

INSPECTION REPORT

ANTHONY GELL SCHOOL
Wirksworth

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique Reference Number: 112968

Inspection Number: 184031

Headteacher: Roderick Leach

Reporting inspector: John Law

Dates of inspection: 8-12 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708503

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wood Street Wirksworth Derbyshire DE4 4DX
Telephone number:	01629-825577
Fax number:	01629-824864
Appropriate authority:	Derbyshire
Name of chair of governors:	Ian Forrest
Date of previous inspection:	February 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr John Law	Vocational Qualifications	Sixth Form 4.1 Attainment and progress 5.1 Teaching 5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare 6.1 Leadership and management 6.3 The efficiency of the school
Mr Irving Smith		4.2 Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 4.3 Attendance 5.5 Partnership with parents and the community 6.2 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr Ian Anniss	Sports Studies Physical Education	5.2 The curriculum and assessment
Ms Ann Cambier	Modern Foreign Languages	
Ms Susan Cameron	Mathematics	
Mr Terry Chip	Art	
Mr Ian Enters	English Drama Key Stage 4	
Mr Norman Farmer	History Geography	
Mrs Alicia Walton		Special Educational Needs Equal Opportunities
Ms Linda Grainey	Religious Education	5.3 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education
Mr David Martin	Music	
Mr Philip Ramsden	Science	
Mr David Tuck	Information Technology Design and Technology	

The inspection contractor was:
 Sheffield Education Department
 Leopold Street
 Sheffield
 S1 1RJ
 Yorkshire
 01142-735672

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33 Kingsway
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MAIN FINDINGS

1

What the school does well

The school provides good education of a high quality for all pupils.

Pupils make good progress in all year groups and attainment is at the national average and sometimes higher.

- Pupils attend regularly and their attitudes to learning are very good.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and their relationships with teachers are excellent.
- Pupils' cultural development is good and social and moral development are very good.
- More than half the teaching is good and often very good and the majority of the rest is satisfactory.
- The provision of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils is very good and excellent in sport
- Teachers show a strong commitment to pupils and their care and to the success of the school.
- The school provides very well for the needs of pupils with special educational needs.
- The school is very well led and runs very smoothly.
- The school's partnership with parents is strong.
- The school has very good links with its local community.

The school manages its finances well and makes good use of its available resources.

2

Where the school has weaknesses

Shortfalls in providing what is nationally required mean that some pupils miss out in some learning in design and information technology at Key Stage 4 and religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

- The school does less well in science than in the other core subjects of English and mathematics.
- Fullest use is not made of how pupils are attaining to help shape learning programmes and the assessment of pupils' work still has shortcomings.
- The school does not monitor the quality of teaching or assessment as fully as it should to provide information to help it develop further.

Accommodation in a number of subjects has major shortfalls and the fabric of the school buildings is poor in several areas.

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

3 The school has made sound progress since 1995. Notably it has had a new sports and leisure centre built on the school site and has achieved the Schools Curriculum Award and Sportsmark Gold award. Some recommendations have been made good in full. A literacy strategy has been developed and is in place. The quality of teaching has been improved significantly so that in most lessons activities now match the abilities and extend the achievement of all students. The school has reviewed its approach to planning so that learning resources are more carefully targeted. However, the overall level of funding on resources for learning has only been increased in a few areas, such as investment in information technology. The procedures for registering pupils at the beginning of lessons have been made more efficient and are now well organised. The management of how tutors use tutor sessions has been reviewed and is now more closely regulated and monitored.

4 In other areas action is still needed. Some improvements have been made in assessment, recording and reporting matters, but major aspects remain to be tackled. The quality of marking of pupils' work remains inconsistent with too little use of written guidance for pupils. Weaknesses the last inspection pointed up in collective worship and in arrangements for religious education (RE) in the sixth form largely remain. Accommodation for sixth form use has been improved but still has unsatisfactory features. A number of health and safety issues remain, mainly as a consequence of the state of repair of some of the older parts of the school building. The school has realistic targets and priorities and is well placed to sustain its development.

Standards in subjects

5 The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar* schools	Key	
Key Stage 3 Tests	C	D	<i>well above average</i>	A
GCSE Examinations	B	C	<i>above average</i>	B
A/AS – levels	B	n/a	<i>average</i>	C
			<i>below average</i>	D
			<i>well below average</i>	E

* 'similar' means schools with a similar number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals

6 In 1997 and 1998 the Key Stage 3 national test results were broadly in line with the national average. Attainment in English and mathematics is better than in science. Attainment at GCSE is above the national results and has remained steady since the previous inspection. In GCSE examinations science results have been poorer than most other subjects. In 1998 the average point score of students entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent was above the national average. On the basis of the average for the last three years the point score of students is close to the national average. Nearly all subjects in the school have good features. Pupils attain well and make good progress, many reaching levels above those that would be expected on the basis of the achievement levels on entry to the school. The overall good progress stems mainly from the good quality of teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to learning. In RE pupils achieve too little, because the planned programme of study is unsatisfactory. In information technology at Key Stage 4 entitlement is well met only for those pupils who follow the GCSE information technology (IT) course.

7

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, mathematics, history, geography, PE and music	Design and technology
Years 10-11	Good	English, mathematics, drama, modern foreign languages, history, PE geography, and music	Religious education
Sixth form	Very good	Teaching is effective in all sixth form courses	

English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

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

8 Teaching was at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of lessons seen. In over 60 per cent of lessons it was good and in almost one in five lessons very good. There is no poor teaching but 7 per cent of lessons are unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is good in all year groups and very good in the sixth form. Teaching is a major strength of the school and all teachers are very hard working, enthusiastic and committed.

9

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good. Pupils' attitude and behaviour are a strength of the school. The school is very effective in encouraging good behaviour and has a very low exclusion rate.
Attendance	Good: unauthorised absence is the same as the national figure. Punctuality to school and to lessons is very good
Ethos*	Very positive: pupils are keen to do their best; they co-operate well with each other and relationships with staff are excellent; staff commitment is clear and pays dividends. The community dimension and links with parents are strong positive features.
Leadership and management	Very good: the school has clear aims and values which are applied in most aspects of its work; governors, headteacher and senior team lead positively. Good administration and financial management. Some aspects of the school's work need monitoring more closely.
Curriculum	Sound overall, but arrangements for design and information technology and religious education are weaknesses. Sixth form provision is good for a small school. Extra-curricular provision very good and excellent in sport
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. All aspects of special needs provision are well organised and well managed.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Social, cultural and moral growth are well catered for. Provision for spiritual development is not well enough co-ordinated; though individual arts subjects contribute well. Pupil welfare and guidance systems are very good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staffing is good, with nearly all specialist teaching except in religious education and some drama. Accommodation is variable in quality: good for English, but sub-standard for science and parts of building in poor state of repair. Information technology equipment is better than in most schools. Other learning resources are barely adequate.
Value for money	Very good. The school makes very good use of its resources. It adds a satisfactory level of value in Key Stages 3 and 4 and value added in the sixth form is good.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its values and attitudes have a positive effect on their children. • It enables their children to achieve a good standard of work. • It ensures that their children are well behaved and well cared for. • It gives a clear picture of what is taught. • It encourages parents to play an active part in the school. • It is easy to approach with questions to do with their children and handles complaints well. • It gets pupils involved with lots of activities. • It sets enough homework for most pupils. • It provides very well for pupils with special educational needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school does not always achieve high enough • It does not set enough homework.

11 Inspection findings support the positive views expressed by parents as well as confirming some of those parents are not happy about. The school is welcoming and staff are very caring. The high quality of support and guidance staff provide through the vertical tutor system is a very good feature and strong links with parents and the community are sustained. Inspectors found the behaviour of pupils in lessons and in school to be very good overall. Discussions with pupils and teachers indicate that the behaviour of some pupils can be troublesome whilst travelling to and from school. This is an issue which the school and parents might consider tackling together. School systems for setting and marking homework are well thought out but there is some inconsistency in the setting of homework in some subjects.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

12 In order to raise further the standards of pupils' attainments, ensuring particularly that GCSE results keep pace with national trends where these are improving, and further improve the quality of the school's provision the governors, senior managers and other staff should:-

- 1 Ensure all pupils have entitled experiences in RE, IT and design and technology, and fulfil statutory requirements and government regulations by:
 - I. amending the amount of teaching time to enable religious education at Key Stage 4 to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus
 - II. making full provision for RE in Key Stage 4, having firmly decided whether this should continue within the personal and social education (PSE) programme or be separately provided for
 - III. increasing the amount of RE taught by teachers who are trained in this subject area
 - IV. amending the provision in design and technology for pupils in Key Stage 4 in the light of the new curriculum orders
 - V. providing for pupils in Key Stage 4 who do not follow the GCSE information technology course to receive their information technology entitlement
 - VI. fulfilling the requirements for providing RE to sixth form students
- (31,34,37,38,40,56,60,62,71,94,156,190,191,242,246)

- 2* Introduce measures to improve pupils' attainment in science at Key Stages 3 and 4 by:-
- VII. improving the quality of teaching by:-
 - developing a better range of teaching and learning methods at Key stage 4 so that pupils are challenged more by their learning tasks
 - improving both planning and arrangements for setting homework at Key Stage 3
 - VIII. improving the quality of departmental planning so that learning objectives are specific and communicated as clear expectations to pupils
 - IX. improving planning for continuity of learning between Key Stages 2 and 3
 - X. enriching the science curriculum on offer to pupils and students by developing links with industry and increasing opportunity for visits, science events and fieldwork
 - XI. further improving the resourcing of the subject so that sufficient GCSE text books can be provided appropriate to pupils' needs
 - XII. improving pupils' and students' opportunity to enhance learning in science through the use of information technology by improving planning in this area so that specific tasks and activities are built into science topics at all key stages including the sixth form
 - XIII. improving the poor quality of science accommodation
 - XIV. reviewing the level of technician support with a view to increasing this when affordable.
- (23,26,30,39,58,103,104,142,143,144,147,148;150,151,152,154,155)
- 3* Introduce further changes to improve the school's assessment, recording and marking systems in order to make more effective use of assessment information and data about pupils by:
- XV. developing a whole school policy which specifies procedures and quality criteria for assessment, recording and marking of pupils' work which is applicable to all departments and teachers
 - XVI. improving the consistency of assessment procedures and moderation of pupils' work in relation to National Curriculum attainment [most subject areas can learn from the good practice already evident in the English, humanities and PE departments]
 - XVII. improving the quality of marking of pupils' work so that there is better consistency within and across departments, these arrangements to include more frequent use of diagnostic feedback to help pupils overcome specific difficulties and improve performance accordingly
 - XVIII. improving the connection between curriculum planning and teaching particularly with reference to matching pupils' work to abilities and setting National Curriculum targets and specific learning targets for pupils
 - XIX. improving the monitoring and recording of pupils' information technology experience and attainment.
- (58,60,69,70,97,163,194,223,247)
- 4* Improve procedures for monitoring key aspects of education provision particularly:
- XX. quality of teaching
 - XXI. quality of assessment, recording and reporting
 - XXII. interpretation and implementation of key whole school policies such as marking of pupils' work
- (58,60,69,97)
- 5* Overcome the serious shortfalls in specialist teaching accommodation in science and music, in dining facilities for pupils and in the internal and external fabric of parts of the school building by consistently representing at the highest level the pressing need for external sources of capital to meet replacement and refurbishment costs.
- (104,105,155,216)
- 13 In addition to the key issues above, the following less important areas should be considered for development and for inclusion in the action plan:
1. Continue to implement, and where possible extend, measures which will close the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in GCSE. * (25)

- 2 Improve provision for pupils' spiritual development through:
- XXIII.improving the quality of planning of religious education at Key Stage 4
 - XXIV.systematically planning for provision through subjects and other aspects of school life
 - XXV.further developing provision for collective worship. (71,72,242,248)

- 3 Introduce more strategies into teaching in design technology and art to provide work which is challenging and interesting for pupils. (58,161,207)
- 4 Review teaching methods employed when teaching large mixed ability classes, especially in Key Stage 3 in order to raise levels of pupils' motivation and achievement. * (148,171,201)
- 5 Develop the use of information technology to support and enhance learning in more subjects across the curriculum. * (139,154,162,210,217)
- 6 Provide specialist training for the teaching in drama so that all pupils can receive equally good teaching in this subject. * (221)
- 7 Continue to improve levels of resourcing for books to some departments, including improvement of the book stock in the library. (107,108,153,187)
- 8 Continue to seek solutions which will enable the school to comply with regulations for collective worship. * (71,72)

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

* = issues which the school has already recognised and is tackling within the school development plan.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

14 Anthony Gell School is a small 11-18 mixed voluntary controlled comprehensive school serving the Derbyshire market town of Wirksworth and surrounding villages. Many pupils come from small, rural primary schools where they have been in mixed age classes. There are 585 pupils on roll, including 94 in the sixth form. This indicates a decrease in size since the last inspection in 1995 when there was 646 pupils. There are more boys than girls in all year groups.

15 There are very few ethnic minority pupils and there is only one who comes from a home where English is not the first language. At present 7.2 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is below local and national averages and about the same level as in the previous inspection. Pupils live mainly in Wirksworth and the surrounding villages. The proportion coming from areas suffering significant social disadvantage is small and housing is mainly owner occupied. Although levels of unemployment are low the main occupations are land based and relatively low paid - mainly agriculture, haulage and quarrying.

16 The school admits the full range of ability although there is bunching towards the higher and lower ends. There are 74 (12.6 per cent) pupils on the school's register of special educational needs which is below the national average (16.6 per cent). There are 37 pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need (7.3 per cent of the 11-16 pupil population). This is significantly above the local and national average. The major disability areas for statements are specific and moderate learning difficulties, and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

17 The school's stated aims are concerned with the development of the individual, ensuring that pupils are equipped for the demands of adult life and developing the school as a resource for the whole community. These aims are reflected in current school priorities which include becoming a specialist school with sports college status. The school has recently achieved the Schools Curriculum Award for work with the community.

18 The school is on one site. There have been some improvements to the school sixth form accommodation since the last inspection. A major capital building project is under way to provide a new community leisure centre and sports hall on the school site. Completion is due December 1999.

19 The school has agreed the following targets for pupils' attainment with the governing body:

Year 11:

Percentage with 5 or more A*-C grades	55%
Percentage with 1 or more A*-C grades	98%
Average points score per candidate	43

Year 10:

Percentage with 5 or more A*-C grades	48%
Percentage with 1 or more A*-C grades	99%
Average points score per candidate	41

Additionally governors have set the following target for student attendance. 92%

20

• **Key indicators**

Attainment at Key Stage 3²

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
98	44	50	94

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	25	28	23
	Girls	40	35	26
	Total	65	63	49
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	69(46)	67(66)	52(60)
	National	65(57)	59(60)	56(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	41(3)	46(46)	22(33)
	National	28(15)	37(37)	28(28)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	29	27	18
	Girls	45	41	25
	Total	74	68	43
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	79(80)	74(70)	46(50)
	National	62(61)	63(63)	62(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	49(48)	49(46)	14(16)
	National	38(38)	37(39)	30(31)

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Attainment at Key Stage 4³

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
98	62	55	117

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	20	57	60
	Girls	33	54	55
	Total	53	111	115
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	45(50)	95(96)	98(98)
	National	46(45)	88(86)	93(92)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	0	N/A
National		N/A

Attainment in the Sixth Form⁴

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
48	26	19	45

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	18.4	21.1	19.7(18.2)	2.3	2	2.4(1.2)
National	N/A	N/A	17.6(17.1)	N/A	N/A	2.8(2.7)

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of *such students* who achieved this qualification:

	Number	% Success rate
School	0	N/A
National		79.1

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of *such students* who achieved these qualifications:

	Number	% Success rate
School	7	100

National		82.7
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3 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

4 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	6.1
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	1.1
	National comparative data	1.1

-
-
-

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	32
Permanent	0

- ## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	20
Satisfactory or better	93
Less than satisfactory	7

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

Attainment on entry

21 Pupils are assessed when they start school using a range of standard tests administered by the local education authority. Results for the last four years indicate that pupils' average ability is slightly below that found nationally on all three measures used - verbal reasoning, non-verbal reasoning and quantitative. Information about pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 supports these assessments. However, the school does not have Key Stage 2 results for all year groups as no local authority scheme exists for aggregating and analysing data. This hinders the school's efforts to develop a systematic approach to baseline assessment.

Attainment at Key Stage 3

22 In 1998, on the basis of the Key Stage 3 national test results in the core subjects, pupils' attainment was broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' overall attainment is below average for similar schools if comparisons are based upon free school meal entitlement. However, the data about pupils' average ability on entry to the school belies this comparison and governors and senior managers are entirely justified in relying upon the baseline attainment data as a starting point when assessing the value added to pupils' education whilst at this school.

23 In English the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5, the standard expected of all 14 year olds, is in line with the national average. The percentage reaching Level 6 or above is higher than the national average. In the 1999 tests the proportion of pupils reaching level 5 or above and level 6 or above has fallen. Girls perform slightly better than boys in English. In mathematics the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 is above the national average, as is the percentage reaching level 6 or above. In the 1999 tests the results are similar to the previous year's. Boys perform slightly better than girls in mathematics. In science the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 is in line with the national average. However, the percentage reaching level 6 or above is below the national average. In the 1999 tests the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above and level 6 or above has fallen. Girls perform slightly better than boys in science.

24 In other National Curriculum subjects teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 show good levels of attainment. In design and technology, history, geography, PE and music most pupils are attaining the expected level and a good proportion are achieving higher levels. In modern foreign languages, information technology and art most pupils attained the expected level. Teacher assessments of non-core subjects in 1999 show generally good levels of attainment being maintained and a significant rise in the percentage of pupils attaining higher levels in IT, geography and history.

Attainment at Key Stage 4

25 By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is generally above average. Over the last three years the proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more GCSEs A* to C grades has been in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more A* to G grades has been above the national average. The GCSE points score obtained by pupils is above the national average but has remained at a similar level for the last four years whilst the trend seen nationally is moving upwards. The proportion of pupils leaving school with no passes at GCSE is lower than the national average and has declined. Standards in GCSE performance overall have remained steady since the last inspection. Comparison between boys' and girls' average GCSE points scores between 1995 and 1998 show that girls' attainments are much higher than boys' and the difference is

well above that seen nationally. This indicates a significant gap between boys' and girls' attainment at GCSE which has persisted since the last inspection in 1995.

26 There are significant differences between the three core subjects in terms of pupils' attainment in GCSE. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher GCSE grades in English is close to the national average. In mathematics the proportion is higher than the national average. However, in dual award science the proportion is well below the national results. When the same pupils' results are compared in different subjects they show that pupils perform very well in French and PE; and relatively well in IT; English language; history and mathematics. Pupils achieve relatively less well in art and design; German, geography and dual award science.

Attainment in the sixth form

27 In 1998 the average A/AS point score of students entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent was above the national average. On the basis of the average for the last three years the point score of students is close to the national average. This is a very creditable achievement for a school operating an open access policy where students with a wide range of ability are admitted into the sixth form. The average points score for 1999 is very similar to the previous year. Boys and girls achieve similarly well in post-16 courses. Although the numbers of students entering the sixth form are small the course completion rates are very good. The subjects in which the highest proportion of pupils attain high grades A/B or pass grades A to E are mathematics, history and PE. In GNVQs in health and social care and business studies in 1998 all pupils were successful in achieving a qualification compared with 72 per cent nationally. Of those seven students entered six gained a merit award or better, including two with distinction. Students currently attending the school and their parents feel that the combination of academic and vocational qualifications they study is preparing them well for the next stage of their education and employment.

Attainment in lessons and coursework

28 Pupils are attaining or exceeding national expectations in six out of every seven lessons in Key Stage 3 and in four out of five lessons at Key Stage 4. In nine out of ten lessons in the sixth form students' are reaching at least average standards in terms of course objectives and syllabus requirements and exceeding these standards in two out of every three lessons. This indicates that similar proportions of pupils are achieving or exceeding national expectations as was noted in the previous inspection. Attainment is generally in line with expectations of class groups in those subjects and year groups where pupils are allocated to classes on the basis of their ability. In lessons with the top sets pupils achieve well above national expectations. In a few lessons where there are large mixed ability sets a minority of pupils, usually boys, achieve below their own capabilities.

29 Pupils with special educational needs, who are predominantly boys, and most of those with lower ability attain well in relation to their own capabilities in all subject areas. Girls attain better than boys in lessons in a few subjects, including English, science and art, but the differences are similar to those seen nationally. Boys and girls are attaining equally well in most other subjects. This is a positive outcome of steps taken since the last inspection to tackle underachievement in boys. It is only just beginning to close the gap in boys' and girls' attainment in GCSE. Good attainment, where pupils are achieving their best in lessons irrespective of their ability or gender is most often in evidence in mathematics, PE, and music.

30 Pupils attain national expectations in their classwork in English at all three key stages with evidence of higher than average standards in Years 7 and 8. Overall standards in classwork in English and English literature have improved since the previous inspection. In mathematics pupils are matching and often exceeding national expectations in much of their classwork in all year groups; though at Key Stages 3 and 4 some lower attaining pupils still lack confidence in basic number skills. Overall standards in classwork in mathematics are similar to the good quality of work observed in the previous inspection. In science girls are mainly working at national expectations at Key Stages 3 and 4. However, a significant number of boys are not attaining these standards. In the sixth form all students attain, and sometimes exceed, national expectations. Overall standards in science are similar to those reported in the previous inspection.

31 In design and technology attainment is below national expectations at Key stage 3. Pupils' design work is unsatisfactory though practical work is of a higher standard and most pupils are able to use equipment and materials competently and safely, often to produce a good quality finish. By the end of Key Stage 4 work is just in line with national expectations but very variable in quality. However, some good work was observed - for example in Year 11 food technology where pupils were using design and evaluation skills and a variety of research techniques in a topic on healthy eating. Attainment in IT at Key stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Pupils are confident and competent in the use of computers and are able to use them in a variety of contexts. In Key Stage 4 attainment is in line with national expectations for those pupils taking GCSE Information Technology. For the remainder of pupils at Key Stage 4 experience of information technology is dependent upon the extent of its use in subject areas. This varies in quality across the school and is insufficiently developed in many subjects. Consequently the attainment of these pupils is below national expectations.

32 In modern foreign languages attainment at Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations and standards are similar in French and German. Pupils learn the use of the target language in a range of learning contexts. At Key Stage 4 attainment in modern foreign languages is also mainly in line with national averages but in some groups it is above. For example girls attain particularly well in French. Attainment in sixth form work in modern foreign languages is well above average. Over the last three years most students have obtained A to D grades at advanced level. At Key Stage 3 attainment in geography is broadly in line with that expected nationally and in some lessons it is good with many pupils attaining above national expectations. For example pupils were demonstrating good levels of ability in their use of maps and grid references, and work on eco-systems was also of a good quality. At Key Stage 4 attainment within lessons is in line with national expectations and in the sixth form good levels of attainment were observed in advanced level lessons. At all key stages, including the sixth form, attainment in history is above national expectations.

33 In music attainment overall is good. At Key Stage 3 most pupils achieve national expectations and many achieve beyond this. At Key stage 4 most pupils achieve beyond national expectations and in the sixth form attainment is good for the relatively small numbers involved. A key feature of attainment in music is that all pupils are engaged in practical music making, many experiencing enhancement through instrumental and extra-curricular activities. Standards of attainment in music have improved considerably since the last inspection. In art attainment is consistent with national expectations at Key Stages 3 and 4. The attainment of sixth form students is good and some produced work of a high standard. The overall standard of attainment in work seen in PE is above national expectations at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form students are achieving at an even higher level.

34 In drama at Key Stage 3 pupils attain national expectations overall but with significant variation between highest and lowest attaining pupils. Skills in performing are generally higher than in co-operative making and evaluation. Standards of achievement are at or above expectations in Key Stage 4. Truly noteworthy standards in practical Theatre Studies are achieved by sixth form students where excellent co-operative making processes are developed into thoughtful and imaginative performance. In RE at Key Stage 3 attainment is broadly in line with expectations of the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils attain standards which are below expectations in relation to this syllabus. This is largely due to the inadequate coverage of the RE syllabus at this key stage. In the sixth form GNVQ courses students are reaching good levels of attainment in the vocational units and in the core units of IT and communication. Students display good levels of technical competence and understanding in vocational areas as well as in the practical application of learning.

Attainment in key skills

• Literacy

35 Pupils are generally confident and clear in their talk. They respect each other and their teachers and show improving levels of listening as they progress through the school. There is some evidence that the National Literacy Strategy in primary schools has enhanced the concentration span and spoken vocabulary of pupils in Year 7. There are good standards in speaking and listening, particularly in English, physical education, personal and social education, history and geography and best practice in drama. Pupils are given

sufficient opportunity to speak about technical terms in sentences and in full explanations of methods and thinking in mathematics. Pupils make good progress in response to literature, story writing, developing opinions and extending vocabulary. Grasp of whole text and word/phrase level interpretation are strong. Writing shows good progress, but variety of sentence structures and paragraphing is weaker, with below average explicit understanding of grammatical terms. Independent reading for pleasure is not as well developed in later years because of time constraints.

Numeracy

36 Standards in numeracy are in line with national expectations at all key stages. Levels of numeracy are such that they effectively support work in other curriculum areas. This is also true of other aspects of mathematical ability such as the use of graphs and data handling. Pupils use number confidently in a range of situations such as in science investigations and design tasks in technology. The mathematics department is leading the planning of a major whole school initiative to improve standards of numeracy.

Information technology capability

37 Pupils' capability in the use of information technology is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. Pupils are confident in the use of the 'Windows' interface and basic tasks such as saving and loading files. They are also making effective use of word processing, spreadsheets, databases and the internet link in a range of curriculum areas. However, in several subjects, including mathematics, science, design technology, art and music there is insufficient planned opportunity for pupils to develop their capability with IT in a range of settings. In most cases a programme of work is not clearly planned nor resourced. When information technology is taught at Key Stage 4 pupils make satisfactory progress. Sixth form students, most of whom have access to a computer at home, display good levels of skill and knowledge.

Progress

38 Pupils make good progress overall in all year groups and in almost all subjects. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, progress well relative to their own capabilities. Gains in knowledge and in the broadening and deepening of understanding are sound in at least nine lessons out of ten and good in over half of them. Progress is slightly better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 and is best in the sixth form where it is satisfactory or better in all lessons. In the small minority of lessons where progress is unsatisfactory some pupils, mainly boys, fail because of lack of attention and inability to concentrate rather than purely lack of effort. In a small minority of lessons in several subject areas, including design technology, drama, RE and science, lack of progress is associated with unsatisfactory features in the quality of teaching. Progress is unsatisfactory in RE at Key Stage 4 and in IT for those pupils who do not follow the GCSE course. This is due to the lack of a planned programme in these subjects.

39 Pupils make good progress in English in all key stages, particularly in response to literature, story writing, developing opinions and extending vocabulary. In mathematics pupils' progress at all key stages is almost always satisfactory or better and often good or very good. Higher and average attaining pupils progress well. For a small minority of pupils progress is limited by a lack of application to their work. In science most pupils of all abilities are making satisfactory progress in lessons and over time at Key Stage 3. They develop a sound understanding of life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes; as well as developing skills of scientific investigation. However, in some large mixed ability classes a significant minority of pupils, mainly boys, make unsatisfactory progress. This is due to a lack of match between the level of difficulty of work set and pupils' ability. At Key Stage 4 progress is variable and sometimes unsatisfactory. However, students following A level science courses make good progress sometimes developing very good understanding of their subjects. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good in the three core subjects through the extensive use of in-class support who work well with the class teachers.

40 In the other subjects of the national curriculum progress in lessons and over time is variable. In history, geography, music, and PE pupils make good progress from the time they start school until they leave in the sixth form. This is predominantly associated with the good teaching which prevails in these subjects. In modern foreign languages pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4 and in their sixth form courses. In design and technology pupils make satisfactory progress in most lessons and in coursework at both key stages but it is unsatisfactory in a minority of cases at Key Stage 3. Progress in pupils' IT capability at Key Stage 3 and in GCSE IT courses is sound. Progress with IT capability for other Key Stage 4 pupils is insufficient and is dependent upon an uncertain level of experience gained in other subject areas. In art in Key Stages 3 and 4 the more able pupils make satisfactory progress and in most lessons the less able are encouraged and supported to achieve their best. Progress in sixth form art lessons is good. In

RE progress at Key Stage 3 is mainly good whilst at Key Stage 4 it is unsatisfactory. In drama the majority of pupils make very good progress in all three elements of making, performing and response. It is only in the small minority of lessons taught by non-specialist teachers where pupils' progress is less secure.

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

Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development

Pupil Attitudes

42 Pupils throughout the school have very positive attitudes to work. They have a pride in their school which is well justified, and share in its values. They settle down quickly in lessons and respond well to good teaching. They concentrate hard on their tasks, apply themselves and meet challenges well. They work successfully individually as well as in pairs and groups in all subjects showing tolerance and respect for each other's views. Pupils in all years are willing to ask questions and are ready to produce reasoned arguments when expressing an opinion. By the time they enter the sixth form they display very high levels of confidence, self-reliance and maturity in their communication and relationship skills. This is evident in a wide range of lessons and other school activities as well as in their behaviour towards adults. They welcome visitors, are friendly towards them and talk easily with them. They listen to their teachers and to one another courteously, thus learning from perceptions that are different from their own. The quality of working relationships is very good and contributes to a very purposeful, happy atmosphere in lessons with pupils wanting to learn and improve. Pupils with special educational needs are well regarded and fully integrated into the work of all subjects. They also benefit from working in an environment where the attitudes to learning are very positive. Pupils take good advantage of the excellent range of extra-curricular activities the school offers and take part in good numbers in a wide range of activities and events.

Behaviour

43 The behaviour of the pupils in school is very good. This judgement confirms the views of most parents. However, a minority of parents are less satisfied with the behaviour of pupils outside of school. For example rowdiness on school buses was criticised by a small number of parents. Teachers had to spend very little time on dealing with behaviour problems in lessons. Thus the teaching time is effectively used and pupils' learning is rarely interrupted. Pupils observe the school's code of behaviour showing good levels of respect and tolerance for each other and for adults working in the school or attending community education. The presence of many members of the local community during the school day has a very positive influence on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development.

44 Pupils wait for the arrival of their tutors in mixed age tutor groups at the start of each day chatting amicably and showing remarkable self-discipline. This good mood continues in tutorial sessions where older and younger pupils mix socially bringing alive the caring ethos of the school. Pupils are friendly and polite and offer their help willingly whenever the occasion arises. They relate well to each other and give willing support to pupils with learning difficulties. They recognise the achievements of others and celebrate their successes with them. They keep their own property tidy and are proud of the quality of their work. The excellent relationships between pupils and staff are a strength of the school. Tutors provide good pastoral support and staff are excellent role models, treating the pupils in an adult manner.

45 The school is well cared for by pupils despite the shabbiness of some areas and all display work on walls and exhibited in public areas of the school is respected. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and appreciate the advantages of an orderly school. Lunchtime is a civilised occasion in spite of the crowded conditions in the dining-room and the long wait for many pupils. There is no evidence of harassment or bullying. It is the opinion of both pupils and parents that bullying does not occur often and if it does, the matter can be discussed with teachers in confidence and the problem will be resolved. Exclusions are well below the national average and are applied only as a last resort.

Personal development

46 Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. They develop their own beliefs and values in RE at Key Stage 3 and the PSE programme. Assemblies and some aspects of drama, music and art lessons enable pupils to share what is meaningful and reflect upon a range of human emotions and responses. For example in a sixth form art lesson students working on a topic on homelessness showed deep understanding and empathy with the plight of homeless people.

47 Cultural development is good. Pupils demonstrate good awareness of their own cultural roots. They also have good levels of appreciation and understanding of other cultural traditions. In English, modern foreign languages, RE, art, history, drama and music they show ability to talk and write about the diversity and richness of other cultures and civilisations.

48 Pupils' moral and social development is very good. Taking responsibility for their own actions comes naturally to many of them. In a good range of lessons they display high levels of self-confidence, willingly taking responsibility for their own work and are managing this well. There were some excellent examples of this in sixth form lessons, such as in theatre studies where students were thoughtfully and imaginatively planning their own performance of 'Fences' by August Wilson. Younger pupils organise their work schedules, using their individual planning diaries. This engenders self-reliance and good self-discipline. Pupils undertake classroom duties, assist with the running of the main school library and the careers library. Pupils in Year 10 often organise their own work experience programme and in the sixth form demonstrate an increasing maturity and independence by taking responsibility for organising their own work shadowing. This develops confidence, self-esteem and organisational skills.

49 A good number of students successfully train as coaches and referees in a range of sports and many older pupils fulfil a significant mentoring role for younger members of their tutor groups. Those students who volunteer to take part in CLIPS (children listening to peers in school) programme provide a valued counselling service for younger pupils. These experiences develop high levels of confidence and skill in working with people. Involvement in planning and organising a range of fundraising initiatives for charities raises pupil awareness of social issues and develops responsibility, initiative and decision-making about which charities they will support. Pupils take initiative when composing music, designing in technology and investigating in science. There is excellent personal development in drama through consistent application of drama learning in challenging contexts. There is also good evidence of extended personal study at Key Stages 3 and 4 in many other subjects, namely English, PE, history and in some mathematics lessons. This is also the case in all sixth form courses.

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

Attendance

51 Attendance of pupils at the school is good and slightly above the national average, though not quite as high as recorded in the previous inspection. The level of unauthorised absence remains the same as the national figure. Punctuality to school and to the start of lessons is very good. This is a credit to staff and pupils in overcoming the difficulty of moving across a school site which is awkwardly designed and has a major building project restricting passage in some areas.

52 Parents are confident that the school encourages and succeeds in maintaining good attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

Standards

53 Teaching is now a major strength of the school. It is satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons. It is good in two-thirds of lessons and in almost one in five it is very good or excellent. There is no poor teaching, though there are unsatisfactory features in a minority of lessons. Teaching is best in the sixth form where it is always satisfactory or better. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Teaching is consistently good or very good in PE, music and A level theatre studies and sociology. It is good overall in English, mathematics, history, information technology, PSE, religious education at Key Stage 3 and in vocational courses. It is always satisfactory or better in science, modern languages and geography. Teaching is satisfactory in design and technology at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 it is variable with an equal measure of good and unsatisfactory teaching amongst otherwise satisfactory provision. The quality of teaching in drama is mainly very good and reaches excellent standards when taught by specialist staff. However, there is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching when lessons are taken by non-specialists. In art teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching at Key Stage 3 and some unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching in the school's tutorial programme is good and satisfactory in equal measure.

54 There is no doubt that the quality of teaching at the school makes a substantial contribution to sustaining the pupils' and students' positive attitudes to their work and the good progress in their learning. Teachers are very hard working. Enthusiasm, commitment to individual care, high levels of encouragement and praise are key features of most lessons.

Strengths

55 Teachers have extensive and secure subject knowledge and understanding in their specialist areas. This is most evident in the sixth form lessons where subject expertise is used to considerable effect in a wide range of teaching methods. In a good proportion of lessons teachers set clear objectives, give clear explanations and provide a good pace for learning. Some particularly good examples of this were seen in PE where pupils were developing dribbling, shooting and defensive skills in basketball and dribbling and goal keeping skills in hockey through a series of effectively planned and challenging activities. Learning is well planned and well managed with a good balance and range of activities including whole class, group, paired and individual work. A very good illustration of this is in geography where examples of discussion, energetically staged role play, the use of maps, charts and diagrams, exemplification from videos and the internet, and follow-up to fieldwork as well as the measured use of textbooks were all observed within the space of a week.

56 Expectations are high and teachers are particularly adept in their use of questioning to skilfully draw out the key points of a lesson and extend pupils' understanding. In the best lessons teachers also devolve significant responsibility to pupils, engaging them in planning learning tasks and evaluating progress. This was particularly evident in sixth form vocational lessons: teachers embrace the concept of GNVQ teaching very well and provide extensive opportunity for students to use their initiative in researching and preparing material for their assignments. Another very good example was seen in a Year 11 PSE lesson where pupils were planning and role playing mock interviews in preparation for their meetings with a careers officer. In many subjects younger pupils are also challenged and encouraged by the responsibility invested in them. In English, for example, Year 9 pupils responded very positively to a writing project where they had responsibility for producing a book for junior school pupils. Most teachers use their knowledge of individual pupils to match the level of demand to their abilities and provide work and learning resources that are appropriate to the range of abilities within the class. Many of these very positive features are also present in lessons which are satisfactory.

57 Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils. Classes are generally managed very well using a good range of techniques to encourage positive attitudes to work. For example in English and mathematics lessons most pupils sit in mixed gender pairs decided by the teachers and work very well together. Homework is taken seriously and is set regularly in most subjects. It is used well to extend pupils' learning and promote independence, particularly in coursework at Key Stage 4 and in advanced level courses. A large majority of parents are satisfied with the work their children are expected to do at home. Pupils and students doing examination courses place great value on the extensive support and help that they receive from teachers on homework and coursework assignments. This help is often provided on a one-to-one basis in the teachers' own time and makes a significant contribution to pupils' understanding and progress.

Weaknesses

58 A relatively frequent weakness is in several aspects of the quality of assessing and recording pupils' attainment. Most teachers mark pupils' work in line with school policy and a few departments mark well. In science and English work is regularly marked with praise and encouragement being frequently used as well as constructive suggestions for improvement. In history and geography there are departmental systems in place for ensuring consistent marking and assessment. In most other subjects this is not the case and marking does not provide sufficient clarity about individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses; or sufficient information about their progress in specific skills or how they might improve on a piece of work. The use of information technology in lessons to support and enhance learning is insufficient in most subjects. It is used well for a range of purposes in only a few subjects, mainly by older students. In a small minority of lessons in art and design technology, the pace and balance of activity is inappropriate and there is insufficient range of opportunity or emphasis upon investigative work. In a minority of science lessons there are unsatisfactory features which are adversely affecting progress and attainment. In these lessons learning tasks are catering for only the middle ability pupils within the groups and both the higher and lower attaining pupils are missing out. Unsatisfactory teaching in drama and religious education is due to insecure subject knowledge.

Special Needs

59 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Assessment of pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register is good and is used to inform teaching plans. Small group teaching is effectively focused on specific skills and is conducted with good pace and enthusiasm. Planning which targets specific pupils for short-term learning programmes is both innovative and effective. In-class support and learning resources provided by teachers and non-teaching assistants are good and benefit both individual students and the class as a whole. Lesson planning between subject teachers and special needs staff is good. In a few subjects teachers have inadequate access to pupils' individual learning targets. Where available, the use of information technology is effective in encouraging pupils with special needs in their writing.

School Improvement

60 The school has significantly improved the overall quality of teaching since the last inspection. The proportion of teaching judged to be satisfactory or better has increased by ten per cent. There have been notable improvements in the planning of lessons and teachers have higher expectations of what pupils should achieve. The introduction of a literacy strategy has improved writing at Key Stage 3. The range of teaching and learning activities has improved in those subjects where this was required and there is now a better match to the abilities of pupils in most subjects. The shortcomings in assessment and recording have been tackled successfully in some subjects with notable improvements in English, history, geography and music. Further improvement in this respect is required in design technology, information technology and RE where pupils remain unclear about their levels of achievement. The marking of pupils' work remains inconsistent though there has been improvement in core subjects. Revised guidance and increased support for tutors has increased the clarity of purpose and consistency of tutor sessions.

- **The curriculum and assessment**

- *Curriculum*

61 The curriculum is broad and appropriately balanced in most respects. Pupils are taught for twenty-five hours per week which is one hour more than the national recommendations for Key Stage 3 and the same as that recommended for Key Stage 4. A two-week timetable is used to overcome the constraints otherwise associated with a smaller school. This flexibility allows the school to offer a broad and balanced curriculum in Key Stage 3, with some enhancement for design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. Religious education, however, has a lower than normal allocation in Years 8 and 9 that does affect pupils' progress in the subject. Whilst the time allocation for design and technology is good, the timetabling arrangements mean pupils study of work with each particular material occurs in widely separated blocks of time. In addition year-to-year links between aspects of the subject and attention to well-stepped stages in learning are weak. Both these features have a negative impact on pupil progress and attainment.

62 At Key Stage 4 the school operates guided choice within an extended core curriculum to ensure that pupils not only study English, mathematics, science, physical education and personal and social education, but must select a design technology, humanities, modern foreign language and arts option from within constrained bands. In addition, they can also select one further option subject giving access to ten GCSE courses for all pupils. Whilst this offers greater breadth and balance at Key Stage 4 than is often the case, provision in design technology, information technology and religious education does not fulfil statutory requirement. In the case of technology pupils chose to study design technology or information technology and as a result one or other of these subjects is not covered in the required terms. In the case of religious education the subject is subsumed into PSE at Key Stage 4. Whilst this usefully extends the range of themes within the PSE programme it falls far short of meeting pupils' statutory RE entitlement at this key stage. In all other respects, including the provision of sex education, the school complies with statutory requirement.

63 In the sixth form, there is a wide range of A Level courses, GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Business and Manufacturing and the opportunity to repeat GCSE in English, mathematics and science. The curriculum is remarkably broad for a school of this size and is effective because of the creative planning and application of the staff concerned. Regular additional lessons outside the standard school day and the effective teaching and combined Year 12 and Year 13 classes in some subjects are strong features that help maintain breadth and choice.

64 The curriculum is under review not only because of the implications of National Curriculum 2000 and the impact of AS Levels at post-16 but also because of the increase in numbers in Key Stage 3 which will require adjustments to the Key Stage 4 curriculum from September 2000. The school is aware of the need to enhance information technology provision at Key Stage 4 and key skills development for sixth form students. They are already in the process of implementing a whole school Literacy strategy at Key Stage 3.

65 In general the curriculum is well planned, providing well-staged coverage of aspects in suitable steps of learning through the key stages and with clear links to the world beyond school. Transition arrangements with primary schools are variable in curriculum terms with some good work in English, drama, PE and music, but elsewhere curriculum links from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 are less well developed. Within the school schemes of work are planned in most subjects to ensure steadily increasing demands in learning and are reviewed to ensure effective application. There is especially thorough planning in English, geography, history and physical education. In Religious education no progress has been made since the last inspection. Planning still lacks cohesion across all the stages and there is no provision in the sixth form so that pupils are missing out on a required part of their education.

66 Pupils of all abilities are able to access the curriculum and are effectively supported in their learning. Those with special educational needs are well catered for with teachers having a good understanding of their capabilities and needs and matching work accordingly. Support staff are deployed effectively across the

curriculum and individual education plans followed and regularly reviewed.

67 The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are actively encouraged to participate and there is a high take-up rate for this provision. The school has a number of successful sports teams and good links with local community sports clubs. Older pupils are active in coaching younger children both within the school and in feeder primary schools. Other features include a Saturday music school, high levels of instrumental tuition, school bands, drama performances and other clubs. Visits, residential experience and foreign exchanges are regularly run and well supported.

68 The quality of provision for pupils' personal and social education is very good. This is ensured through good teaching of the PSE programme, co-ordinated planning, the use of external speakers where appropriate and in-service training opportunities for all staff to develop their skills. Within PSE there is a thorough and substantial programme of careers education and guidance and work experience for all pupils in Year 10 and in the sixth form. This draws on valued support from the careers service, and local employers. Guidance on appropriate choice of course are provided for students wishing to pursue higher education..

Assessment

69 The previous inspection report identified weaknesses within school procedures for assessment, recording and reporting and their lack of consistency and diagnostic focus. Since the inspection the school has reviewed its approach and as a result further developed its pupil tracking and target setting. Whilst this provides a good indicator of individual pupil progress, there has been only limited progress in improving the consistency of assessment across and within departments. Currently, there is little whole school direction on assessment procedures, marking and standardising of levels in relation to the National Curriculum. Responsibility for assessment is devolved to departments leaving a fragmented system that is of very variable quality. There is good practice in English, history, geography and physical education where pupils' progress is related to National Curriculum outcomes and specific advice on how to improve performance is given. Elsewhere, there are examples of good scored assessment at the end of units of work, but diagnostic feedback to help pupils overcome specific difficulties and improve is much less in evidence. Marking is often limited in scope and confined to praise or encouragement and there is no overall school policy on response to pupil work and therefore considerable inconsistency and variable quality. Similarly, the degree to which assessment information shapes planning is also patchy. In some areas, teachers use their understanding of pupil progress to adapt programmes of work for individual pupils and analysis of GCSE performance is used to evaluate teaching, but there is a lack of consistency of practice overall. An individual pupil self-assessment system is in place, but generally lacks sufficient focus on specific learning targets. The reporting system complies with statutory requirements, but the degree to which comments highlight specific strengths and weaknesses varies from subject to subject.

70 Whilst progress in developing assessment has been made in some respects since the last inspection, it is still under-developed across the whole school. There is the need for a further review and planned action to ensure that existing good practice is shared and developed across all departments.

• **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

71 The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall with some good features. The values and attitudes which are identified, promoted and fostered through the school's ethos and pastoral systems are a strong positive feature of the school. Several subjects make a good contribution to spiritual development by providing a range of learning tasks which enable pupils to explore their own values and beliefs. In RE lessons at Key Stage 3 pupils develop language and a conceptual framework which enable them to explore and analyse the beliefs and values of others. In geography pupils explore issues to do with industrial location through role play, and through the study of eco-systems they develop understanding of inter-relationships and inter-dependence. In English pupils develop views about the role of women and the church through their work on Joan of Arc in 'The Witnesses'. In music the 'Alleluia Praise' choral group provide opportunity to develop spirituality through singing. All of these experiences are supporting learning towards the school aim to 'ensure that students develop a critical awareness of and tolerance for the beliefs, opinions

and traditions of others, irrespective of race, creed or gender'. The shortcomings in the provision of RE at Key Stage 4 and the absence of RE provision in the sixth form are, however, significant weaknesses in this area which were identified in the previous inspection.

72 Assemblies promote the values of the school. Since the previous inspection the school has extended provision to three assemblies per week for all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. There are, however, no policy, guidelines or termly programmes. The school should look to develop an approach which enables pupils to participate in assemblies and which evokes spirituality, for example through the use of poetry, prayer, presentations or music which enables pupils to think about the spiritual theme.

73 The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The school promotes an appreciation of cultural diversity as well as pupils' awareness of the nature and roots of their own cultural tradition. The schemes of work in geography and history provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to increase awareness of the cultural origins and practices of both their own and other major cultural groups. For example in history pupils were exploring ethnic and social issues surrounding the colonization of North American Indians as well as studying the development of Wirksworth over time. Pupils are extensively involved in the Wirksworth Arts Festival which includes experience of literature, art and musical performances exhibiting local cultural traditions as well as a strong international dimension. In music there were good examples of multi-culturalism, both planned and emerging naturally, in the discussion of musical genre. The wide range of extra-curricular activity which pupils participate in provides very good experience of other cultures; for example in PE the regular sports trips and in modern foreign languages exchanges enrich pupils' cultural experiences.

74 The moral and social development of pupils, is a strength of the school. The school is particularly effective in encouraging pupils to relate positively to others, in that relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Attitudes of courtesy and respect are strongly encouraged and very evident. In particular, pupils listen to each other with respect and they are used to being listened to and respected by staff. The school's objective, that it should be a place where pupils are happy, secure and able to develop their potential is well realised and evident throughout the life of the school. The principle of the school as a mutually supportive community is well developed and facilitated effectively through the pastoral system where the basis of allocating children to house groups is based upon the home communities which the school serves and on family groupings. This effectively promotes and develops cohesion, the values of the school and citizenship. The 'vertical stacking' of tutor groups also supports the notion of a family-based unit, where older pupils take responsibility for younger pupils. Pupils themselves see this as effective in breaking down the barriers between different age groups

75 Attitudes of responsibility are further developed through commitment to, and involvement with, the local community and participation in fundraising for local, national and international charities. This year monies raised have gone to The Padley Centre, NSPCC, Royal British Legion and Children in Need. There is evidence that pupils maintain communication and relationships with the local charitable organisations over some period of time. Discussions with pupils about these activities clearly demonstrate that the school's tradition of promoting concern for others is well developed. Pupils also organise a senior citizens' party and give their time voluntarily to participate in the community service programme. They are also heavily involved in the school's links with local primary schools. These experiences engender a sense of responsibility for other members of the community, both young and old. The strong emphasis upon sport within the community also provides a significant context for this activity. The CLIPS programme is highly valued by pupils. It is run for younger pupils and gives older students a valuable opportunity to develop skills of listening and empathising

76 The PSE programme provides extensively for pupils' social and moral development. A good range of planned learning activities in both Key Stages 3 and 4 develop personal values in relation to the self; for example in Year 11 pupils were gaining in their self-awareness and self-confidence through role play activity simulating careers interviews. Group discussions in Key Stage 3 dealing with the topic of alcoholism provided opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the nature and purpose of moral discussions. A number of other subjects make a good input to moral and social development, though this is not always deliberately planned. For example in art the work of major artists is explored in some depth increasing awareness of national and world issues - war, cruelty, death, fear and anguish. In history discussion of Henry VIII's treatment of his wives and religion evokes consideration of right and wrong. In science pupils were tackling the moral dilemma of who should receive kidney transplants and in English were judging the level of deceit or truth in the media through a learning activity based around the television programme 'Blind Date'.

77 Overall the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development continues to be a good feature of the school. A very positive feature of this provision is the high level of inclusion of pupils with

special educational needs in all aspects.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

78 The quality of support, guidance and concern for pupils' welfare is very good throughout the school. The pastoral system is valued by parents, pupils and staff and is a significant strength within the school. Support for individual pupils is provided through a pastoral system based upon mixed age tutor groups at Key Stages 3 and 4. This arrangement fits in with the school's aims and culture and works well. Tutors are dedicated, caring and develop close supportive relationships with pupils. They frequently give pupils support and guidance in their own time and were praised by pupils in all year groups. This enables tutors to fulfil very effectively a key role of monitoring and supporting pupils' progress. Two heads of house co-ordinate and manage the work of the tutors very proficiently. Communication between tutors, heads of house and other staff is good with concern about individual pupils being dealt with efficiently and effectively and at the appropriate level. In the sixth form the quality of care and support is equally good. Sixth form students value the system which is tailored to match their different needs and maturity. They are well supported with one-to-one guidance about their academic studies as well as personal matters. The sixth form provision is well managed by the head of sixth form. Parents believe their children are given good support by tutors and most are happy with all aspects of guidance.

79 The pastoral system is effectively underpinned by good positive relationships between teachers and pupils. The expectation of good behaviour, positive attitudes and respect for one another permeates relationships at the school and the vast majority of pupils respond well. The school has an unintrusive code of behaviour which matches the culture and values of a small, caring school. Procedures for monitoring pupils' behaviour, effort and attitude to work are comprehensive and effective. Alongside a system of merits this provides a structure and motivation for pupils to progress. The school operates a 'buddy system' whereby staff supervise pupils excluded from lessons for misbehaviour. This works well enabling almost all lessons to proceed without disruption. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated within the school community with teachers responsive to individual needs. Overall the school is a safe and orderly community.

80 A system of recording achievement is well established and pupils are given the opportunity to reflect upon their progress and set themselves targets. This is generally at the level of effort and motivation and needs to be developed to ensure review of specific learning outcomes. The pastoral system is effective in identifying pupils who significantly under-achieve or lack commitment and supporting them in improving their work. Information about pupil attainment and progress is provided by a computerised tracking system. This has been extended since the last inspection but information drawn from the monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress is not yet being used sufficiently by teachers to plan teaching and learning nor to influence curriculum planning in relation to National Curriculum targets.

81 The individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs meet with the necessary requirements and information within them is well used to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress and allocate appropriate levels of support.

82 The school has developed a policy on bullying. Its message and possible sanctions are understood by pupils and parents, who are satisfied that instances of bullying, which are few, are dealt with quickly and effectively by teachers. Arrangements for child protection procedures are very well managed by the learning support coordinator who is also the designated child protection officer. Procedures are clear, liaison with external agencies is effective and confidentiality is assured. Staff are informed only on a strictly need-to-know basis.

83 Registration is carried out quickly and efficiently. This is an improvement in procedure from the last inspection. School procedures for recording absence and monitoring attendance are efficient and implemented consistently. Heads of house and tutors monitor individual pupils' attendance rigorously. The school effectively follows up absences, using the valued services of the education social officer who regularly attends pastoral staff meetings.

84 The school has straightforward and well-established procedures for ensuring that the health and safety of pupils are promoted. Procedures for dealing with most day-to-day health and safety issues are documented and distributed to staff and are evidenced in their working practice. There is a designated staff member who has defined responsibilities. Risk assessments are in place as appropriate. Medical care for some pupils who

need it is provided on site.

Partnership with Parents and the Community

85 There is a good partnership between parents and the school. Parents are very supportive of staff and feel that they are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school. They are kept well informed of events and other school matters by letters and leaflets from the headteacher and pastoral staff. The parent and teacher association (PTA) has raised significant funds for educational and school improvement purposes via a range of social events which are well supported by the local community. Many parents give valued support to teachers through their involvement in school visits, sports fixtures, cultural events and residential activities. These activities also draw parents, teachers and pupils together in working towards the educational aims of the school. Full details of school organisation and activities are listed in a range of well-presented documents for parents including the prospectus and governors' annual report.

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

87 There are excellent links with the local community. The school site is also the base for a thriving adult and community education provision. The presence of these facilities means that the school has everyone from toddlers to senior citizens on site in the course of a week and the two arms of education work closely together. For example IT facilities are jointly provided and used and the summer literacy school was paralleled by an adult computer literacy course. This partnership significantly enriches the educational experience of pupils. An application for the Schools Curriculum Award has been successful on the basis of the very high quality of its community links. The school is also seen as a role model within Derbyshire for the development of links with the community through sport. This has enabled the school to apply for specialist sports college status and has been a major factor in the award of a Sports Council lottery grant of £1.2 million to build a community leisure centre on the school site which will open at the end of this year. The Youth Service is also sited at the school and the availability twice a week of the local youth club has enabled the school to develop Duke of Edinburgh Award work sharing the expensive personnel costs.

88 The school is actively involved in arts development in the community and is well represented in the annual Wirksworth Arts Festival which makes a good contribution to the cultural development of participating students. The school supports the maintenance of local traditions such as well dressings and contributes to environmental schemes around the locality, for example, the European Forest Project. These experiences enhance the pupils' learning and progress in the humanities and science. Local clergy regularly take assemblies and pupils attend the carol service in the parish church. Older students organise their own fundraising initiatives for community projects and charities and entertain senior citizens at Christmas. Many Year 10 pupils and sixth form students gain in experience by helping in local schools and nurseries as part of the community service work or working in local industries as part of their work experience.

89 There are good links with local primary schools involving close curriculum co-operation in some subjects. PE, English, and drama teachers organise extensive projects bringing together primary and secondary age children. There are also close links in modern languages and technology. In Derbyshire the school is seen as a role model in developing links with primary schools through sport. It has qualified for Sportsmark gold status partly as a consequence of this. The school has very good links with higher education, industry and commerce and works hard at preparing pupils for their career after leaving school. Links with further education colleges are less in evidence, mainly as a consequence of the geographical isolation of the school.

• **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

• **Leadership and management**

Leadership

90 The leadership of the headteacher and other senior managers is very good and contributes significantly to the success of the school. Senior managers work very well as a team and share a clear vision for the school based upon mutual values. They work collaboratively with governors to maintain a clear educational direction through ambitious school aims, an open but firm management style and energetic promotion of the school within the community. Senior managers are approachable and accessible and willingly roll up their sleeves when there is need for hands-on support. They are open to other people's ideas and encourage innovation and high expectations, bringing people together into a powerful identification with, and pride in, their school. Parents are of the view that the school is very well led by a dedicated and motivated headteacher who perseveres in the interests of their children even when the going gets tough.

91 Management of the school is good. There are clear lines of communication with efficient systems and processes to keep people informed, engaged and abreast of major developments in the curriculum. Senior managers promote and secure a friendly climate, good morale and very good relationships between staff. The reasons for decisions are understood and commitment to the school and to high standards is secure. Investment in middle manager training as a priority for staff development is paying dividends in terms of improving the overall quality of management at departmental level. Several subjects, including English, mathematics and PE already benefit from very good leadership by heads of department who give high priority to raising pupils' achievement and ensuring high standards of provision.

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

93 The school has two governing bodies because of its status - the Foundation Governors and the main governing body. Relationships between both groups and school managers are open and positive. Governors are closely involved at a number of levels with staff and pupils and, as a consequence, the decisions they take regarding future development and the day-to-day business of the school are pragmatic and well informed. Their positive influence upon the project to build a new £1.2 million leisure centre on the school site and, more recently, compilation of the school's bid for sports college status are good examples of appropriate involvement of governors in planning. They actively argue the school's case for further improvement to facilities.

94 The main governing body meets frequently and has a well-organised committee structure dealing with finance, personnel, premises and curriculum matters. Meetings are appropriately focused on important priorities which are drawn from the school development plan. Minutes clearly document the business and the decisions made. By receiving detailed financial reports at each meeting they are able to monitor expenditure carefully and make well-informed budget decisions. Governors have developed relevant and practical policies covering all key areas but some statutory obligations regarding provision of RE, design technology and IT at Key Stage 4, RE for sixth form students, and a daily act of collective worship are not fully met. Amongst otherwise broad and successful provision, these shortfalls have an adverse impact on pupils' fullest attainment. A governor has been appointed to oversee special educational needs issues and each curriculum area has a governor working closely with them.

Planning

95 The school has clear aims and values which are applied in almost all of its work. For example the strong philosophical commitment to being a community school is witnessed in many aspects of provision including schemes of work, curriculum planning, guidance systems and in the extensive links with partner primary schools. All staff with management responsibilities have detailed job descriptions with key responsibilities clearly stated. The recently revised structure of the senior management team is well conceived and has enabled the school to improve its procedures for forward planning. The inclusion of the bursar now allows detailed cost/benefit analyses of planned developments to take place. This determines how best to target finite resources and effort and is a significant improvement in planning since the previous inspection. The headteacher and both deputies each line manage four departments. They attend departmental meetings and review the work of each subject. Whole school priorities which are in keeping with the school's aims emerge from these meetings and contribute to the school development plan. This is carefully integrated with staff development. Effective planning has had an impact on raising standards in key areas such as literacy and sports development.

96 The majority of middle managers understand their delegated tasks and carry them out capably. Several heads of department, including PE and English, have set and are working to meet challenging goals which represent significant stretching improvements in their subject areas. Performance indicators, targets and timescales are not precise enough in a minority of subject plans, hindering effective monitoring and evaluation of progress. The management of pupils with special educational needs is an important and well-organised aspect of the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator is well-organised and systems are carefully planned and effective.

97 Most necessary policies are in place and there is a system of planned review of school policies in operation. However, this needs to be more rigorous in monitoring the implementation of school and subject policies in several key areas of provision, including curriculum content, marking of pupils' work and quality of teaching. Monitoring quality of provision by heads of department is developing but the programme of visiting lessons to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure fulfilment of curriculum entitlement is incomplete. There needs to be a stronger focus on performance management by heads of department so that the abundant good practice in the school can be observed, shared and used to improve the small minority of unsatisfactory lessons. Monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress by senior managers is comprehensive and well managed. The information drawn from this analysis is supporting curriculum planning and target setting for school improvement and enabling governors to begin the process of making informed judgements about school effectiveness. The use of information about pupil attainment by subject staff to support the planning of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but needs further development.

Routines

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

Capacity for school improvement

99 The staff and governors have responded positively to a number of changes and curriculum initiatives since the last inspection, whilst maintaining a very positive ethos and good learning experience for all pupils. Action planning in response to the previous inspection report has been well organised and documented in governors' reports. Most of the key issues which were identified have been tackled, but not all. Solutions have not been found to enable the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship to be met nor to provide religious education for students in the sixth form. The school and community working together have acquired a lottery grant to build a leisure centre. This greatly improves facilities for sport. Changes in the school

management structure have been successfully introduced and the school literacy strategy, another major development following the last inspection, is being managed very well. The momentum that exists in the school for development and change, the enthusiasm and commitment of staff, along with established systems and processes, are indicators that continuing improvement will occur.

Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

Staffing

100 The school makes good use of the generally well-qualified, experienced and hardworking teaching and non-teaching staff. There is a good balance of long-serving teachers and those who are relatively new to the profession or are just new to the school. This is a feature of staffing which was praised by parents. Teachers are effectively deployed to ensure appropriate coverage of the curriculum in most subjects. There is a good match between teachers' qualifications and their teaching responsibilities with few examples of teachers working in subject areas where they have no qualification or experience. Exceptions to this are in RE and drama where non-specialists are deployed. Staff working closely with special needs pupils are well experienced and qualified for this work.

101 There is a well-planned and supportive induction and mentoring system for newly qualified teachers (NQTs). Arrangements comply with new government requirements regarding their support and assessment. The induction process for other new staff is carefully organised and effective.

102 Job descriptions are in place and of a good quality. There is a system of teacher review which incorporates the required elements of teacher appraisal for some teachers. However, this does not yet include classroom observation for all staff.

103 The school has a training development team that has representation from a range of curriculum and pastoral areas and meets regularly. Expenditure on staff development is higher than national averages despite budgetary constraints. All staff have access to a range of development opportunities; though not all have availed themselves of this. An ongoing focus is on middle management training which was successfully introduced last year. Priorities for funding of courses are established and usefully relate to departmental development plans, which in turn cross-reference to the school development plan. A good recent example of this is the emphasis upon training for the school's literacy strategy which has been effective in raising pupils' standards of attainment. Administrative, technician and caretaking staff are deployed effectively and provide service of very good quality which contributes significantly to the effective running of the school. The level of technician support in science is too low. Non-teaching staff are valued and respected members of the school's adult community.

Accommodation

104 The school makes good use of its facilities. It is pleasantly located within the Derbyshire dales but the buildings are awkwardly designed and showing signs of severe ageing in places. Accommodation is sufficient for the present curriculum but parts of the building provide a poor quality learning environment for secondary age children. Teaching rooms are of a variable quality. The English department has a suite of pleasant good-sized rooms in a newer part of the school. This provides a good learning environment. The workload of mathematics teachers is increased because they teach in different blocks. The quality of science accommodation is poor and laboratories are in need of general refurbishment. The music room and some of the sixth form teaching rooms also offer poor teaching accommodation. The dining areas are badly designed with poor access and are too small to accommodate pupils comfortably and efficiently. Several classrooms have to be used for school lunches which is an unsatisfactory arrangement. Despite a very efficient and well-ordered lunch-time routine it is difficult to cater for pupils. All these limitations in the accommodation hinder the school in endeavours for best educational provision, and inevitably pupils' fullest achievements are therefore constrained.

105 The governors and caretaking staff have introduced measures to try and improve the poor state of the buildings and school grounds since the last inspection. The school is spending scarce resources on a rolling programme of decoration. The standard of cleanliness in most of the school is now mainly satisfactory and many teachers enhance shabby accommodation with good displays of pupils' work. However, both internally and externally parts of the buildings remain in a poor state of repair as a consequence of many years of inadequate maintenance and refurbishment. This gives rise to a range of minor health and safety issues which need to be tackled in the near future.

Learning resources

106 Resources for learning in departments are generally adequate and well used, though expenditure is below the national average. The school is reasonably well equipped with computers with a ratio of computer to pupils similar to the national average. Much of the ICT system is modern, with good quality equipment and some is networked. Recent investment supplemented by contributions from the adult education centre has supported upgrading of the school's information technology suites. These facilities are of the highest standard and provide considerable enhancement to pupils' learning opportunities.

107 Practical subjects are adequately funded for equipment and materials. Staff make good use of existing stock and relatively modest budgets to ensure that the curriculum is appropriately resourced to match learning needs. Spending on textbooks is low and there is a shortage in some subjects where it is not affordable to issue all pupils with their own copies. The school is attempting to tackle this shortfall and has used contributions from the PTA as well as specific government grants to improve provision in some areas, such as vocational courses. However, there is a need to further improve the book stock. This is an outstanding recommendation from the previous inspection which the school is dealing with but tight budgets limit scope for higher investment.

108 The library is reasonably well stocked and provides a good range of books and other reference materials for research, up to and including A level. It is now equipped with a PC linked to the Internet which provides another well-used medium for student research purposes. The library is well managed and is accessible and well used by pupils. There is an induction programme for Year 7 pupils and the borrowing of books is efficiently monitored. The school also has a good separate careers library with an up-to-date range of software and a PC linked into the Careers Service data network. This is well used by pupils and members of the adult community. Sixth form pupils also have access to an extensive resource facility with an ICT network which supports their application for university entrance.

The Efficiency of the School

109 The school manages its available resources efficiently and responsibly. Very good financial planning ensures that the income is carefully allocated and well spent. The school's financial administration system is computerised and itemised statements of expenditure are produced on a regular basis. The bursar proficiently organises the day-to-day administration of the school's resources. Financial records are very well maintained. Curriculum area leaders have responsibility for management of resources, accommodation and finance within their relevant domain. They do this well. Governors are fully involved in the process of financial planning and are thoughtful and prudent in their approach to budgeting. Accountabilities are well defined. Most of the recommendations in an auditor's report received one month before the inspection have already been carried out.

110 Decision making, in relation to expenditure, undertaken by school managers and governors, is appropriately influenced by the priorities included in the school development plan. The bursar is a member of the senior management team and is involved in all aspects of school planning. This ensures that the budget cycle and school development planning are linked and compatible. Departmental plans influence where money is spent, enabling school managers to be more accountable and logical about overall expenditure and financial direction. The inclusion of a finance plan within the school development plan also provides a useful link between the priorities for development and available resources.

111 The financial implications, including staff training costs, of major initiatives such as the literacy strategy, are carefully analysed and rigorously monitored. The costing of proposed developments in departments is not always as thorough but recent training of middle managers is supporting improvement in this area of planning. The monitoring and analysis of pupils' progress and standards of attainment have also improved. This provides a better basis for measuring the success of initiatives introduced to raise achievement and evaluating the school's own cost-effectiveness.

112 The overall level of funding made available to the school is around the average for comprehensive schools. However, the small size of student year groups coupled with high numbers of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need add substantially to the financial pressures faced by the school. Available income is being well managed and used very judiciously to fulfil the aims of the school. The emphasis is on raising standards through high quality teaching and learning, developing a broad and relevant curriculum in all year groups, including the sixth form, and enhancement of the school's community dimension through sport. The Foundation Governors make a valued contribution to the management of the school's assets and provide additional funding for minor improvements, curriculum support and ensuring that pupils are not denied access to extra-curricular opportunity on grounds of cost. The school plans, monitors and evaluates the cost of sixth form provision very carefully. Despite its smallness the sixth form is cost-effective and a significant enhancement to the school's overall quality of provision.

113 Teaching and support staff are very efficiently deployed in most areas and this contributes to the school's high standards and quality of provision. The shortage of specialist teachers for RE and drama adversely affects standards in these areas. Staff attendance is very good which helps to minimise the cost of supply teaching. Non-teaching staff are well managed and deployed and their work is effective and appreciated. Additional grants allocated for curriculum and staff development have been well used. A successful community led project has resulted in the opening of a new £1.2 million, lottery funded, leisure centre on the school site. Governors, parents and school staff have worked hard to try and improve the working environment for pupils in other parts of the school. However, lack of money to invest in major refurbishment and upgrading of facilities leaves much of the buildings in an unsatisfactory condition. Learning resources are carefully and economically managed and the quality of the teaching environment is enriched by the good use of display areas. Good and effective use is made of all resources used to support the provision for pupils with special educational needs

114 The school has clear purpose and direction. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is slightly below average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress at all key stages and their personal development is very good. Attainment by the end of all three key stages is at or above the national average in most subjects. The school is clearly adding value to pupils' attainment and personal development. The quality of education provided in terms of teaching, the provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development, and support for pupils' welfare and guidance is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is good. Attendance is above the national average. The amount of money provided to fund the education of pupils is average. In the light of all these factors, the school provides very good value for money.

· **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

· **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

· **English**

115 Standards of achievement by the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the national average in speaking and listening, reading and writing, but below those of schools with similar levels of free school meals. Boys and girls achieve close to the national average. Attainment in Key Stage 3 from lesson observations is at least meeting national expectations with evidence of higher attainment in Year 7 and Year 8. Progress both within lessons and over time is good. The difference between boys' and girls' performance is within national averages.

116 Standards of achievement in Key Stage 4 English are broadly in line with national averages in 1998 English A*-C and above national averages in A*-G. When measured against schools with similar percentages of free school meals, standards are below national averages. Achievement in English literature A*-C is higher than in English, above the national difference, with girls, in particular, reaching higher grades. Results in English in 1998 indicate that pupils achieved slightly more A*-C grades in English than the average score within other subjects. Girls achieved above the subject average in both English and English literature and boys achieved above the subject average in English and slightly below the average in English.

117 1999 results show a dip in performance in both English and literature. Attainment in media studies is very high. Observations indicate, however, that progress is now accelerating in many lessons. Coursework evidence also shows good progress in more extended expression and development of well crafted final text.

118 Pupils of a wide range of abilities attain satisfactory or better standards in Key Stage 5. Attainment in lessons is good, particularly in detailed oral response to literature. Theatre studies students show excellent making, performing and reviewing awareness. Coursework over time shows improving grasp of discursive writing, although further work is necessary in supporting essay work through appropriate use of writing and thinking frameworks.

119 Pupils make good progress, particularly in response to literature, story writing, developing opinions and extending vocabulary. Grasp of whole text and interpretation at word and phrase level are strong. Writing shows good progress, but variety of sentence structures and paragraphing is weaker, with below average explicit understanding of grammatical terms. Independent reading for pleasure is not as well developed in later years because of time constraints. Pupils listen well to teachers and other pupils and contribute in class and group discussions with enthusiasm, with extended debate in literature study, but with less reflection in other contexts.

120 Pupils of all abilities show very positive attitudes towards work with many pupils expressing enjoyment of English lessons. Lower attaining pupils are very well supported and are grateful to support staff and teachers for their care and help. Most pupils are able to explain strategies for learning spellings and show a commitment to study and homework. Behaviour is very good. Initial bubbly or excited comments quickly give way to focused attention. Teachers rarely need to discipline pupils. There is an occasional comment to individuals, normally boys, about steadying down or showing respect for another's voice. Pupils accept responsibility for their own behaviour very well. There is very good evidence of pupils growing through English. The Year 9 writing Project gives excellent evidence of how pupils take on responsibility for creating a book for junior school pupils. Extra-curricular provision is very well developed with, for example, trips to London theatres, drama productions, additional lessons at lunchtime, occasional publications. Relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils are very good indeed with trust and respect shown even when pupils have problems.

121 The quality of teaching in all cases is at least satisfactory and more often good or very good in all key stages. Teaching is marked by enthusiasm, commitment to individual care, high levels of encouragement and praise and very good subject knowledge and understanding, particularly in close reading and whole text grasp of literature, media studies and developing opinion and oral expression. Teachers are keen to share practice and develop approaches in line with the national literacy strategy in primary schools. They are flexible and show very good awareness of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Plans and delivery show an improving use of a clear lesson focus, precise learning objectives and checks on learning in plenary work. Methods to meet the needs of a wide range of ability are well developed. Seating arrangements are varied for different purposes and work may be done by the whole class, groups, pairs or individuals. Teachers have high but well-judged expectations with a clear and potentially challenging focus for the whole class. Demanding texts are used, particularly in literature study, and these are well introduced and explained as appropriate so that all pupils can readily gain from them. Most importantly teachers have clear assessment procedures to ensure individuals are helped to identify targets for improvement. Pupils are gradually using this process to help themselves. There is a well-developed overall philosophy and a genuine sense of links between aspects of the subject and well-judged steps in learning. The explicit teaching of grammar in the context of text study needs further development. Shared ways of involving all pupils in more extended formal talk are needed. Translating pupils' enjoyment of English into more independent reading for pleasure in Key Stage 4 needs development.

122 There are very good detailed programmes of study for each key stage underpinned by a powerful set of principles. Global English and ten-minute literacy slots in Year 7 lessons are building effective bridges from primary practice as is the excellent exploration of challenging literature. There is a clear map of suggested order for teaching in Key Stage 4. The department fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum for English. There is good use made of visits and visitors to enrich the learning.

123 Although the limited time for English is organised efficiently in Key Stage 4, there are too few opportunities for developing independent reading for pleasure in later years and too little explicit teaching of sentence and paragraph organisation in different genres. There is great pressure to complete extensive coursework and prepare for two full GCSE examinations in only ten per cent of the curriculum time.

124 Assessment to shape planning, to involve pupils in target setting and to raise achievement is a growing strength of the department. The identification and explicit use of key learning objectives in lessons with clear expected outcomes to feed into the sharing of learning in review at the ends of lessons is developing well.

125 The department is adjusting well to the expectations underpinning the primary National Literacy Strategy Framework. It contributes very well to whole school development in this, in Media, IT and support systems to accelerate progress. Matching Year 8 and Year 9 expectations against Year 7 demands is happening informally already, but will need recognition in schemes of work.

126 There is an ethos of praise and support which raises pupils' self-esteem and confidence very well indeed. Linked to practical targets for improvement, the process is becoming balanced and powerful for most pupils. The leadership and management of the department are positive and effective with very good team working, practical termly evaluation and monitoring linked to annual appraisal. There is an excellent atmosphere of mutual support and desire to improve.

127 There is resourceful gathering of resources over and above annual capitation. Accommodation is good. The effective use of fine display is a strength in the department. The department gives very good value for money.

• *Development of literacy*

128 The school is developing a coherent literacy policy with strong leadership from senior management. All teachers and support assistants have received some effective training in literacy teaching and the school has completed an action plan with clear expectations against a simple audit of need.

129 The school has liaised well with primary schools to mount a summer literacy school for the last two years and is implementing a successful intervention programme for Year 7 pupils in 1999. The programme is a simple one. Pupils attaining below the national expectation use Global English information and communication (ICT) work for fifteen minutes every day and all Year 7 classes receive a ten minute literacy teaching focus every lesson matched against the National Literacy Strategy learning objectives. Support assistants are well used in mainstream classes and in providing specific support for small groups. There are early signs of accelerated progress.

130 There are excellent lists of words to support improved spelling in all English classrooms. All departments identify useful key words for reinforcement and support appropriate monthly literacy targets for all. There is a library induction period for Year 7 and English teachers also develop pupil targets for improvement for all abilities while Global English is being used. Teaching in modern languages develops knowledge and understanding of grammar through active involvement. The library carries an adequate stock, which has been improved and refined over the last few years to meet the expressed needs of departments and pupils more effectively. It is used for research, library lessons and individual use. There is significant borrowing in Year 7, but less use in later years.

131 The improvement of literacy throughout the school is a recognised priority. For further development, the library needs to be more fully used so that independent and extended reading is enhanced in later years. Some teachers are at an early stage in developing literacy approaches appropriate for their subjects and pupils. Further training in the use of thinking and writing frames together with shared practice in improving active listening are needed. Ways in which active use of ICT can enhance literacy are under-developed as yet, although there is good practice, for example, in media studies and the fortnightly IT programme for Year 7 pupils.

• **Mathematics**

132 Over the three years from 1996 to 1998 the results in standard assessment tasks for pupils aged 14 gaining National Curriculum levels 5 and 6 are above the national average and close to schools with similar levels of free school meals. Average levels in mathematics in the 1998 tests are higher than those achieved in English and science. Results in the 1999 tests maintain these levels.

133 The department has a policy of entering all possible pupils for GCSE. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 1998 is above the national average for all schools and for comprehensive schools. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-G in GCSE examinations in 1998 is below the national average for all schools and for comprehensive schools. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C in 1999 is similar and there is an increase in the percentage gaining A*-G. In 1998 GCSE results in mathematics are significantly higher than most other subjects in the school. Lower attaining pupils are also entered for a profile of achievement. This ensures that all pupils gain some form of accreditation in mathematics. Pupils staying on at school after 16 have the possibility of resitting GCSE and in 1998 six out of seven of these pupils achieved a pass.

134 Between 1997 and 1999 the school has entered between 10 and 15 pupils for A level mathematics. The percentage gaining A-B in 1998 is similar to all schools and similar schools. All pupils gained a grade A-E in 1998, above all schools and similar schools. These are good levels of attainment for a school operating an open entry policy into its sixth form. Pupils unable to complete a full 'A' level are able to take 'AS' level in mathematics and the most able take 'AS' level in further mathematics.

135 Pupils are matching and often exceeding national expectations in much of their classwork in all year groups. At the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils can confidently convert between units of measurement. Lower attainers can round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. By the end of Key Stage 4 the most able pupils confidently use graphical calculators and sketch graphs showing transformations of trigonometric functions. Average ability pupils can use angle properties to calculate angles. The least able can calculate simple probability. At Key Stages 3 and 4 some pupils still lack confidence in basic number skills. In year 13 'A'

level groups pupils can confidently tackle standard A level questions on calculus and apply trigonometric formulae to solve problems.

136 Pupils' progress at all key stages is almost always satisfactory or better and often good or very good. Higher and average attaining pupils progress well. They use teachers' notes and examples to learn new facts and skills and work hard at practice exercises. Pupils with special educational needs make steady progress with a lot of help from teachers and support staff. Few pupils with special educational needs have specific mathematics targets which could be used to provide focused support to improve basic skills. For a small minority of pupils progress is limited by a lack of application to their work. For all pupils progress is best when work is clearly focused and matched to their different abilities.

137 Almost all pupils have very positive attitudes towards mathematics. They listen well to teachers and work hard at set exercises. Some pupils are keen to answer questions and come to the front to demonstrate their work on the board. Others are less actively involved in whole class questions and answer sessions. Relationships are very good; most pupils sit in mixed gender pairs decided by teachers and work very well together. Almost all pupils behave well and show respect to teachers and other pupils. A small number of pupils have less positive attitudes and do not concentrate sufficiently on their work. Pupils are helpful and take responsibility for collecting and giving out equipment. There are fewer opportunities for collaborative work or problem solving. Each year there is a good take-up of A level mathematics with 10-15 pupils most years.

138 The quality of teaching is almost always satisfactory and often good or very good. Subject knowledge and understanding is good and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attention to work. There is a clear expectation in all lessons that pupils work hard and make progress. Lessons are well planned. They usually have a clear focus which could be more clearly identified by defining and sharing learning objectives with pupils. Work is pitched at an appropriate level. Pupils' attention is quickly gained. Explanations are clear and questions are used to check pupils' understanding. More quick questions would ensure that all pupils are involved in oral work answering questions, improving their mathematical vocabulary and explaining their thinking. New textbooks generally provide appropriately varied tasks to suit pupils of different attainment levels within the same topic focus. Feedback and support for individuals are positive and supportive. Too many lessons end without a conclusion used to check pupils' understanding. Most lessons are well paced and pupils get through a lot of work. In less successful lessons the content is less appropriate. In one lesson at Year 10 too many boys did not cooperate well with the teacher. Teachers know their pupils well and use their assessments to encourage progress. Homework is regularly set and marked with effort comments. Less feedback is provided to help pupils to recognise their attainment levels and identify areas for improvement.

139 The department is well organised and managed. There are high expectations of standards, behaviour and effort. The department works well together to discuss progress and make improvements. There is good support for the newly qualified teacher who has made a confident start to teaching. The mathematics curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Schemes of work have recently been developed to incorporate new textbooks and a greater emphasis on direct teaching. There is less emphasis on problem solving and investigation and practical and collaborative work. A whole school initiative on numeracy is planned for 2000. Accommodation unusually does not provide a suite of adjacent mathematics rooms. Newly resited computers will provide a useful resource but are not yet connected for use in lessons.

140 Monitoring and evaluation are informal. The head of department visits lessons and looks at pupils' work. A newly set up database tracks pupils' attainment and is used to identify pupils making insufficient progress. Key Stage 2 SATs results are not available as part of input data. This information can now be further developed to identify targets for improved attainment at each key stage.

141 The department received a positive report in 1995. Since then they have continued to make developments. Results remain similar and they are now looking to translate these into improved grades at all levels.

Science

142 Attainment at Key Stage 3 is similar to national average but below that of schools with similar levels of free school meals. Girls do slightly better than boys. The 1999 test results are below those of 1998. The average National Curriculum level attained in science tests at the end of Key Stage 3 is significantly lower than the average levels attained in English and mathematics. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is below the national norms for pupils obtaining grades A-C but the performance of girls is significantly better than boys and is close the average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A-G is in line with national norms. In the sixth form attainment at A level overall is above national averages, though numbers of students are often small and vary considerably from year to year.

143 In science lessons girls are mainly working at national expectations at Key Stage 3. However, a significant number of boys are not attaining these standards. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils have made satisfactory progress and developed a sound understanding of Life Processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes, as well as developing skills of scientific investigation. More able Year 9 students could explain how different types of rock are formed and relate this to the properties and appearance of rock samples which they were investigating. A majority of Year 9 pupils in another class could account for the effects of forces including balanced forces. In some large mixed ability classes a minority of pupils are making unsatisfactory progress due to the lack of match between level of difficulty of work set and pupils' ability.

144 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils attainment in lessons shows greater variation with a higher proportion showing only a basic level of understanding below national expectations. Pupils in an upper band Year 11 group could organise, carry out and interpret food tests applied to simulated kidney fluids, but many in a lower band Year 11 group had only a limited understanding of food chains and pyramids of numbers.

145 The progress of pupils with special needs is good largely through the extensive use of in-class support who work well with the class teachers.

146 In A level science courses pupils make good progress and are developing a good and sometimes very good understanding of their subjects. A level chemistry students could plan an investigation into energy changes, speculate about likely sources of errors and then discuss the relative importance of these.

147 Pupils' attitude to learning was satisfactory overall but shows considerable variation within and across year groups. Most pupils were able to communicate about their work to teachers and to others in their group. For example pupils could all offer suggestions about the properties needed by materials which do certain jobs. Most pupils also were capable of working co-operatively in a small group. For example Year 10 pupils investigated energy changes and shared tasks and talked about the significance of their results with other group members. The attitude of a significant minority of pupils in some year 9 lessons was unsatisfactory. In a lesson classifying rock samples many pupils, mainly boys, were inattentive and showed little in their work. A minority of these were noisily interrupting the learning of others. Some pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, were capable of a higher degree of self-organisation than they were given the opportunity to demonstrate with few extended tasks set for them. Post-16 students were keen and well motivated organising themselves and using time well.

148 The quality of teaching overall is good, never less than sound and sometimes very good. However, in a minority of lessons at both Key Stages 3 and 4 there are unsatisfactory features which are adversely affecting progress and attainment. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and communicate an enthusiasm for science to their pupils. Most know pupils well and use their knowledge to maintain a firm but friendly discipline. In a few lessons where teachers are covering for absent colleagues relationships with pupils are less well established and the management of learning is less effective. Where lessons were very good teachers had clear learning outcomes for the lesson and communicated these to pupils. They used a variety of well-organised learning activities and maintained a good pace, using their knowledge of pupils to match the level of demand to their abilities. However, in a minority of lessons at both Key Stages 3 and 4 the learning activities are not as effective, matching only the middle ability pupils within the groups. There is too much teaching to the middle

ability in these groups and both the higher and lower attaining pupils are missing out. The department needs a strategy to improve the quality of teaching so that all abilities are equally challenged and engaged in learning tasks which support progress.

149 Teachers mainly give clear explanations of key science concepts and take care to introduce new terminology carefully by linking it to existing vocabulary and establishing clear definitions with pupils. Homework is set regularly, but at Key Stage 3 the quality and of the exercises and the amount of time needed were variable, particularly for shared classes. Work is regularly marked with praise and encouragement being frequently used. There were many cases where these were also linked to constructive suggestions for improvement

150 The quality of most aspects of departmental long term planning is sound but schemes of work need further development. Detailed learning objectives are not established and specified for individual lessons. This particularly limits the development of skills of scientific investigation as well as making the communication of clear expectations to pupils less secure. The net effect is that attainment in this subject is reduced at Key Stages 3 and 4.

151 Planning for continuity between Key Stages 2 and 3 is not sufficiently well developed. The department does organise good liaison activities each year with pupils from feeder schools who enjoy the opportunity of taking part in 'egg-race' type events. However, no systematic attempt has been made to determine what pupils have been taught and what their National Test results are. This is an issue which was highlighted in the previous inspection report.

152 The department does too little to enrich the science curriculum by linking with the world outside the school. The inclusion of greater opportunity for visits, speakers, science events and after school activities, would help with general levels of motivation and attainment.

153 The GCSE Double Award course is currently being taught with a lesser share of total curriculum time than the average for schools nationally and this makes it harder for pupils of average and just above average ability to really make progress. This situation is made worse by the lack of textbooks for Key Stage 4 pupils to use at home which would enable more research-based homework to be set. However, the general situation with regard to textbooks raised in the previous inspection report has improved, with several class sets of attractive books being purchased for all key stages.

154 Insufficient use is made of IT to enhance science learning and to reflect the current practice in science in the world outside school. Some development has occurred since the last inspection but more needs to be done, for example to establish specific data-logging activities in topics in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16.

155 The laboratories although adequate in numbers and size are over 30 years old and have seen no refurbishment and very little redecoration in that time. Excellent displays of pupils' work and teacher - produced stimulus materials attempt to overcome the negative messages about science which this poor level of maintenance presents. The poor quality of science accommodation adversely affects the quality of education and pupils' progress. The situation is further exacerbated by the low level of technician provision which is below national norms and is during term time only.

· **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

· **Design and Technology**

156 In 1998 the percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades in GCSE examinations in design and technology was lower than the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades in the 1999 examinations was significantly lower than in 1998. The school's decision not to comply with the statutory requirements for every pupil at Key Stage 4 to study a design and technology course has an adverse effect upon attainment.

157 Attainment in Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. For example, the quality of the pupils' work in graphics is very variable, with poor standards of accuracy in drawing and lettering, and a lack of basic understanding of the construction and purpose of working drawings. Pupils' work in practical sessions is of a higher standard with the majority able to use hand tools competently and confidently to shape materials and produce a good quality finish. Year 7 pupils were able to shape acrylic sheet in a project to design and make 'fun hooks' and showed an understanding of the need to work accurately and carefully.

158 In Key Stage 4 attainment is just in line with national expectations. Good work was seen in a Year 11 food technology session where pupils were able to use the results of their research and questionnaires to design dishes focusing on fruit for healthy eating. A particular feature of this work was the good quality of presentation in their design folders. Pupils in Year 10 taking the GCSE resistant materials course were able to explain the stages in their design work and the construction techniques they intended to use. The quality of drawing and sketching in design folders varied between pupils, some displaying a very good standard, while others showed a too heavy reliance on magazine and catalogue cuttings. Most pupils have a good understanding of the concept of designing for a particular user.

159 Pupils make sound progress in the majority of lessons in Key Stage 3. They are building on previous knowledge and experience and developing the skills to produce better quality work. Where progress is unsatisfactory it is related to teaching which fails to provide work for pupils which is suitably challenging. In Key Stage 4 pupils make sound progress. Pupils' design folders show increasing gains in their knowledge and understanding of designing and making.

160 In the majority of lessons at Key Stage 3 the pupils' attitudes to their learning are sound. In lessons where their attitudes are good the pupils are very keen and enthusiastic, they listen carefully to teachers and are able to work independently or collaboratively when required. In a minority of lessons where attitudes are unsatisfactory the teaching is also unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 4 the pupils' attitudes are never less than sound, and in some cases good.

161 The majority of the teaching in Key Stage 3 is sound and in some lessons it is good. In a small minority of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory. All of the teaching in Key Stage 4 is sound. Most lessons are well planned and prepared. They have clear objectives and teachers accurately demonstrate techniques using appropriate technical vocabulary. Teachers have good subject knowledge and the pupils are well managed. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory the pupils are not set sufficiently challenging tasks and expectations in terms of work and behaviour are not made clear to the pupils.

162 Pupils have very little opportunity to use information technology in their design and technology work. The department needs to review its schemes of work to ensure that information technology is integrated, and that best use is made of existing equipment.

163 Since the last inspection satisfactory progress has been made in improving safety in the workshop areas. The system for assessing and recording pupils' work needs further development to give a sharper focus on individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses. This information will enable teachers to plan more effectively and indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve.

• **Geography**

164 Attainment in geography at the time of the inspection is broadly in line with that expected nationally.

165 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is normally good with three-quarters of pupils attaining National Curriculum levels of 5 or above in both 1998 and 1999 as measured by teacher assessment. Some two fifths of pupils attain at the higher levels and few remain at the lower levels of attainment.

166 During the week of the inspection pupils at Key Stage 3 demonstrated their ability to use maps and locate places using four-figure and six-figure grid references. They could describe the main sequence of events for types of coastal erosion and could understand, use and classify data following residential fieldwork at Castleton. Work on the elements of eco-systems was also of good quality.

167 GCSE results in 1999 improved on those of 1998 for those pupils attaining the higher grades. In 1998 just over two-fifths of pupils entered for the examination achieved grades at A*-C being some 10% below the national average. Pupils achieved less well in 1998 than they did in other subjects. In 1999 (there were no published national comparisons at the time of the inspection) 50 per cent of pupils passed at grades A*-C and the data provided by the school indicates that more than half of those entered achieved as well or better in geography than in other subjects. It appears that teething problems with a new GCSE syllabus have been successfully dealt with by the geography department. Attainment over the whole range of GCSE grades A*-G has been consistent at about 95 per cent over the two years in question.

168 Within the lessons observed at Key Stage 4 the whole ability range was represented but overall attainment is at about that expected nationally. In one lesson pupils confidently worked on exercises about the changing course of a river and in another produced good quality course work on their fieldwork study of Lathkildale.

169 The numbers studying geography in the sixth form are too small to make statistically significant comparisons but within lessons there is evidence of good levels of attainment particularly in relation to high quality discussion of geographical issues relevant to the A level syllabus. For example there was a very lively debate on the possible global location of a new car factory.

170 The majority of pupils make good progress in their geography lessons and progress is never less than satisfactory. At all key stages there is a wide range of ability within each mixed ability class but nearly all pupils steadily gain in their understanding of geography. At Key Stage 3 pupils make steady to good progress, at Key Stage 4 they make good progress and in the sixth form very good progress.

171 The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and more often good. Occasionally it is excellent. All lessons have a clear structure and a stated purpose shared with pupils. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and put considerable effort into making their lessons more interesting. They provide a range of resources and information for pupils to work from. During the inspection there were examples of discussion and energetically staged role play, the use of maps charts and diagrams, exemplification from videos and follow-up to fieldwork as well as the measured use of textbooks. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with good access to the curriculum through modified work and targeted support by either the class teacher or designated support staff. Teachers in the department show noteworthy commitment to maintaining good levels of fieldwork in the curriculum. The management of pupils is normally very good and positive relationships, often with good humour, help produce a productive learning environment. Most lessons proceed with a suitable brisk pace with clear targets for the completion of work. Occasionally this is not the case and the pace of the lesson slows down because of the lack intermediate targets towards completion of more extended pieces of work.

171 Pupils respond well in most of their lessons. They behave well, concentrate on their tasks and take care with the presentation of their work. They co-operate with one another both formally and informally. Older pupils in particular demonstrate an ability to take part in extended discussion and respect and listen to each other's opinions. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, work well together in mixed ability classes and fully participate in their lessons.

172 The planned curriculum fully meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. It is well planned and has a good balance between the required elements of places, patterns and processes and skills. A good strength of the curriculum is the amount and quality of fieldwork offered at both key stages and in the sixth form. There are examples of good practice in the use of information technology with planned modules at Year 7 and staff are beginning to use the Internet to obtain source materials such as satellite imagery. There are departmental systems in place for ensuring consistent marking and assessment. Marking could contain more diagnostic comment as well as comment for encouragement.

173 The department is well lead with many examples of consistent practice across both history and geography. However due to fairly recent changes in the staffing structure of the department the success of

geography is dependent on the goodwill of the two geography teachers to provide the expertise require to plan the geography curriculum.

174 A variety of learning resources are provided to support geography and are generally of at least satisfactory quality. All classrooms are equipped with good basic learning resources including television and video. There is one departmental computer and nearly all classrooms are wired for the internet. All available resources are used efficiently and effectively, but while adequate they are by no means plentiful. The department provides good value for money.

175 Geography has continued to progress since the last inspection and has maintained and improved the quality of education provided. There is improved consistency in marking and assessment procedures and in the overall teaching of the subject.

• **History**

176 At all key stages and in the sixth form attainment in history is above average.

177 At the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils are at or above the standards set nationally as measured by teacher assessments. About three-quarters attain at the required level and none perform at the lowest levels. Two fifths of pupils achieve higher levels.

178 At Key Stage 3 pupils are able to derive information from portraits about the lives of the wives of Henry VIII, to suggest reasons for his treatment of them, and to begin to detect bias in sources of evidence. Year 7 pupils communicated information about their residential field visit to Castleton and began to generalise information about mott and bailey fortifications.

179 Attainment at GCSE in 1998 was well above the national average in 1998 on both the measures of candidates achieving grades at A*-C and at grades A* - G. The majority of pupils taking the examination did slightly better in history than in other subjects. 1999 results are not as high (no national comparisons were available at the time of the inspection) but attainment observed within lessons during the week of the inspection indicates standards close to the national average, within the very wide ability range of pupils entered for the GCSE examination.

180 Within lessons pupils demonstrated that they understood a range of factors connected with public health and could apply their knowledge to the Roman way of life and the supply of water to Roman settlements. Pupils could interpret secondary and primary sources and could come to conclusions about them. Other pupils were acquiring good knowledge and understanding of the American West and the reasons for the population migration westwards.

181 In the sixth form pupils attain well in their A level work. There is a high level of debate and discussion on topics such as the development of Wirksworth and on the setting up of the Welfare State. Using photographs, videos and some oral evidence pupils were building up a good evidence base for their coursework assessment on the school locality.

182 Pupils make good progress in this subject from the start of Key Stage 3 to the sixth form. There is a steady build-up of understanding and key history skills over their time at this school. The development of discussion and types of role play is evident and by the time pupils reach the sixth form they are very capable of sustaining and arguing a point of view relevant to their studies. Using information from fieldwork and visits to places of historical interest also adds to the breadth and interest in their studies.

183 Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is more often good or very good. Lessons are well prepared and have clear purposes. Teachers use a range of approaches to the teaching of the subject including role play, personal research, discussion, use of video, opportunities to use the Internet, and fieldwork. Relationships with pupils are good and provide a very positive learning environment in which there can be a free exchange of ideas and points of view. Generally classes are well managed and lessons proceed at an appropriate pace. On just a few occasions lessons could be injected with a little more urgency to complete the planned work or to consider the key elements in the National Curriculum programme of study. Lessons provide an appropriate level of challenge for pupils of all abilities and pupils often respond positively to the demands placed upon them. Teachers show their dedication by maintaining a good programme of visits and history fieldwork, in co-operation with other subjects in the humanities department. Good support is provided to pupils with special educational needs by both class teachers and by support staff. On occasion modified tasks are provided for these pupils and they are targeted by teachers for particular help.

184 Pupils respond well in their lessons. Most demonstrate an interest in history and work to sustain that interest within their lessons. They are normally good at self-organising presentations to the whole class and in coming through role play. They co-operate with one another both formally and informally. Classes contain a wide range of ability and pupils are supportive of one another, and show respect for each other's point of view in discussion and argument.

185 The history curriculum fully meets the statutory requirements of the national curriculum. It is broad and balanced in both the content and the planned methods of teaching. Pupils of all abilities have good access to the history curriculum and benefit from their lessons but in order to meet examination requirements history becomes more reliant on higher levels of literacy as pupils get older. Overall there is a very good balance of teacher input, individual research, use of sources, discussion and role play. History fieldwork makes a substantial contribution to demonstrating the interest and relevance of history. The use of information technology is a growing influence on the department. There are good links between the IT department and the humanities department within Year 7 and the single humanities computer is used to good effect in most classes. The Internet produces some interesting source material for some lessons and the challenge for history teachers is to help pupils be more selective about the information they download. Newspaper front pages, using IT, on the events surrounding the battle of Hastings are also of good quality.

186 The department in conjunction with geography has consistent and standardised procedures for the marking and assessment of pupils' work. This increases the reliability of teacher assessment and information to parents. Pupils are able to describe the marking procedures and have confidence in them. Teachers comments need to be more diagnostic as well as providing for pupil motivation.

187 The department is well managed by those responsible and the leadership of the head of humanities ensures consistent and implemented procedures across the department, including marking, assessment and cross-checking of standards of pupils' work. Classrooms are equipped with a good basic level of resources including television and video. Textbooks are adequate but there are examples of pupils sharing in the larger classes. Overall resources are adequate but not plentiful. Staff are suitably qualified or experienced in their subject and use available resources efficiently and effectively. The department provides good value for money.

188 Since the last inspection history continued to progress and has maintained overall standards and improved its assessment procedures. It has ensured more consistent practice.

Information Technology

189 Attainment at Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Pupils are confident and competent in the use of computers and are able to use them in a variety of contexts. In particular they are skilled in their use for word processing and desk top publishing applications. The pupils are able to use information technology in a number of curriculum areas and good work was seen in history where Year 8 pupils were using the Internet to research life in Tudor times.

190 The school does not fulfil the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum for all pupils at Key Stage 4. Attainment is in line with national expectations for those pupils taking GCSE IT. Good work was seen in Year 10 where pupils were constructing charts to represent the results of a survey. In Year 11 pupils were able to use software to explore career options in a personal and social education lesson, and a range of software applications were used particularly effectively in English and modern foreign language lessons. In 1998, 36 per cent of pupils entered for GCSE information technology achieved A*-C grades, compared with the national average of 42 per cent. In 1999, 54 per cent of the pupils entered achieved an A*-C grade. For those pupils not following a GCSE course attainment is very variable. Key Stage 4 experience of information technology for these pupils is dependent upon the extent of its use in subject areas. This varies in quality across the school and is insufficiently developed in many subjects. Consequently for many pupils attainment is below the national average.

191 Pupils in Key Stage 3 make sound progress. They are gaining the basic skills and the more able pupils are extending the activities they are engaged in and making good progress. They are able to build and draw on previous knowledge when tackling new learning. In Key Stage 4 pupils taking GCSE IT make sound progress. Their folders show an increasing understanding over a period of time, and a growing knowledge and range of skills. In particular pupils show an increasing awareness of the need to create and present information for a specific audience. Other pupils in Key Stage 4 make insufficient progress due to a lack of a planned programme in information technology.

192 In the lessons observed in Key Stage 3 and in GCSE information technology the teaching was good. Lessons are well prepared, the teachers give accurate demonstrations and set clear objectives for the lessons. A particular feature of the teaching is the good use of questioning to check out and reinforce pupils' learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge, high expectations of the pupils, and lessons have a brisk pace with clearly defined targets. The management of the pupils is good, and very evident in those lessons where the size of the teaching groups exceeds the number of computers available.

193 The pupils' attitude to their learning is good in both key stages. They are keen and enthusiastic, follow instructions accurately and are able to persevere with a task. The majority of pupils are able to work independently or collaboratively when required. They listen carefully to their teachers, are willing to answer questions and support each other. Behaviour is good.

194 Since the last inspection the school has invested in a number of new networked computers, and being in the first phase of the LEA's plans for the National Grid for Learning has ensured that the resources for information technology are much improved. The monitoring and recording of pupils' information technology experience through the school is still unsatisfactory. Opportunities for the pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the use of information technology in control and monitoring are still too limited.

Modern Foreign Languages

195 The standards attained by most pupils in Key Stage 3 are in line with the national expectations. This is confirmed by the National Curriculum assessment at the end of this key stage, where standards are similar in French and German. Overall, standards at Key Stage 4 are in line with the national average, and in French, where girls attain particularly well, they are above average. All pupils study a language to GCSE, and in 1999 only two pupils from the year did not achieve a GCSE pass. The school has maintained its above average achievement for the past three years. A significant minority of pupils, 10-15 per cent each year, study two languages.

196 Attainment at A level is well above average. Over the last three years most pupils obtained A to D grades. In 1999, almost all pupils studying French and/or German gained an A to E grade.

197 In Key Stage 3, pupils' progress is satisfactory. In about half of their lessons pupils make satisfactory progress and respond confidently in the target language. Pupils' rate of progress is closely related to the quality of teaching. Where it is good, more able pupils can complete a piece of extended writing from memory, using correct grammar in the context of the topic, and with accurate spelling. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress: they can read and write at an appropriate level for their ability and can respond in the foreign language to simple instructions and questions with confidence and enthusiasm. Pupils make less progress when they are insufficiently involved, become passive listeners, and have few opportunities to contribute orally.

198 In Key Stage 4, most pupils make good progress. Pupils can write and perform role-plays in different contexts using their knowledge of grammar. They are gaining confidence in speaking and listening. Their coursework shows they can use narrative or dialogue appropriately and with increasing accuracy. More able pupils can write extended pieces using a range of tenses and giving opinions in French or German.

199 Pupils' progress is good at A level in French and German. Pupils are able to give their opinions through speaking or writing in different situations with fluency and accuracy. They can talk about the feelings provoked by a French novel and respond to a news bulletin in German.

200 All pupils study two languages in Years 8 and 9. All pupils choose French, German or both languages in Key Stage 4. The ability of the school to offer French and German at A level and a vocational course is a reflection of the success at Key Stage 4 and of the school's commitment to languages.

201 The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in most lessons and is good or very good in about one third. The best teaching is based upon good planning, good relationships with the pupils, pace and challenge. In these lessons teachers make skilful use of the target language to encourage pupils to adopt the language for their own communication. Where teaching is very good, the resources chosen match closely the needs of all pupils. All teachers use interesting and stimulating resources including video, IT, language programmes, satellite TV and the internet. Usually these resources contribute well to pupils' learning and add to the cultural content of lessons. Not all teachers have a good understanding of learning objectives nor the steps pupils need to be offered to build confidence and learn. This lowers the quality of teaching in some lessons.

202 In the majority of lessons in Key Stage 3 pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are satisfactory. In Key Stages 4 and 5 they are good. Occasionally in Key Stage 3 pupils lose concentration when they are insufficiently involved in their learning tasks.

203 The department contributes well to the ethos of the school and to pupils' cultural awareness. Trips and exchanges occur regularly. The department runs language festivals and careers days for pupils. Sixth form pupils studying a vocational language course teach a modern foreign language in their partner primary schools. The recently appointed head of department has a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses, helped by a programme of monitoring focussed on the quality of pupils' written work. The department is well resourced with a wide range of stimulating authentic materials. Strategic planning is in its early stages. Priorities include using assessment information consistently, extending the scope of monitoring and sharing the best practices in teaching and learning.

• Art

204 In art the majority of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 are attaining standards in line with the national average. At GCSE level the percentage of pupils attaining A*-C grades has fluctuated considerably over recent years but it has remained significantly below the national average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining A*-G grades has, however, remained at 100 per cent for the past three years which is above the national average. Girls have consistently performed better than boys have by an average of one to two GCSE grades.

205 Sixth form students were seen to make good progress in exploring the batik process and some produced work of a high standard which made full use of the unique qualities of the medium. They are articulate in discussing the development of their work and in evaluating the use of media. In Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 the more able pupils make satisfactory progress and in most lessons the less able are encouraged and supported to achieve their best. Further emphasis should be placed on reviewing the progress of a significant middle group in relation to the take up of the art option at the end of Key Stage 3 and to crossing the D– C threshold at GCSE.

206 The large majority of pupils are polite, well behaved and ready to learn. They show interest in their work but this was seen to fade where individual teaching predominated, leaving some pupils without regular input from the teacher to set new targets or reinforce the original intentions for the lesson.

207 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some variations. In Key Stage 3 teaching was satisfactory in three out of four lessons and good in the remainder. Common features were good relationships with pupils, good classroom organisation and effective individual support. Less successful features were a flat pace and simple structure to lessons, which allowed some pupils to lose momentum and a sense of purpose. Planned learning objectives were not always made clear to pupils. In two out of three lessons in Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching was satisfactory with one lesson judged to be unsatisfactory. The strengths seen in Key Stage 3 were again apparent as was the weakness in pace and structure. In the sixth form good working patterns are well established and teaching, though very low key, was judged to be good with individual support being well targeted. Teaching patterns at this stage have recently been evaluated and modified to the benefit of students and staff.

208 The scheme of work is well planned at project level though it lacks clarity for individual lessons within projects. While the range of media is good the range of artists listed is rather narrow and largely from the last 100 years. Chronological and influential links between the chosen artists are not clearly established and pupils' knowledge and understanding of the artists' work is limited. Subject specific vocabulary is generally used but, again, requires reinforcement. Contacts with contemporary artists such as the sculptor Philip Cox have led to some very successful collaborations involving studio visits, school based workshops and displays of work within the community. The large-scale card sculptures produced by the pupils showed a high level of skill and innovation.

209 The assessment of pupils' work is positive with an emphasis on encouragement and praise of effort but with little guidance towards improvement. The department does not have a standardised folio of graded work to ensure uniform marking between staff. Many pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are unclear about how well they are attaining and what standard of work is expected of them. The assessment of progress and standards in the small sixth form group is comprehensive and detailed.

210 The art rooms are well lit and adequate in size. Well-labelled displays of work create a stimulating learning environment but some of the furniture and equipment is in a poor condition. The use of information technology as a resource and creative medium is still to be developed as it was at the last inspection.

Music

211 Attainment in music overall is good. At Key Stage 3 most pupils achieve national expectations, many achieve beyond and some well beyond this level. At Key Stage 4 most pupils achieve beyond national expectations, with recent examination results confirming this standard. In the sixth form attainment is again good for the relatively small numbers involved. When considered in the light of the ability levels of pupils, the majority of pupils are achieving at, and many beyond the standard of attainment that might be expected. This is particularly true of less able pupils, many of whom achieve standards close to the rest of the class. A key feature of attainment is that all pupils are engaged in practical music making, many experiencing enhancement through instrumental and extra-curricular activities. Singing is now a regular feature of all lessons in Key Stage 3, and although standards are not as high as in instrumental work, progress is being made. The regular

practice and attention to technique seen in Key Stage 3 lessons should soon rectify this relative weakness. Singing has been enhanced by the 'Alleluia' event at Sheffield Arena, which has involved a large group of singers.

212 Progress within lessons at Key Stage 3 is notable in that there is a genuine gain in skills, knowledge and understanding in individual lessons and across units of work. During the course of Key Stage 3 there is evidence of broadening of musical understanding and sharpening instrumental skills, with pupils able to work with an increasing sense of responsibility. An example of this was observed in the independent use of recording equipment by Year 9 students in a project on melodic improvisation. At Key Stage 4 this progress is effectively built upon, with pupils able to apply their skills to more individualised performance and composition tasks. By Year 11 pupils are skilled, independent learners who can organise and develop their work with the teacher acting mainly as a facilitator. Attainment and progress in instrumental lessons is generally good, and links with classroom work enhance the quality of group and individual activity.

213 Classroom teaching is predominantly good and often very good across the key stages. In the lessons where teaching is very good there is a brisk pace, a variety of integrated activities and a mixture of full class, group and individual work. Occasionally the work might be more closely matched for more able pupils by having planned extension tasks rather than relying on different outcomes. The behaviour of pupils is generally very good, due to the unrelenting focus on musical activity. Relationships are open, friendly and purposeful. Pupils show respect for the teacher, other pupils and the classroom environment. Equipment is used very responsibly. A particular feature is the way in which pupils quickly organise themselves into groups, access instruments and settle to the task in hand.

214 Music now has a time allocation that is in line with recommendations, but there is still little technical or learning support available in the classroom.. Assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 meets national requirements, and pupils have regular opportunities to reflect on their work. Some attention still needs to be given to finding manageable ways of recording evidence of pupils' achievement.

215 A high proportion of pupils (approximately one in six) learn instruments in the school. The commitment of staff and pupils to extra-curricular work is noteworthy, with a wide range of vocal and instrumental activities offered. The band and jazz band, the Saturday Music School based on the site and the annual festival all provide excellent opportunities for enhancement. There are regular productions and events in the community and local primary schools that add greatly to the ethos and cultural life of the school.

216 The accommodation for music is unsatisfactory but effective use is made of available spaces. The rooms used for instrumental teaching are at some distance from the main music area in very remote locations, which is far from ideal. More use could be made of pupils' own work (for example graphic scores) in displays. Resources are satisfactory and well suited to the teaching that takes place, with the exception of computer facilities. These resources are, however, heavily used and plans need to be made for replacement and additions, particularly to the stock of classroom percussion instruments.

217 The department has made good progress since the last inspection. There is now no evidence of underachievement at Key Stage 3. All pupils are able to access the practical activities. The work is enhanced by the number of pupils who use their own instruments in classroom composition and performance activities. The use of ICT, particularly computers and midi equipment has still not been addressed. Many pupils would have their musical experience further enhanced by such provision.

Drama

218 Standards of achievement in drama are at national expectations in Key Stage 3 with significant variation between highest and lowest attaining pupils. Skills in performing are generally higher than in cooperative making and evaluation. Standards of achievement are at or above expectations in Key Stage 4. Many pupils are starting from a low base but quickly develop more focused and confident grasp of drama techniques. There is a wide range of attainment. Excellent progress is evident through the key stage, however, with evidence of all three elements of making, performance and response being systematically improved.

219 Very high standards in practical theatre studies are achieved in Key Stage 5. Excellent cooperative making processes are developed into thoughtful and imaginative performance. There are good skills of control,

empathy and contextual awareness. Students respond and apply evaluation in sensitive and supportive ways to inform and develop work further. They create challenging drama from challenging texts. There is a wide range of ability represented, but most are achieving higher grades in theatre studies practical work. Lower grades apply in writing, but good progress is made.

220 Although there is excited enjoyment of drama in much of Key Stage 3, drama has a low status with some, leading to superficial and egocentric work from time to time. Behaviour is satisfactory most of the time, but movement from one task to another tends to be noisy with time being wasted. Work varies from involved and interested to unfocused and self-indulgent. In the best lessons, there is excellent personal development through a consistent application of drama learning to challenging contexts. Attitudes in Key Stage 4 are positive, co-operative, involved, interested and highly supportive. Drama is taken seriously with a deepening absorption. Behaviour is excellent and there is fine evidence of personal development through evaluative and empathetic work by Year 11. There are excellent attitudes to drama in Key Stage 5.

221 Almost all teaching is good or better. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. The quality of teaching throughout Key Stage 3 is enthusiastic, caring and committed. It reaches excellent standards when taught by subject specialists, but there is a lack of subject knowledge and confidence in applying the subject to a high level that prevents effective teaching when taken by non-specialists. Much of this work tends to use PSE or English objectives rather than drama ones and the control systems for effective exploration of contexts through drama are insufficiently developed.

222 The teaching in Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 is at least good, more often very good and occasionally excellent. It is marked by excellent subject knowledge, sensitive application of conventions and processes for involving all students in realistically challenging ways, a good balance between reflection and action and very clear learning objectives within an overall focus for development.

223 There is a very useful guide for teaching drama, which includes specific support for each key stage with clear expectations of pupils, appropriate strategies for drama making, performing and response, together with a highly useful list of drama conventions and their purposes. There is a useful evaluation process and guidance on creating units of work. There are criteria for report writing, which could also support individual target setting. The framework for curriculum is well conceived for all key stages and all teachers apply it to the best of their ability. Lack of confidence in the subject objectives for drama as they relate to each lesson prevents effective assessment to inform planning and teaching in some Key Stage 3 work. There are regular paired meetings between subject specialists and teachers in Key Stage 3 to support planning, but lack of experience in drama teaching sometimes prevents consistently satisfactory teaching. The department policy document recognises the problem accurately, but appropriate staff development through the observation of best practice and working alongside specialists over time has not yet been achieved.

224 Drama contributes well to the literacy development of pupils, particularly in reading playscripts, interpreting texts, following instructional texts and developing descriptive, analytic and discursive responses.

225 Extra-curricular opportunities are wide with access for the full range of ability. There are visits to theatres, workshops around specific topics led by professional theatre in education groups, regular opportunities for acting and supporting plays and involvement in festival productions.

226 Drama contributes powerfully to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. A Level work includes developing a sensitive and empathetic performance of 'Fences' by August Wilson, dealing with black American culture and male/female roles and attitudes so that the "hair stood up on the back of our necks!" Work with masks in Year 10 gradually developed cooperative making skills leading to performances informed by positive evaluative comment. The commitment to drama beyond the classroom was evident among teachers and pupils, including lunchtime extension work for A level students. Units of work throughout the drama curriculum give ample opportunities for exploring these issues, but the methods for that exploration are sometimes insufficiently developed to move beyond the immediate response. Work on the Windrush has potential for considering slavery and the human spirit for survival and faith.

227 Drama has the services of an extremely talented specialist teacher, who has forged strong relationships with staff and pupils. She is highly respected and has provided useful initial support for non-specialist teachers, but is limited in her time to provide more. She is well supported by another specialist. The two teach most of the drama timetable. Part-time working and teachers without sufficient training for drama in Key

Stage 3 reduce the potential for sharing and developing best practice throughout the curriculum.

228 Resources and accommodation are satisfactory with blackout and lighting facilities in one room and carpets in both rooms. Full classes in Key Stage 3 and a large option group in Key Stage 4 make for rather crowded working. Furniture is generally satisfactory, but some chairs are broken. Moving furniture can be hazardous. This is a health and safety issue in active drama lessons within some Key Stage 3 work.

Physical Education

229 The overall standard of attainment in physical education is above national expectation with a significant number of pupils at both key stages and in the sixth form achieving at an even higher level.

230 At Key Stage 3 pupils demonstrate good overall performance in games and outdoor and adventurous activities and sound performance in gymnastics. Basic ball skills in basketball, hockey and soccer are well established with pupils able to control, dribble, pass and shoot well. They have a good knowledge and understanding of rules, conventions and technical language in games and willingly take responsibility for their learning. Most pupils are developing planning and evaluation skills and understanding of the use of space and the importance of decision making. In outdoor and adventurous activities pupils plan and implement tasks co-operatively and effectively, with understanding of responsibility for each other's safety. In gymnastics pupils experiment with ideas and co-operate well in exploring flight, but have as yet under-developed body management skills overall.

231 At Key Stage 4 pupils demonstrate satisfactory performance in games overall, with a significant minority showing higher levels of skill and understanding. Sending and receiving skills in basketball, hockey and soccer are generally well established, with some good use of more advanced dribbling and shooting skills in all games. Understanding of technical language and rules of games is good and pupils generally take responsibility for their learning and are beginning to engage effectively in evaluation of performance. Use of space in invasion games, communication and decision-making are more varied in quality.

232 In sixth form work at A level, students demonstrate high standards of attainment in basketball and hockey. Dribbling, passing, shooting and defensive skills are highly developed; movement and decision making are very good and students engage in quality planning, analysis and evaluation of their work.

233 GCSE and A level results are well above national averages. At GCSE pupils consistently achieve higher levels in physical education than in most other subjects for which they are entered. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls across all key stages.

234 Pupils of all abilities make good progress in the vast majority of lessons and in some cases it is very good. They build on prior knowledge, understanding and skills and work hard to apply new ideas and activities with generally high levels of success. This is at its best in developing dribbling, shooting and defensive skills in basketball and dribbling and goalkeeping skills in hockey, where pupils make notable progress in lessons through a series of effectively planned and challenging activities.

235 Overall pupils have good knowledge and understanding of technical language and of rules in games and have well-established learning skills. They observe health and safety requirements well and work collaboratively to good effect. They are willing to take responsibility and do so successfully in the planning and evaluation of activities.

236 Pupils' attitude to learning is good in almost all cases, often very good and never less than satisfactory. They are well motivated, enjoy their work and are keen to learn. They listen attentively to instructions and advice, observe demonstrations carefully and work hard to apply teaching points. They are lively, enthusiastic and well behaved, often showing good self discipline and co-operating well with each other in planning, playing games and evaluating. They are supportive of each other and willing to work independently, setting and pursuing their own well-judged targets. In competitive situations they are keen to do

well, but have a good sense of the importance of teamwork, rules and fair play.

237 The quality of teaching is good or better in the vast majority of lessons and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and understanding of the pupils they teach. The plan effectively using agreed schemes of work that show logical connections and well graded steps in learning from year to year. There is a clarity about specific learning outcomes in each lesson and teachers implement these plans with enthusiasm, dynamism and at appropriately challenging pace. Teachers' explanation and demonstration are good and they use questions effectively to involve pupils in their learning. A variety of teaching methods are used and a purposeful learning environment is created with resources and space used effectively and pupils managed well. Teachers have high expectations and pupils are invited to take responsibility for their learning and are supported with appropriate encouragement and good diagnostic feedback.

238 Since the last inspection the department has reviewed the overall breadth and balance of the curriculum and has enhanced gymnastics and dance provision and introduced outdoor and adventurous activities in Key Stage 3. There are also plans to further develop outdoor and adventurous activities into Key Stage 4. Whilst a good start has been made, the curriculum still favours invasion games and further work is necessary to ensure greater overall balance. The curriculum is well planned with attention given to transition from primary school and carefully planned build up of skills year on year. The department has a manageable and effective assessment and recording system for use at the completion of units of work. Diagnostic assessment is used appropriately in lessons to assist individual and collective pupil progress.

239 There is a full programme of extra curricular activities that encourage high participation rates as well as success in local competition. A number of pupils achieve County representative honours. The department is very committed to working within the local community to encourage sporting opportunities and has successful links with local sports clubs. They also lead the TOPS Programme with primary schools in the area, hosting regular after-school clubs for junior age children and use senior students in coaching and organising these events.

240 The department is very well led and managed and the teachers work as a cohesive and mutually supportive team to plan, evaluate and improve their work. Development planning is thorough, focused and systematically reviewed and there is a consistency of approach and expectation that supports the good management of the department.

• **Religious Education**

241 In Years 7 and 8 standards of attainment are in line with the expectations of the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus in almost all lessons. In one Year 7 lesson, standards of attainment were above average in relation to the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Pupils' knowledge of background to, and importance of, sacred texts, is good. They use religious terms accurately and with confidence. They understand quite difficult concepts such as 'covetousness', and what the religions they have studied have to say about such concepts. More able pupils are developing a capacity to evaluate. This is above average attainment for their age-related cohort. No Year 9 religious education was timetabled during the inspection. It is not possible to make judgements about standards of attainment and pupils' progress in this year group.

242 There is no scheme of work for religious education at Key Stage 4 or assessable evidence of pupils' work in this subject at this key stage. The school states that wherever appropriate, religious and ethical perspectives are explored within the PSE Programme. However, this is not explicit in the PSE scheme of work, nor evidenced in the PSE lessons observed during the week of the inspection. There is no evidence of the statutory 'core content' covered or of and material to be drawn from 'Christianity and the other principal religions represented in this Country' as is detailed in the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus at Key Stage 4. Pupils are thus deprived of their entitlement to education in the spiritual dimension.

243 This syllabus anticipates that the statutory 'core content' of six units will prepare pupils for the GCSE short course in religious education. There is, currently, no opportunity for pupils to attain GCSE

accreditation for their statutory religious education curriculum at Key Stage 4.

244 At Key Stage 3 the progress which pupils make in lessons is mainly good. There is clear evidence of gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. In Year 8 lessons on Sikhism, pupils clearly learn and are developing the capacity to talk about, the particular importance of 'identity', for Sikhs. They understand the concept and are able to relate this to the origins of Sikhism: when it was a 'new' religion, it needed an 'identity', which made it clearly different from Hinduism and Islam. The majority of pupils are also clearly developing understanding of this in relation to the wider societal need for human beings to have an 'identity' and to 'belong'. In these lessons, there is a clear progression of learning objectives across the lesson. Pupils' understanding of the relationship between religious beliefs and lifestyle is particularly good.

245 Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are, generally, good. They contribute enthusiastically to the learning environment. They are confident, raise questions and maintain active involvement and concentration throughout the lesson. They think for themselves and can apply their learning in a variety of contexts. Relationships are very good and do much to contribute to a very positive learning environment, appropriate for discussion of religious issues in an environment of mutual respect. Pupils' contributions in lessons are always valued by teachers. Pupils themselves show considerable respect for other people's values, beliefs and feelings.

246 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is mainly good. Lessons have a good, clear focus. Purposes of learning are clear to pupils and knowledge, understanding and skills are clearly developed across the lesson. There is good direct teaching and subject coverage. Good questioning prompts advanced discussion and pupil outcomes. Teaching points are identified, for example: 'judging people by what they look like'. Language and concepts are taught and questions and activities require pupils to think. There is no subject specialist within the school. The subject is taught therefore by non-specialists within the humanities department at Key Stage 3 and incorporated within the PSE programme at Key Stage 4. Lack of subject knowledge is hindering pupils' progress and attainment.

247 Assessment needs further development in relation to use of the agreed syllabus: its details about interim and final tests in units of work are not fully used; nor are the descriptions of what qualities in pupils' work merit marks at the different specified levels. Ongoing assessment should more specifically reflect what and how pupils are achieving and what they need to do to improve. Information technology has been effectively introduced, which enhances both the quality of teaching and learning in religious education and the ICT capability of pupils. A particular strength, is the development of a sense of morality, as well as factual knowledge, which has a clear and effective impact upon the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at Key Stage 3.

248 The school should review the current scheme of work for religious education in relation to the requirements of the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus, and ensure appropriate age-related coverage of their chosen religions of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. There should also be a planned programme of training and development for the non-specialists teaching religious education. The training should focus upon appropriate levels of subject knowledge, developing conceptual understanding, exploring such understanding in the context of religions and relating this to contemporary individual, local, national and global issues. The quality of provision has significant weaknesses in these aspects.

249 The issue of time allocation for religious education identified in the previous inspection remains unresolved. The provision at Key Stage 3 in Year 8 and Year 9, of twenty hours per year is less than half the national recommendation and requirements of the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus. Pupils are achieving well and above average for their age-related cohort in Year 7, where provision meets requirements, but attainment falls off subsequently. It remains the case that there is still no post-16 provision of religious education.

• **Vocational Qualifications**

250 Three advanced and intermediate level GNVQ courses are provided for sixth form students: business studies, health and social care and manufacturing. These courses significantly enhance the range and quality of the sixth form curriculum and they are actively promoted within the school.

251 Though numbers choosing GNVQ options are small all students completing the full courses achieved a pass grade and more than half attained a merit or distinction. This is well above the national average for GNVQ attainment levels. In lessons students are achieving good levels of attainment in the mandatory and optional vocational units and in the core units of communication, application of number and information technology. Students can offer reasoned views on the advantages and disadvantages of siting industries in sensitive locations. Investigative skills are employed successfully, for example to research the impact of health education campaigns in schools. In order to explore the feasibility of a range of his own ideas in a manufacturing assignment a student with special educational needs was competently analysing a range of source material for ideas to support his design brief. Completed work in assignments meets GNVQ criteria in terms of technical confidence in vocational context and practical application of learning.

252 Progress in vocational units is mainly good and often very good. Students of all abilities progress equally well, including those with special educational needs. They are confident and articulate in talking about their work and show good rates of progress with work in their design schedules and coursework assignments. Progress is similarly good with the core skills of communication, application of number and information technology.

253 Students' attitudes to learning are mainly good and often very good. They are very positive about the assignment based method of working. They are able to work well independently and show a mature attitude to working together and supporting each other's learning. Work is characterised by high levels of energy, willingness and concentration and this enables the development of good research skills and competence in evaluating a range of source material. More able students show good levels of initiative and are willing to take responsibility for much of their learning. Students are well organised and self-reliant.

254 The quality of teaching in vocational courses is mainly good, often very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers plan the programmes well and have embraced the concept of GNVQ. Lessons are well prepared a good range of resources provided to support students' investigation tasks and design work. Learning is well organised with a good range of activity suited to the GNVQ requirements. For example in a Health and social care session students held a lively debate about the merits of health campaigns, visited the library to draw information from a range of source material and used the computers in their teaching base to work this into their current assignments. Teachers give good clear explanations and use probing questioning to test and increase understanding. Students are provided with a good range of individual tasks suited to their abilities and vocational assignments. There is a good atmosphere in lessons reflecting the students' maturity and excellent relationships.

255 Courses are allocated appropriate amounts of time and are well planned in order to provide good connections and learning steps from Key Stage 4. Good organisation enables access for students' of a wide range of ability, including those with special educational needs. The combination of Years 12 and 13 into single teaching groups is a strategy which works well. Assessment is careful and thorough and internal verification is used effectively to support planning and assure standards. Students benefit from the thoroughness of teachers' marking and the speed of turn-around of their work.

256 Vocational courses make a good contribution to students' moral and social development. In-depth discussions about what is right and wrong with human activity covering a wide range of social issues increases students' understanding and influences fundamental attitudes towards self and others. Cultural self-awareness and understanding of the beliefs, cultures and customs of people from other countries are increased when students research vocational themes with an international dimension.

257 Vocational courses are well organised and proficiently managed by the coordinator. There is good evidence of mapping of course content leading to effective training of GNVQ course providers. Development planning is good with clear vision and suitable targets for further development in course provision. This necessarily includes recruiting greater numbers of students onto vocational courses. Internal systems for monitoring the quality of course provision need to be further developed. The team of teachers who provide vocational education is well led. Vocational courses are taught by experienced staff with appropriate qualifications for teaching and assessing GNVQ. Accommodation is adequate and well used by staff and

students. Learning resources are sufficient in quantity and of a good quality. Students have access to modern computers, modern textbooks and a good range of research materials. Resources are well used and the department provides good value for money.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

258 The team of thirteen inspectors observed 165 lessons, 20 registration sessions, four assemblies and a selection of extra-curricular activities during the week of the inspection. All teachers present were seen teaching at least once and most several times. More than 50 planned discussions were held involving senior staff, many other members of teaching and non-teaching staff, governors and representatives of outside agencies. A visit was made to two partner primary schools and a tour of the catchment area was made on a pre-inspection visit. The registered inspector met with staff and governors prior to the inspection. Inspectors attended a senior management team meeting and a staff briefing held during the week of the inspection. They looked at the written work of many pupils during lessons. A sample across the attainment range of pupils from each year group was scrutinised in greater detail. Discussions were held the following day with the same pupils. Many other pupils were involved in informal discussions. Pupils' reports, attendance registers and records were examined. A large amount of documentation provided by the school was analysed both before and during the inspection. The Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 32 parents two weeks before the inspection. The team considered 220 responses from parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school.

259

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7- ➤ - Y13 ➤	585	52	74	42

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7? - Y13?)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	37
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16

Education support staff (Y7? - Y13?)

Total number of education support staff:	12
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	228

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	76.4
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	23
	KS4	20

Financial data

Financial year:

1998-99

	£
Total Income	1,359,136.00
Total Expenditure	1,362,284.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,348.77
Balance brought forward from previous year	9,692.00
Balance carried forward to next year	6,544.00

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	585
Number of questionnaires returned:	220

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	21.6	63.3	11.0	4.1	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	35.0	55.8	6.9	1.8	0.5
The school handles complaints from parents well	16.4	53.7	21.9	7.0	1.0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	16.2	62.5	13.0	8.3	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	22.7	64.5	8.5	3.8	0.5
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	23.9	62.4	8.9	4.7	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	31.9	55.1	11.1	1.9	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	12.8	67.0	8.7	11.5	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	20.3	58.0	13.2	7.1	1.4
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	9.6	48.6	26.4	11.5	3.8
My child(ren) like(s) school	32.3	58.6	4.5	3.6	0.9

