

INSPECTION REPORT

CHESLYN HAY HIGH SCHOOL

Cheslyn Hay

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124425

Headteacher: Mr David Ayling

Reporting inspector: Dr Kenneth C Thomas
3390

Dates of inspection: 27 – 30 March 2000

Inspection number: 183764

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: County

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Saredon Road
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Staffordshire

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Phillips

Date of previous inspection: 17 October 1994

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cheslyn Hay High School is a comprehensive community school situated in the south of Staffordshire near to Walsall. The school is larger than most secondary schools, with 1305 students, and provides education for boys and girls in the 11-18 age range. About a half of the students are drawn from Cheslyn Hay with the other half being drawn from the surrounding area, and in particular from Shareshill, Featherstone and Essington. The attainment of students coming into the school shows a steady improvement over recent years and, although wide-ranging, was overall above the national average in 1999. The proportion of students with English as an additional language, at 0.6 per cent, is low, and all of these students speak English fluently. The proportion of students with special educational needs, at 10.6 per cent, is below the national average, while those with statements, at 1.8 per cent, is in line with the national average. The proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals, at 7.5 per cent, is below the national average. The school is popular: the number of students has increased by about one third, since the last inspection. Links with other education providers are good.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Almost all of the teaching is satisfactory and most is good. The school achieves standards that are generally consistent with students' previous levels of attainment in most subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in some subjects they are above. There are very good care and guidance arrangements and the school provides very good support for students' personal, social and cultural development. The sense of community is strong and the school benefits from the very good support it receives from parents and carers. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and the new headteacher, with good support from the governors, is in the process of reorganising the school's management structure in order to provide more focused support for the raising of standards. The sixth form is cost-effective and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Good and improving standards of attainment in English, art, information technology and physical education in Key Stages 3 and 4, and in art, economics and history in the sixth form.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good: they are very willing learners
- The school provides an environment in which students feel secure, relationships are harmonious and support for students' personal development is very good.
- Students' personal, social and cultural development is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and good provision for the performing arts.
- The school benefits from the support of the overwhelming majority of parents.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment in mathematics and science, and in the sixth form generally.
- The monitoring and evaluation by the senior management team and heads of department of teaching and learning and the implementation of school policy.
- The structure of the school day and time-keeping at the beginning and end of lessons and registrations.
- Opportunities for reflection and collective worship by all students and sixth formers' entitlement to religious education.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The overall progress made by the school since the last inspection in October 1994 is satisfactory. Parents recognise the school is improving and the roll is rising - numbers have increased by 30 per cent since the last inspection. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are generally rising at a rate that is in line with the national trend and at Key Stage 4 at a rate that is above the national trend. The school has made good progress in assessment arrangements, particularly in the use of effort grades alongside attainment grades to provide more complete information on students' progress. Although

assessment information is used well to guide curricular planning in some subjects, there is a need to ensure that this information is used more consistently in all departments to support students' learning. The provision and teaching of information technology have improved and this has had a positive effect on standards. Improvement has been made in the provision of religious education, but sixth form students still do not receive their religious education entitlement and the school does not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. The quality of teaching is much the same as at the time of the last inspection. Teachers' planning for the range of levels at which students are working has improved in several subjects, but in some there remains a need to give more attention to the needs of students at the upper and lower ends of the attainment range. The curriculum for the sixth form has been extended to include additional A level subjects. The lack of specific costs linked to targets in the school development plan was identified as a weakness in the previous report and the most recent school development plan now includes these costs.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A	D	D	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Results in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests have been improving at a rate that is broadly in line with the national trend. Overall attainment at this stage in 1999 was above average, compared with all schools nationally, although below average when compared with similar schools. Standards in English were well above both the national average and the average for similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were average in comparison with all schools, but in mathematics they were very low and in science well below the average in similar schools.

GCSE examination results show a steady rise over the past four years at a rate that is above that observed nationally. The 1999 results were well above average compared to all schools nationally and average in comparison with similar schools. The percentage of students obtaining the higher A*-C grades shows a downward trend over the past three years. Students did well in English, art, humanities, information technology, physical education, religious education and music. Results in mathematics and science were broadly in line with the national averages. The overall results represent satisfactory progress from the end of Key Stage 3. There has been a marked improvement in the performance of boys over recent years.

Results at A level are below the national average and show a decline over the past three years. Standards of attainment in art, history, economics and sociology are well above average but in other A level subjects are below average. Both the completion rates and standards attained in GNVQ courses are above average.

In lessons and work seen, standards are just above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and a little higher at the end of Key Stage 4. Very little work of below average standard was seen. In the sixth form in art, economics and history are above expectations but in other subjects just below. Individual students achieve highly in a range of sports, some at national level, for example in athletics.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
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Attitudes to the school	Students are proud of their school and their attitudes to their work are very good.
Behaviour in and out of classrooms	There are high standards of behaviour in and out of lessons and students show respect for each other. There is a lack of punctuality at registrations and the start of lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is very good. Relationships among students and between students and adults are very good. Students are prepared to take increasing responsibility as they move up through the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory, with below average unauthorised absence.

The climate for learning is good. Teachers establish very good relationships. The systems of support for behaviour are clearly understood and behaviour is very good, on the whole. Incidents of bullying are few and they are dealt with firmly. In lessons, students have very good attitudes and learn well. Students show good responsibility towards each other and are helped to develop as individuals. They contribute well to the life of the school through drama productions, performing music and in sports activities. The school is vigilant in following up absence, of which very little is unauthorised. There is a lack of punctuality at registrations and lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall. In 61 per cent of lessons the teaching was good or better and in 14 per cent of lessons it was very good or excellent. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in only three per cent.

Teaching is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. Teaching is good in English because lessons are planned so that students of all abilities can learn effectively. Teaching in mathematics and science is generally effective for middle and lower attaining students but less so for higher attaining students. This is largely due to a lack of variety in teaching with insufficient demand made on higher attaining students. Teachers make effective use of their subject knowledge to give clear explanations and guide students' learning. In art, high expectations allied to effective planning lead to consistently high standards of achievement. The effective use of assessment provides particularly good support for students' learning in physical education and design and technology. Students are very well managed and work well in groups. Although lively teaching with variety in teaching methods are features of effective lessons in art, history and economics in the sixth form, teaching in other subjects lacks variety.

The school has an effective literacy strategy. There is, however, no co-ordinated approach to the development of numeracy skills in all subjects. Planning for information technology lessons is very good, which helps students to make good progress and attain above average standards. The use of information technology in other subjects is not consistent. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good when they are taught in small withdrawal groups. However, subject teachers are insufficiently involved in the preparation of students' individual education plans. Although students' work is marked regularly, in many subjects students are not provided with enough guidance on what they must do to improve the quality of their work. Homework is set regularly in most subjects but not always in accordance with the homework timetable.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Sixth form curriculum provides students with a sufficient choice of A level subjects but some have to be taught as after school classes.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory provision for students with statements of special educational need and for those withdrawn for individual support in Year 7. Insufficient use of individual education plans by subject teachers.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very few students with English as an additional language have no language difficulties that require additional support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good overall. Opportunities for social and cultural development are very good, including a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Moral development is good, although there are not enough opportunities for spiritual development. The requirement for collective worship is not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its students. Their progress is monitored systematically and targets are set to help them improve. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring students' welfare are very good.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements at Key Stages 3 and 4. It is broad and balanced and builds upon good links with the primary schools, particularly in English. Most students are provided with the opportunity to study a second foreign language. Careers guidance and work experience at Key Stage 4 are very good and a strength of the school. The school offers an appropriate range of A level subjects, but some of these can only be offered as after school classes and place excessive demands on both students and teachers. The sixth form curriculum does not meet the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good. School dance, drama and musical productions involve a large number of students and staff and performances are of a high standard. Sports opportunities are extensive and enable teams and individuals to reach high standards. Arrangements for monitoring students' progress are well developed and there is an effective mentoring system to support students in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision of the future direction of the school and is developing strategies to ensure that the school moves forward.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	With the exception of the provision of a daily corporate act of worship, governors fulfil most of their statutory responsibilities. They have a strong commitment to the school and understand its strengths and weaknesses.

The school's evaluation of its performance	Thorough analysis of students' results and systematic use of targets for individual students' improvement. Insufficient monitoring and evaluation by the senior management team and heads of department of teaching and learning and insufficient use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning in some subjects.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its resources and effective use of new technology to support management. The structure of the school day means that time is not always used to the best effect. The school attempts to obtain best value in the use of resources and post-16 provision is cost effective.

The headteacher took up post at the start of the current term and is providing a clear educational direction for the school. There is a spirit of teamwork amongst all staff and harmonious relationships between students and between students and adults. This provides a supportive learning environment. Parents and governors have confidence in the leadership of the school. The headteacher is in the process of developing strategies to improve both the management structure and the structure of the school day. The overall quality of management provided by heads of department is satisfactory, with examples of very good management in English, art, design and technology and physical education, which is helping to raise standards in these subjects. There is a need for heads of department to be more involved in the review and evaluation of teaching, for more rigour in management in mathematics and science, and for more effective co-ordination in special educational needs.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expectation that their children will work hard and do their best. • The progress their children make. • Teaching, which is good. • The support given to help their children become mature and responsible. • The approachability of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some would like to know more about the work their children are doing and how they are getting on. • They would like more homework to be set. • The closeness with which the school works with parents.

Parents are highly supportive of the school and inspectors' findings endorse the positive views, which most parents hold. Homework is set regularly in most subjects, but some homework involves the completion of work started in lessons. This means that students who work quickly may have little homework to do. Information is given to parents through parents' evenings, annual reports and letters. Parents are also welcome to contact the school at any time if they have particular concerns. However, there is no school newsletter and not all form tutors monitor students' organisers on a regular basis, so that they become ineffective as a means of communication between home and school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Good and improving standards of attainment in English, art, information technology and physical education in Key Stages 3 and 4, and in art, economics and history in the sixth form.

1. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are improving, broadly in line with the national trend. The levels of attainment of students on entry to the school have been improving over recent years and are now above average. Comparative analyses of the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3 with those on entry, show that standards are generally in line with expectations at the end of the key stage. Results in English were particularly good in 1999 and well above both the national average and the average for similar schools. Standards in information technology, art and physical education are well above average, while standards in design and technology, history and modern foreign languages are in line with the national average. However, performance in mathematics, science and geography has declined.
2. Students make satisfactory progress across Key Stage 4. The average General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) points scores show a rising trend over the past four years, that is above the national trend. The 1999 average points scores, for both boys and girls, were well above the national average, although average in comparison with similar schools. The proportion of students gaining five subjects at the higher GCSE grades (A*-C), at 49 per cent in 1999, was close to the national average. This proportion is much higher than at the time of the last inspection (when it was 39 per cent), although below the results obtained in 1997 and 1998. Most of the Year 11 students are entered for GCSE and are generally successful in achieving certificates. This reflects well on the progress of students with special educational needs. In most years girls do better than boys at GCSE, although the gap is narrowing as a consequence of the boys' results improving at a faster rate than those of girls. This is a consequence of an effective mentoring scheme, which helps to sustain the motivation of boys through Key Stage 4. Average GCSE points scores show results in art, design and technology, information technology, humanities and religious education are significantly above national averages, but results in science and German are below. In all other subjects results are broadly in line with national averages. The proportions of students gaining the higher A*-C grades in English, art, humanities, information technology and physical education are all well above national averages.
3. The A level results achieved by sixth form students in art, history and economics are all well above average, and those in mathematics and sociology are comparable with national figures. However, results in other subjects are all below.
4. Inspection evidence indicates that standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 generally match national expectations, and in some subjects they are higher, while overall standards in the sixth form are just below expectations. Effective teaching strategies and very good subject leadership are contributing to good and improving standards in several subjects. Standards in English are improving as a consequence of lively and challenging teaching that caters well for the needs of students at all levels of attainment. Standards of literacy are above average and enhanced by a carefully planned literacy strategy, which builds well upon work done in Key Stage 2. The effectiveness of this strategy owes much to its cross-curricular features which derive from the imaginative use by senior management of temporary additional salary points, which support the development of new projects of this nature. The effective emphasis on reading in Years 7 and 8 is helping students with special educational needs to improve. The department sets high standards and very good use is made of assessment information in curricular planning. As a consequence, students are very well prepared for National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. Similarly, in art, information technology and physical education, high standards are set and the level of challenge offered to students is considerable. As a consequence, students produce much original work and many students are highly creative. Again, very good subject leadership ensures that there is a sharp focus on

raising standards and the most effective use is made of assessment information to guide curricular planning. Lively teaching that makes very good use of open-ended questioning to probe students' understanding, with an emphasis on the correct use of terminology, contributes to above average standards in art, economics and history in the sixth form. In economics and history, for example, this approach helps to develop students' analytical skills so that they gain a thorough understanding of the subjects' key concepts and are able to explain them well. Similarly, in art, teaching is characterised by an ongoing dialogue between teachers and students, which provides students with continuous feedback on their work. In this way teachers are able to share their considerable expertise with students in a most effective way and this has very positive effects on the standards being achieved.

5. In addition to art, high standards of performance were observed in dance and music and standards show a good rate of improvement in design and technology. Students do well in projects and coursework in design and technology and this work is well supported by the particularly effective use of assessment information. Students play in a variety of musical ensembles and participate in dance and drama productions with a high standard of performance. Individual students achieve highly in sports, some at national levels, for example in athletics.

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good: they are very willing learners

6. The attitudes and behaviour of students, including those with special educational needs, are very good. The substantial majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that their children enjoy coming to school and this is evident in most lessons. Students show that they are keen to learn and make good efforts to achieve their learning goals. They sustain concentration, respond well to challenges and are prepared to persevere when work is difficult. Relationships are very good and students with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons. This has a significant positive effect on standards of attainment. In Year 7 English, for example, students showed very good levels of concentration as they developed the skills of critical analysis in a study of 'Frankenstein's Aunt' by Allan Petterson. The sense of enjoyment that students gain through well-structured learning activities was evident in another Year 7 English lesson on the use of alliteration. Again in a study of 'Romeo and Juliet' in Year 9, the high level of involvement of students in a discussion of the causes and consequences of the behaviour of characters in the play led to a deeper understanding of the plot. In mathematics, the helpful attitudes of students to learning enable lessons to proceed at a reasonable pace. In a Year 7 lesson on volume, for example, the high level of attention given to the teacher as the lesson objectives were outlined helped to ensure that all students were purposefully engaged throughout the lesson. This was also the case in a Year 11 lesson on estimation with lower attaining students. In science, students co-operate well with their teachers but tend to be passive and compliant in response to a teaching style that does not encourage a great deal of initiative on the part of students. In a Year 11 art lesson, students showed that they are willing to express their ideas and feelings through their work in a highly creative way. Art students use the art room very responsibly as their own workshop and clearly value the support they receive from teachers and enjoy their art lessons. Similarly, in design and technology, students demonstrate much enjoyment and tenacity when making artefacts and take pride in their work. Students' attentiveness and enthusiasm are evident in music and this can be seen in the use that students make of the music department at breaks and after school, when a significant number of students routinely use the resources of the department. Sustained levels of concentration with high levels of physical effort were seen to contribute to above average standards of attainment in a Year 7 swimming lesson. The ability of students to organise themselves and take responsibility is clearly evident in physical education, where they handle quite large pieces of equipment in small groups, with a minimum of instruction from teachers.
7. The good climate for learning is due to several factors and especially to the very good relationships that exist between adults and students in the school, and the high level of support received from parents. The systems of support for behaviour are clearly understood, and behaviour is very good, on the whole. The good quality of the relationships and very good behaviour are perhaps most clearly seen at lunchtimes, when most of the school population have to be processed through a very small dining area in a short space of time. Students

queue, with good humour, along corridors and stairs and show consideration by vacating the dining room quickly so that others can take their place. In the few instances where students have difficulty in maintaining good behaviour in lessons students are withdrawn to work under close supervision. In this calm environment students are helped to understand their work and in nearly all cases are quickly returned to lessons. For repeated and serious incidents, the school is firm about maintaining standards of behaviour. The number of fixed period exclusions is broadly average and the number of permanent exclusions is below average. Attendance is average, with unauthorised absence below average.

The school provides an environment in which students feel secure, relationships are harmonious and support for students' personal development is very good.

8. Students' personal development and the quality of the relationships amongst all groups are strengths of the school. Students work, study and play well together and are prepared to listen to and show respect for the views of others. This has a positive effect on standards of attainment. The school takes its responsibilities for child protection and students' welfare very seriously and has established very good procedures for fulfilling these responsibilities. The school provides a supportive environment in which to learn. Staff have a very good knowledge of individual students and their particular social and educational needs. This knowledge underpins the school's provision for students' personal development, which is a strength of the school. Most parents feel that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible and students themselves are appreciative of this aspect and feel secure in the learning environment that the school provides.
9. Pupils from the feeder primary schools make a preliminary visit to the school in October of the year before transfer. This is followed, from January onwards, by visits from the Year 7 tutor to all pupils in their primary schools. Later, all pupils make a full day visit to Cheslyn Hay. During this visit they are 'hosted' by students from Cheslyn Hay who attended the same primary schools. At the pre-inspection meeting parents spoke highly of these induction arrangements. From entry into the school, continuity in care is built on the role of the form tutors, who stay with their forms for the five years students are in the school. Students are in regular contact with their form tutors, who have responsibility for the oversight of attendance, punctuality, general welfare and personal and social education. Each year group has its own social area, which helps in the development of students' social relationships. Students are provided with an organiser, which provides them with a good deal of useful information and allows them to develop a structured approach to their learning. The organiser also allows the form tutor to monitor students' homework completion and for parents to communicate with the form tutor. The system works well when tutors check the organiser on a regular basis, but not all do and some parents find the irregularity of checking the organiser frustrating when messages are left unanswered for several weeks.
10. The school is efficient in identifying and collecting information about the strengths and weaknesses of its students, discussing them with students themselves, and with parents and other agencies. A good system is used to collect and analyse assessment information about students on entry to the school, including reading scores and NFER Cognitive Abilities Test scores. The school is also beginning to make use of end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results. This information is useful as it allows tutors to monitor students' attainment in a variety of areas and to keep track of students' personal development. There is a system of target setting and review that allows form tutors time to discuss with students individually their progress, thoughts and concerns. An important part of this system is the use of grades for effort, which enables tutors to gauge the extent to which students are achieving the standards that they ought to be achieving. This, together with a good mentoring system, is proving to be an effective means of ensuring that students maintain a positive work ethic, particularly as they move through Key Stage 4. The school has a well-understood reward system, which is used effectively to support appropriate behaviour. Students value the rewards. Residential visits, including some abroad, provide students with practical experience of living among others. Through numerous sporting activities, dance, drama and musical productions, and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme, students develop teamwork and a sense of responsibility. All of these activities provide support for students' personal development, which as a consequence is very good.

Students' personal, social and cultural development is very good and enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and good provision for the performing arts.

11. The school is successful in meeting its commitment to establish a caring and supportive environment and one that allows for students' personal, social and cultural development. Provision for moral development is good. The school has clear expectations that the majority of students accept as a framework of values. The ethos promotes respect, courtesy, consideration and co-operation. All staff promote good relationships both in the classroom and about the school and give generally clear signals about acceptable attitudes and behaviour. Moral issues are raised and discussed in several subjects. In religious education, for example, Year 9 students considered some of the moral issues surrounding abortion and in history, another Year 9 class examined the circumstances which led to the rise of dictatorships in Europe in the 1930s. In terms of personal development it is apparent in various subjects, such as music and physical education, that students work well together, show reliability and develop a sense of team spirit and fair play. Students are encouraged, but also take the initiative, to consider the plight of others through charitable work, both locally and internationally. For example, students recently took part in a sponsored swim that at the time of the inspection had raised over £4,500 for charity with an anticipated target of £7,000.
12. The school makes very good provision for social development. The large majority of students relate well to each other. Paired and group work in many lessons, projects, team games and visits all contribute very effectively to the development of respect for other people, differing views and the need to compromise. Social skills are further advanced for many through the good range of extra-curricular activities. The opportunities for taking responsibility in the school are varied. Examples include the arrangement whereby Year 10 students negotiate with local employers to secure their own work experience placements. All subjects contribute through the many collaborative class activities that require co-operation and awareness of others. Aspects of the curriculum develop understanding of social structures in society. Examples can be found in personal and social education, which includes topics such as crime and punishment and social responsibility. Very good displays of students' work on themes such as the 'World War I battlefields', 'Christianity and the environment' and the 'erosion of the ozone layer' make powerful contributions to the development of social responsibility through an increased understanding of the collective consequences of individual actions.
13. The school also makes very good provision for students' cultural development. The curriculum provides good support for the development of students' appreciation of their own and other cultures. In English, for example, students study both traditional English literature, such as the works of Shakespeare, and literature from other cultures, such as poems by Dennis Brutus and Claude McKay. Similarly, students examine a wide range of cultural influences in art, music and dance and these influences are reflected in the work that students produce. In religious education students have opportunities to study other faiths and in history, geography, economics and sociology students examine different economic and political systems, populations and cultures of a number of countries. A wide range of materials and activities is employed in modern foreign languages, alongside overseas trips, which help to broaden students' awareness of German, French and other European cultures. There are visits to theatres, galleries and other local cultural events. Provision for the performing arts is particularly good. School productions, such as last year's performance of 'Grease', involve large numbers of students who perform to high standards. Similarly, a large number of students perform in the school orchestra, string group, windband and other ensembles, together with the school choir, who again perform to high standards. The orchestra has travelled abroad to perform in Paris and other musical groups perform in local events. Dance, which is included in the physical education curriculum and offered as a lunchtime extra-curricular activity, is a strong feature of the performing arts at the school. This was clearly demonstrated in a dance production which took place earlier this term. The production was the outcome of the various extra-curricular dance clubs and about 150 students and teachers performed dance routines which covered jazz, tap, rock-and-roll and contemporary ballet and reflected European, Asian, African, Latin-American and African-American cultural influences. The performance was well supported by parents who, at the pre-inspection meeting, offered

the collaboration between students and teachers in both production and performance as a good example of the way in which the school helps their children to become mature and responsible young people.

The school benefits from the support of the overwhelming majority of parents.

14. Parents are highly supportive of the school and their children's education. This has a positive effect on standards. Parents have very positive views of the school and feel that the school is improving. They quote the school roll, which has increased by about 30 per cent since the last inspection, as evidence of the way in which the perceptions of the quality of education provided by the school are improving within the community. Parents feel that this is a consequence of the school's expectation that their children will work hard which, in turn, leads to their children making good progress. The school has good links with most parents and teachers have a good knowledge of students and their families. This provides a considerable support to students' learning. The school is welcoming to parents and, in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the majority of parents expressed satisfaction about the approachability of the school. Parents feel that teaching in the school is good and that the school is helping their children to become more mature and responsible.
15. The overall impact of parental involvement in the life of the school is good. There is an active parents and teachers association, which organises a number of well-supported social and fund raising events throughout the year. Through its various activities the association is able to provide the school with extra financial support, which is used, for example, to meet the running and maintenance costs of the school minibus. Parents also give helpful support, by providing transport for their own and other children, which enables them to participate in extra-curricular activities. The high level of attendance of parents at the various school productions and performances is both encouraging to students and supportive of high standards of performance. Most students with special educational needs also benefit from the active support of their parents and this has a positive effect on standards.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards of attainment in mathematics and science, and in the sixth form generally.

16. The end of Key Stage 3 results in mathematics and science dipped from being above the national average in 1998 to close to the national average in 1999. However, in comparison with similar schools the results were well below average in science and very low in mathematics. The 1999 results in mathematics and science in the GCSE examination taken at the end of Key Stage 4, were broadly in line with national averages. Comparison of the results obtained in these subjects with the results these students previously obtained at the end of Key Stage 3, shows that progress in mathematics was in line with expectations, while progress in science was below expectations. This contrasts with students' progress in English, which was above expectations. Attainment in the sixth form in 1999 was below the national average. The average point score of candidates entered for two or more A levels, or AS equivalents in 1999 was 14.2 compared to the national average of 17.9. Standards of attainment in terms of average points scores show a downward trend over the past four years. These scores have fallen from a high of 19.5 in 1997, and are also below the average score of 15.5 in 1996. A level Information Systems analysis of students' performance in relation to standards of attainment on entry shows that in most A level subjects, students did much less well than expected. The reasons why standards are not as high as they could be is due to some teaching which does not do enough to promote high levels of performance and leadership which is insufficiently focused on strategies for raising standards in mathematics and science.
17. Although teaching in mathematics and science has strengths similar to those found in other subjects, not enough is done to cater for the needs of students at either end of the attainment range. Lesson planning does not include strategies for extending higher attaining students and for supporting lower attaining students, with the consequence that when higher attaining students finish their work they either have to wait for their classmates to finish or are given more of the same work to do. At the same time lesson planning does not take into account the

needs of lower attaining students who often have difficulty in completing lesson tasks. There are weaknesses in the marking of students' work in both subjects, with much of the work being marked by a series of ticks or brief comments and little guidance given to students on what they should do to improve the standard of their work. Teaching strategies in the sixth form rely heavily on direction from teachers and do not allow students sufficient opportunity to develop independence in their learning. Standards of attainment in subjects that do provide students with such opportunities, as in art, history and economics, tend to be above those in other subjects. The positive response of students to different teaching and learning strategies is also evident in the above average completion rates and standards attained in the GNVQ courses offered in the sixth form.

18. Insufficient use is made of assessment information in mathematics and science to guide curricular planning, although in science this is partly due to there being no permanent head of department at the time of the inspection. Although the school collects a good deal of information on students on entry to the school and analyses results in end of key stage tests and examinations, there is a tendency to use this information to explain differences in performance and not to use it in curricular planning. For example, purposeful leadership in the English department has resulted in the systematic analysis of students' performance in tests and examinations in order to identify weaknesses so that these can be taken into account in planning schemes of work. As a consequence of the careful attention given in subsequent teaching to these weaknesses, standards of attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 rose dramatically in 1999. Standards in the GCSE examination were also above those obtained in 1998. However, assessment information is not used in this way in mathematics and science. Under-performance tends to be seen as a consequence of inherent weaknesses in particular cohorts of students. Too little attention is paid to ways of addressing these weaknesses through the schemes of work and a wider range of teaching strategies.

The monitoring and evaluation by the senior management team and heads of department of teaching and learning and the implementation of school policy.

19. The school attempts to evaluate its performance in a number of ways. Detailed analyses of examination and test information are undertaken and heads of department are required to provide reports on students' performance as part of the review mechanisms in the school. The senior management team also engages in reviews of aspects of the work of departments. These reviews involve members of the senior management team, accompanied by another head of department, making a formal 'visit' to the department to evaluate the particular aspect of the department's work. Following the visit, a written report is produced which is intended to form the basis of action by the department. Through formal evaluations of this nature and other informal contacts, the senior management team has a good understanding of many of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, members of the senior management team are constrained in the extent to which they can engage in the processes of monitoring and evaluation for several reasons. There is, for example, insufficient sharing of responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the work of departments amongst members of the senior management team. Members of the senior management team are not linked with particular departments, so that, apart from the headteacher, responsibility for monitoring the work of departments rests mainly with one of the deputy headteachers. Given the size of the school and the number of departments within it, the scale of the task is too great for the number of senior staff involved. At the same time, although heads of department engage in a certain amount of classroom observation, such as observing the teaching of newly qualified teachers, there is no programme of regular observation across subjects to identify common strengths that can be shared and areas where improvements can be made. The need for the senior management team to commit their time to the processes of whole-school review and evaluation and long-term planning, means that there is a need for heads of department to be responsible for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning within their departments. The headteacher has recognised the need for improvement in management and is in the process of restructuring the senior management team and redefining roles and responsibilities, in order to give each member of the team clear line management responsibility for particular departments and to provide a much sharper focus on improving performance.
20. There are inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy with regard to assessment.

The school has made some progress in the use of assessment since the last inspection, when assessment, including marking, was a key issue of the report. Students know, for the most part, how they are progressing and there are examples of good assessment practice in some subjects, such as English and art. However, there are weaknesses in the marking of students' work and the use of assessment to guide lesson planning in mathematics and science. Marking, in many instances, consists of a series of ticks or brief comments, which do not give students clear information on the standards they are achieving. The school produces a number of very useful analyses of students' performance, which are provided to heads of department. In some subjects, such as English, this information has been used effectively to guide curricular planning and raise standards. However, there is no system for ensuring that the implications of these analyses are taken into account in subsequent curriculum planning and little use is made of this information in some subjects. At present, insufficient use is made of end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test information to identify students' weaknesses and build on strengths in Key Stage 3.

21. The are weaknesses in the implementation of the school's policy with regard to special educational needs. Although students receive effective support and make good progress when they are taught in small withdrawal groups and when they are supported by learning support assistants in lessons, subject teachers are insufficiently involved in the construction of students' individual education plans. As a consequence the plans lack subject-specific objectives and subject teachers make little reference to them in their lesson planning. There is an over-reliance on learning support assistants to cater for the needs of students with special educational needs in lessons. There is also an over-reliance on informal methods of communicating information concerning special educational needs information to subject teachers. The special educational needs co-ordinator does not convene cross-curricular special educational needs meetings and subject departments do not have designated special educational need liaison teachers. Also, special educational needs does not feature as a regular item on the agenda of departmental meetings. At present no member of the senior management team has responsibility for oversight of special educational needs. The headteacher has identified the need for improvement in this area and is developing strategies to strengthen this aspect of the school's work.

The structure of the school day and time-keeping at the beginning and end of lessons and registrations.

22. The structure of the school day is very much influenced by the availability of school buses to transport the large number of students who travel to the school from the surrounding area, and in particular Sharesill, Featherstone and Essington. As a consequence, the school makes a relatively late start with registration at 9.25am, although staff duties commence at the earlier time of 9.15am. The day is then divided into six periods of 50 minutes, with 55 minutes for lunch and 15 minutes for a morning break, before the final period ends at 3.50pm. Tutors register their groups at 9.25am and then, on four mornings of the week, students in Years 7 to Year 11 move to the first lesson at 9.30am. On the fifth morning the school operates a rolling programme of assemblies and tutor group time during the first period. So, on Monday, for example, students in Year 7 go immediately to assembly after registration and then return to their form rooms for the remainder of the first period when the personal and social education programme is taught by the form tutor. In Key Stage 4, the time when the year group is together is sometimes used for a collective introduction to a theme that forms part of the personal and social education programme, which is then followed up in the tutor period. However, the arrangement adversely affects the teaching of the personal and social education programme, particularly at Key Stage 3, as the time available following the assembly can be too short for teachers and students to engage in any meaningful activities. The use of personal and social education lesson time for assemblies erodes the amount of time available for the teaching of the subject.
23. Other than at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and at break times the school bell is not used to signal lesson changeover times. Teachers are allowed a certain amount of latitude to end lessons close to the lesson changeover time in order to avoid congestion in some of the narrow corridors. However, during the period of inspection the 'window' during which lesson changeovers occurred was as long as ten minutes in some instances. Some

classes were dismissed up to five minutes before the scheduled time for the ending of the lesson while the lesson following did not begin until five minutes after the time at which the lesson was due to start. As a consequence, students are beginning to move around the school while others are still engaged in lessons and teachers and students are at times kept waiting outside classrooms for the previous lesson to end. In this circumstance it is very difficult for teachers to plan the timing of lesson activities and the amount of lesson time they will have available is not always predictable. The lack of co-ordinated lesson changeover times also has an adverse cumulative effect, with considerable erosion of the total teaching time available in the school week. Teaching time is also lost through the practice of some teachers giving classes up to a ten minute break in the middle of a double lesson.

24. Another consequence of the fact that teachers and students may arrive at lessons at different times is that there is general lack of urgency about time-keeping, which is most obvious at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. During the period of the inspection, there was a lack of punctuality at registrations by both teachers and students, which did not make an appropriate start to the morning or afternoon session.
25. In order to accommodate the range of A level subjects the school now offers in the sixth form, some subjects can only be offered through extended day classes, which are taught between 4.00pm and 6.00pm. This arrangement makes excessive demands on both students and teachers.

Opportunities for reflection and collective worship by all students and sixth formers' entitlement to religious education.

26. The personal development of students is fundamental to the ethos of the school. Spiritual development is recognised as an integral part of this. Very good examples of students' art, together with displays of students' work on a variety of spiritual themes, decorate the walls of public areas, encouraging reflection on the interpretation of experience, and values.
27. Opportunities for reflection on spiritual issues occur in lessons in creative and humanities subjects and in particular in religious education. Opportunities are taken in assemblies to emphasise achievement and to raise students' expectations, but there is little emphasis on cultivating students' spiritual awareness. No acts of worship were seen. Early morning form-times are used for notices and discussion about practical matters, but no use is made of a 'thought for the day', which would promote reflection on the part of students. Moral and ethical issues are discussed in general studies in the sixth form, but the religious content of the programme does not meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and so students do not receive their full entitlement to religious education. Overall, opportunities to cultivate students' spiritual understanding are being overlooked and could be more regularly taken.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

28. The school should now:

- Raise standards in mathematics and science, and in the sixth form by:
 - (a) ensuring that teaching provides good variety and challenge in all lessons, and that lesson planning takes account of the needs of students at both ends of the attainment range;
 - (b) ensuring that all teachers mark students work consistently, in accordance with the school's marking policy, and that the marking provides students with clear guidance on how to improve the standard of their work;
 - (c) making better use of assessment information to identify differences in students' individual performances, set targets and guide curricular planning.

- Redefine the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team and heads of department, in order to ensure that:
 - (a) members of the senior management team have clear line management responsibilities with a focus on improving performance;
 - (a) teaching is systematically monitored and evaluated in all subjects by heads of department and members of the senior management team;
 - (b) there is consistent implementation of school policy in all departments in respect of assessment and, in particular, school policy with regard to special educational needs.

- Make more effective use of the time available for teaching by ensuring that:
 - (a) all of the curriculum time allocated for personal and social education is available for the teaching of the subject;
 - (b) lessons start and finish on time;
 - (c) the time available in double lessons is used purposefully in all subjects;
 - (d) teachers and students are punctual at registrations and lessons;
 - (e) all A level teaching takes place within a reasonable time frame within any working day.

- Increase opportunities for reflection and collective worship, and the provision of religious education in the sixth form.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	77
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	9	47	35	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1136	169
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	88	4

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	136	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	37

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	96	141	237

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	75 (69)	55 (97)	59 (96)
	Girls	120 (74)	89 (60)	71 (59)
	Total	195 (143)	144 (157)	130 (155)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (62)	61(69)	55 (68)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	50 (29)	33 (36)	18 (26)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59 (93)	63 (78)	75 (111)
	Girls	111 (85)	107 (60)	98 (74)
	Total	170 (178)	170 (138)	173 (185)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (79)	72 (61)	73 (81)
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (32)	24 (31)	26 (36)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	95	104	199

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	40 (50)	89 (106)	94 (109)
	Girls	57 (53)	94 (87)	96 (88)
	Total	97 (103)	183 (193)	190 (197)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (50)	92 (95)	95 (97)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43 (43.8)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		n/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	24	37

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	14.8 (11.5)	13.7 (18.7)	14.2 (16.1)	0 (0.3)	10.0 (1.8)	5.0 (1.5)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1292
Any other minority ethnic group	6

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	22	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	73.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7– Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	378

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	23
Key Stage 5	13

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2,586,799
Total expenditure	2,529,966
Expenditure per pupil	1988
Balance brought forward from previous year	8430
Balance carried forward to next year	65263

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1305
Number of questionnaires returned	389

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	55	7	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	50	47	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	58	5	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	51	20	3	2
The teaching is good.	29	67	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	53	14	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	41	4	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	34	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	23	58	14	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	27	60	2	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	59	3	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	43	4	1	7

Other issues raised by parents

The parents' meeting was attended by 25 parents. They were very supportive of the school and spoke highly of the quality of the relationships between staff and pupils. They feel that the school is improving.