behaviour which is based upon the premise

that 'other people matter' is witnessed in the way that pupils and staff consistently show high levels of respect and courtesy for one another. All staff with management responsibilities have detailed job descriptions with key responsibilities clearly stated. The recently revised management structure is well conceived and the majority of middle managers understand their delegated tasks and carry them out capably. Systematic monitoring of whole school policies is the least effective aspect of their management role.

62 The management of pupils with special educational needs is an important and well-organised aspect of the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator is well-organised and systems are carefully planned and effective.

63 All necessary policies are in place and there is a system of planned review of school policies in operation. However, this needs to be more rigorous in monitoring the implementation of school and subject policies in several key areas of provision, including curriculum content, marking of pupils' work and quality of teaching. Informal monitoring by heads of faculty is helpful but there is no programme of visiting lessons as part of efforts to raise the quality of teaching and ensure fulfilment of curriculum entitlement. Monitoring by senior managers of curriculum development and departmental planning is more effective. Subject plans are reviewed twice yearly in meetings between the senior management team and subject staff. Whole school priorities which are in keeping with the school's aims emerge from these meetings and contribute to the school development plan. This identifies future developments for each area of the school and is integrated with staff development. These procedures have had an impact on maintaining and raising standards and have contributed to the school's success in achieving Investors in People status. Plans are costed but not always in sufficient detail. This is a weakness which was reported in the previous inspection and should be attended to. Performance indicators, targets and timescales are not precise enough in a minority of subject plans hindering effective monitoring and evaluation of progress.

64 Administrative procedures and routines are very good allowing the school to operate smoothly. These measures have a positive effect on the quality of education pupils receive. The office manager and non-teaching staff contribute extensively to the effective administrative procedures. Internal communication is effective through the staff briefings, bulletins and a calendar of meetings at all levels of management. The quality of documentation is good. It is extensive and thorough and gives access to all school policies and procedures. The school prospectus presents requisite information clearly. Parents have a high regard for the school and consider that they are made welcome and contacted quickly if problems arise.

65 The staff and governors have responded positively to a considerable number of changes and curriculum initiatives since the last inspection, whilst maintaining a very positive ethos and purposeful learning environment for all pupils. Action planning in response to the previous inspection report has been

well organised, effective and well documented in governors' reports. The most significant development has been the achievement of technology college status.

Major changes in the school management structure are being successfully introduced and the establishment of an integrated resource for pupils with physical disability is being managed very well. The momentum that exists in the school for development and change, the enthusiasm and commitment of staff, along with established systems and processes, are indicators that continuing improvement will occur.

### **Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources**

66 The ratio of pupils to teachers is high compared to national averages for comprehensive schools but the staff are highly experienced and effectively deployed to ensure appropriate coverage of the curriculum. There is a good match between teachers' qualifications and their teaching responsibilities with few examples of teachers working in subject areas where they have no qualification or experience. One exception to this is in religious education where several non-specialists are deployed. Staff working closely with special needs pupils are well experienced and qualified for this work.

67 The staff is a stable one with many teachers having been in the school for fifteen years or more. In recent years there have been more new staff as the school has expanded and there is a well-planned and supportive induction programme for newly qualified teachers. There is no formal induction process for other new staff, although where appropriate this is linked to aspects of the newly qualified teacher (NQT) programme.

68 Job descriptions are in place. There is a system of teacher review which incorporates most of the required elements of teacher appraisal. However, since this does not include classroom observation the school does not comply with statutory requirements in this respect.

69 The school has a professional development committee that has representation from all curriculum areas and meets regularly. Expenditure on staff development is low compared to national averages due to budgetary constraints. Despite this, attempts have been made to ensure access to development opportunities for most staff, with a focus on middle management training having been successful last year. Priorities for funding of courses are established and usefully relate to departmental development plans, which in turn cross reference to the school development plan.

70 The expenditure on clerical and technical support is low compared to national averages, but support staff are deployed effectively and provide a good service. The school's original timber framed building is showing signs of severe ageing and with the expansion of school numbers in recent years mobile classrooms have been added, creating a tight, overcrowded site. The dining

areas are far too small to accommodate pupils comfortably and efficiently and despite a very efficient and well-ordered lunch-time routine it is very difficult to cater for all pupils in the lunch period.

71 The governors and staff have done a great deal to ensure a clean and well maintained school, but the external repair of many of the buildings is poor, with the upper school building needing urgent repair to window frames and roofing. If this is not dealt with it could become a health and safety issue in the near future. Most of the mobile classrooms are adequate for general use but conditions for specialist lessons are of variable quality. The technology area has been improved to create a good working environment and physical education, music and art all have satisfactory areas that are conducive to learning. Science provision, however, is inadequate with insufficient laboratory areas and some of these too small and under-equipped for larger classes to undertake investigative work. Similarly, the absence of an appropriately equipped drama area limits the scope for development of creative and performing arts. All these limitations in the accommodation hinder the school in endeavours for best educational provision, and inevitably pupils' fullest achievements are therefore constrained.

72 The school is well equipped with computers with a ratio of computer to pupils well above the national average. Recent investment following the granting of technology college status has led to the development of two new information technology suites and further refurbishment of two open learning centres which are available to all staff. These facilities are of the highest standard and provide considerable enhancement to pupils' learning opportunities.

73 The school's expenditure on resources as a percentage of its total budget is higher than the national average, although this has been inflated by the recent investment in computer equipment. Expenditure on subject text books is low compared to national averages and although the school is beginning to tackle this shortfall there is still a need to improve the book stock. Subject areas are adequately resourced for equipment and resources and staff make good use of existing stock and relatively small budgets to ensure that the curriculum is appropriately resourced to match learning needs.

74 The library is integrated within the open learning centre which is extensively equipped with refurbished computer stations, CD Roms and access to the Internet. The library book stock is depleted and a programme of refurbishment has begun with further investment planned. The centre is well managed and is accessible and well used by pupils. There is an induction programme for Year 7 pupils and the borrowing of books is monitored on a class by class basis with information fed back to form tutors.

## **The Efficiency of the School**



75     The school manages its available resources efficiently and responsibly. Good financial planning ensures that the income is carefully allocated and well spent. The school's administration system is computerised and itemised statements of expenditure are produced on a regular basis. The office manager proficiently organises the day-to-day administration of the school's resources. Financial records are well maintained. Curriculum area leaders have the main responsibility for management of resources, accommodation and finance within their relevant domain. They do this well. Governors are fully involved in the process of financial planning and are thoughtful and prudent in their approach to budgeting. Accountabilities are well defined. All the recommendations from the most recent auditor's report in 1997 have been implemented.

76 Decision making, in relation to expenditure, undertaken by the senior management team is appropriately influenced by the priorities included in the school development plan. Faculty action plans influence where money is spent, enabling school managers to be more accountable and logical about overall expenditure and financial direction. The inclusion of a finance plan within the school development plan also provides a useful link between the priorities for development and available resources. The costing of the school development plan has been improved since the last inspection, but the system used to cost proposed developments in faculty areas varies in detail and quality. There is also a need to improve the analysis and monitoring of pupils' performance. Further improvement in these areas will provide a better basis from which the school can evaluate its own cost-effectiveness.

77 The level of funding made available to the school is very low compared to that of similar schools and is the lowest budget share per pupil attending secondary school in the LEA. However, income is being well managed and used very judiciously to fulfil the aims of the school. The emphasis is on maintaining the high quality of teaching and learning and in the development of technology within the whole school curriculum. The ratio of pupils to teachers is high. However, teaching and support staff are very efficiently deployed and staff attendance is very good which helps to minimise the cost of supply teaching. This contributes to the school's high standards and quality of provision. Non-teaching staff are well managed and deployed and their work is effective and appreciated. Additional funds allocated for specialist school status have been well used to improve the quality of accommodation for technology and to substantially upgrade the quality of technology equipment in many curriculum areas. Learning resources are carefully and economically managed and the quality of the teaching environment is enriched by the good use of display areas. Good and effective use is made of all resources used to support the provision for pupils with special educational needs

78 The school has clear purpose and direction. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in almost all subjects. Attainment by the end of both key stages is above the national average in most subjects. The quality of education provided both in terms of a broad curriculum and teaching is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is very good. Attendance is above the national average. The amount of money provided to fund the education of pupils is very low. In the light of all these factors, the school continues to provide very good value for money.

## PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

### English, mathematics and science

#### English

79 Standards in English are broadly average with evidence of higher than average standards in some years. Standards in reading across the curriculum are average. Pupils are generally fluent readers. Higher attainers develop confidence with a wide variety of texts. A minority of weaker readers find subject texts difficult. Some subjects, such as humanities, use effective methods for teaching key subject vocabulary. New arrangements for grouping and teaching pupils with reading difficulties have been trialled by the special needs department and have produced measurable improvements in pupils' comprehension. These worthwhile innovations are now being extended into other year groups. The special needs department has successfully organised reading evenings for parents of pupils with a reading age two years or more behind their actual age. These successful events are being followed up by plans to train support staff and parents in techniques for teaching reading.

80 The library is a popular and attractive environment for reading in and out of lesson time. Many pupils at Key Stage 3 borrow books regularly, but by the end of Key Stage 4 few pupils borrow books, especially boys. Provision for fiction is good and has been well grouped in themes such as 'Horror' to make books more accessible. There is limited access to stories on tape which can be listened to on headphones. Non-fiction resources for curriculum subjects and general interest are inadequate. There are few newspapers or magazines. There is very good provision for computers but there is little multimedia software yet in use, although this is planned.

81 The English department encourages reading for pleasure and ensures private reading time for all pupils at Key Stage 3. It has prioritised reading in its development plan and English staff are actively planning methods to encourage and reward wider reading. Improving literacy is one of the school's two main priorities in its current development plan. The school plans to bring together key staff from across the curriculum to extend and develop arrangements for increasing pupils' understanding and enjoyment of fiction and non-fiction texts.

82 Standards in writing across the curriculum are average. Higher attainers write fluently in a range of styles and as they move up the school they write more analytically and at greater length. Average attainers are often fluent but do not provide the same level of analysis, detail and accuracy in their writing. The minority of weaker writers write simply and often briefly, unless writing something personal. Their spelling and handwriting is often weak. They write to a higher

standard when using information technology. In general, the use of computers for writing is still at an early stage. All pupils have some experience of writing using a word processor but as yet there is little evidence of frequent or sophisticated use of the computer to produce work imaginatively with colour, graphics and varied layouts.

83 Standards in speaking and listening are above average. In many lessons pupils are given good planned opportunities to present their ideas publicly. The most able are articulate and confident in expressing their ideas. Some pupils are particularly expressive in drama. Good examples of choral poetry were observed in Year 7. The quality of pupils' learning is highest when they are challenged to explore possibilities and come up with possible explanations. Opportunities for this type of talk should be extended.

84 The Key Stage 2 test results in English, taken in 1995 and 1996 by the current Years 9 and 10, show that achievement of pupils on entry in English is in line with the national average.

85 The Key Stage 3 assessments in English, taken in 1997 by the current Year 11, show that the percentage reaching level 5 or above, and level 6 or above, was above the national average in the tests and well above average on the basis of the teacher assessments. Taking the two years 1996 and 1997 together, the performance of both boys and girls was above the national average. In 1997, in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, pupils' performance in the English tests was well above average.

86 GCSE results in English language and English literature were in line with national averages in 1996 and 1997. In 1998, results in both English language and literature were better than 1997. Girls perform better than boys to a greater degree than the national average. In 1997, the gap between the performance of boys and girls at Key Stage 3 was similar to the gap at GCSE.

87 Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress in English. Average and higher attainers extend their vocabulary and their skill in reading and writing in a range of styles and forms. The more able make more progress than the average in developing their analytical understanding and their ability to express themselves in complex language. Pupils who have difficulties with basic skills often make good progress when they are involved in a programme targeted at their needs. Without support their progress is slow.

88 Pupils' response is satisfactory in all lessons and good in many. Pupils are routinely attentive and well behaved. In pair and small group work, they work co-operatively, plan constructively and acknowledge each others' ideas. They concentrate well and take pride in their work. In the best lessons, pupils take risks in testing out their ideas and imagination. In lessons where the response is satisfactory, pupils are compliant in completing the task.

89 Half the English teaching is good, much is satisfactory, some is very good and very few lessons are unsatisfactory. In the best teaching, the teacher is positive and enthusiastic, exploits pupils' responses, uses brief oral work sessions and focuses on specific aspects of language and meaning. Much of the teaching in the department is good. Lessons are delivered at a good pace, with clear and confident explanation and organisation.

90 Satisfactory teaching is well planned but focused on the task rather than learning objectives and evaluation of pupils' response. On the one occasion where unsatisfactory teaching was observed, this was due to a last minute change in supply staff. In general the quality of teaching by supply staff is good. The teaching of media studies is satisfactory at both key stages.

91 Curriculum planning in English is good at both key stages. Within the English scheme of work, media studies is planned and taught effectively at Key Stage 3. The provision of media studies as a separate additional subject at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. It does not add significantly to what is provided within English. The scheme of work in Years 7 and 8 duplicates areas covered in English and the quantity of written work is limited. At Key Stage 4, the GCSE media studies option is successful and pupils have carried out good analytical and creative work.

92 English teachers regularly use National Curriculum levels to record attainment at Key Stage 3. There is a lack of clarity in the department about the purpose and benefit of using school levels as well as national levels for assessing, recording and reporting attainment. The use of the term 'levels' for both school and national attainment in English is confusing. The correspondence or otherwise between these levels is not routinely clear and explicit. Pupil self-evaluations are often specific and contribute positively to setting targets.

93 The department is led well by the head of department. There is a good combination of new and experienced staff. Relationships within the department are good and staff work well together. Induction is carried out well. Organisation and documentation in the department are good and support the quality of teaching. The department does not effectively use and analyse the range of available assessment data to identify and target improvements to specific areas of pupil and departmental performance in English. The department has maintained the good standards reported at the last inspection.

## Drama

94 Standards of attainment in drama are average at Key Stage 3 and above average at Key Stage 4, where pupils take a GCSE option. At both key stages, pupils create drama with belief and concentration and respond to each other sensitively in developing their work. At Key Stage 3 pupils develop their skill and confidence in improvisation and they learn about current and historical

drama. Year 9 pupils are particularly confident in acting out familiar Shakespearean scripts. At Key Stage 4 pupils are able to use their experience of real life situations to improvise drama and develop scripts. They are developing their understanding of lighting and stage management. More able pupils demonstrate good control and detail in their language and gestures.

95 At Key Stage 3 pupils are generally well behaved in drama and are co-operative and enthusiastic in pair and small group work. Both boys and girls are keen to express themselves and they take each other seriously.

96 Drama makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development. At Key Stage 4 drama is a popular choice and pupils show considerable enthusiasm and self-motivation.

97 Most teaching is good, some is satisfactory and a minority unsatisfactory. In good teaching the teacher displays warmth and enthusiasm, sequences activities with good pace and direction and uses praise constructively to improve pupils' understanding and response. Teaching which is satisfactory has a well planned sequence of activities but does not provide sufficiently detailed praise and comment. In unsatisfactory lessons relationships with pupils are less well developed and teaching methods are less effective in terms of engaging pupils' commitment and creativity.

98 At Key Stage 3 the drama curriculum is linked with media studies. The educational rationale for this link is weak. There is little evidence that the combination enhances the quality of drama. It limits the amount of time for drama and the continuity of learning is interrupted by switching between subjects. Media studies does not develop pupils' artistic skills and self-expression and is inappropriately timetabled with drama in the creative and performing arts programme.

99 At Key Stage 4 the introduction of a GCSE drama course has proved popular. The option choice system has produced one large class and one small class and the school plans to rectify this imbalance next year. Regular visits are made to theatres and touring companies perform at the school. Unsatisfactory accommodation continues to restrict improvements in the quality of provision in drama.

## **Mathematics**

100 When pupils start at the school their attainment in mathematics is broadly in line with national averages. By the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion of pupils gaining level 5 in Standard Assessment tests is similar to the national average but the proportion gaining level 6 is below the national average. Results for level 5 and 6 are well below scores in schools with similar intakes.

101 By the end of Year 11 all but a very small proportion of pupils are entered

for GCSE and 94 per cent of the year group in 1998 obtained an A\*-G grade. This maintains results over recent years. In 1996 and 1997 the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was well below the national average at around 38 per cent compared with a national average of around 43 per cent. Pupils' results in mathematics were poorer than their results in other subjects. Results at A\*-C in 1998 have improved considerably with 52 per cent gaining higher grades, which is above the national average of 43 per cent in 1997. In recent years the proportion of boys gaining grades A\*-C has been much lower than girls. The 1998 results show a narrowing of that gap. All pupils not achieving a GCSE grade gain accreditation through the Profile of Mathematical Achievement which includes a numeracy certificate.

102 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are gaining confidence in using algebra, undertaking extended tasks and explaining their methods. Too many lower attaining pupils lack basic number skills. They do not have quick recall of multiplication facts and often rely on calculators to do simple calculations. By the end of Key Stage 4 the most able pupils can use trigonometry and graphs to solve complex problems. Lower attaining pupils still have poor basic skills and limited mathematical vocabulary which hinder progress.

103 Progress in Years 7 and 8 is generally satisfactory but sometimes variable. Too often more able pupils make insufficient progress when work is set for the whole class. Average pupils make generally satisfactory progress and the least able are often given extra support in class to help them improve. In Years 9,10 and 11 classes are setted and there are many more boys than girls in lower sets. Work in these classes is set at appropriate levels but progress could be further improved by targeting groups within the sets.

104 Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They give good attention to teachers and to tasks set. Most maintain good concentration and are keen to do well. Behaviour is almost always excellent and there are good relationships between pupils and teachers and amongst pupils. When given the opportunity, pupils work well together and develop problem solving skills in extended tasks. However, few lessons provide opportunities for collaborative work or for pupils to take responsibility, make decisions and develop their own methods.

105 The quality of teaching is broadly satisfactory. A significant proportion of lessons are good or very good and a smaller number less than satisfactory. All teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. Lessons are carefully planned and well managed to ensure that all pupils work well and behaviour is good. Explanations are clear, relationships are always good and teachers provide helpful feedback and support to individuals. The most successful lessons are lively and interesting with a good balance of teacher's input and pupils' activity. In these lessons, teachers check out what pupils already know and adjust work accordingly. They focus on likely difficulties and mathematical vocabulary and target individuals to make sure that all pupils understand the main ideas. Pupil activities are set at different levels to ensure

that all pupils make progress. Some good use is made of real data including local maps and timetables. In less successful lessons the timing and balance of direct teaching and individual work is not always effective. Tasks are less well matched to different abilities and so progress is variable. Homework is regularly set and marked. Assessment processes provide feedback on individual pupils' progress, but these need to be used more systematically to target work for differing abilities within classes.

106 The department has contributed to mathematical targets for pupils with special educational needs. Marking is positive and supportive. It should be further developed to provide questions, suggestions for improvement and targets. Reports also need to be developed to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils in different areas of mathematics.

107 The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements. The time allocated to mathematics at Key Stage 3 is low. The three lessons each week represent 10% of the curriculum compared with a national average of 12 per cent. At key stage 4 the time for mathematics has recently been increased to 13 per cent. The timetable for Years 7 and 8 does not currently allow for the option of setting so classes are all mixed ability. Pupils are setted for mathematics in Years 9,10 and 11. The grouping of pupils into eight classes in Years 7 and 8 and ten classes in Years 9, 10 and 11 further disadvantages the first two years. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the full mathematics curriculum with targeted additional support.

108 The department works well together as a team and is effectively organised and managed. There is a shared commitment to high standards of behaviour and learning. They have made significant changes to improve attainment and progress. A new scheme of work in Years 7 and 8 replaces an individualised system to ensure more direct teaching, better curriculum coverage and improved arrangements for logical coverage of issues in well-judged steps of learning. A new modular GCSE syllabus has been adopted to provide regular assessment and feedback and raise motivation and standards in Years 10 and 11. Numeracy activities have been introduced at Key Stage 3 to improve basic skills. These need to be developed to provide a systematic approach to teaching key skills. The development planning process is well established and priorities for improvement are clearly identified.

109 The analysis of attainment data needs to be further developed to explore issues, identify trends and inform target setting. Monitoring and evaluation also needs to be further developed. Pupils' work is scrutinised for assessments at the end of each key stage, but there is no programme of formal lesson observation. There is also a lack of whole school appraisal. The annual departmental review needs to be further developed to provide more detailed analysis.



110 The majority of mathematics lessons take place in the mathematics block of four classrooms. The block also has small rooms for resources and departmental management. A further two dedicated mathematics rooms are situated at the other side of the school. The split accommodation is unhelpful, although the department makes every effort to meet together regularly. All mathematics areas are well organised with posters and examples of pupils' work on display. Text book resources are adequate with the new additions. Practical resources are limited and there is limited use of practical work. Old computers have recently been replaced by new machines, but these are not yet functioning and software needs to be identified and purchased. So currently there is no provision for IT within mathematics. This limits pupils' best progress.

## Science

111 Key Stage 3 national test results are significantly above national averages but the difference has decreased by a small amount over recent years. The results are also above average when compared with similar schools.

112 GCSE results are significantly above national averages and there has been a small decrease in the difference over recent years. Girls overall do significantly better than boys although both are above average. Key Stage 3 pupils have developed a good overall understanding of life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. More able pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 showed a good understanding of kinetic theory and could apply this to predicting what would happen in a model intestine. Lower ability pupils could describe what happens when alkali metals reacted with water and could test for hydrogen. Pupils can follow instructions and carry out investigations safely but their skills of investigation design are less well developed.

113 Pupils are making good progress in developing knowledge and understanding in both key stages both over time and within lessons. Year 10 pupils progressed well in a lesson in which they used a displacement reaction to produce magnesium sulphate crystals and by the end of it had consolidated their understanding of both displacement and methods of making salts. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. In-class support is effective and teachers use their knowledge of pupils to good effect. Some variety in resources to match pupils at different attainment levels is evident, but more could be used in Key Stage 3.

114 Pupils in both key stages have a very good attitude to learning. They settle down to work at the beginning of lessons in an exemplary way and are capable of sustaining concentration and effort for long periods with only minimal supervision. They show pride in their work and the condition of their books and the laboratories in which they work are a credit to them. Year 11 pupils made some very perceptive contributions to a lesson about the absorption of light and used the class discussion in an extremely mature way to clarify and extend their own developing ideas. Pupils work very well in small groups whether doing practical work or discussing a problem set by the teacher, showing real co-operation and the ability to listen. Most pupils showed a high level of communication skills.

115 Teaching in both key stages is good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use good questioning to encourage all pupils to be fully involved in lessons. Lessons are well planned and pace is generally good with homework linked to the lesson aims. Planning for investigative and experimental work is not well developed and pupils' progress in this area is insufficient. Although based firmly on National Curriculum programmes of study schemes of work do not make use of National Curriculum levels to guide depth of treatment and to

set pupil targets. The range of learning methods used is good but could be less closely directed by the teacher, thereby capitalising on the pupils' considerable ability to accept responsibility for managing their learning, particularly in Key Stage 4. A good feature of many lessons was the care which teachers took to explain the aims of the lesson and to clearly introduce the new ideas by linking them to current knowledge and to pupils' own everyday experiences. Teachers were always careful to introduce new scientific terminology carefully and give pupils clear examples of the correct use of the new words.

116 Opportunities for using science to contribute to pupils' moral, spiritual and cultural development are not identified in schemes of work and are not evident in lessons.

117 Very little use is currently made of information technology to enhance pupils' understanding of scientific concepts and to exemplify to pupils how modern scientific investigation is done. However, a computer suite has recently been installed in the science department, sensors and data loggers have been purchased and staff are beginning to familiarise themselves with these. A development plan has been drawn up to ensure that the new facilities are fully utilised across both key stages. Laboratory provision is both old and inadequate for current levels of science teaching. A significant number of science lessons are either in classrooms which have no facilities for practical work, or are in laboratories whose small size or level of services makes a full range of practical work impossible. This adversely affects quality of provision and pupils' attainment

118 The previous report highlighted the inadequate number and poor condition of laboratories as a significant issue to be addressed. Although some very small laboratories were enlarged they are still too small for current class sizes and only two of the seven laboratories have been refurbished. The previous report also recognised the shortage of textbooks for Key Stage 4 pupils. This has now been remedied but there is a lack of published resources for Key Stage 3.

## **Other Subjects or Courses**

### **Information Technology**

119 Attainment overall in Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations and in many lessons is higher. At Key Stage 4, attainment is above national expectations.

120 The percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C grades in the 1996 and 1997 GCSE computer studies examinations was substantially higher than the national average. Pupils performed better in GCSE computer studies than in any other subject in both 1996 and 1997.

121 In Key Stage 3 the pupils are proficient in the use of word processing, data handling, control, measuring and modelling software. For example, in a design and technology lesson, Year 9 pupils were able to use software to control a model greenhouse with an automatic ventilation system. In their information technology lesson the same age group were designing and making a collection of documents for a theatre company, including seating plans, programmes, membership cards, brochures and posters.

122 Approximately half of the pupils in Key Stage 4 are taking GCSE information technology or business studies and they demonstrate considerable skill in their knowledge and application of information technology. They are able to combine a range of techniques for handling and communicating information and understand the need to design and present for a specific audience.

123 For the remainder of the pupils in Key Stage 4 the requirements of the National Curriculum are not being fully met. Individual pupils' experience in information technology is dependent on the extent of its use in subject areas. This varies across the school. Good work was seen in geography where pupils were constructing graphs using a spreadsheet package and in modern foreign languages where letters to pen-friends were being word processed. In design and technology projects include the use of computer-aided manufacturing and the computers in the library are well used, for example to support work in history.

124 Pupils of all abilities make good progress in gaining the skills, knowledge and understanding of information technology throughout Key Stage 3, as do those taking GCSE courses in Key Stage 4. They are enthusiastic and interested in their work and in both key stages are able to work independently and sustain concentration. Other Key Stage 4 pupils make only patchy progress.

125 The teaching is consistently good. Lessons are well prepared, with high quality materials produced by the staff to support the pupils' learning. A particular feature is the way that the teachers have designed tasks for pupils which are set in 'real-life' contexts. The teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and have high expectations of the pupils. The use of the day-to-day pupil assessment cards, and the comments provided for parents on reports, would be improved by more specific references to individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses in the subject.

126 Since receiving technology college status, the school has made a substantial investment in the accommodation and equipment for teaching information technology. There are two excellent information technology suites and two open learning centres. Excellent facilities also exist in design and technology and science and at the time of inspection the school's network was being extended to provide pupils and staff with similar access in most subject areas.

## Music

127 By the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of almost all pupils is in line with the national expectation. All pupils play simple melodies on the electronic keyboard and use notation to help them to read and write down tunes and chords. They use the keyboard controls well, for example to play single finger chords. They understand how primary chords are built up and use this knowledge to help them to make up their own improvisations. Pupils have a fair general knowledge of major composers, their major works, and the musical period to which they belong. Those pupils who learn individual instruments attain standards of performance which are above the national expectation.

128 Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. This is reflected in the consistent levels of success in the GCSE examinations over the past few years. Although only a small number of pupils enter, in 1997 and 1998 almost 100 per cent gained grades of A\* to C. Pupils perform confidently both as soloists and as ensemble players; most of them gain at least intermediate grades in the Associated Board or equivalent examinations. They also compose confidently and notate music clearly. They develop a sound understanding of how music from both the standard and popular repertoire is constructed, and they use technical language well in analysing and describing difficult examples of works set for study. They also acquire a good working knowledge of the rudiments of music, for example how to identify and use chords, or how to transpose from one key to another. Pupils' attainments in all required aspects of the syllabus have improved since the last inspection.

129 On entry at Year 7, pupils' experience of music is very varied; overall, their attainment is average. During Key Stage 3 the majority make satisfactory progress in reading and writing music, playing keyboards, in learning the rudiments of music and acquiring knowledge of the main musical periods. Since the last inspection the school has introduced a new scheme of work which enables pupils to progress in all the required areas. Early evidence suggests that this scheme is producing good results. However, long-term progress in the acquisition of musical skills is limited by the timetable which is integrated within the creative and performing arts area. The long gaps between taught units mean that pupils often have to relearn their skills. No convincing advantages of the attempt to integrate arts teaching could be found.

130 At Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress. This is a result of the positive teaching of essential skills and knowledge and also of the pupils' very good experiences in band and orchestra. At the beginning of the examination course in Year 10 they revise essential music theory, for example the construction of scales and key signatures, which serves as a good basis for subsequent work in composition, analytic listening and the understanding of musical form. This good progress continues into their final year.

131 In almost every class attitudes to learning are good. Pupils show an interest in their work; most of them take the subject seriously. They are punctual, turn up regularly for their instrumental lessons and most of them practise diligently. With minor exceptions, behaviour in lessons and in the department is good. Pupils work well together in practical activities which happen in most lessons. Older pupils who take the GCSE course and those who continue to play instruments are loyal to their teachers and peers. They are very helpful in setting out equipment and take good care of instruments, other property and the classrooms.

132 Teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall with some examples of good lessons. At Key Stage 4 it is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise which they use well in demonstrating lesson material and in assessing pupils' attainments. All lessons are well planned and prepared, materials well chosen and used and pupils' homework is monitored well and diligently marked. Lessons include a good balance of direct instruction and independent learning.

133 Around 50 pupils receive individual or small group tuition on orchestral and band instruments and guitar. Also, 75 pupils are involved in extra curricular activities, mainly brass band and orchestra. The brass band, which performs to a high standard, has taken part in the National Youth Festival; during the inspection pupils formed the majority of the Rotherham schools' brass band which was on an overseas tour.

134 Since the last inspection, as well as introducing a new scheme of work, the teaching has broadened its scope in order to give more emphasis to rudiments, singing and ensemble playing. Some of these activities are recently established and therefore still unproven. The department is aware of the need to continue to raise standards.

## **Art**

135 Standards of attainment in art are above the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 3. From Year 7 onwards pupils learn to use line to achieve tone and texture and use images to convey mood such as fear, despair and hope. They develop tone to create three-dimensional effects and to get the effect of light and shade in still-life drawings. In Year 9 pupils gain experience in pottery, creating a range of models using slab-pottery techniques. They study the work of major artists to gain a knowledge of the use of images, line, colour and texture. This helps to promote an imaginative approach to design in their own work. Work in sculpture is of a high standard; wire, clay, papier mâché and fabric are used to good effect to convey form and movement.

136 At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is at the national average. This is reflected in recent examination results where performance has been slightly below the national average, with 42 per cent gaining A\*-C grades, but above the

average for A\*-G grades, with 100 per cent success rate. Performance in A\*-C grades in recent years has fluctuated from 45 per cent to 53 per cent to 42 per cent. There has been a 100 per cent pass rate in this subject for the past three years. Art has been at some disadvantage in having to compete with a much larger than average range of subjects in GCSE. This affects attainment when compared with the national average. Pupils follow the syllabus for the GCSE examination. They are able to develop ideas from still-life observational drawings into abstract themes, exploring tone and colour to good effect. There is a good attempt to capture expression and character in all work, particularly in wire and fabric sculpture.

137 In relation to prior learning, pupils make good progress in both key stages. They acquire the skills of drawing and painting, which are taught formally, from Year 7 onwards. They apply these skills throughout both key stages. They study the work of famous artists and can utilize this knowledge to help them approach their own work with more freedom and imagination. They use sketchbooks appropriately to experiment with colour and texture in both key stages.

138 Pupils have a good attitude to work in this subject. They are well behaved, quiet and composed and give careful thought to their work for the most part. There was no need for reminders about behaviour in any of the lessons seen. Pupils are encouraged to show initiative in this subject and they respond well to the challenge. They enjoy art and show a good degree of confidence in their approach to work.

139 Teaching is good throughout both key stages. The subject is taught by specialist teachers who have good knowledge and expertise and good class management skills and discipline. There is a pleasant, restful atmosphere in all lessons which seems to be achieved with ease. Teachers give all pupils individual attention to help them develop their work. They involve them in assessing and evaluating the work of the whole class in most lessons in Key Stage 3. Lessons are well structured and pupils work at a good pace. Teachers give appropriate demonstrations of drawing and painting techniques. Planning is good and modules are well structured. The lack of long-term planning and review to provide common experience for all pupils has been rectified since the last inspection. There is now a good link between understanding and practical activity and strategies to ensure coherent coverage and well-judged steps in learning have also been agreed.

140 The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

141 The art department is part of the faculty of expressive arts. However, there is no evidence of an integrated approach to subjects or of benefits gained from this structure. The subject is given less than the average amount of time in the curriculum and this drawback is compounded by the modular course

structure which continues to inhibit progression as reported in the last inspection.

## **Physical Education**

142 The overall standard of attainment in physical education is at least in line with national expectation, with a significant proportion of pupils in both key stages achieving at a higher level. The quality of work in this area makes a good contribution to overall standards in the school.

143 At Key Stage 3 pupils demonstrate sound overall performance in games. Basic ball handling techniques in sending and receiving are well established. So are knowledge of rules and conventions and ways of communicating in team games. However, decision making, the use of space and evaluation of performance are less secure, but developing. In gymnastics pupils show a higher level of performance, understanding key ideas, working well in individual and paired sequences and demonstrating a higher level of co-operative planning and evaluation than in games.

144 At Key Stage 4 pupils have sound basic ball skills and in some cases demonstrate higher levels of skill. There is a clear progress in performance from Key Stage 3 with better decision making and use of space and communication skills. Evaluation of performance is developing but less well established. In GCSE lessons pupils demonstrate higher levels of performance and evaluation. Attainment at GCSE has improved steadily over the last few years and is now in line with national standards.

145 There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

146 Good progress is made in most lessons and in all lessons it is never less than satisfactory with pupils building on prior knowledge, understanding and skills. It is at its best in Key Stage 3 gymnastics and GCSE classes where pupils incorporate new techniques and ideas into activities, demonstrate good understanding of technical terms and the rules and strategies of games. Pupils of all abilities have full access to the curriculum and progress. Care is taken to organise activities that match pupils' abilities to appropriate levels of challenge and pupils with special educational needs are effectively integrated into lessons with teachers aware of their particular needs. Pupils with physical handicap are encouraged to participate with able bodied classmates in paired work in gymnastics to the mutual benefit and progress of all pupils involved.

147 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and their behaviour very good. They are interested in their work, listen and try to apply advice and feedback and generally participate with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Good work habits are established and concentration is sustained with pupils hardly ever off task. They work well collaboratively, giving advice and encouragement and, on occasions,



useful feedback to one another. Teachers are treated with respect and pupils willingly help with the organisation of equipment and resources.

148 The quality of teaching is good or very good in three-quarters of lessons and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and understanding of effective teaching methods. Collective planning is of a high standard with individual teachers applying the schemes of work effectively and with appropriate flexibility and using time, equipment, resources and space to good effect.

149 Teachers' explanation and demonstration is of a high standard and a purposeful atmosphere is created in lessons through good relationships with pupils, high expectations and support for individuals. Lessons are appropriately paced and structured to ensure progress through stepped levels of challenge with opportunities for practice and reinforcement. There is considerable encouragement, praise and positive feedback to pupils although there is a need to develop further pupils' self-evaluation.

150 The curriculum is broad and balanced and adequately provides appropriate opportunities for all pupils. It is well planned with progression from year to year and within individual units of study. There is, however, the need to review creative and performing arts provision in Key Stage 3 to which the physical education department contributes. Progress had been made in developing assessment and recording methods since the last inspection although further work needs to be done to improve pupils' self-assessment and the use of assessment information to help guide review and planning.

151 There is a full programme of extra-curricular activities both to support school teams and for general participation. The school successfully takes part in local leagues in a range of games and has a number of pupils who represent Rotherham with a few achieving county honours.

152 The department is very well led and managed. A purposeful, supportive team ethos has been created with responsibilities appropriately delegated. Attention is paid to professional development linked to departmental and school planning priorities.

## **Religious Education**

153 At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in religious education is broadly in line with the expectations of the Rotherham Agreed Syllabus. The majority of pupils are gaining knowledge and understanding of some of the key beliefs and practices of Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Islam, as required by this syllabus. A strength is the high proportion of pupils in each year group who demonstrate the ability to talk with confidence, based upon a sound knowledge base, about concepts such as prayer, forgiveness, temptation, issues around the conflicting aspects of human nature and distinguishing 'right' from 'wrong'.

154 At the end of Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils attain standards which are unsatisfactory in relation to the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and the GCSE results of a small option group last year, were well below the national average. There are currently no pupils opting to study religious education to examination level. There is very little evidence within lessons or in pupils folders of work which reflects the requirements of the Rotherham Agreed Syllabus. The majority of pupils are not able to talk about or describe the beliefs, teachings and practices of Christianity and at least one other religion, at an appropriate level for Key Stage 4. This is for the most part due to the inadequate time allocation at this stage, which does not allow for the content of the agreed syllabus to be covered, as this is based upon 5 per cent of curriculum time.

155 At Key Stage 3 pupils are making good progress in developing knowledge, understanding and skills. They are both learning about and learning from religion, having a growing appreciation of the way in which religious beliefs and ways of life can affect people's attitudes, values and behaviour. A particular strength is the developing capacity of pupils across the key stage to evaluate similarities and differences between two or three religions. For example, Year 7 pupils can explain and give their views upon Hinduism having many gods (although one Brahman) and Christianity having one God. Year 9 pupils are able to discuss the concept of ritual in preparation for a visit to a mosque, its place and importance within Islam, and evaluate this in relation to their understanding of Christianity.

156 Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are very good at both key stages. Particularly at Key Stage 3 they are confident, raise questions, take responsibility for their own learning and can apply their learning in a variety of contexts. They show a high level of interest and enthusiasm, listen attentively and maintain concentration throughout the lesson.

157 At Key Stage 4 pupils are not demonstrating progress in developing understanding of the meanings of the language and terms they are learning. The conceptual framework is particularly underdeveloped and pupils do not demonstrate knowledge and understanding of issues raised by religion, for example, Year 11 pupils looking at 'rules of life' and Year 10 pupils looking at 'arranged marriages' in Sikhism or what it means to 'marry in the sight of God', for a Christian.

158 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is generally good. Strong features of good lessons are clear aims and objectives, where the purposes of discussion and activities are understood by pupils; and very effective questioning, which both re-inforces and accelerates learning. Well-planned, highly structured lessons, with a good balance between teacher input, individual, paired and group work; access and develop the full range of ability. The clarification of terms and concepts is good and methods to reinforce learning are effective.

Assessment clearly targets development of knowledge, understanding and evaluation skills and is used to help shape planning. Marking and comments on pupils' work should be further developed to help pupils understand what and how they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. A particular strength is the development of a sense of morality as well as factual knowledge which clearly and effectively impacts upon the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Teachers' command and coverage of the subject is good. In a small minority of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory, due for the most part to insecure subject knowledge and lack of understanding, as to appropriate approaches to teach both concepts and language of RE in a way which allows issues to be returned to and clarified. In one lesson observed a pupil could explain that she had learned that Mohammed was a founder. She did not, however, know who Mohammed was or understand the meaning of founder. Had she understood these terms and concepts before engaging in the activity the purpose of her learning and the connections she was expected to make would have been clearer to her.

159 In three out of the four lessons observed at Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory. Again, insecure subject knowledge resulted in missed opportunities to develop knowledge, understanding and skills. A video excerpt was not well enough set in its context to help pupils identify issues. Themes of 'The Ten Commandments' and 'church attendance' were introduced without appropriate explanation and development. The pupils were left to make weak and scarcely valid connections for themselves.

160 The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 provides appropriate detail with regard to content. However, urgent priority should be given to providing training for teachers which focuses upon approaches to the teaching of RE and lesson planning. In particular, training should focus on language and concepts to be explored, teaching points and issues to be raised and clarity of learning outcomes for pupils. Resources for religious education are only satisfactory and need to be extended to support all aspects of provision, particularly at Key Stage 4.

## **Modern Foreign Languages**

161 Following a restructure of the modern foreign languages curriculum, the school now teaches French and Spanish as joint first languages from Year 7 and the most able linguists have the opportunity to begin the study of German in Year 8. All pupils study at least one language throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. From Year 8 there is setting, which establishes top sets in German, and parallel sets in each of the first languages. The first pupils to have followed this curriculum will take GCSE in 1999; up to 1998, French was a first language for all.

162 Attainment at GCSE in French has fluctuated around, or just below, the national average over the last three years. Attainment in German has been consistently above the national average. Observed standards of attainment in the top sets have been entirely consistent with this level of performance, being the result of good teaching, pupil response and sustained use of the language. Challenging standards have been set and met to ensure significant progress.

163 In other sets at Key Stage 4 attainment and progress are not so evident. Despite some examples of good teaching and pupils' commitment, many pupils in these groups make less progress and achieve below national expectations. A small number of pupils lack motivation, make little or no progress, achieve low standards and act against the interests of other pupils in the group.

164 At Key Stage 3 attainment is consistently good. Although the best standards are in the top sets in Years 8 and 9, there is much good attainment and progress in all classes at Key Stage 3. Pupils are learning to use the target language in a range of contexts, and give visible evidence of enjoying language learning.

165 Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress: gifted pupils are often provided with extension work. Teachers are aware of weaknesses in some pupils and structure their planning and teaching to support them. However, the number of pupils with special needs in some classes is such as to warrant a greater level of in-class support than is currently provided.

166 The quality of teaching is good. The best teaching is based on good planning, good relationships with pupils, pace and challenge. Teachers make consistent use of the target language and encourage pupils to adopt the language for their own communication, although a wider range of methods for language practice could be introduced into some lessons. Except in those few cases where progress and attainment are poor at Key Stage 4, pupils' response is good. Most pupils make great efforts in language learning. They are prepared to commit themselves to use of the language, work co-operatively with the teacher and other pupils and display commendable enthusiasm. Particularly in upper groups at Key Stage 4, pupils demonstrate a high level of concentration and tenacity, when challenge is at its greatest.

167 Progress is good and is evident in almost all lessons. Consolidation of previous work is a particularly strong feature, often supported by homework. When progress is good, this consolidation is extended and developed into new learning, or into the use of different language skills. However, in a small minority of lessons, too much emphasis is placed on practising existing skills, when pupils should be building on their learning and moving forward.

168 The acting head of department has introduced an inclusive management style and fostered a strong team identity. This identity is partly strengthened by grouping of a number of teaching rooms around an office and a resource base. It is a disadvantage that all teachers are not able to be accommodated in this suite of rooms: two are in poor-quality mobile accommodation and one has no permanent base at all, which places an unacceptable strain on the teacher concerned. Resources are good: choice and acquisition of materials have been good as are organisation and accessibility. The department has the great advantage of having, within its teaching and foreign language assistant personnel, native speakers of all the languages on the curriculum.

169 Assessment procedures meet statutory requirements, although a system that gives more scope for involvement and development of pupils in the process would allow pupils to contribute to their own records and enable assessment data to be used in planning the curriculum.

170 The school has a programme of educational visits to all three countries whose languages are taught and these make a positive contribution to language learning.

## **History**

171 Overall attainment in history is at least in line with the national expectation and often exceeds this standard.

172 At Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress in history and acquire a range of knowledge, understanding, and skills which relates history to their own experience. They are knowledgeable about different types of historical evidence and can interpret sources, such as portraits, with a good degree of accuracy and perception. Pupils are able to project themselves into a period of history and, with considerable inventiveness, produce writing that relates to the events and feelings of that time. All pupils can describe the basic elements of the times being studied, most are able to describe events in sequence, and some can provide an accurate chronology.

173 At Key Stage 4 GCSE results in 1996 and 1997 exceeded the national average both at grades A\* - C, and grades A\*-G. The pupils entered for the examinations obtained grades in history at least in line with their attainment in other subjects. The 1998 results are not as favourable with some 39 per cent of

pupils obtaining grades A\* -C. At the time of the inspection no 1998 national data was available to identify trends, but the history department is already taking effective action to review the situation through an analysis of answers and a dialogue with the examination board. Attainment within lessons at Key Stage 4 is always in line with national expectations and is often good. Pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of the key elements of history, its relevance and connection with events today, and the nature of historical enquiry. Key Stage 4 pupils are adept at class and group discussion and confronting some of the ethical issues involved.

174 The quality of history teaching is good, with frequent examples of very good work across the department. Teachers have a good subject knowledge which is taught with enthusiasm through a wide range of teaching methods and historical sources. This provides good access for all pupils studying history. Video, the use of portraits and other illustrations, Roman artefacts, role play and visits by 'a soldier from the civil war', fieldwork at museums and other historical sites, backed by a range of textbooks all help ensure variety and interest. There are specially adapted worksheets and tasks for pupils who find their work more difficult and teachers and support staff give considerable help to individuals. History teaching is characterised by careful planning across the department, clear objectives and explanations, good pace with a minimum of time wasting, and a confidence to engage pupils in extended discussions of historical events, attitudes, and opinion. Standards could be further improved in some lessons if pupils in both key stages were given greater encouragement to complete their work in the time available. Some lessons may also be improved with a conclusion or review session before the pupils leave their classroom.

175 Pupils are well behaved in lessons and most demonstrate an enthusiasm for the subject through their answers to questions and contributions to discussions. The majority remain on task throughout their lessons and take a pride in the presentation of their work. Some make suggestions on alternative ways of presenting their work including the pupil who successfully completed some of her work in verse.

176 The curriculum at both key stages fully meets statutory requirements and is planned so that it provides a good balance of the key elements of history teaching as required by both the National Curriculum and the examination boards. There is a good concentration on different sources of evidence linked to a knowledge and understanding of a variety of periods in history including ancient and modern. The development of chronology is greatly encouraged by time lines in every classroom and there are opportunities for historical enquiry. The communication of history in a range of written and spoken forms, including IT, makes a valuable contribution to the development of pupils' literacy. The planning of the history curriculum is particularly successful in its detailed emphasis on the teaching and learning methodology employed in lessons. At departmental meetings the best patterns for providing the curriculum are under constant review and staff work professionally and collaboratively to try and

ensure the most effective learning opportunities for their pupils.

177 The department took effective action in response to the 1994 inspection report with greater provision for matching tasks to pupils' abilities and with the improvement of development planning. A programme of historical visits at Key Stage 3 has also been planned and implemented. Resources are effectively used and deployed but the levels of funding impose a maintenance mode rather than a developmental mode.

## **Geography**

178 Overall attainment in geography is good. Most pupils progress from average levels to above average levels of attainment. At Key Stage 3 pupils become proficient in a range of geographical skills including map and atlas work, fieldwork and the analysis of data. They steadily acquire knowledge and understanding of a range of places and geographical processes. At Key Stage 4 GCSE results over the past three years have exceeded the national average for the subject. The 1998 results at grades A\* - C are slightly below those of the previous two year average. However, this is the first year of a new examination syllabus with tiered papers and at the time of inspection no 1998 national data was available to compare performance. Generally pupils entered for the geography GCSE examination obtain grades similar to, or better than, those grades awarded in other subjects.

179 The teaching of geography is of good quality. Teachers know their subject well and use a range of approaches and methods well matched to the different aspects of geography studied by their pupils. At both key stages there is a good consistency of planning and delivery by all teachers. This provides a solid foundation for the next stage of the pupils' education. Geography teaching is characterised by clear lesson objectives and explanations, good pace in lessons with minimum time wasting, and the provision of help to individual pupils. Pupils who find learning more difficult at Key Stage 3 are helped by a variety of approaches including specially adapted tasks and worksheets. The planning and organisation of fieldwork, particularly the Year 7 residential in Longdendale, are of a high order and add greatly to the geographical experience of pupils. This fieldwork provides data and information that is used and built upon through the key stage. In some classes this data is analysed using spreadsheets on the new computers by those teachers who already have the confidence to use them for their lessons. To further improve quality and raise standards in lessons all pupils should be encouraged to complete their work in the allocated time and in a few lessons the balance between teacher input and pupils working at their tasks should be better matched to the time available.

180 Pupils are well behaved in their lessons and are interested in the subject. They are attentive and the majority remain on task for the whole of their lesson. There is also a willingness to answer questions and to take part in class and

group discussions. At Key Stage 4 pupils organise their own coursework and readily engage in conversations about data and conclusions derived from fieldwork in the local woodland.

181 The curriculum offered to pupils at both key stages fully meets statutory requirements. Particular strengths include the planned programme of fieldwork and its follow up in the classroom, the relevance of environmental issues, and the ecological aspects of geography. Overall the Key Stage 3 schemes of work offer a reasonable balance of places and geographical themes studied with the appropriate skills employed. However, the geography department should try to ensure that, within the limitations of the National Curriculum, there is a consistent incline of difficulty and challenge throughout the key stage. There is also a need to ensure that all pupils receive the same level of computer usage and instruction across the department. The selected GCSE syllabus provides good continuity for those opting to study geography at Key Stage 4. The school's decision to ensure all pupils study a humanities subject at this key stage greatly adds to the breadth and balance of the education that all of its pupils receive. Effective action has been taken by the department to build upon the recommendations of the last inspection report through the development of tasks at Key Stage 3 to better match the abilities of pupils. There have been improvements in departmental planning, including the development plan and the writing of Key Stage 4 schemes of work. Resources for Key Stage 4 have also improved. Overall, resources in the department are about adequate, being well targeted and effectively used, but there is sharing of textbooks and atlases and little funding available for development.

## **Design and Technology**

182 In 1996 and 1997, the percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations was considerably higher than the national average. In 1996 pupils achieved better GCSE results in design and technology than the majority of the other subjects they were entered for. In 1997, the performance of pupils in GCSE design technology was not as successful when compared with their other subjects, but still better than their results in mathematics, English language and science.

183 Attainment at Key Stage 3 is at least in line with, and often higher than national expectations. The pupils' design work is of a good standard, and they are able to use equipment and materials competently and safely. They are able to accurately explain the processes they have followed during designing and making, and can evaluate their own work and that of others.

184 In Year 7 good work was seen in food technology where pupils were able to demonstrate their skills in preparing and presenting a fruit salad. Of particular note was their regard for food to be presented attractively and imaginatively, and their consistent application of safe and hygienic procedures. Year 8 pupils showed their competence in the use of hand and machine tools in the design



and manufacture of a child's educational toy, and in Year 9 pupils were combining their knowledge of textiles and resistant material technology to construct marionettes.

185 Attainment at Key Stage 4 is consistently good and above national expectations. The pupils are expanding their range of design and evaluation skills. They are able to use a variety of research techniques, including questionnaires and the analysis of existing products, to ensure their practical solutions fulfil the needs of the user. In resistant material lessons pupils were observed in the finishing stages of a teaching aid for nursery children. The pupils design folders were of high quality, with relevant research and analysis leading to a preferred idea. A particular feature in Key Stage 4 is the care and attention given by pupils to achieving a high quality finish to their practical work. The work observed in food technology and graphic products was of an equally high standard.

186 Pupils make sound and often good progress in both key stages. Their written and practical work shows an increasing range of designing and making skills, with a growing sophistication of techniques and understanding through Year 7 to Year 11. Good progress was observed in individual lessons. For example, pupils in Year 7 in a graphics lesson made considerable gains in the skills and understanding of shading techniques to illustrate the difference between wood, metal and plastic materials. In Year 11 pupils used and built on knowledge they had previously gained during a Year 9 project.

187 The pupils' attitudes to their learning are always good and often very good. They enjoy the subject, are enthusiastic and interested, and are prepared to persevere to achieve work of a good quality. They listen carefully to their teachers and fellow pupils, and are willing to ask questions and join in discussions. They are able to work independently without constant supervision, but also to work collaboratively when required. Behaviour is very good.

188 The majority of the teaching is very good, and is never less than sound. The staff have very good subject knowledge and have high expectations of the pupils. Lessons are well planned and prepared, and collectively contribute to the coherent design and technology experience for the pupils. They involve the pupils in their own learning through the skilful use of questioning, and they encourage them through the use of appropriate praise and rewards. The teachers maintain a continuous assessment of pupils' work. This could be improved by clearly focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils, which in turn would improve the quality of information reported to parents. A particular feature in Key Stage 4 is the skill of teachers in maintaining the sustained interest and perseverance of pupils engaged in major practical projects which extend over several months.

189 Since the last inspection there has been considerable improvement to the accommodation for design and technology. This has been achieved partly by the school gaining technology college status, but also through the efforts of the staff in carrying out self-help projects. The rooms now provide an excellent learning environment and the previous problems of dust extraction and the lack of display space have been resolved.

## PART C: INSPECTION DATA

190 The team of thirteen inspectors observed 208 lessons, 20 registration sessions, seven assemblies and a selection of extra-curricular activities during the week of the inspection. All teachers present were seen teaching at least once and most several times. More than 50 planned discussions were held involving senior staff, many other members of teaching and non-teaching staff, governors and representatives of outside agencies. A visit was made to the nearest partner primary school and a tour of the catchment area was made on a pre-inspection visit. The registered inspector met with staff and governors prior to the inspection. Inspectors attended staff meetings and a staff briefing held during the week of the inspection. They looked at the written work of many pupils during lessons. A sample across the attainment range of pupils from each year group was scrutinised in greater detail. Discussions were held the following day with the same pupils. Many other pupils were involved in informal discussions. Pupils' reports, attendance registers and records were examined. A large amount of documentation provided by the school was analysed both before and during the inspection. The Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 30 parents two weeks before the inspection. The team considered 437 responses from parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school.

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### **Data and indicators**

#### **PUPIL DATA**

\_\_Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)\_\_Number of pupils with statements of SEN\_\_Number of pupils on schools' register of SEN\_\_Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals\_\_Y7-Y11\_\_1149\_\_33\_\_144\_\_151\_\_

#### **TEACHERS AND CLASSES**

##### **Qualified teachers (Y7-Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent) \_\_63\_\_Number of pupils per qualified teacher\_\_18\_\_

**Education support staff (Y7-Y11)**

Total number of education support staff\_16\_\_Total aggregate hours worked each week\_345\_\_

**FINANCIAL DATA**

Financial year: \_1996-7\_\_

\_£\_\_Total Income\_2,256,485.00 \_\_Total Expenditure\_ 2,295,546.00  
\_\_Expenditure per pupil\_ 2,079.30 \_\_Balance brought forward from previous year\_  
20,053.00 \_\_Balance carried forward to next year\_ -19,008.00 \_\_

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1149 Number of questionnaires returned: 437  
Percentage return rate: 38.00

### Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

PRIVATE Strongly agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly disagree I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school 23.0 66.0 7.9 2.6 0.5 I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren) 37.7 56.5 3.7 1.4 0.7 The school handles complaints from parents well

17.8 56.3 21.7 3.5 0.7 The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught 28.7 59.5 9.7 2.1 0 The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress 34.4 55.1 7.8 2.6 0 The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work 49.3 48.1 2.4 0.2 0 The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons 30.6 56.3 10.9 2.3 0 I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home 27.9 60.8 6.1 5.2 0 The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren) 37.4 54.0 8.1 0.2 0.2 The school achieves high standards of good behaviour 41.7 50.9 5.7 1.7 0 My child(ren) like(s) school 37.2 55.7 4.6 2.1 0.5

### Other issues raised by parents

### Summary of responses

[Included when there are only a small number of returns]

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