

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGH STORRS SCHOOL

High Storrs Road, Sheffield.

LEA area: Sheffield LEA

Unique reference number: 107139

Headteacher: E M Talmadge

Reporting inspector: J K Arnold
2408

Dates of inspection: 24/01/00 – 26/01/00

Inspection number: 183953

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: High Storrs Road
Sheffield
South Yorkshire

Postcode: S11 7LH

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: S Tomlinson

Date of previous inspection: 21/11/94

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A strong social ethos in which relationships and behaviour flourish, permeates the school.

Standards are high throughout the school in most subjects because of good teaching and particularly so in the sixth form where teaching is very good.

The school's curricular and extra-curricular provision provides rich and varied opportunities for all pupils.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

High Storrs School is a very large, multi-ethnic, mixed comprehensive school for pupils in the South West of Sheffield. It has 1682 pupils on roll, aged 11 – 19, including a very large sixth form (371), a small unit for hearing impaired pupils and a significant number of pupils (231) who have English as an additional language. The school is currently oversubscribed. The majority of its pupils come from local primary schools, with very little movement to and from the school. At about eleven percent, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average and 35 pupils have statements, of whom five are pupils with hearing impairments. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (approximately 12 percent) is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment overall and there are significant numbers of high attaining pupils in the school as a whole.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

High Storrs is an effective school with some significant strengths but with some inconsistencies. Pupils are motivated to work hard and make the most of the rich and varied opportunities open to them. Teachers provide excellent role models and most inspire pupils and inculcate in them a love of learning. Standards are high in most subjects, particularly in the sixth form. The recent appointment of the new head teacher has brought a renewed sense of direction and purpose to the school. Overall, the school's strengths outweigh its weaknesses and it provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The school provides a positive climate in which pupils learn and achieve well, despite deteriorating conditions in parts of the buildings.
- A strong social ethos in which relationships and behaviour flourish, permeates the school.
- Standards are high throughout the school in most subjects because of good teaching and particularly so in the sixth form where teaching is very good.
- The school's curricular and extra-curricular provision provides rich and varied opportunities for all pupils.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The new head teacher's vigorous and realistic leadership has re-energised and involved the staff, stimulated developments and defined appropriate areas for improvement.

What could be improved

- Although High Storrs does many things well, there are too many inconsistencies in the school's practices.
- The school's systems for analysing and using data to improve standards need to be used more extensively across the school.
- Standards suffer in some lessons, in some subjects, because of pockets of unsatisfactory teaching.
- The school does not yet have effective processes for monitoring and evaluating its practice.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Until the start of 1999, the school made insufficient progress with some of the issues identified in the last inspection. Since the arrival of the new head teacher, progress has accelerated so that overall it is just satisfactory and is continuing to get better. In the last year, the school has started to consider the impact of policy and practice in the classrooms. All staff have been observed by the head teacher and responsibility for monitoring has been rightly located with subject leaders as well as senior managers. Both the systems for reports and for pupils' records of achievement and experience have been developed but some weaknesses remain. Satisfactory progress has been made planning a coherent programme for personal and social education (PSE) and good progress has been made with provision for pupils with special educational needs which is now effective. The school has taken satisfactory steps to improve both the provision and equipment for information technology (IT). It is rightly a key priority in the school development plan because staff need to make better use of ICT in lessons. The school has been unable to afford the extensive refurbishment required by the last report and has reviewed arrangements for collective worship but still does not meet statutory requirements on this issue. The school is well placed to make the improvements still needed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds based on National Curriculum test results and 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
End of Key Stage 3 tests	A	A	A	A
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	B
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	

Key

very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Results in the national tests for 14 year olds show pupils' overall attainment in English, mathematics and science to be well above the national average and to compare very well with attainment in similar schools.

GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average, both for pupils obtaining five or more higher grade passes (A*-C) and for those achieving five or more pass grades (A*-G). Both boys and girls score better than boys and girls nationally and high attaining pupils do well. Almost all pupils achieved at least one GCSE pass grade, which is above the average in similar schools and reflects the number of pupils with special educational needs who achieve some success. The trend in the average total point score per pupil is rising but at a marginally slower rate than the national trend. The school has set appropriately challenging statutory targets and is making satisfactory progress towards them.

Over the past three years, A-level results have been consistently well above national averages. In 1999, the average point score for students entered for two or more A-levels or AS equivalent, was well above the national average. There were no candidates for advanced GNVQ in 1999.

In most lessons, in most subjects, pupils' attainment is above and often well above average. High attaining pupils do very well. Exceptionally good sixth form art work was seen during the inspection and high standards of attainment were particularly evident in history, German, English, theatre studies and classics. Standards in aspects of design and technology observed were relatively low.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: throughout the school, pupils respond to teaching with maturity and conviction, creating a strong ethos for learning. They come punctually to lessons and are confident to ask questions and seek help. Many participate in the wealth of additional activities provided by the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: pupils respond sensibly to the code of conduct and daily routines are known, accepted and followed.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: the quality of relationships, especially between pupils and teachers is a particular strength. Many pupils contribute to the life of the school by helping teachers or providing support for their peers. They show increasing levels of maturity and responsibility as they move through the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory: attendance is broadly in line with the national average as is the rate of unauthorised absence in the school. Permanent exclusions are rare.

A particular strength is the peer mediation scheme. Pupils volunteer to act as mediators to help their friends resolve problems and conflict. This is well used by pupils and valued by parents.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teachers' detailed knowledge of the subjects they teach, helps to enliven the lessons and to inspire the pupils. In many lessons teachers use probing questions which promote deeper understanding and encourage pupils to explain their thinking. Good teaching in English, classics, geography and history reinforces pupils' literacy skills and number work is incorporated when appropriate. In most lessons, teachers provide work that is suitably matched to the needs of their pupils and support for the lower attaining pupils and for those with special educational needs helps them make good progress. Occasionally, the higher attaining pupils are not given sufficient challenge to stretch them fully. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 87% of lessons seen. It was very good or better in 28% of lessons and good in a further 38%. Teaching is good in science and English and satisfactory in mathematics in Key Stages 3 and 4. All sixth form teaching is good or better. However, in

aspects of design and technology, PE, mathematics and ICT, there are pockets of teaching that are unsatisfactory or occasionally poor.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good: the school provides a rich and wide-ranging curriculum, which is a strength of the school and includes a significant and unusual level of choice. The range of extra-curricular opportunities is impressive.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Effective: the withdrawal provision provides good opportunities for supporting basic skills in literacy, improving spelling and reading and helping pupils with their course work. Disabled access is good. Good work has been started to ensure that higher attaining pupils are adequately stretched.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good: there are plans to introduce Urdu for pupils in Key Stage 3. It is already taken as an option in Key Stage 4. Support in lessons from the ethnic minority achievement team (EMAT) is sensitive and helpful.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: the school provides very good opportunities for moral, social and cultural development right across the curriculum. Provision for spiritual development is unpredictable because it is not planned and coordinated across the curriculum.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory: the school gives very good personal support to its pupils. Systems for monitoring pupils' academic performance are developing but are, as yet, used inconsistently.

Curriculum opportunities are particularly diverse in Years 7-9, which includes classical studies, Latin and German. In Year 9, there are separate sciences and further choice in languages and classical studies. The ethnic minority achievement team (EMAT) plays an active role, working in the community to raise educational aspirations and provide information and support. Statutory requirements are not fully met in IT in Key Stage 4.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: the head teacher has brought clarity of vision and new ambition to the school. The restructuring of the management team and creation of new roles and responsibilities are positive developments to encourage collective responsibility.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Purposefully: governors are dedicated and provide sound leadership. They are playing an increasingly strategic role in the development of the school and management of its finances.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory: the head teacher knows the school's strengths and has identified appropriate priorities for its improvement. However, the school does not yet have effective strategies for monitoring and evaluation so much of its practice remains inconsistent.
The strategic use of resources	Given pupils' relatively high attainment on entry, the stimulating curriculum opportunities, the high standards of behaviour and attainment overall and the cost effectiveness of the school, particularly in the sixth form, the school uses its resources well.

Staff with leadership and management roles at departmental level increasingly contribute to whole-school improvement. They now need to work more closely with senior managers to achieve a consistent, corporate approach. Governors cost developments carefully and are beginning to apply some of the principles of best value. They have yet to assess the impact of spending priorities consistently on the standards that pupils achieve.

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 progress their children make. • The quality of most of the teaching. • The approachability of the school. • The school's expectations that pupils will work hard. • The support given to all pupils and particularly those with special educational needs. • Teaching in music and English. • The way the school helps pupils become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standard of some of the accommodation and very poor toilet provision. • The amount of homework set and inconsistency of marking. • The quality of teaching in some subjects and insufficient challenge for the pupils. • The information they receive about their children's progress and school matters in general.

Parents overwhelmingly support the school and many acknowledge how well their children achieve. Inspection findings support this view. Inspectors also support parents' views on teaching but found most pupils to be appropriately challenged in most lessons. The inspection team confirms that the school does encourage hard work and mature and responsible attitudes in its pupils. Parents' views about homework are mixed. Some feel that there is too much. Others feel that there is not enough, particularly for higher attaining pupils. The inspection team agrees that the setting and marking of homework is inconsistent, does not always help pupils learn effectively and is insufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils. Inspectors were very impressed with the quality of some of the

information that is sent to parents but judged that reports did not include sufficient comment about the progress pupils make and what they can do to get better. Despite the poor conditions in some of the school's accommodation the team did not find evidence that it compromised pupils' attainment, however they did find the toilet provision for both girls and boys to be unhygienic and unacceptable.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school provides a positive climate in which pupils learn and achieve well, despite deteriorating conditions in parts of the buildings.

1. Pupils achieve well at High Storrs, despite the condition of the buildings, which in some cases are in need of refurbishment. One of the main reasons for this is the way in which staff make apparent their expectations that the pupils will work hard in lessons. Lessons start punctually and are conducted in a businesslike fashion, with well-planned activities, timed to ensure that pupils maintain concentration and momentum for their learning. In a Year 10 science lesson on meiosis, the teacher settled the class quickly, skilfully adjusted the timing of the opening question and answer session to keep attention and moved pupils on smartly with the practical task of sequencing the steps in cell division. Also in Year 10, in an English lesson, the conscious decision by the teacher to seat boys and girls alternately resulted in pupils working with intense and silent concentration which led to them making good progress.

2. The very positive atmosphere in the sixth form is another strong feature of the school's work ethic. Students speak very positively about the way they are taught and how they are encouraged to organise their own learning. They themselves influence the climate for learning lower down in the school by their positive involvement as helpers and role models in lessons and by taking charge of the library. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 find it helpful when they read and do work on their own, learning from the discussions with and suggestions by the teachers that follow. Younger pupils also recognise how they are expected to be involved and appreciate how teachers incorporate their answers into the lesson. In a Year 10 history lesson, for example, the teacher used a pupil's observation that many German names had "Von" in them, to explain about German aristocracy.

3. Pupils are not unaware of the poor physical conditions of the PE and science areas and the lack of appropriate accommodation for music. Students regret, for example, the lack of space to practise their instruments. They acknowledge that the drab and sometimes bleak environment can be inhibiting but are, nevertheless, motivated by teachers who *"know their stuff and inspire us to learn"* and by lessons with the clear purpose of helping them achieve good examination and test results. They are pleased that the teachers know them by name and feel that they matter.

4. The school does a great deal to lessen the impact of the tired buildings. Displays mounted in many classrooms and around the corridors both brighten the bare walls and also provide good examples of exciting and often high quality work. Some exquisite portraiture by sixth form students was displayed in the school foyer during the inspection. This was breathtaking and of a professional standard, providing a standard of excellence towards which other pupils can strive.

A strong social ethos in which relationships and behaviour flourish, permeates the school.

5. An outstanding feature of High Storrs School is the extremely positive relationships between staff and pupils. This was observed in many lessons and about the school generally. In two Year 9, PSE lessons on contraception and on responsibility towards first

sexual relationships, the way in which teachers sensitively created a climate of trust and managed humour and pupils' potential embarrassment was directly attributable to the mutual respect that existed between them. In a Year 10 Urdu class, the teacher's gentle and respectful manner towards the pupils established an atmosphere of calm in which pupils' concentration and absorption was tangible. In this lesson, pupils obviously responded to the positive encouragement they were given and clearly looked up to the teacher as a positive role model.

6. There are strong moral codes active in the school. This is apparent in pupils' behaviour and is clear in the way that the school communicates its aims and rules. These epitomise its ambition to be a learning community and to celebrate and respect the cultural diversity of its pupils. The prospectus is written in a way that encourages all to take responsibility for the collective welfare and success of the institution. The Code of Conduct is a good example of the way in which the school cultivates good relationships with pupils. Written in a conversational style, it puts the pupils first. It gives pupils and teachers equal responsibility for mutual respect, good behaviour and consideration for others, for example, *"Poor behaviour in lessons prevents people from working and learning; we all have a responsibility to prevent such behaviour"*. Safety and order is emphasised *"so that the smallest pupils feel just as secure as the largest"*.

7. Most of the time, there is no time or reason for pupils to misbehave because teachers plan interesting and stimulating lessons. Activities are generally relevant, well organised and are often conducted at good pace. In a Year 11 geography lesson, the teacher timed the tasks to take account of some of the pupils' short attention spans, particularly some lower attainers and boys, and all the pupils responded well. In music, the teacher's excellent planning and control of a Year 8 class ensured very good behaviour and enabled the pupils to work on analysing, composing and performing tasks with good commitment throughout the lesson. Health and safety routines are known and followed in science lessons and respect for people and property is demonstrated consistently.

8. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development are fostered in many areas of the curriculum and teachers actively encourage pupils to reflect on deeper meanings and important issues. In a Year 7 art class, pupils learn about the work of Kandinsky and Mondrian and deepen their understanding by trying to emulate the painting techniques that they used. In a Year 9 English lesson on Romeo and Juliet, pupils are asked to consider the impact of Tybalt's aggression and consequent death on the lives of the other characters. Year 11 pupils learn about the relatively recent formation of Pakistan in geography and consider the impact of World War two on civilian life, particularly women, in history. Pupils in Year 8 study Greek mythology in classical studies and are asked to consider the moral issues surrounding Agamemnon's killing of his daughter.

9. Pupils with hearing impairments and other disabilities are effectively integrated into the classes and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds work harmoniously together. Staff provide good role models for them and run activities and clubs that recognise and value their different needs and cultures. There are, for example, homework clubs for the hearing impaired and for pupils from ethnic minorities. Bengali and Urdu clubs are run. The school's policy towards uniform allows those of different faiths and cultures to wear appropriate clothing without standing out.

Standards are high throughout the school in most subjects because of good teaching and particularly so in the sixth form where teaching is very good.

10. Results in the national tests for 14 year olds show pupils' overall attainment in English, mathematics and science to be well above the national average when taken together and to compare very well with attainment in similar schools. Results in science in 1999 were slightly weaker than those in English and mathematics. More pupils attain at the higher levels 6 and 7 than nationally and the results indicate that the majority of pupils are working at levels that are 2 or 3 terms in advance of their expected progress. Both boys and girls score better than boys and girls nationally.

11. GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average, both for pupils obtaining 5 or more higher grade passes (A*-C) and for those achieving 5 or more pass grades (A*-G). When compared to schools with similar intakes, high grade results also compare very well but pass grade results less so, being only average. Both boys and girls score better than boys and girls nationally. Results from the last four years show that the school has been particularly successful in raising boys' attainment. Almost all the pupils achieved at least one GCSE pass grade, which is above the average in similar schools. The trend in the average total point score per pupil is rising but at a marginally slower rate than the national trend. Over the last three years 1997 –1999, performance in aspects of design and technology has been relatively weak. The school has set appropriately challenging statutory targets.

12. Over the past three years, A-level results have been maintained consistently at levels that are well above national averages. In 1999, the average point score for students entered for two or more A-levels or AS equivalent, was well above the national average.

13. Pupils identified as high attainers demonstrate impressive skills, knowledge and understanding particularly in their grasp and use of language. The standard of their written work is very high indeed and they converse confidently and achieve well as a consequence of high levels of challenge in most of their lessons. In a Year 11 English lesson they were encouraged to consider syllogism and hyperbole, which led to intense discussion and increased their comprehension of poetry. In a Year 10 science lesson, higher attaining pupils learned from the teacher's probing questions on seismic waves and came up with innovative answers, which demonstrated good understanding. However more able pupils said that when the work is undemanding, they lose interest and motivation because they *"know it already"*.

14. High Storrs is leading a new initiative, part of the Excellence in Cities project that aims to explore the needs of gifted and talented pupils. This is being well led by a thoughtful and creative manager. It has come at a good time for the school, as the intention is to develop teaching and learning approaches in the classroom. The school has gone some way towards reaching a common understanding of issues to do with identification of gifted and talented pupils and has appropriate plans to develop work on academic and pastoral support and curriculum issues. This initiative links well with the school's Beacon status which is for spreading best practice in teaching the most able pupils.

15. Teachers know their subjects well and the majority of teachers use their skills to inspire the pupils and to make the learning come alive. In a Year 9 German lesson, the teacher's command of the language and her dramatic presentation, helped the pupils understand the gist and meaning of new phrases and inspired them to participate actively and improve their pronunciation and inflection. In a Year 9 classics class, the teacher used detailed knowledge of the text of the play Antigone, to help pupils understand the use of metaphor and simile. From this, pupils were able to pick out examples and record them for

use in their writing. In the same lesson, pupils were able to comment on the use of sarcasm and were encouraged by the teacher to consider the moral issues involved, by comparing the events in the play with a current issue with which they were familiar.

16. High standards of attainment were particularly evident in the sixth form because of consistently high quality teaching. In English, students were able to offer meaningful interpretations of Shakespeare's play the Tempest, prompted by the teacher's good knowledge of the text and the dramatic conventions involved. In a Year 12 mathematics group, challenging questions resulting from the teacher's good grasp of the knowledge required, helped the students improve their understanding of the principles of motion and acceleration. In an A-level German group, the teacher was not satisfied with the students offering one way of translating a phrase or using a sentence structure but demanded several different versions. This served both to extend the students' vocabulary but also to consolidate their grasp of different grammatical conventions. Much learning took place because of the teacher's ability to explain and exemplify meanings in German.

The school's curricular and extra-curricular provision provides rich and varied opportunities for all pupils.

17. High Storrs offers its pupils an unusually wide level of choice and variety in Years 7 – 9, both within and beyond the timetabled curriculum. Pupils enjoy the chance to study Greek literature in classics, are able to follow separate courses in science and have the opportunity of some choice in languages, with the possibility of studying Latin all the way up. This breadth of study and particularly the focus on language and literature bears fruit further up the school, where they make use of their knowledge of syntax and display a love of literature and learning.

18. The sixth form has a relatively wide range of courses and widens this by operating a link with other local comprehensive schools and a local FE college. This runs smoothly and extends students' opportunities in a cost-effective way. The school also receives students in return and they are quickly and effectively integrated into the very secure sixth form community. The school offers only a limited range of vocational courses but its realistic approach to the constraints of its budget has led them to encourage students who wish to follow GNVQ courses to look to the local FE college which is better resourced to provide them.

19. The staff run a large number of clubs and societies, mainly in lunch times. They cover a wide range of hobbies, skills and activities and stimulate not only academic but also vocational, cultural and sporting achievement. Pupils are involved in bands, choirs and orchestras and parents speak well of concerts and productions they have attended. Even in these more recreational activities, high standards are demanded. In a lunchtime band rehearsal, the teacher insisted on crisp and accurate rhythmic playing and a string ensemble practised carefully to get the right balance and correct intonation. Both pupils and parents appreciate the commitment of staff and the informal, social contact that these activities provide does much to develop and cement the good relationships that exist between staff and pupils.

Support for pupils with special educational needs is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection.

20. The school has successfully introduced the Code of Practice since the last inspection. The individual needs of the different pupils are catered for through effective support in classrooms or direct instruction programmes, provided on a withdrawal basis. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, a support teacher helped pupils with language difficulties and was able to help them make progress because the teacher had discussed the planned work before the lesson. Some direct instruction on spelling with a small group of Year 8 boys was successful because the teacher carefully structured and sequenced spelling activities that helped the pupils learn and consolidate spelling rules. In both examples, the positive relationships between the teacher and the taught enhanced the work.

21. The balance of need has changed since the last inspection, with fewer hearing impaired pupils and more with complex physical and behavioural difficulties. The school supports these pupils well. It is increasingly using individual education plans (IEPs) to help pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Approximately one third of the pupils with statements are in this category. In addition, there are one or two pupils in each year who are set behaviour targets and whose IEPs are managed by the year tutor. There are good links with the local authority's service for the sensory impaired, which are integrated into the work of the school and makes a valuable contribution to the progress of those pupils with impaired hearing.

22. The management of special needs is good. The special needs team meets regularly and includes an element of training on each agenda. The school now appoints the support assistants and they also have had some training on autism and dyslexia. Governors take an active interest in the work of the special needs department and demonstrate this in their concern to monitor pupils' progress with their targets.

The new head teacher's vigorous and realistic leadership has re-energised and involved the staff, stimulated developments and defined appropriate areas for improvement.

23. Both the head teacher and the Chair of governors share a real clarity of vision for this multicultural school. This and the strong commitment to equal opportunity and individual worth is also shared by the staff and the governing body. The head teacher's particular contribution has been to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and to start to take the school forward after a period when real improvement was insignificant. Governors view her appointment as crucial and they are rightly confident in her abilities.

24. The head teacher and senior managers have a realistic view of standards. In the last year, the head teacher has observed all staff teach and is rightly shifting the responsibility for monitoring what happens in the classroom to other senior and middle managers. The management team knows the school's weaknesses and recognises where improvement is still needed. This is reflected in both the school development plan, which identifies relevant priorities and in the departmental plans, which link closely with it. Those managing departments appreciate the new openness of the head teacher, her integrity and sense of direction and are pleased to be more actively involved in taking the school forward. Good examples of this are the way in which the school is approaching literacy and the development of target setting, although staff acknowledge that there is still some way to go with these developments.

25. Amongst the priorities for development, the head teacher has correctly identified quality assurance, target setting, academic monitoring by tutors and changes to the curriculum and the school day as key areas. The development of information and

communications technology (ICT) and the associated staff training is also included, linked to the school's overall ICT plan. These are all relevant and essential and have accelerated the school's hitherto modest improvement since the last inspection.

26. An impressive development, stimulated by the head teacher, is the formation of the governors' strategy group. This consists of the Chairs of each of the governors' sub-committees and allows proper time for considering future development planning for school improvement.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Although High Storrs does many things well, there are too many inconsistencies in the school's practices.

27. Teachers vary in their use of assessment to help pupils learn and make progress. In many lessons the use of ongoing assessment helps pupils move their work on. In English, teachers vary their interaction with individual pupils according to how well they are doing. In one history group, the teacher insisted that a higher attaining pupil complete research work to include with his writing, as the teacher has assessed that the pupil's written work generally lacked the depth required for a high grade. However, in most lessons observed, although clear tasks were given, teachers did not always point out what constituted the features of a good piece of work or the reason for doing it (the learning objective) so the pupils did not know what to aim for. Similarly, pupils are often told that they have done good work but not often told why or how they could improve it.

28. There is similar inconsistency evident in the marking of pupils' books. Marking is spasmodic in some subjects. There does not appear to be a school approach to presentation so even the best work of some of the high attainers is very untidy. Work is rarely dated or headed so progress is difficult to track and there are few comments which give pupils guidance or targets for improvement. Where constructive comments are written they do not appear to be followed up. Nevertheless some relatively good practice does occur in English for example, where the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of work are identified and advice given on what could be improved.

29. Reports to parents are similarly disparate. Many contain encouraging comments but say more about pupils' attitudes rather than what they know, understand and can do and what they have to do to improve. They are not presented as well as other documents the school produces. Layout is inconsistent, with some poorly hand-written pages.

30. Parents indicate that the setting of homework is inconsistent and the inspection team endorses their views. In many of the planners seen, there was a considerable amount of "*none set*" and little direct use of homework was seen in the lessons observed although some was set. Generally, homework was set for whole classes or groups, rather than matched to pupils' different attainment levels. This sometimes means that higher attaining pupils do not benefit from it and slower learners have too much to do. The school has set out very helpful guidance about homework in the prospectus but needs to ensure that both subject teachers and year tutors check that it is set, completed and used profitably to help pupils improve their work.

31. Pupils' planners have the potential of being a useful means of communication between teachers and parents and parents view them positively. At present they are not used consistently. Some tutors check them regularly and make appropriate comments. Others do not. Although they have useful pages on which to log targets for improvement,

these are rarely used.

The school's systems for analysing and using data to improve standards need to be used more extensively across the school.

32. The school has built up a useful bank of assessment data and is continuing to do so. At present, IT systems are being introduced that will allow them to make better use of the data they have collected. A start has been made on the analysis of results of pupils with English as an additional language but this is as yet, unsophisticated. Similarly, although the school has data about pupils' attainment on entry, it does not yet use it to track through all pupils' attainment from Year 7 to Year 9 in order to predict probable progress and set suitably challenging targets. However, target setting has been started with the current Year 10 pupils. Use of value added data at the individual pupil and subject level would enhance all pupils' progress in lessons.

Standards suffer in some lessons, in some subjects, because of pockets of unsatisfactory teaching.

33. Although the quality of teaching in most subjects, in most lessons is good or better, there are some pockets of teaching that are unsatisfactory or occasionally poor. These occur in design and technology, PE and occasionally mathematics and ICT. In the weaker lessons, teachers expect too little or too much of the pupils. This often means that pupils, particularly the higher attaining pupils, are not being given sufficient challenge to stretch them fully. In one Year 11 graphics lesson for example, pupils were allowed to spend too long on a routine copying task. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson the work set was too hard for some of the pupils and despite help from the teacher, only a third of the class had achieved a result after 45 minutes.

34. Teaching is also ineffective when pupils are set tasks but no learning has been planned (learning objectives) or the pupils are not helped to understand what they are supposed to be learning. In a Year 11 PE lesson, a teacher played no active part in developing the skills of a high attaining basketball group, even though there were clear opportunities for developing and consolidating advanced defensive and attacking tactics. Students studying ICT were very patient listening to a long introduction about databases but the purpose of the lesson was not explained. Difficult concepts were not enlivened by any illustrations and students had to ask for clarification. Only in the last 20 minutes of a 70 minute lesson did any learning take place because the purpose (first steps to create a database) became clear and sample data was entered.

35. On one isolated occasion, teaching suffered because of the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small group of pupils. Sometimes tasks do not interest the pupils or the lessons drag and pupils switch off and become bored.

The school does not yet have effective processes for monitoring and evaluating its practice.

36. The head teacher has raised the profile of lesson observation by observing every member of staff teach. The school intends to extend this practice so that lesson observation becomes a routine part of school self evaluation. There is some way to go, as there is not yet a consistent view amongst all the staff of what constitutes good and very good teaching although this practice does exist in parts of the school. Neither is there yet a common understanding of how to measure pupils' progress. Once this is achieved, regular observation of teaching by all staff needs to be set up, so that strengths can be shared and

weaknesses improved.

37. Increasingly, responsibility for monitoring the work of the school is being shared, to involve not only the senior managers but also those who lead subjects and departments. This is a positive development but needs to be carefully planned into a systematic programme of review. The school would benefit from greater focus on particular aspects for example:

- homework;
- reports;
- presentation of work;
- use of planners;
- marking;
- the planning of learning objectives;
- use of formative assessment;
- challenge and pace in teaching.

38. The school's development plan could play a more central part in the evaluation of practice. To do so, there needs to be a clearer relationship made between what actions are taken and, when completed, what the actual impact of them is on pupils' attainment. At present, the success criteria do not provide an adequate means of measuring the success of actions taken, only that they have been completed.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

1. strengthen and focus systems of monitoring and evaluation (paragraphs 36-38);
2. improve teaching in design and technology and PE (paragraphs 33-35);
3. iron out the inconsistencies in its practice (paragraphs 27-31);
4. improve its analysis and use of data for teachers to set targets for improving individual pupils' achievements (paragraph 32).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	69
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3%	25%	38%	21%	6%	6%	1%

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	1311	371
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	179	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	171	8

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	231

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	155	139	294

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	104	119	97
	Girls	111	104	76
	Total	215	223	173
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (73)	76 (78)	59 (73)
	National	64 (65)	62 (59)	54 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (55)	55 (59)	30 (56)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	117	97
	Girls	102	105	85
	Total	181	222	182
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (70)	77 (79)	62 (77)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (35)	53 (61)	23 (53)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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	130	107	237

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	64	123	130
	Girls	75	100	103
	Total	139	223	233
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	58.6 (66.2)	94.1 (93.2)	98.8 (97)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	93.9 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.6 (42.2)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

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	69	97	166

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	21.1	21.1`	21.1 (21.2)	4.7	5.1	4.9 (5.1)
National	N/A	N/A	17.9 (17.6)	N/A	N/A	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	2	100
	National		81.7

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	36
Black – African heritage	41
Black – other	24
Indian	5
Pakistani	149
Bangladeshi	11
Chinese	10
White	1403
Any other minority ethnic group	3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	9	
Black – African heritage	3	
Black – other		
Indian	1	
Pakistani	10	
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	17	2
Other minority ethnic groups		

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)	102.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	326

Deployment of teachers: Y – Y

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

Key Stage 3	17.3
Key Stage 4	17.1

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	3678016
Total expenditure	3647257
Expenditure per pupil	2171
Balance brought forward from previous year	15574
Balance carried forward to next year	46333

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1682
Number of questionnaires returned	407

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28%	59%	9%	3%	1%
My child is making good progress in school.	33%	55%	6%	1%	5%
Behaviour in the school is good.	11%	60%	14%	2%	13%
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14%	61%	17%	6%	2%
The teaching is good.	15%	68%	4%	1%	12%
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15%	47%	29%	6%	3%
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49%	43%	5%	1%	2%
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45%	46%	5%	2%	2%
The school works closely with parents.	16%	50%	23%	5%	6%
The school is well led and managed.	17%	56%	4%	2%	21%
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	24%	58%	8%	1%	9%
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28%	46%	8%	3%	15%

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents are generally satisfied with the school and the standards it achieves. They praise most of the teaching in the school and appreciate the range of extra-curricular opportunities provided for their children.