

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Millfield High School**

Thornton Cleveleys

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique Reference Number: 119714

Inspection Number: 184171

Headteacher: Mr A Harvey

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Reporting inspector: Mr Frank Myers

1208

Dates of inspection: 8-12 November 1999

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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:	County
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of Chair of Governors:	Dr H Pindred
Date of previous inspection:	November 1994

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Chris Meakin	Mathematics	Curriculum and assessment, Key Stage 4
David Davies	English, Drama	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
David Tracey Rhona Humphries	Science Design and technology (DT), Information and communication technology (ICT)	Efficiency Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
David Sharpe Tony Bell	History, Religious education (RE)	Learning resources Special educational needs
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress in art and science in both key stages and in drama, history and mathematics in Key Stage 4.
- Teaching is good in art, history, science and ICT in both key stages and in mathematics and drama in Key Stage 4.
- Senior managers visit classrooms to ensure teaching standards.
- Pupils help to run an effective anti-bullying scheme.
- Pastoral care is good.
- The school is popular with parents and has good facilities.
- There are good links with the community to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils are provided with a good range of extracurricular activities.
- Financial control is good so that the school works within tight budget limits.
- There are good arrangements for pupils' spiritual and social development.
- There are good arrangements for staff development.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Pupils make insufficient progress in music, DT (food technology) and child development.
- II. The range of teaching styles has improved but it is still not fully matched to learning needs, especially special educational needs, and it does not fully promote use of the library and computers in learning.
- III. The school development plan is not sufficiently clear about how it will be evaluated, what costs are involved and how cost effectiveness will be shown.
- IV. Plans for monitoring all pupils' academic progress have been slow to come into practice.
- V. Attendance is below average and not enough priority is given to improving it.
- VI. Reports to parents do not give enough information about what children are learning and the progress they are making.

The strengths of the school outweigh the 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

Overall, the response of the school to the issues identified in the last inspection has been satisfactory and some progress has been made in all areas. The structure of the curriculum and the timetable have been substantially improved and staff are now more efficiently deployed. Arrangements for evaluating school goals are still not an explicit part of planning. Teaching has been monitored by senior managers and the quality of teaching has improved significantly. The role of academic managers in monitoring teaching has not yet been widely implemented. The range of teaching styles is still not sufficiently matched to the needs of individual pupils. The Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs has been implemented but a whole school approach to pupils' special educational needs is still lacking. Not enough work is done across subjects to match teaching methods and materials fully to the needs of these pupils. There are now effective arrangements for progress managers and academic managers to identify under-achieving pupils. A system for monitoring the general progress across subjects of all pupils is still not in place, although there is good practice in some subjects, notably science. The school now provides for a daily act of collective worship in assemblies or form periods, although the worship planned for form periods does not always take place. In this respect, the strict statutory requirements are not met.

The attainment of pupils showed a rising trend in GCSE between 1994 and 1998. A rising trend was also shown in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 between 1996 and 1998. Both sets of results declined in 1999. Most of the arrangements are in place that will allow the school to respond effectively to the issues of this

report and to improve pupils' attainment. The achievement of the school's current performance targets now depends heavily on the school carrying out promptly its plans for academic managers to monitor teaching quality, and for staff to monitor each pupil's progress on a regular basis.

### Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools		
			<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
			<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
Key Stage 3 tests	C	C	<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
GCSE examinations	D	D	<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

In the 1999 national Key Stage 3 assessments, school standards were close to national averages, both in each core subject (English, mathematics and science) and in all core subjects combined. Standards were also close to those of similar schools in each core subject and in all combined. In 1998, standards in all core subjects combined were above the national average and well above those of similar schools. The inspection evidence at Key Stage 3 has shown that pupils are currently performing in line with national expectations in core subjects. Attainment is below expectations in DT and music, and above expectation in art. It is in line with expectations in other subjects.

In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the school's overall results were below the national average and below the average for similar schools. In 1998, results were in line with the national average and with those of similar schools. Results rose from 1994 to 1998 at a slower rate than the national rising trend. The inspection evidence at Key Stage 4 has shown that pupils are currently performing below expectations in DT, music, modern foreign languages and travel and tourism. Attainment is above expectations in art, history and drama. It is in line with expectations in other subjects.

Boys' and girls' attainment scores on entry to the school are broadly average or slightly below, but girls score consistently higher than boys. In the 1998 Key Stage 3 tests, boys and girls were both close to average in English, whereas girls were above in mathematics and boys were above in science. In GCSE results from 1995 to 1998, boys have been below the national boys' average whereas girls have been above the national girls' average, except in 1995 when both were below their respective averages.

### Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	Art, history, science, ICT	Music, DT ( food technology)
Years 10-11	Satisfactory	Art, history, science, drama, ICT, mathematics	Music, DT (food technology), child development
English	Satisfactory	N/A	N/A
Mathematics	Satisfactory	N/A	N/A



Most teaching is at least satisfactory in both key stages. Around one lesson in ten is unsatisfactory, one in two is at least good and one in eight is very good. Teaching is slightly better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, mainly because the behaviour of a small minority of pupils is not successfully controlled in Year 9.

Overall the standard of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, when three lessons in ten were unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, certain key weaknesses have persisted, notably a relatively narrow range of teaching styles with inadequate matching of tasks to the needs and attainments of individual pupils where appropriate. There is no school policy on teaching and learning, in order to promote, for example, independent or resource based learning. Homework is usually appropriate to pupils' needs and is set according to the school homework timetable.

Teaching in the learning support department is good. The teachers break the work down into simpler tasks and use appropriate teaching strategies to meet individual needs. Good reference is made to the individual educational programmes. Teachers in subject areas make insufficient use of these strategies.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school is generally satisfactory. Some pupils show challenging behaviour towards teachers and other pupils. This is generally well dealt with.
Attendance	Attendance is below average, particularly in some upper school classes, although there has been some improvement this term. Unauthorised absence is above average. Low attendance limits pupils' progress.
Ethos*	The climate for learning is satisfactory and is good in some subjects. The majority of pupils have good attitudes towards their work. Pupils benefit from good pastoral care.
Leadership and management	Leadership and management are generally effective. Clear values guide the work of the school. Planning and evaluation are not fully developed but good practice exists in the monitoring of teaching quality and subject development.
Curriculum	The curriculum is broad, balanced and in line with statutory requirements. There is a good range of extracurricular activities. There is very good practice in science, where pupils are carefully assessed and work targets are set accordingly.
Pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Some class sizes are kept small in order to assist teachers to plan for lower attaining pupils and match the tasks to their needs. This opportunity is not always fully exploited
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes good arrangements for pupils' spiritual and social development and satisfactory arrangements for moral and cultural development. The anti-bullying scheme is good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staff are suitably qualified for what they teach and have appropriate experience. The standard of accommodation and facilities is good. Learning resources are mostly adequate to support what is taught.
Value for money	The school gives satisfactory value for money.

\* *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**

VII. The staff are easy to approach.

VIII. The school helps pupils to achieve.

IX. Children like the school.

X. Children are encouraged to involve themselves in extracurricular activities.

XI. Homework is generally satisfactory.

**What some parents are not happy about**

XII. Some pupils behave poorly in school.

XIII. There is not enough information about

XIV. Homework is sometimes set

Relatively few concerns were expressed and these were not supported by the majority of the parents who gave a view. The inspection evidence supports parents' views about children liking the school and enjoying a range of extracurricular activities. Staff are caring and responsive. Homework is generally appropriate. The poor behaviour of some children in some classes impedes the progress of others. Teachers usually deal with these problems successfully. The school does not give parents enough information about the curriculum or about individual children's progress.

## KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The governors, Headteacher and staff should attend to the following key issues.

1.Improve the overall levels of attainment and progress at both key stages by:

a)fully implementing the school's plans to monitor each pupil's academic progress regularly, so that teachers can take timely action on under-achievement; (paragraph 60)

b)fully implementing the school's plans to monitor teaching systematically, with a special focus on improving the match between teaching styles and pupils' needs; (paragraphs 38 and 72)\*

c)strengthening the quality of teaching, and its impact on pupils' progress, in music, DT (food technology), and child development; (paragraphs 36, 187, 138 and 207)

d)more actively promoting pupil attendance, so that the school's overall attendance level at least matches the national average; (paragraph 32-34 and 62)

e)increasing the amount and quality of information given to parents in reports about what their children are learning and the progress they are making. (paragraph 67)

1.Improve school development planning so that it is more closely linked to financial planning, gives clear indication of how the planned developments will be evaluated and shows how school performance targets will be met. (paragraphs 70 and 79)\*

2.Improve efficiency in the use of the school's library and ICT facilities so that they support learning in a wider range of subjects. (paragraphs 82-83)

4. Strengthen the school's approach to providing for pupils with special educational needs in order to support their learning across the whole range of subjects. (paragraphs 39, 73, 81)\*

\* These key issues reflect key issues raised in the last inspection report.

In general, the school has sound arrangements for health and safety. (See paragraphs 64-65.) Two matters of health and safety have been drawn to the attention of the governors and Headteacher. These concern safe movement around the school and the advice given to staff on child protection procedures. The school's arrangements for collective worship do not meet statutory requirements because the practice within form periods is inconsistent.

In addition to the key issues, action on the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the inspection action plan.

- .Improve the consistency with which teachers require pupils to observe the rules of behaviour in the classroom. (paragraphs 24, 40)

- .Further encourage all form tutors to carry out the programme of collective worship in form periods. (paragraph 74)

- .Increase the range of non-European cultures explored through the curriculum. (paragraph 58)

- **INTRODUCTION**

- **Characteristics of the school**

1. Millfield High School is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive school situated in a suburban housing area to the east of Thornton. The school is about half a mile from the town centre. The buildings are very modern and include a recently opened new wing. The site is extensive and includes gardens and large sports fields, which give the school an open and attractive aspect. The characteristics of the school are broadly unchanged from the time of the last inspection, except that there has been a 12 per cent increase in the school roll and a gradual rise by four points in the average attainment scores of pupils entering the school.

2. The pupil roll of 921 is average for secondary schools. There are more boys than girls in each year except Year 7. Some 16.2 per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs. Those with formal statements of their needs are 4.3 per cent of the roll. Both figures are above the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 13.8 per cent. This is broadly in line with the 1998 national average. Two per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, the largest group being black Caribbean. This is lower than average. Less than one per cent of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. This is below average but typical of a shire school. The percentage of pupils choosing to stay on in education and training has increased over the last three years to 82 per cent.

3. The school is oversubscribed and has a wide catchment area. Nearly 80 per cent of the pupils come from eight local primary schools and annually two others send more than 25 pupils each. A further ten schools send fewer than ten pupils each to Millfield. Sixteen per cent of pupils come from as far away as Fleetwood. Approximately seven per cent of pupils transfer from other secondary schools as their families buy properties in this expanding area. The 1991 census information has been used as a guide to the social background of the pupils. Nearly 70 per cent of pupils come from five local wards. All but one of these wards has a lower than average percentage of adults with higher education and three of the five have fewer than average children living in high social class households.

4. As shown by standardised Cognitive Attainment Tests (CAT) and Key Stage 2 national tests, the attainment of pupils on entry represents all levels of ability. However, the school's mean CAT score is slightly lower than the nationally standardised mean. The average attainment levels are also affected by the seven per cent of pupils who join the school from other secondary schools. These transferred pupils tend to have lower attainment than those entering Millfield directly from primary schools. The CAT scores of pupils currently in Key Stage 3 are considerably higher than those for pupils in Key Stage 4. In each of the current year groups, girls' CAT scores on entry were higher than those of boys.

5. The LEA set the school GCSE performance targets in 1999, which were not met. Targets have been lowered for 2000 to reflect attainment on entry and provisional targets for the following years are considerably higher.

6. The school's aims and values are demanding and wide ranging. The aims for the pupils are that they will reach their potential, be successful, develop independent learning and self-discipline, and have an understanding of their responsibilities as well as their rights. The school as an organisation places value on high standards and efficiency, participative and open management, Christian values, a supportive climate and opportunities for staff to develop their skills.

6. **Key indicators**

**Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	99	74	173


6. National Curriculum test results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	54	67	59
	Girls	52	45	38
	Total	106	112	97
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	61 (74)	65 (69)	56 (74)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	28 (39)	42 (32)	23 (35)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

6. Teacher assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	54	71	55
	Girls	51	54	39
	Total	105	125	94
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	61 (79)	72 (66)	54 (68)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	29 (40)	49 (43)	25 (30)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

#### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	79	86	165

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	30	65	75
	Girls	32	79	83
	Total	62	144	158
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	38 (43)	87 (88)	96 (99)
	National	47.8 (44.6)	88.4 (89.8)	93.9 (95.2)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of <i>such pupils</i> who achieved all those they studied:	Number	% success rate	
	School	0	N/A
	National		N/A

.....  
1 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

2 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	11.7
		National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised absence	School	1.3
		National comparative data	1.1

6.

## 6. Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	49
	Permanent	8

## 6. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	13
	Satisfactory or better	90
	Less than satisfactory	10



## 6. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### 6. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### 6. **Attainment and progress**

7. In recent years the overall attainment of pupils coming into the school has been slightly below average but the broad range of attainment has been represented. These levels have been confirmed by standardised tests. Attainment has been rising. The year groups currently in Key Stage 3 had higher test scores than those in Key Stage 4. The scores of the current Year 7 group were very close to average.

8. Pupils' performance at the end of Key Stage 3 in the national assessments for all core subjects combined is broadly in line with what might have been expected from their attainment on entry, but some year groups do better than others. Thus, pupils did particularly well in 1998, so that their results were above average, even though they had slightly lower attainment on entry than pupils in the two previous years. This higher level of performance was not sustained in 1999, when results returned closer to average.

9. The Key Stage 3 results for the last two years can be compared to national standards of attainment. Using the broadest comparison method, the average level which pupils attained, school standards were close to the national averages, both in each core subject (English, mathematics and science) and in all core subjects combined. Standards were higher in 1998. They were close to the national averages in English and mathematics, but well above average in science. Standards were close to average for all three subjects taken together. The overall trend from 1996 to 1998 was also close to average. Using a more stringent comparison, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above standards in each of the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, were close to average in 1999. They were above average in 1998, and well above in science.

10. The school does comparatively well at Key Stage 3 when compared with schools operating in a similar context, as defined by the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In 1999, standards (as shown by the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above) were close to those of similar schools in English and above in mathematics and science. For core subjects overall (using pupils' average point scores), they were close to those of similar schools. In 1998, standards were above those of similar schools in English and mathematics and very high in science.

11. The inspection evidence at Key Stage 3 is in agreement with the 1999 test results. It shows that pupils are currently performing in line with national expectation in core subjects. Attainment is below expectation in music and DT, and above expectation in art. It is in line with expectation in other subjects. It is below expectation in the designing area of DT but in line overall in that subject.

12. Judging by pupils' levels of attainment on entry, it might have been expected that pupils in Key Stage 3 would now be showing higher attainment than pupils in Key Stage 4. No such difference was seen and there is lower attainment in Year 9 than in other years. In Year 9, there is also more unsatisfactory progress and unsatisfactory teaching than in other years. What explains much of this is some pupils' challenging behaviour in a number of classes in Year 9, which is not fully controlled by teachers.

13. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the school's overall results were below the national average and below the average for similar schools. This was the case both for the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more grades at A\* - C and for the average point score per pupil. In 1998, results were in line with the national average and with those of similar schools. The school's GCSE results have been below national averages in four of the past six years. The results rose from 1994 to 1998, but at a slower rate than the national rising trend. The explanation for the fall in results in 1999 lies partly in the fact that the pupils who produced the 1998 GCSE results had higher attainment on entry than did the pupils in 1996 or 1999.

The school also attributes the lower results in 1999 to disruption of learning caused by a small group of pupils who were excluded during 1999, some of whom had previously been excluded from other schools.

14. The data currently available makes it possible to compare pupils' performance at GCSE in 1998 and 1999 with their respective performance at Key Stage 3. This confirms that pupils sitting GCSE in 1998 did well, since their Key Stage 3 results were lower than those of the pupils sitting GCSE in 1999, but their results were better.

15. The inspection evidence at Key Stage 4 is not completely in line with the 1999 GCSE results. Pupils are performing below expectations in DT, music and modern foreign languages. However, their attainment is above expectations in art, history and drama, and it is in line with expectations in other subjects. Overall, it is in line with national expectations. Pupils currently in Year 11 performed above average in the 1998 Key Stage 3 tests. On the inspection evidence, they have not fully sustained these levels in Key Stage 4, although there are good examples of above average attainment in a range of subjects including art, drama, history, PE, science and statistics.

16. On the basis of the inspection evidence, pupils make satisfactory progress in most subjects throughout the school, and they make good progress in art and science. They also make good progress in drama, history and mathematics during Key Stage 4. They make unsatisfactory progress in music and DT (food technology) during both key stages and in child development and modern foreign languages during Key Stage 4. They make unsatisfactory progress where they lack sufficiently challenging work or they do not spend enough time on building up the necessary skills for the subject.

17. These different rates in pupils' progress from subject to subject are partly confirmed by data about the relative contribution made by each subject to a pupil's GCSE results. National data for 1998 shows the positive contribution made by science, and mathematics and statistics. Subject performance over a longer period is illustrated by LEA data. Science, mathematics, statistics and English have made positive contributions over four years, and art and RE have done so over three years. Music and modern foreign languages are among those subjects which have not made a sustained contribution to pupils' GCSE results. Data was not available for 1999.

18. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Their progress tends to be good in lessons provided by learning support staff, where activities are tailored to their needs and good teaching has a significant impact. The progress of lower attainers is satisfactory, mainly because of the policy of support for them in lower sets with smaller class sizes. Their progress is seldom good, and is sometimes unsatisfactory, because teaching styles and tasks are not varied enough for their needs.

19. Consistently on entry to the school girls have higher attainment than boys. This pattern is reflected better in GCSE results than in Key Stage 3 tests. Thus, in the 1998 Key Stage 3 tests, boys and girls were both close to average in English, whereas girls were above in mathematics and boys were above in science.

20. There is evidence that boys make poorer progress than girls during Key Stage 4. In GCSE results from 1996 to 1998, boys were below the national boys' average whereas girls were above the national girls' average. The inspection evidence did not reveal fully the causes of underperformance by boys at GCSE, except that some are more likely than girls to engage in challenging behaviour in class, which slows progress for both themselves and others.

21. Standards of literacy and numeracy have a positive influence on pupils' attainment. Across the subjects, standards of literacy are in line with national expectations. In history, pupils write extended pieces of work, for example, on the slave trade or the experience of soldiers in the trenches. In RE, pupils write lengthy passages on the life and teaching of Jesus. In science, key words for new topics are placed on the board and regular spelling tests are held. Some work, for example in geography and DT, is below

expectation in spelling and punctuation. In the literacy support centre, pupils use a variety of techniques to improve their reading, but these are not used across subjects. A school literacy policy is planned but not yet in place.

22. Pupils' attainment in the use of number across their subjects is in line with national expectations. In geography, effective use is made of graphical techniques, and the analysis of statistics is aided by the use of different types of graphs to represent information. In history, pupils' understanding of the enormity of the loss of life in the First World War is sharpened by their appreciation of the magnitude of numbers. They apply their knowledge of percentages effectively in studies of the Wall Street Crash. In technology and science, pupils measure lengths and times accurately. In science, they use calculators confidently and have the necessary algebraic and graphical skills to manipulate formulae and record the results of experiments.

23. The school and the LEA set independent targets for the 1999 GCSE results, which were close to the 1998 results. Neither target was met and the current targets are closer to the results achieved in 1999. Provisional targets for future years, especially those set by the LEA, are higher than the school has achieved before. The school's targets for 2000 are partly based on predictions derived from entry attainment scores. Not enough weight has been given to the evidence of best past performance as represented by the results in 1998, in order to ensure that the school target is sufficiently challenging.

### **23. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

24. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. They show good powers of concentration and are interested in their subjects, especially at Key Stage 3. They listen carefully and are responsive to the teachers' questions. They generally get on well with each other and work collaboratively when asked. Many pupils are ready to discuss and present ideas openly, despite occasional discouragement from others. Pupils usually have cordial and productive relationships with teachers, based on mutual respect. They often show particular enthusiasm and interest when carrying out practical tasks or participating in sport. A few pupils have a limited span of concentration and, if not managed well by the teacher, become distracted or disinterested. If unchecked, they often talk whilst the teacher is talking.

25. Pupils develop their capacity for personal study by using the library and computer facilities to undertake research, especially at lunchtimes. This work is seen in both key stages, for example, in history and in art and design projects, although not every subject sets such work. Where such opportunities are offered through homework and other tasks, pupils successfully develop their personal study skills. Despite the limited space available in the library, pupils use it heavily at break times to keep up with their work. In some cases, a lack of commitment shows in unfinished coursework.

26. Where there are opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility, pupils perform their duties well. For example, the prefects monitor and control the entrances, corridors and stairways. They take these responsibilities seriously, as do those who are involved in extracurricular sports, school outings, competitions and drama productions.

27. Pupils' standards of behaviour are largely as described in the last inspection report. Behaviour is satisfactory around the school and is generally good in lessons. Most pupils are responsive to teachers' instructions about their conduct. A small minority of pupils in some lessons engage in challenging behaviour. This is more sustained in some classes for example, in Year 9, and it impedes the progress of other pupils. When pupils' behaviour is good, it has a positive effect on educational standards.

28. Pupils with special educational needs are well accepted within the school. This is particularly noticeable where, for example, pupils from a local special school attend lessons and are totally accepted within the group and where disabled pupils are helped to move around the school.

29. Most pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and negotiate the narrow corners and stairways sensibly, although there is some running and pushing. Occasionally, pupils can be boisterous and noisy waiting to go into classrooms. The majority are polite and friendly, happy to talk to adults and keen to offer help. A small minority display immature behaviour and discourtesy.

30. Exclusions have remained at a similar level for the past three years. The number of boys excluded is above the national average. Of the seven permanent exclusions in 1999, three have been of pupils already excluded from their previous school. The school has taken measures to reduce the number of exclusions, which is recognised as a problem.

31. Pupils respect the fabric of the new buildings and the school environment except for occasional instances of graffiti and the careless dropping of litter at lunchtime. The school has a policy on litter and organises litter collection by pupils. Although pupils report that some bullying does occur, they say that they feel safe in the school and they value the work done by staff and their fellow pupils in the anti-bullying scheme.

#### 31. **Attendance**

32. Levels of attendance are unsatisfactory and below both the national average and the minimum expected level. Attendance has risen slightly since the last inspection but has declined during the last academic year. Levels of unauthorised absence are slightly higher than the national average. There has been some improvement in the first part of the autumn term but the level of improvement, if sustained, would not bring school attendance up to average. There is also low attendance among some groups in Key Stage 4.

33. Low attendance is the result of several factors, including the fact that a small number of pupils have high levels of unauthorised absence. The Headteacher has written to parents but some parents do not support the school's efforts. Due to the seasonal nature of leisure based employment in the area, many families take holidays during term time. These sometimes extend past the permitted two weeks. Authorised absences for medical reasons last for a week at a time in an unusual number of cases. Such absences are not confined to any particular group of pupils. They have a significant effect on the progress and attainment of such pupils.

34. A significant number of pupils arrive late for the start of the school day. Problems with buses play a part but pupils who are late do not always hurry into school. This lateness interrupts the work that form tutors carry out with their groups and sets a poor example to other pupils. During the day, most pupils arrive promptly for lessons, although occasionally pupils have long distances to walk between classes.

#### 34. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

##### 34. **Teaching**

35. Most teaching is at least satisfactory in both key stages. Around one lesson in ten is unsatisfactory, one in two is at least good and one in eight is very good. Teaching is slightly better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, mainly because occasionally teachers do not control some pupils' behaviour successfully in lessons in Year 9.

36. Teaching is good in art, history, science and ICT at both key stages. It is good in mathematics and drama at Key Stage 4. It is unsatisfactory overall in music and DT (food technology) at both key stages and in child development at Key Stage 4.

37. The standard of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, when three lessons in ten were unsatisfactory, and teaching now promotes satisfactory learning in most lessons. Nevertheless,

certain relative weaknesses have persisted, notably the use of too narrow a range of teaching styles with inadequate matching of tasks to the needs and attainments of individual pupils, even where class numbers have been reduced to make this easier to arrange, as in bottom mathematics sets. There is no school policy on teaching and learning, for example, to promote independent or resource based learning and the lack of access to the ICT facilities during lessons limits the use of modern CD-ROM software to promote these learning styles across subjects. Pupils do, however, have ICT lessons and they make use of computers during lunchtimes when they can have freer access. Homework is usually appropriate to pupils' needs and is set according to the school homework timetable.

38. The special needs staff identify pupils appropriately and effective use is made of outside agencies to identify and support specific needs. Support strategies include both class-based help and withdrawal. Some pupils in Key Stage 4 choose learning support as an option to help them with their examination subjects. These lessons are not always sufficiently structured. Pupils sometimes arrive in class without work and tasks are then set which are not necessarily the most appropriate for their immediate needs.

39. Teaching in the learning support department is good. The teachers break the work down into simpler tasks and use appropriate teaching strategies to meet individual needs. Good reference is made to the individual educational programmes. Teachers in subject areas make insufficient use of these strategies. In a few lessons, pupils with reading difficulties are given worksheets which are too difficult for them. Teachers' use of support staff is sometimes ineffective, for example, when they are not working with pupils identified as having difficulties or are not sufficiently occupied in the lesson.

40. The strengths and weaknesses of teaching are not notably different at each key stage, except that the ordinary rules of classroom behaviour are least well enforced in Year 9. Occasionally, poor behaviour also goes unchecked. There are very good demonstrations in art, followed by individual tuition as needed. Across a range of subjects, however, the teachers' explanations fail and valuable time is lost, because pupils are allowed to talk when they should be listening. The pace of some lessons is too slow because the teacher's presentation lasts for too long. Pupils were much more actively engaged and challenged in a geography lesson where they reinforced aspects of their map reading skills using a series of exercises based on common games. Even with very large numbers in a top science set, the teacher arranged practical work so that the pupils actively explored and understood the laws of reflection. In a drama lesson in preparation for a presentation at an assembly, pupils were required to exercise their own directing talents by working out how they would choreograph their movements to act out a war poem.

41. Teachers generally use their expertise to good effect. In a lesson on the formation and location of crude oil, the teacher showed good knowledge and also communicated enthusiasm to the pupils through an effective and well timed demonstration of fractional distillation. In music lessons, the information given is sometimes inexact, so that pupils have an oversimplified understanding of musical concepts, or it is too peripheral to the task. In contrast, during a lesson on Beethoven, information was used judiciously to strengthen a teaching point and the teacher insisted on the correct use of terms. Occasionally, where the teachers' main expertise is in another area, techniques and skills are less well taught.

42. Planning is generally satisfactory but changes in staffing coupled with lack of schemes of work have seriously disrupted pupils' learning in child development and food technology. Planning is good in history. Teachers clearly formulate their aims in terms of what pupils would know, and they return to these aims for consolidation at the end of the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers give pupils a clear idea of the criteria they should use for judging their own work. In an ICT lesson, pupils learned criteria for distinguishing between good and bad graphics by means of well chosen visual examples. In art, pupils judged examples of project work using the examination criteria.

42. **The curriculum and assessment**

43. The curriculum is broad and balanced and well designed to promote pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development. Satisfactory processes are in place to ensure that the curriculum is regularly monitored and reviewed through a consultative process involving subject area managers, the senior management team and governors' curriculum group.

44. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in both key stages and weekly teaching time at least meets the recommended level. A comprehensive range of school policies provides a clear rationale for the curriculum, except that there are no policies to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the curriculum.

45. The overall structure of the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. A fortnightly 50-lesson cycle has provided for a better balance of time allocations to subject areas. Improved arrangements for the grouping of subjects have given subject areas greater flexibility and autonomy in allocating pupils to teaching groups. The problem of classes being taught by more than one teacher in a subject has been removed. The structure generally assists the school in matching its staffing to the needs of the curriculum.

46. Pupils have equality of access to subjects in both key stages. Boys and girls now have full access to each aspect of the PE curriculum, whereas formerly single sex classes sometimes had different access to the activities.

47. In Key Stage 3, the curriculum is enriched by provision for personal and social education, drama and separate lessons in ICT. In Key Stage 4, the combination of compulsory core and choice of options provides good balance, with previous concerns having been addressed. All pupils study both DT and ICT as full or short GCSE courses. Enrichment is provided by personal and social education, a small range of vocationally relevant GCSE courses and the opportunity to study two languages, although this is not a popular option.

48. In both key stages, the personal and social education programme enriches pupils' learning, particularly through the contributions to teaching made by external agencies and speakers. This programme effectively fulfils the requirement for drug, sex and health education. The arrangements for careers education and guidance are satisfactory. They include activities in the personal and social education programme to inform choice of courses and careers, access to advice from the careers service and to information in the school careers library, and two weeks of work experience in Year 11.

49. Pupils with special educational needs are taught alongside their peers for most lessons. Their curriculum is therefore similar to that for all pupils. In Key Stage 4, as part of the option choice, pupils can opt for support studies instead of a conventional subject choice. This option provides valuable additional learning support. The curriculum is not sufficiently developed across subjects to provide for individual pupils' learning needs.

50. Links with primary schools support continuity of the curriculum. For example, mathematics teachers share good practice with primary colleagues and plan harmonised schemes of work. There is a good range of extracurricular activities and trips. In sport the choice includes soccer, basketball, hockey and netball. Rugby has recently been introduced for both boys and girls. Many staff contribute to these programmes as volunteers. They also provide a range of homework clubs and activities. Musical activities include senior and junior orchestras, woodwind and guitar clubs and a school choir.

51. The school has a good assessment policy to guide its work and assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessment of pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection. A range of assessment data is available for use in monitoring progress, setting targets, devising appropriate work, making predictions and identifying underachievement. Teachers have had training on how to make use of the data, but the

development of these practices is uneven across subjects. In music, the quality of formative assessment is poor and there are few documented procedures. There are examples of good practice in art, DT, history and RE. Developments in science are at an advanced stage and have an impact on both subject planning and pupils' progress.

52. The use of assessment data to inform curriculum planning varies but has improved since the last inspection. The good practice which exists is not sufficiently shared across subjects. In mathematics, an analysis of the performance of pupils in carrying out calculations without the aid of a calculator has resulted in the production of a redrafted scheme of work that identifies specific times throughout Key Stage 3 when these skills will be taught. Information about pupils' special educational needs is not sufficiently used to plan appropriate work in subjects.

## **52. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

53. There is no school policy on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but some departments such as English and RE have their own policies and a commitment to moral and spiritual development is recognised in the school prospectus.

54. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils have three assemblies and two form periods each week. A school prayer is used at assemblies. These assemblies are based on Christian principles and include acts of worship and opportunities for prayer. Pupils are encouraged to consider the importance and meaning of human life. A major contribution is made by the annual Remembrance Assembly, to which pupils contribute directly from their work in drama, English, history, music and RE.

55. A programme of themes for the day assists worship in form periods but these are not consistently used. Some good practice included a short but effective talk on the theme of remembrance and a two-minute silence during a history lesson. Other opportunities for spiritual development include regular visits to local faith groups and churches.

56. Provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory. Most subjects make a contribution, as do assemblies. Moral issues are particularly well explored in PSE and drama. Pupils explore the difference between aggressive and assertive behaviour and reflect on their responsibilities towards elderly people. From as early as Year 7, a community policeman helps pupils to consider the issues of drug misuse. The anti-bullying scheme involves a no blame approach for minor cases. Forty pupils from Year 9 and 10 are involved annually in applying this approach as mentors or as team members. Younger pupils take part in a Readathon to raise money for charity.

57. Provision for social development is good. Many pupils in Year 11 have prefect responsibilities and they take these seriously. Pupils also take part in the school council and help to run the school library and a school bank. There are opportunities for collaborative work in lessons and for developing social skills through sports teams and the orchestra. The PSE programme covers issues such as citizenship. A writing skills weekend encourages older pupils to develop both writing and social skills. Many pupils in Year 7 take part in a summer camp and older pupils go along as helpers. An awards system gives recognition to pupils in Key Stage 4 for their contributions to school life and for full attendance. This is being extended to Year 9. Pupils are encouraged to become involved in the school community. Some pupils and parents gave up their free time to help plant trees in the school grounds.

58. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils gain an understanding of their own and other cultures through a wide range of visits, for example, to the Manchester Jewish Museum and Blackpool Zoo. European trips have included a tour of Holland by a school football team, a visit to Eurodisney, a GCSE visit to First World War battlefields, and ski holidays. There is effective collaborative work, for example, involving drama, music, art and technology to produce 'A Midsummer Night's

Dream'. Attractive displays of work, especially in art, help to stimulate pupils' interest in cultural forms from around the world. The focus given to non-European culture is relatively limited.

#### **58. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

59. Provision for the support and guidance of pupils is generally satisfactory but with some areas of weakness. Pastoral care is good because tutors identify and address personal problems that are having an effect on individual pupils' attainment or personal development.

60. Monitoring of academic progress is not fully established and has a limited effect on standards. Progress managers work with academic managers to identify pupils whose work is causing concern across a number of subjects. Preparations have been made to introduce a system which would monitor the progress being made by every pupil and would allow appropriate individual targets and work to be set. The working links between progress managers and academic managers which already exist offer a good basis for whole-school progress monitoring.

61. Effective strategies are in place to identify and assess pupils with special educational needs. External agencies and experts are used where necessary. Individual education programmes include learning, physical and behavioural aspects as appropriate. Some systems are in place to monitor the attainment and progress of these pupils, though more comprehensive records are needed.

62. Procedures for promoting good attendance and punctuality are not sufficiently proactive. Although recognition is given for good individual attendance, contact with the home over non-attendance is not always prompt enough. Attendance statistics are not used to encourage improvement or set targets for tutor groups, so that a climate of expectation is set for all pupils to attend consistently and punctually.

63. Procedures to promote good behaviour are satisfactory. Promoting positive behaviour is an aim of the school and this is done by a variety of reward schemes. Volunteers from both teaching and non-teaching staff have worked together to improve discipline. Some staff act as mentors to potentially disruptive pupils. To deal with more serious behavioural problems within the classroom, a red card system is used to seek help from managers. Pupils can also be put on a 'green card' which allows them to take time out of situations they find difficult. At break times, staff have effective control of behaviour by patrols in set zones of the school premises and grounds. There is an effective anti-bullying scheme. Older pupils are trained in strategies to diffuse potential conflict and protect younger pupils. They refer promptly to teaching staff in the event of more serious misbehaviour. Staff, pupils and parents report favourably on this initiative. The training they receive makes the scheme a positive influence on pupils' personal development.

64. The school's formal procedures for child protection are not secure. There is no school policy document for child protection. There are no written guidelines for staff on the action to be taken should any concerns be identified. Despite these weaknesses, the practice is effective. The school monitors cases closely and takes appropriate action. This includes contact with outside agencies where necessary.

65. The school makes good provision to promote the health, safety and general wellbeing of pupils. This includes the good use made of the specialist services offered by outside agencies. A programme of study is followed to support pupils' personal and social education. Sex education and drugs awareness lessons are included as part of the curriculum. Both the school nurse and the education welfare officer offer opportunities for pupils to drop in if they are in need of advice and support. There is potentially hazardous congestion in some corridors and stairwells when pupils are changing classes. The school's one way systems are not consistently enforced.



65. **Partnership with parents and the community**

66. The school makes good efforts to involve parents in establishing policies and discussing improvements. The parents' association has been reformed into a parental supporters group in order to give parents a more significant consultative role in school decision making. Sixteen of the parents have formed a quality group to consult on a wide range of issues. The school provides a satisfactory level of day-to-day information about the life of the school. A two-monthly newsletter on school life is published. This includes contributions from pupils. Despite these efforts, a minority of parents do not support their children's work and their regular and punctual attendance. Parents of children with special educational needs are now fully involved and informed through annual reviews and individual education programmes.

67. Insufficient information is given to parents in reports on what their children are being taught and how they are progressing. Whilst annual reports give a good idea of the level of pupils' motivation and the effort they make, these reports do not sufficiently explain the progress being made in the major areas of each subject. However, information on curriculum and progress can be requested at the regular meetings to which parents are invited. Weekly planners are used to record the homework being set. Parents find the school easy to approach.

68. The school has good links with the local community, especially with agencies to support the school's academic and social life. There is good support for the programme for personal and social education and for work experience. There are effective links with the careers advice agency. Effective use is made of educational trips to extend the curriculum, for example, in history and geography. There are residential visits to support social development, for example, in modern foreign languages. Fund raising for national charities helps pupils to identify their place in the wider community. During the week of the inspection, pupils contributed to the British Legion poppy appeal and the Remembrance Assembly was attended by local people and clergy.

68. **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

68.

**Leadership and management**

69. Leadership and management are generally effective. Clear values guide the work of the school. Much attention has been given to developing and expressing the school's aims, values and mission. Practical direction comes from a wide range of written policies covering most aspects of school life including equal opportunities. The governors receive detailed reports from the Headteacher on a range of appropriate topics. The information they receive and the structure of governors' committees allows them to be fully involved in the school and carry out their role.

70. The school development plan is constructed around various areas for development, with each subject contributing a plan for each area. This approach ensures that common themes run through the contributory plans and that all staff see the school plan as relevant to their work. However, the form of the plan does not allow whole-school priorities to be set out clearly for the range of its readers. Specific costings, targets, deadlines and evaluation methods are also lacking in the plan itself, although it is actively monitored by periodic review meetings with middle managers.

71. The school actively monitors its own performance using a comprehensive set of data, including value added reports on subjects from the LEA. Two years ago a major analysis of performance was followed by a governors' review of performance in each subject. The reports produced for this review were often telling and incisive on the causes of low attainment and the next set of school results improved. The procedure has not become an annual one, despite the fall in results in 1999. Although a subject review is operated by senior managers, it provides less formal accountability than did the governors' review. Specifically, there is no procedure for converting the school's performance targets into subject targets and related

commitments. Plans for monitoring each pupil's progress have not yet been implemented, although good practice exists in some subjects and progress and academic managers share information to monitor underachievement.

72. Good practice exists in the monitoring of teaching quality and subject development. Senior managers run a substantial programme of visits to classrooms for a range of purposes including offering support to individual teachers and assisting the induction of new teachers. Senior staff act as mentors to subject areas. Although academic managers are also expected to monitor teaching and have time for this purpose, this activity is not yet widely established and improvement to the range of teaching styles has been slower than expected.

73. Recent progress has been made in providing for pupils' special educational needs and the school now meets the statutory requirements, subject to the governors' approval of the policy which is now in draft form. A designated governor has oversight of this area and the latest governors' report to parents includes a section on the school's implementation of special educational needs. All pupils have individual education programmes and the progress of all pupils is reviewed at least termly. Parents are involved at all stages. Effective use is made of external agencies including the learning support services. Assessment, recording and reporting arrangements meet statutory requirements. All departments have newly appointed special needs representatives. As yet the planned provision does not fully permeate teaching and learning across the curriculum and teaching strategies are sometimes inappropriate.

74. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is met in spirit by arrangements for worship in school assemblies and form periods. Practice at assemblies meets requirements and is of good quality, but worship is not consistently practised at form times. To that extent, the school is likely to be in breach of the strict terms of the law.

#### **74. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

75. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection so that there is now a satisfactory match between the numbers, experience and qualifications of both teaching and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. Staff are appropriately qualified for what they teach. Although many staff are very experienced, there has been a recent influx of staff who are either new to the school or inexperienced teachers. Arrangements for the induction of these staff are good, as are the general arrangements for staff development. The Investors in People scheme has been used to strengthen the school's procedures to ensure that the training taken by staff reflects the school's priorities. After a period when lack of funding prevented access to courses, a good programme of training opportunities matched to school needs has been provided, using the expertise of the school's own staff where appropriate. A good start has been made to training staff in the use of ICT. More is needed to ensure that ICT is evenly exploited across the curriculum. Other needs include briefing on child protection issues and on teaching pupils with particular learning difficulties. An annual appraisal system has been in almost continuous operation for some years. It makes a useful contribution to the planning of staff development.

76. The school is housed in attractive modern buildings adjacent to a large playing field and offering good specialist accommodation and facilities, especially for drama, sport, music and art. Each subject has its own suite of rooms, although rising numbers result in some classes being taught outside these areas. The library and ICT facilities are also heavily used as pupil numbers rise. The library is attractive but, at lunchtimes, it quickly becomes overcrowded and it lacks sufficient computers to support the number of pupils who wish to study. Most areas are spacious but some corridors and stairwells are too narrow for the volume of traffic they take. There is access for the disabled to all areas of the school apart from the second floor of one teaching block. Where necessary, classes are relocated to provide access for disabled pupils.

77. Resources for learning are generally adequate for the requirements of curriculum. Recent expenditure has been higher than average and in many subjects, including English, geography, history, PE and ICT,

textbook resources are now above average levels. In history, the range of videotape material is good. Consumable resources and textbooks are insufficient in DT. The ratio of computers to pupils is high, but lack of access to the ICT network has limited the investment in subject related software. Pupils with special educational needs rely on computers that are old and not powerful enough to run modern software.

78. Curriculum areas are each given an allocation from the library budget so that a stock of appropriate subject resources can be built up. Despite the introduction of some attractive new material, for example in art and history, the book stock is generally inadequate. There is insufficient fiction and too much outdated material, for example, in DT, history, RE and PE. Programmes of educational visits substantially enhance pupils' learning in geography, history, modern foreign languages and RE. The residential writing weekend makes a similar contribution to English.

#### **78. The efficiency of the school**

79. Planning and preparation for the school's budget is thorough but the school development plan does not clearly identify how priorities are reflected in costs and how it will be established that value has been achieved. This obscures accountability and limits the opportunity for governors to monitor the effectiveness of decisions. Thus extra time has been given to academic managers and progress managers for pupil-monitoring and teacher-monitoring activities. This is a clear school priority and a central part of the strategy for improving examination performance. The monitoring activities are not all in operation, yet the resources have not been diverted to other parts of the plan. The overall proportion of time spent in contact with classes is low in comparison with other schools and there are some very large classes, for example, in science in Key Stage 4. This partly reflects the allocation of extra time to monitoring. In this respect, financial planning is unsatisfactory.

80. Governors are fully involved in the compilation of the annual budget. Thereafter, governors receive monthly reports so that there is effective financial control. The school's capacity to deal with budgetary matters in a timely way has been shown by the action taken to return a deficit budget to surplus. Reductions to subject resources and staff development opportunities have now been restored. An appropriate formula approach is used to fund subjects. The use of specific grants is appropriate to their purposes. For example, money from the School Regeneration Fund is used to mentor underachieving pupils. Appropriate pay and charging policies are in place.

81. Improved efficiency in the use of staff has been achieved since the last inspection. Although broadly satisfactory, there is scope for further improvement. There is no longer a large number of classes where subjects are taught by more than one teacher. However, the application of funds for special educational needs is not fully efficient in that, where it has been used to reduce bottom set class sizes in core subjects, insufficient attention is given to meeting the needs of these pupils through appropriate methods, materials and tasks. Too few teachers use individual education programmes as a reference point for planning lessons, developing individual learning tasks, setting short-term targets, developing key words for topics, diagnosing weaknesses and monitoring progress.

82. The use of learning resources and accommodation is generally efficient. Rooms are occupied for 85 per cent of school time and rates of use are due to increase as the pupil roll expands. One area of concern is the lack of access to ICT facilities by subjects because of their heavy use for ICT lessons. Not enough coordination and integration of schemes of work is done to alleviate this problem.

83. The school library is heavily used when open but it is not accessible for the whole of the school day, which is an inefficient use of this important resource. However, the school has been gradually restoring the hours of opening following previous economies. Subjects vary in their use of the library as a centre for learning. There is good practice in English, where classes have library lessons. The librarian is given details of RE homework to allow resources to be selected.

84. Day-to-day financial control and school administration are good. This has been confirmed by an external audit. Expenditure is monitored and reviewed on a weekly basis by the Headteacher and the finance officer. Significant savings have been made and care has been taken to maximise revenue, for example through the creation of Millfield Enterprises, although the sporting facilities are not yet fully exploited for their income potential.

85. Pupils' socioeconomic circumstances vary between average and below average. They have slightly below average attainment on entry and their GCSE results have varied between below average and average. Spending per pupil is low for this type of school. Pupils make satisfactory progress. Attendance is below average. Taking these factors into account, together with the use made of available resources to provide quality of education, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

85. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

85. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

85. **English**

86. In the national Key Stage 3 tests in 1998, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 or higher was above average. In 1999, this percentage was close to average but the proportion of scores at the higher levels was above average. The inspection evidence confirms that the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national expectations. In the 1998 tests, girls performed better than boys, as is the case nationally.

87. In 1998, GCSE results in English were above the national average. In English Literature they were average. In 1999, results in both subjects declined. In 1998, girls achieved better results than boys in both subjects, to a greater extent than was the case nationally. From the inspection evidence, the majority of pupils are attaining in line with national expectations.

88. Pupils make sound progress during both key stages. For example, in Key Stage 3 they accurately identify Shakespeare's use of metaphors and other language features. By Key Stage 4, they are able to write about the social and historical context of witchcraft in Macbeth. In Key Stage 3, they read their own stories aloud and evaluate them. By Key Stage 4, they edit autobiographies on a computer and take part in group discussions related to issues such as the use of persuasive language in the media. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. However, the progress of a minority of pupils is affected by insufficient guidance on the selection of appropriate texts in reading lessons.

89. In both key stages, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is broadly in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils speak with confidence in a variety of activities and settings. They are able to adapt their language to a variety of formal and informal situations, including reading aloud, assessment tasks and discussion of their own stories. Most listen attentively and show awareness of the requirements of formal English. They know something about the development of language, for example, the way in which words in English are borrowed from other languages. Some pupils do not share their understanding well by careful listening when working in pairs, and lower attaining pupils do not always listen attentively to others.

90. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have developed their skills in speaking and listening and are able to negotiate a consensus in groups, for example, when considering the selection of candidates for inclusion in a nuclear shelter or discussing the issue of prejudice. Some lower attaining pupils make less progress than other pupils because they are reluctant to contribute to discussions.

91. Standards of reading are in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. The results of reading tests in Year 7 demonstrate a wide range of reading abilities around the average. Pupils read a wide variety of novels, plays and poetry, including some texts from other cultures. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils have established the habit of private reading. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are able to analyse and evaluate the use of language in a variety of media, making comparisons where appropriate, for example, in a study of advertisements. Despite limited opportunity for library periods, pupils make good use of the library; the fiction stock is adequate for readers of middle and lower attainment, but there is a lack of good quality modern fiction and reference books.

92. Pupils' attainment in writing is in line with national expectation at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3 they produce, for example, a detailed mission statement and articles for magazines they have designed together. They also write imaginative stories. Standards for some pupils are adversely affected by unfinished work and errors in spelling and punctuation, which are not consistently corrected.

93. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are able to write competently for a wide variety of audiences and purposes. They produce extended pieces, for example, about the social and cultural backgrounds of texts such as Macbeth and A Taste of Honey. They use computers to draft, edit and annotate their stories. Some lower attaining pupils produce written work of good quality with the aid of computers.

94. Attitudes to learning are satisfactory in both key stages. Most pupils are well motivated and talk, read and write with enthusiasm. A small minority lack motivation, settle slowly and do not complete work in their books. Pupils' behaviour is generally good with very few exceptions. Most pupils take care in the presentation of their work. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Boys are more easily distracted from longer tasks in lessons and take less care in their presentation of work.

95. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages and is sometimes good. Teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' needs. The writing weekend held before the GCSE examinations enables pupils to develop both their writing and social skills. Teachers follow the schemes of work closely and plan their lessons effectively. They have satisfactory knowledge of their subject. Expectations are generally appropriate but, for example, in some work on producing magazines, not enough work is set to stretch the higher attainers. The pace of lessons is generally appropriate but is occasionally too slow for higher ability pupils. A feature of teaching is the use of good quality worksheets, for example, on advertisements and the social and cultural backgrounds to literary texts. A wide variety of appropriate teaching methods is used in both key stages. These include class teaching, group, paired and individual work, self-evaluation, and work in ICT rooms. Appropriate homework is set.

96. Teachers write detailed and constructive comments on work. In a minority of cases pupils' work is given inappropriately high grades. Assessment is used effectively to inform curriculum planning.

97. Management of the subject is satisfactory. An appropriate emphasis is given to each of the attainment targets in schemes of work. However, the time allocated for monitoring the quality of teaching is not used for this purpose. The department has not undertaken work to address the issue of underachievement by boys.

98. Accommodation is satisfactory and excellent use is made of display areas to show pupils' work in both English classrooms and the school corridors. Access to computers within lessons is limited and this restricts their application within the subject.

#### 98. **Mathematics**

99. In the national Key Stage 3 tests in 1998, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 or higher was above average. In 1999, this percentage was close to average but the proportion of scores at the higher levels was above average. Inspection evidence confirms that the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national expectations. In the 1998 tests, girls' results were above average and they performed slightly better than boys, whose results were average, whereas nationally boys do better than girls.

100. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils competently tabulate data and can interpret information presented to them in graphical and tabular form. They are familiar with the commoner geometrical shapes and their properties. Most have a satisfactory repertoire of mathematical vocabulary. Pupils have a good grasp of measurement. They understand squares and square roots when calculating the third side of a triangle. For some pupils, including some higher attainers, weaknesses and carelessness with arithmetic sometimes inhibits success, even though they usually understand the new work being done.

101. In 1998, pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations was around the national average. In 1999, attainment was considerably below the national average. Results have improved since the last inspection and, except for 1999, have been broadly in line with national averages and sometimes higher. Pupils'

grades in mathematics usually at least match their grades in their other subjects. The reasons given for the lower results in 1999 are prolonged absence due to staff illness and the introduction of a new syllabus.

102. Grades obtained in GCSE statistics have been consistently well above national averages.

103. The inspection evidence is more in line with the 1998 results than the 1999 results. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations. Pupils are competent in each of the subject attainment targets. For example, both higher and average attainers confidently match categories of data to appropriate types of graph. Lower attainers show that they can competently construct each of the specific graphs. As in Key Stage 3, some pupils' weaknesses in mental arithmetic, rather than a failure to understand the mathematics, sometimes result in inaccurate answers.

104. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. They both consolidate and build on previous learning in most lessons. Sound progress is made by higher and lower attainers. They work on the same topics using texts and exercises designed to meet a range of needs. For example, pupils' understanding of number patterns is enhanced when they construct flowcharts that require them to break down processes into small, logical steps. They then describe their observations with varying levels of formality that match their attainment levels. Lower attainers sometimes make unsatisfactory progress in numerical calculations because they cannot cope with the same task and explanation as others. Progress is sometimes impeded because written work lacks structure and therefore fails to foster understanding and retention.

105. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 4 through exercises that match the requirements of the different levels of GCSE courses. For example, groups of higher and average attaining pupils confidently extend their skills and understanding of scale drawings to include inverse bearings. They accurately construct diagrams to represent journeys of varying complexity appropriate to their GCSE level, and both groups demonstrate that they can accurately use protractors and apply their knowledge of angles. Pupils preparing for GCSE statistics display maturity and understanding when discussing the important features to be considered in compiling a questionnaire and they efficiently compile a checklist of dangers and requirements. Standards of written work are mostly satisfactory but progress is sometimes inhibited by a lack of systematic presentation.

106. The majority of pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in both key stages, by providing texts adapted to their needs and some additional teaching support. Progress for some pupils is impeded because, in some lower set classes, teaching and tasks take too little account of their level of attainment.

107. The majority of pupils show good interest in their work. Concentration is sustained until the final stages of the lesson, although at this stage a lack of variation in activities and tasks sometimes leads to a loss of momentum. Pupils respect the contributions of their peers. Some pupils require to be kept on task but the relationship between teachers and pupils is usually harmonious.

108. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. It is better in Key Stage 4 because, within groups, pupils have a narrower range of attainment than in Key Stage 3 and teaching styles more readily match the needs of particular groups. Effective schemes of work have been produced since the last inspection. These offer a closer match to pupils' needs, but the range of methods and strategies employed by teachers is still narrow. In particular, the use of ICT is not well developed.

109. Most teachers show a good command of the subject, communicate enthusiasm, prepare lessons thoroughly and are concerned to improve the achievements of their pupils. The best teaching fully involves the pupils, maintains a brisk pace, sets challenging and realistic tasks and regularly assesses the level of understanding of the pupils. In a Key Stage 4 class, average attaining pupils were actively involved in collating their existing knowledge of statistics and extending it to include cumulative

frequencies and graphs. Time limits were clear and progress was checked so that no pupils were left behind. In less successful lessons, the teacher relies on responses from some pupils only, and activities lose momentum. In a Key Stage 4 class, some pupils became inattentive to demonstrations if not questioned for their understanding. Homework is satisfactory.

110. Most teachers mark and assess pupils' work in accordance with the department's policies and procedures, but this is not done consistently and there are variations in the degree to which pupils understand and share in the assessment processes. There is also some discrepancy between end of key stage teacher assessments and test scores, particularly in relation to the higher levels of attainment. A database of pupil attainment records is being established. The information has already been used to identify a need to modify the Key Stage 3 number scheme of work. The use of the database to establish individual pupil targets is in the developmental stage.

111. Management is satisfactory. The issues in the last report have been largely addressed, although the range of teaching methods and styles is still limited, for example, with regard to the use of computers to enhance learning. The newly developed scheme of work ensures that all pupils are exposed to the various aspects of mathematics, but not enough priority is given to developing uniform standards of arithmetic and of written presentation. Learning resources are adequate in Key Stage 3, but the shortage of texts in Key Stage 4 hampers work both in class and at home.

#### 111. Science

112. In the national Key Stage 3 tests in 1998, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 or higher was well above average and was the highest among the core subjects. In 1999, this percentage was close to average but the proportion of scores at the higher levels was above average. Until 1999, results showed a rising trend. They remain above average in comparison with those of similar schools. In the 1998 tests, boys perform better than girls, the boys being well above average and the girls above average. The inspection evidence is in line with the 1999 results. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national expectations. Higher attaining pupils can verify the laws of reflection of light from a plane mirror by experimental means. Pupils understand the states of matter and the properties and structures of solids liquids and gases. Lower attaining pupils have some knowledge of the shapes and functions of muscles.

113. In 1998, pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations was slightly above the national average. In 1999, attainment was below the national average. A four-year analysis of results up to 1998 has been provided by the LEA. It indicates that pupils have tended to perform better in science than in their other subjects. The 1999 analysis is not completed. The inspection evidence is more in line with the 1998 GCSE results than the 1999 results, in that attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. Higher attaining pupils understand how layers of sedimentary rocks can be changed by the action of natural forces and the range of useful products that are obtained. Pupils understand the action of enzymes in digestion. Lower attaining pupils understand the notion of chemical reactions but are less able to recognise the factors which affect the speed of reactions.

114. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in all aspects of science, including experimental and investigative science. Lower attaining pupils, for example, are acquiring good understanding of the types of food that have high energy values. Pupils of average ability have a good understanding of the structure and function of teeth and how to prevent tooth decay.

115. At Key Stage 4, pupils are maintaining the good progress seen in Key Stage 3. They are consolidating their knowledge and understanding of important scientific concepts and processes. For example, lower attaining pupils have a good understanding of materials and their properties. They can plan and carry out simple experiments to measure the speed of the reaction between limestone and acid. Pupils of average ability have a good understanding of living things and life processes such as transport systems in plants.



Higher attaining pupils are aware of the physical processes associated with geological transformations in the earth's crust. Planning for experimental and investigative science is good and this enables pupils to make good progress in this attainment target. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them as a result of the support given them by class teachers during their lessons.

116.The majority of pupils have a good attitude towards science. They sustain concentration well. They are courteous to adults and their positive attitudes contribute to their progress in science. Their motivation is shown in the quality of their work in displays. There are very good working relationships between pupils and teachers. However in a small number of lessons a minority of lower and middle ability pupils showed unsatisfactory attitudes to their work and as a result made unsatisfactory progress.

117.Teaching is good overall in both key stages. Subject knowledge and understanding is strong and teachers can explain scientific concepts at a level appropriate to the attainment of their pupils. Lessons are well planned and have clear objectives and learning outcomes. Discipline is good. Positive relationships enable most pupils to progress well. There is an effective focus on literacy and numeracy in lessons in both key stages. Activities are suitably varied. Weaknesses in some lessons result in some pupils not being fully engaged in the learning process. Aims and objectives are not clear to the pupils and discipline is not fully established.

118.The science curriculum is broad, balanced and well planned to meet statutory requirements. In Key Stage 4, all pupils study double award science. Schemes of work cover the curriculum at a level appropriate to the ability of the pupils. Although there is some use of ICT in the subject, this area is underdeveloped as a means of raising pupils' understanding of scientific processes and applications. Teachers organise many activities outside the taught curriculum, for example the Science Club, and these activities have a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to learning.

119.Assessment throughout both key stages is very good. Teachers use the departmental assessment procedures to track the attainment of individual pupils and set them targets. Assessment is also well used to ensure continuity and progression and to adapt the curriculum for higher attainers. Day to day assessment and marking is consistent. Some, but not all, teachers highlight pupils' strengths and weaknesses well and show them how to improve.

120.The subject is very well managed, both on a day-to-day basis and in the longer term. Roles and responsibilities are clear and well understood. Since the last inspection the standard of teaching has improved, with a variety of teaching styles to suit the range of attainment, as has the assessment of pupils' progress. A range of policies and developments has improved teaching. Teachers work well together as a team and laboratory technicians make an efficient contribution to the work of the department. Resources and accommodation are adequate and are effectively used.

## 120. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### 120. **Art**

121.Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. Pupils attain well in investigating and making and very well in acquiring knowledge and understanding of art. Attainment within some teaching groups in Year 9 is very good with pupils achieving very high standards in ceremonial mask making, through combining materials and using Balinese inspired designs. Skills and techniques with paint, collage and an increasing range of three-dimensional materials are successfully extended through drawing and design development, with some average and higher attaining pupils taking their work to levels above those required by the National Curriculum.

122. In 1998, pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations was above the national average. In 1999, attainment was slightly below the national average. The inspection evidence broadly matches the 1998 GCSE results. By the end of Key Stage 4, levels of attainment are above national expectations. The majority of pupils are becoming skilled in the use of a very wide range of two and three-dimensional media and this enables them to respond very effectively. A Year 11 project drew on a variety of observational studies made by pupils during their holidays, and captured many aspects of national cultures. The resulting three-dimensional work was occasionally of a high standard, showing a depth of investigation, multimedia skills, and good knowledge and understanding of artistic styles.

123. Progress is good in both key stages, especially for average and higher attainers. Since the last inspection the department has introduced work in a wide range of three-dimensional media, and this has contributed to a rise in the levels of attainment for all pupils. Year 7 is taught as a foundation year when activities using colour, line, tone, pattern and texture are undertaken. Some excellent work was seen by some Year 8 pupils using architecture as a theme, where they had used a range of textiles techniques to produce work of outstanding quality. The use of primary and secondary source materials is helping pupils to work very effectively with a wide range of images drawn from Eastern and Western cultures. Two group projects in Year 8, using Japanese water themes and Chinese dragons, demonstrated good progress with observational and design development drawing. Good progress is being made by most pupils in two and three-dimensional work, despite a lack of cooperation with teachers by some pupils in Year 9.

124. Good progress is maintained in Key Stage 4. The pupils improve rapidly by evolving their own styles of working and of interpreting and expanding the themes they have been set. Pupils use the styles of several twentieth century artists, including Dali, Warhol and Liechtenstein, to extend their forms of expression. Cultural themes are also successfully integrated within topics. Well above average standards of drawing are produced during lessons and for homework.

125. Satisfactory progress is made by pupils with special needs but some lower attainers make unsatisfactory progress. The tasks are not sufficiently adapted for these pupils, who require additional support when the task is being introduced. Currently, support materials do not fully ensure that the various stages of the projects are clearly understood, for example, by the use of language appropriate to the lower attainers.

126. Pupils develop positive attitudes towards art in both key stages. Their response in lessons is good, with the exception of some poor behaviour by a minority of pupils in Year 9, which is not allowed to spoil the general working atmosphere. Personal and creative development is very good and pupils collaborate very well with each other in class. Homework is effectively integrated into the topics. Pupils keep very good quality sketchbooks which serve as an illustrated record of their progress in a variety of drawing, writing, designing and research activities.

127. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. This reflects the standard observed in the last inspection. Teachers work as a very effective team, with outstanding subject knowledge and complementary experience in both the fine and applied arts. At both key stages teachers' expectations are very high. They organise and manage lessons very well and ensure that pupils understand what is required of them. At Key Stage 4, teachers expect good work from the highly motivated pupils. Lesson planning is very good with learning objectives clearly identified in teachers' notes, but these are not communicated to pupils at the start of each lesson.

128. Assessment practice is good. Work is regularly marked and comments include targets for improvement. Ongoing assessment and progress reviews help teachers to track the acquisition of skills, techniques, knowledge and understanding. Individual pupil records include the comments they make regarding their own achievements. Teachers grade and comment on work at the end of each course unit during both key stages. Final assessment is undertaken at the end of Key Stage 3, although the levels are not reported to parents.

129. Art is a well established and successful subject providing pupils with both challenging and creative experiences in a broad range of two and three-dimensional media. The recently revised scheme of work exceeds many of the requirements of the National Curriculum and encourages pupils to work beyond national expectations.

130. The management of the department is highly effective. The quality of accommodation is good. It includes two very good general art studios and a separate specialist three-dimensional ceramics facility, although this is not heavily used. Exceptional displays of pupils' work are found in the department and throughout the school. Resources are just satisfactory. Reference books held in the department are average in quality and quantity. Good use is made of the art history and design books in the school library to encourage study of these aspects. The use of ICT is limited to a small amount of research and investigation. This was an issue in the last inspection. The departmental development plan has appropriately identified computer hardware and training as a priority for the subject.

### 130. **Design and technology (DT)**

131. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is below national expectations overall. Attainment in food technology is below expectations. Limited evidence was seen of attainment in making because of the stage of the Year 9 course reached at the time of the inspection, although displays contained made items of good quality. The overall standard is lower than that recorded by end of key stage teacher assessments in 1999, although it has to be noted that different pupil groups were involved. Lower attaining pupils know the stages of designing and achieve accuracy in some drawings but they cannot copy accurately or devise questions for an enquiry. Higher attainers are able to identify strengths and weaknesses in a design and suggest modifications.

132. In 1998, 23 pupils took the full GCSE course in graphic products and nine took the full GCSE course in resistant materials. In 1999, the numbers were 28 and 22 respectively. In 1998, results were well above the national averages for these courses. Results fell for both courses in 1999 (no national averages were available at the time of reporting).

133. The majority of pupils take short GCSE courses. In 1998, results were well below average for those taking the short courses in graphic products and resistant materials. In graphic products, significant numbers were unclassified. Results for over a third of the 49 entries for the short course in resistant materials were unclassified. In 1998, results were well below average for those taking the short courses in food technology. In 1999, results in food technology were again poor (only the full course was taken and there were 14 entries).

134. The inspection evidence for Key Stage 4 mainly supports these results. Pupils' attainment is below national expectations, especially in food technology. Higher attaining pupils attain in line with national expectations. They have good research skills, use questionnaires successfully and are constructively critical of their work. Lower attainers do not draw conclusions from their surveys as a means of refining their ideas. They are more successful in illustrating their work than in writing about it. Design briefs and specifications lack sufficient detail. Attainment in making is in line with expectations. Even lower attaining pupils have good making skills in a range of materials. They can measure and finish their work accurately, using a range of equipment.

135. Pupils make satisfactory overall progress in DT at each key stage, but they make less progress in designing than in making and unsatisfactory progress in food technology. Knowledge of the properties of a variety of materials is increasing as pupils are beginning to plan their major projects in Year 11 in resistant materials. A wide range of skills is learned and pupils use accurate measurement in producing well made items in acrylic, metal and wood. Pupils use precision modelling to test out their chosen ideas. Although some lower attainers have difficulty in recording their ideas in writing, they show their understanding in oral and graphical work. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory

progress and lower attainers make good progress in resistant materials.

136. Progress in food technology is unsatisfactory because it has been affected by the long-term absence of the specialist teacher. The lack of relevant schemes of work to guide supply teachers has limited continuity and progress in the subject. Pupils in Year 9 have shown little progress in developing good research skills and have failed to use previous learning to develop suitable menu ideas for special meals. Progress is better in understanding of how to apply procedures such as detailed specifications to a range of tasks. Pupils are conscientious in their approach to project work but the lack of relevant food technology support material is affecting their progress. Within Year 10 food technology, pupils are beginning to recognise the need to analyse and record their research in order to begin to develop a range of ideas for their new food products for restaurants.

137. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good at both key stages. Their approach and commitment to the subject are often good. Homework is generally completed on time. However, a few pupils in Years 8 and 9 are reluctant to learn new skills but on the whole they cooperate and work well in pairs or groups. A small minority of lower attaining pupils talk whilst the teacher is talking. In Key Stage 4, although pupils are very committed and keen to produce quality work, a minority lack a sense of urgency and are not so enthusiastic to complete work on time or to produce well ordered folder work. Some lower attainers, however, have displayed a positive approach and taken pride in what they have achieved.

138. Teaching is barely satisfactory overall in both key stages. There is good teaching in some areas of the subject but this is counterbalanced by the standard of teaching in food technology. Here teaching is unsatisfactory, having been adversely affected by lack of continuity of teaching and by inappropriate coursework in food technology. There is very little evidence that appropriate food technology resource material has been available, but some textbooks have now been purchased.

139. Teachers are beginning to plan for pupils with different attainments but this is lacking at present. Planning for manufacturing and production is weak, especially in food technology at Key Stage 4. Homework and support sheets stretch the higher attainers and support the lower attainers. Features of successful teaching are effective class management, clear objectives, brisk pace and high expectations. One weakness is the insufficient amount of guidance given to pupils. Most teachers use relevant support material and quality samples to interest and motivate the pupils. Homework is regularly set and some projects are marked in detail with comments on areas for improvement. A thorough assessment procedure has been set up recently and it is beginning to be used to identify pupils' areas of strength and weakness and targets for improvement.

140. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with some good features in Key Stage 3, where pupils have experiences in five different areas of the subject. Detailed schemes of work have recently been introduced at Key Stage 3, with the exception of food technology. In Key Stage 4, graphic products, resistant materials and food technology are also offered. Pupils receive the minimum curriculum time in Key Stage 4, especially for those taking the short courses. Plans are in place to introduce textiles and system control at GCSE. There are good links with British Aerospace and year groups visit design museums.

141. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The new academic manager has improved assessment and has taken steps to improve the deficiencies in food technology. Teaching of lessons in these areas was satisfactory during the inspection. The monitoring of pupils' progress is now well developed at Key Stage 3 but the new system has yet to be extended to Key Stage 4.

142. The accommodation is of good quality but insufficient for pupil numbers. With only one food room and no specialist textile room, lessons in these areas have to be taught in general classrooms. Most of the necessary large and hand electrical equipment is plentiful but there is a shortage of sewing machines. Low funding for consumable items over the past three years has meant that no pupils have individual textbooks

for GCSE coursework and, within food technology, there are very few textbooks at all. There has been an increase in the current academic year in funding for books and materials. It is still less than half the national minimum suggested allowance. The limited resources restrict pupils' opportunities to use a variety of materials and be creative in order to gain the higher grades at GCSE.

143. Since the last inspection, standards in teaching have improved, although there are weaknesses in the planning and teaching of food technology. All pupils are now entered for a technology examination. The quality of learning has improved and new staff have brought a wider range of skills and ideas.

#### 143. **Drama**

144. In 1998, pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations was well below the national average but, in 1999, it was slightly above average. From the inspection evidence, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3 and is above national expectations in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, pupils write scripts, collaborate successfully in group work and comment perceptively on each other's performance, for example, in a lesson on the issue of conflict with parents. In Key Stage 4, they are competent in self-evaluation and are ready to experiment with new ideas. They work individually and together to develop skills in characterisation. They understand how to act under lights. They vary their tone and pace to match the mood and sense of the work.

145. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. A small number of lower attaining pupils make unsatisfactory progress because they behave inappropriately in lessons and fail to develop adequate skills. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 4, for example, in developing their understanding of characterisation and their knowledge of the acting techniques of Brecht and Stanislavsky. They polish their performances together, as when preparing to enact a Wilfred Owen poem at the school's Remembrance Day service. Pupils with special educational needs make progress comparable to that of other pupils in both key stages.

146. In Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils behave well in class and demonstrate a satisfactory attitude to drama. They listen carefully to criticism from teachers and other pupils. However, the behaviour of a minority of pupils is not satisfactory as they call out answers to questions and fail to take a constructive part in lessons. In Key Stage 4 pupils have a good attitude to the subject and behave well at all times in lessons. They are well motivated.

147. Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject area and meet its requirements in their lesson plans and schemes of work. The application of the school's marking policy is inconsistent, as teachers are required only to sample pupils' work in their logbooks.

148. In Key Stage 3, drama lessons are provided for all pupils, and taught mainly by teachers who are also members of the English department. The drama and English departments cooperate effectively, for example in a 1999 production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', which also involved liaison with the music, art and technology departments. In Key Stage 4, drama is taught by the head of drama as an option for single classes in Years 10 and 11. Separate departmental meetings are not held and this reduces the opportunities for drama planning. Accommodation is good, with some limitation on use because the drama studio is shared with music. Resources for learning are satisfactory but insufficient to support the introduction of technical options within the GCSE drama and theatre arts syllabus.

148. **Geography**

149. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Pupils have a range of geographical skills, particularly in map reading and fieldwork, and have acquired a suitable range of terminology which they use in studies of places and themes. Pupils have a good understanding of the processes of river action through local studies of the River Wyre. They have an understanding of geographical patterns and processes, for example, in the context of tropical rain forests and agriculture. Pupils' knowledge of locations is underdeveloped. Atlases are not used sufficiently to help develop this knowledge. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty in applying theory to real situations, such as identifying areas of commercial and subsistence farming.

150. In both 1998 and 1999, pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations was below the national average, although there has been a steady improvement over three years, even with the fall in school results in 1999.

151. The inspection evidence has shown that pupils' current attainment in the final year of Key Stage 4 to be higher than expected on the basis of previous results at GCSE. Although variable, attainment in geography is broadly in line with expectations. Most pupils employ sound reasoning to make accurate geographical predictions, in particular when testing fieldwork hypotheses. In studying Italy, pupils understand the concept of development, but some have difficulty in identifying the factors required for economic growth. The highest attaining pupils appreciate the importance of infrastructure but others have an insecure understanding of this concept.

152. In both key stages, pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in geography. Those with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 3, pupils effectively extend their geographical vocabulary, skills and understanding, often through group work which increases their motivation. Thus, pupils undertake searching enquiries into the use of nuclear power. In Key Stage 4, some high attaining pupils pose questions and successfully seek solutions in studies of the central business district of Preston. Others gather the relevant data but have more difficulty with further analysis and with drawing accurate conclusions. A significant number fail to complete tasks, which has clear effects on their progress. Poor writing skills affect the progress of some less able pupils at both key stages.

153. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are usually satisfactory and are occasionally good. The majority are interested in their work and sustain concentration throughout lessons. They often work well in groups. Only rarely are lower attaining pupils distracted. Relationships between pupils and teachers are satisfactory. Pupils are usually courteous, although there are small groups in Years 9 and 10 where this is not the case. Occasionally research opportunities allow pupils to show initiative, to which some respond well. In recent years, the numbers taking the GCSE course in geography have been relatively small.

154. The quality of teaching at both key stages is satisfactory and is sometimes good. Almost all lessons are taught by specialists with good subject knowledge. Lessons are planned with clear aims and objectives, using a range of methods. Field and group work regularly elicit good work from pupils. There is good use of printed teaching resources but too little use of ICT to extend enquiry skills. Work is not always successfully matched to different levels of attainment. Marking is regular and often gives supportive comments, but less often shows pupils how to improve.

155. The subject is managed effectively. A team approach is developing. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have been maintained at Key Stage 3 and have improved overall at GCSE. Teaching and learning styles are more balanced. The curriculum is broad and balanced with appropriate emphasis on fieldwork. The scheme of work is now a comprehensive document, although it gives little guidance on teaching and learning strategies. Teaching is not yet monitored in order to spread the best practice within the department. The development plan is wide ranging but lacks detail on improving

attainment. The assessment system is simple and does not provide sufficient detail of the learning needs of pupils.

#### 155. **History**

156. In the national Key Stage 3 assessments in 1998, pupils' attainment was above average. In 1999, it was average. Inspection evidence confirms that, by the end of the Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Most pupils have a secure knowledge of the events and people in history. Higher attainers show in their extended research into the slave trade of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that they can use a variety of sources, including in one case a poem by Cowper, and reach reasoned conclusions based on evidence. Some have a good understanding of the nature of historical bias, as when studying the causes of the Great War. Pupils know the historical connection between poor health and poverty, as illustrated by poor urban housing conditions from the end of the eighteenth century. Pupils of below average attainment tend to have uncertain recollection of historical events and have a weak grasp of cause and effect.

157. In 1998, pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations was just below the national average but, although higher in 1999, it was further below the national average. The overall trend is of steadily improving attainment. Girls do better than boys, but not by a significant margin. The inspection evidence shows that, towards the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is at a higher level than in previous GCSE results. Pupils' attainment is above national expectations overall, representing an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils show good background knowledge in assessing why the Great War was not over by Christmas. Higher attainers give both sides of the argument before reaching their conclusion on whether or not America was right to deploy the atom bomb. They can evaluate the merits of various historical sources and know that primary sources are not necessarily more reliable than secondary. They appreciate that a commercial film is an interpretation of the history it portrays, that even an official film may involve a reconstruction of an event, and that neither might be reliable as evidence.

158. Pupils make generally satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3, although poor behaviour in Year 9 sometimes has an adverse effect on progress. Sound skills of numeracy, reading and writing support learning. Pupils develop the skill of using information to make judgements, as when deciding the extent to which Henry VII used new methods of government. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4 because work and resources are well matched to their needs.

159. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 4 because of good teaching and the very good attitudes of pupils who have opted for the subject. They build successfully on work done at Key Stage 3 on the use of sources. They assess their reliability and use information from them effectively in essays. At both key stages pupils of higher attainment make good progress because of good questioning by the teacher, and sometimes by pupils, and the provision of tasks that usually make pupils think. An example is in work in Year 7 on Caesar's character using a large number of written and pictorial sources.

160. Most pupils respond very well to history and increasing numbers choose to study it at GCSE. They enjoy lively, good-humoured, stimulating teaching and work very hard with a high degree of concentration. Their interest was shown by their complete silence at the end of a film on Gallipoli. Pupils take a good deal of pride in their work, presenting it neatly, using word processing for projects and writing at length. Most classes behave well and this enables pupils to concentrate and make progress. Pupils work well in pairs and are very competent researchers. Relationships between pupils are very good and they show respect for each other's feelings.

161. Teaching is good at both key stages with some very good features, and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have secure knowledge, plan thoroughly, share objectives with pupils and review progress at the end of the lesson. Their expertise allows them to ask searching questions, devise

challenging activities and provide helpful links, for example, between work already done on Germany and new work on the USA. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk so that much is done. Most teachers control their classes very well so that time is not lost. Teaching methods are sound, with a good balance of teacher talk and pupil activity. Some weaknesses include inadequate control of behaviour, insufficient pace and unchallenging activities for the higher attainers.

162.The department is well managed. All its members are specialists and work well together as a team. The curriculum is effectively planned and assessment procedures are good, so that realistic targets for attainment can be set. Reports to parents are insufficiently specific and fail to indicate clearly what pupils know, understand and can do. Resources have improved since the previous inspection and are good overall, especially in the provision of video material. The ethos for learning is very good because teachers push for higher standards. The display of pupils' work, the photographs taken on visits, and the daily sheet of events in the past make the foyer outside the main teaching rooms interesting and attractive. The work done from time to time with drama, music and religious education adds breadth to pupils' historical studies. Too little use is made of ICT in teaching the subject.

#### **162. Information and communication technology (ICT)**

163.In the 1998 and 1999 national Key Stage 3 teacher assessments, pupils' attainment was well above the national average and above average in 1999. The inspection evidence is not completely in line with these assessments, although it has to be noted that different pupils are involved. The evidence suggests that, by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national expectations. Average and higher attaining pupils are acquiring competent keyboard skills and are able to select and use appropriate word processing and desktop publishing packages to produce publications on beginners' guides to a variety of sports and hobbies. A few higher attaining girls are able to use an extensive range of information within their guidebooks and adapt and present their findings using desktop publishing. Pupils of lower attainment work fairly accurately and are beginning to master basic keyboard skills. Some can insert images.

164.In the 1998 GCSE examinations, pupils' attainment in ICT was above the national average but, in 1999, attainment was well below the national average. In Key Stage 4, all pupils take either a short or long course in ICT. In 1998, those pupils taking the full course exam in ICT did better than the pupils taking the short course. Inspection evidence shows that the majority of pupils have a good understanding of spreadsheets, databases and graphics. They used word processing successfully to redesign a fire instruction booklet, and they understand the input and output of data.

165.Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3. Some pupils in Year 7 already have a good understanding of formatting and even of animation. Pupils are keen to learn to use computers, acquiring basic keyboard skills quickly as well as an understanding of technical terms. Lower attainers make slower progress because they have not developed good keyboard skills. Boys complete their research less successfully than girls. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Many pupils in Year 10 show increasing confidence in using software to produce a new school prospectus, improving their skills in word processing and desktop publishing. Some fail to complete work and make unsatisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, in many cases because they are helped by their classmates.

166.The application of ICT skills to other areas of the curriculum is limited by lack of access to the facilities on a regular basis, although there is some good practice. Mathematics groups have used the facilities for work using Logo, pupils in PSE designed a homework room using word processing and desktop publishing, and in geography pupils produced articles on volcanoes. Individual use of computers is often good, with pupils taking advantage of the ICT clubs at lunchtime and after school, the library facilities and computers at home.

167.Most pupils are keen and enthusiastic about learning new skills but a few older pupils are lacking in



confidence and need individual help to make progress. Pupils work well together and generally support each other. Most pay attention and listen to instructions carefully but a few show frustration when not able to proceed at their own pace. Occasionally, immature behaviour can affect the progress of the groups, as when a few pupils talk or shout out answers.

168. Teaching is good at both key stages. A strong feature is that pupils are given good individual support. This allows more complex tasks to be suggested so that pupils are stretched. Understanding of terms is checked and their accurate use is encouraged. Relationships are good because positive encouragement is given. Teachers confront any pupils who are not on task. Some lesson planning sheets are very detailed and indicate how pupils' different levels are to be suited in the work. Occasionally, worksheets are too easy for some pupils and whole-class teaching holds back those higher attainers who could begin to work earlier than others.

169. Management is effective. Developments are well planned and costed, good support is given to members of the department and to developing schemes of work and support material. Good work is being done to train school staff to use ICT. Very few departments have detailed planning for ICT within their schemes of work.

170. The ICT rooms are well equipped so that pupils do not have to share computers. However, other computers in classrooms are not sufficiently well used, partly because they are on a different network and cannot run more advanced software. The area benefits from having a full time technician. Progress has been made since the last inspection. All pupils are taught ICT and examinations are taken by all pupils. The quality of teaching has improved.

#### 170. **Modern foreign languages**

171. In 1998, pupils' attainment in French at GCSE was slightly below the national average. In 1999, attainment was well below the national average. Pupils' attainment in German at GCSE was below the national average in both years.

172. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils attain standards in line with national expectations, although very few perform above them. This judgement broadly matches the end of key stage teacher assessments for 1999. Most pupils can understand and communicate simple information within a range of basic everyday situations and can extract detail from short passages. Many pupils have a satisfactory range of vocabulary within the topic areas taught, can answer teachers' questions and can participate in short dialogues, although many are hesitant when speaking and lack confidence without written support.

173. By the end of Key Stage 4, overall attainment is below national expectations, although a large minority of pupils attain standards in line with expectations. Across the school, the performance of girls is better than that of boys. Pupils can read a wide range of topics in the target language and higher attainers can read longer passages, using dictionaries appropriately to aid understanding. However, pupils do not work enough with longer texts containing more complex language and the tasks are often unchallenging. Pupils remain lacking in confidence when speaking and rarely initiate an exchange. Pronunciation in both key stages is poor. Writing is limited in scope, with only little imaginative work and often contains errors in spelling and grammar.

174. Most pupils make at least satisfactory progress and for many in Key Stage 3 it is good. Progress in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory overall because tasks lack appropriate challenge. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3, but not in Key Stage 4. Across both key stages, pupils acquire new vocabulary within a widening range of topics and previous work is well consolidated and built upon. Not enough progress is made in pronunciation, due to insufficient practice, and pupils improve little in their confidence to speak. The ability to listen and understand increases satisfactorily, although reading is not sufficiently practised. The higher attaining pupils develop their

knowledge of grammatical rules, but do not apply them with sufficient accuracy.

175. In the majority of lessons, the response of pupils to learning a foreign language is good and only rarely drops below sound. Pupils demonstrate good levels of interest and motivation. They are often engaged in their work and participate well in lessons. They are cooperative when working with other pupils or in teacher-led activities. Levels of concentration are in general satisfactory and pupils settle well to their work. Many, especially in Key Stage 3, clearly enjoy learning a foreign language and behaviour is mainly good. Relationships with teachers are good.

176. Teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages and is often good in Key Stage 3. In some lessons, especially at Key Stage 4, the activities are not challenging enough. Teachers are well motivated and have a good command of their subject. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives and generally appropriate content, although not often matched to pupils' attainment. Resources are adequately used, but insufficient use is made of the overhead projector and video facilities to present and practise language. The range of resources used remains too narrow with too much use of textbooks to provide sufficient variety and extension of work. There has been little progress since the last inspection.

177. Activities are well managed with suitable pace but tend to be led too much by the teacher with insufficient pair or group work to involve pupils actively. Good engagement of pupils' interest was seen in a Year 9 low attainers group, where a series of structured activities led pupils to carry out a class survey on food. In a Year 7 lesson, soft toys were used to present vocabulary. In some lessons, the foreign language is used consistently to good effect, but in others English is often used unnecessarily, a matter highlighted in the last report. There are too few opportunities for imaginative written work and there is a need for a more rigorous approach to accuracy. Homework is set regularly and consolidates well the work done in class.

178. Pupils' work is regularly marked, but comments do not show in sufficient detail how it can be improved. There is a satisfactory assessment policy and marking scheme, but arrangements to ensure that consistent judgements are made at the end of Key Stage 3 are underdeveloped.

179. Accommodation is good and some excellent display has helped to enhance an attractive learning environment. The department is satisfactorily resourced with textbooks, but is lacking in ancillary material, particularly for listening and reading. Insufficient use is made of ICT.

180. The department is efficiently managed and good monitoring of teaching represents a particular improvement since the last inspection. The department has suffered recently from some instability in staffing, but this has been resolved. Subject documentation is satisfactory and includes a handbook with a range of appropriate policies and an informative scheme of work. The scheme lacks guidance or practical arrangements for matching work to pupils' different attainment levels. It does not include timescales for units of work or mention the reading scheme in Key Stage 3.

180. **Music**

181. Attainment towards the end of Key Stage 3 is below what is expected nationally at this age. In 1999, the school assessed more than half of the pupils to be working beyond expectation, with a few exceptional performances at the end of the key stage. This standard was not seen during the inspection, although it has to be noted that a different group of pupils was involved. Towards the end of the key stage, pupils can correctly identify instrumental sounds such as flute and brass when listening to 'L'Après Midi d'une Faune'. They can define scale but only higher attainers can use the whole tone scale in the composition of a melody. Singing is weak. Pupils have a limited range and lack basic breathing technique to enable them to sustain long notes and control dynamics in a song such as 'Autumn Days'. Most of the instrumentalists in the school, who also form the orchestra, are in the early stages of learning and do not yet have sufficient command of their instrument to form an agreeable ensemble. A few more advanced players are competent musicians and make a valuable contribution to music-making in school and in the county.

182. GCSE results were well below the national averages in 1997 and 1998, although the small examination entry does not allow for significant comparisons. There were no candidates in 1999. The inspection evidence is in line with previous GCSE results. Pupils in Year 11 continue to work well below the level required for higher grades. Compositions are weak, with many pupils unable to notate their work accurately with bar-lines and accurate note lengths. There is very little attention to melodic development and the characteristics of instruments. Where a chord accompaniment was added in the examples seen, it consisted of repeated root position block chords.

183. Progress in both key stages is unsatisfactory, as is the progress of pupils with special educational needs. In Key Stage 3, pupils do not follow a structured course which enables them to build musical skills and apply them systematically. They do not spend enough time in lessons learning to develop some of the fundamental techniques of pitch, rhythm and harmony which would enable them to play and compose. Their vocabulary of musical terms is over-simplified and they do not develop their ability to think about the significance of concepts such as tonality by applying the right measure. The notion given to them that major is happy and minor is sad leads them into false assumptions which are still held in Year 11. Instrumentalists, however, make satisfactory progress through their commitment to regular practice.

184. In Key Stage 4, pupils begin their GCSE course deficient in compositional and notational expertise and make poor progress. The range of their vocabulary of musical terms is immature and does not allow them to respond to the listening component perceptively. Where pupils are competent instrumentalists, they use this experience to gain a deeper understanding of the music they listen to and make satisfactory progress when applying this to composition, as in the case of a Year 10 pupil using a synthesiser to produce a piece in Blues style.

185. Year 7 pupils approach their work with enthusiasm, taking off their jackets and being prepared to put energy into singing. By Year 9, many pupils have lost interest and behaviour in class is influenced by a small number of pupils who taunt their classmates and draw attention to themselves. Where this is dealt with well by the teacher there is little disruption to the pace of the lesson. In one such lesson, pupils listened with rapt attention to a passage of Debussy for three or four minutes. Pupils studying GCSE do not fully appreciate the need to read and listen widely outside lessons, being content to rely on the teacher for information.

186. Over the short period since the present academic manager has been in post, the number of pupils taking instrumental lessons in school has risen significantly to around 70, woodwind being the most popular, but brass and strings are also studied. There is valuable support from parents in meeting the cost of instruments and lessons as well as in forming a music society to raise funds and support concerts.

187. As teaching was unsatisfactory in half of all lessons seen, the overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory at both key stages. In satisfactory lessons, the teacher shows enthusiasm and expertise, the

pupils' attention is held and behaviour is well managed. When the tasks are not interesting and challenging, as in practising the drawing of treble clefs, pupils begin to chat and call out to each other. The teaching of singing is a particular weakness, with pupils not being taught how to breathe properly and pitch accurately. Some lessons start briskly, routines are swiftly accomplished, pupils' interest is continually assessed and activities are adjusted to suit. When lessons are slow to begin, pupils' interest is lost. Regular checks are not made on pupils' understanding and misconceptions are not rectified early. Pupils are not given clear indications of their level of performance in relation to the National Curriculum and are not told what they need to do to improve.

188. The present academic manager has been in post for two years and has worked hard to build up instrumental lessons in order to increase pupils' involvement in music-making. However, to some extent, this successful effort has been at the expense of classroom music. There is no comprehensive scheme of work which shows how pupils will progress through the key stages and how this will be assessed in relation to National Curriculum requirements. Assessment procedures for the end of key stage statement are not reliable and insufficient evidence is held in the department to support judgements on standards. The absence of a departmental development plan means that expenditure has been assigned without clear indications of how this will raise the level of attainment.

#### 188. **Physical education (PE)**

189. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations but shows a wide range of competence. In Year 9 basketball, lower attaining pupils have poor control in dribbling, lose possession frequently in games and have poor shooting skills. In Year 9 netball, pupils have a good knowledge of the rules, and can pass and catch effectively using the correct footwork and have satisfactory shooting skills.

190. In 1998 and 1999, pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations was below the national average. Inspection evidence suggests that attainment is now in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 11 GCSE hockey have good passing and receiving skills, which they are able to use effectively in games. They have a good knowledge of the rules and tactics of the game. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of body systems, of the use of drugs to enhance performances, and of body types. They can relate this knowledge to practical examples in sport.

191. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress. However, within this overall pattern, there is a wide range of progress. In Year 7 hockey there is very good progress, with pupils learning to hold the stick correctly, dribble the ball and use the reverse stick, with higher attainers being more effective in stopping the ball when under pressure. Boys in Year 7 gymnastics can perform a variety of rolls, with higher attainers showing good quality forward and backwards rolls. Pupils in Year 8 netball are making very good progress by improving short and long passing and catching skills and making effective use of these in competitive games. In Year 8 rugby, the majority of pupils are working below the expected level for their age group. They lack basic passing skills and therefore are unable to play small games effectively within the rules and with organised formations. In Year 8 girls gymnastics, pupils can show different types of balances, higher attainers are able to move with good control between balances.

192. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress. In badminton, pupils are able to play high clears, understand the rules of service but are unsure as to the type of service to use in singles and doubles games. Higher attainers in boys' soccer in Year 10 have good control. They pass the ball with the right amount of pace and are able to use both feet to pass and control the ball. Pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of sponsorship in sport. Over the period of the course they have increased their knowledge of theoretical aspects of the subject and can relate these to real sporting examples. There is good progress in soccer where pupils improve their spatial awareness through well selected practices and in theory lessons they

make significant increases in their understanding of respiration.

193. Pupils are positive about the subject. They are quick to change into the correct clothing and equipment and are eager to participate. There are good levels of active participation in nearly all lessons. Pupils follow teachers' instructions well and work with interest on the tasks set. There is good cooperation when working in pairs in Year 7 hockey and in small groups in Year 8 rugby. When given the opportunity, they are able to work independently, as when warming up at the start of lessons, and when taking out equipment and putting it away.

194. Teaching is satisfactory in both key stages, although lessons range from unsatisfactory to very good. Little attention is paid to stretching exercises before activities. In some rugby lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory as planning does not take into account pupils' levels of attainment, some practices selected are inappropriate and they do not match lesson objectives. There is satisfactory teaching in GCSE theory, with homework leading into the lesson. Resources and teaching styles are not always sufficiently varied. Good features include well selected practices for soccer, which provide increasing challenges to pupils of different attainment. In gymnastics there is good pace, a variety of tasks and a good working atmosphere. Some hockey teaching is very well planned and closely matched to pupils' attainment levels, with high expectations. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which enables them to give good explanations and demonstrations. Planning is generally good and pupils are well managed. Good relationships and a working atmosphere are apparent in the majority of lessons. However, some teaching gives too few opportunities for autonomy. Warm-up time is often teacher-directed.

195. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, but units of work in Key Stage 3 are too short and this is detrimental to pupils' progress in some activities. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 needs to be developed to improve progression from Key Stage 3, in order to enable pupils to learn higher level skills and tactics in activities. There is a good range of extracurricular activities, with good team standards in soccer, basketball, hockey and netball. Rugby has recently been introduced for both boys and girls. The department receives valuable help from many members of staff in the provision of clubs and school teams for pupils of all attainment levels.

196. The department has made a satisfactory response to issues raised in the last inspection. However further work needs to be done to improve the curriculum and assessment procedures, so that pupils' progress in all activities might improve. The range of teaching styles still does not encourage independent learning.

#### 196. **Religious education**

197. Inspection evidence shows that, by end of both key stages, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations for their age. However, the LEA agreed syllabus which the school follows does not define levels of attainment or end of key stage statements to provide an objective point of reference.

198. Most pupils at Key Stage 3 have a sound knowledge of the main features of the major world faiths, although there is confusion about the development of some of the Christian churches. Pupils understand the nature of a parable and those of higher attainment readily grasp the main point of the story. They understand the nature of gospel and know the audience for whom the evangelists were writing. Many have a sound understanding of the nature of commitment, citing baptism and marriage as examples.

199. In 1998, pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations was well above the national average. In 1999, attainment was below the national average. In 1998, top set pupils were entered for the GCSE short course examination. In 1999, a larger number, representing the whole spread of ability, obtained many fewer A\*-C grades, although all but one pupil gained an A\*-G grade. Girls did better than boys. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is in line with national averages. Pupils use evidence from more than one religion when discussing issues such as women's rights. Their

understanding of Christianity is deep enough for the higher attaining pupils to explain the doctrine of the Trinity and its relevance today. Many can argue maturely for or against an atheistic view of the creation of the universe.

200. Pupils make sound progress through both key stages, although poor attitudes among some pupils, and some unsatisfactory teaching, adversely affect progress. The sound progress made can be seen in work done by pupils in Years 7 and 11 on the origins of the universe. Older pupils examine the question at a much deeper level. In Year 10, pupils build successfully on work done in Year 8 when studying the gospels. Higher attaining pupils in both key stages maintain sound progress despite some inappropriate behaviour and attitudes in some classes. They benefit from challenging questions, for example, on the links belief and environmental issues. Pupils with special educational needs generally make sound progress because much of the work is done by discussion and they receive effective support from the teacher.

201. The response of pupils is satisfactory overall. Although some pupils have poor attitudes in Key Stage 3, most are interested and enjoy the subject. As with a Year 7 class working on celebration and festivals, they work steadily, concentrate, and take some pride in the finished product. Pupils can work independently when required, as when researching in Year 8 the life of Jesus from references supplied. The majority respect each other's feelings and beliefs, and show sensitivity to symbolism when passing a lighted candle around the class.

202. Teaching is satisfactory in almost all lessons at both key stages. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Among the strengths in teaching is the expertise that allows thoughtful questions to be asked, for example, on the relationship between belief and behaviour, and on whether or not a Muslim can be a scientist. The aims for the lesson are shared with pupils and the activities follow each other briskly. Teachers' expectations of pupils' progress and behaviour are generally high. Methods are straightforward and varied, with good use of videotapes and worksheets as a stimulus. Unsatisfactory features include inadequate class management, some over-dependence on whole-class presentation and occasional inaccuracies in what is presented.

203. The department is very well led. Standards have recovered to the level of the previous inspection, despite a lengthy period without a specialist teacher. Too little use is made of ICT to contribute to the development of skills in this field. The scheme of work is good and meets well the requirements of the LEA agreed syllabus. New and non-specialist teachers are well supported. Assessment procedures are good, but reports to parents are too general. The staffing of the department is unsatisfactory with only one specialist teacher and two others who have responsibilities in other departments. There is a determination to improve standards. Visits locally and further afield enhance pupils' knowledge of faith communities in action, and represent an improvement since the previous inspection. The subject makes a considerable contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

#### 203. **Other Key Stage 4 courses**

As part of the options offered at Key Stage 4, pupils can take GCSE courses in business studies, child development and travel and tourism.

### *Business studies*

204. Three groups in Years 10 and 11 take a full GCSE course in business studies. Results have steadily improved over the past three years but low numbers in 1997 and 1998 limit the usefulness of comparisons with national averages. In 1999, with 56 entries, results were in line with the national average. Inspection evidence confirms that attainment is generally in line with expectations for this course. Within their course modules, pupils have learnt to use databases, spreadsheets and other packages effectively. Working in groups, pupils have developed market campaigns, for example, to promote a new chocolate bar, and taking different consumer age groups into account. Some pupils have successfully devised searching questionnaires, analysed their findings and produced realistic brand names and packaging ideas. Progress is satisfactory. The higher and average attaining pupils taking the subject in Year 10 have a good understanding of the procedures involved in recruiting, training and paying employees. Pupils joining the course late catch up on the work.

205. Pupils' show satisfactory attitudes to their work, especially when engaged productively in groups. A small minority are passive and rely too much on individual guidance from the teacher. Sometimes the teacher has to repeat instructions constantly and the pace of the lesson suffers. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers insist on good behaviour, recap work and record key terms on the board. They guide the work of groups by appropriate monitoring and intervention. Active learning methods are used, including role play and simulated tasks.

### 205. *Child development*

206. The GCSE child development course is an option taken up only by girls over the past three years. The low numbers in 1997 and 1998 invalidate comparisons with national averages. In 1998, of eight girls taking the course, half gained a C grade. In 1999, of 26 girls taking the course, results were very low, with only one girl gaining a C grade.

207. There was little direct evidence on which to assess current levels of attainment. Pupils were working independently on coursework with the help of a temporary teacher. They were motivated to work hard on their own projects. They used books and magazines appropriately for research and some work was well presented. Changes in staffing coupled with the lack of schemes of work have seriously disrupted pupils' learning on this course. In the one lesson seen, the teacher gave useful help to individual pupils as they worked but there was no scheme of work or other guidance. On this evidence, together with the low GCSE results in 1999, teaching and progress in this subject are unsatisfactory. The temporary teacher receives support from the school but longer standing weaknesses of organisation are still affecting teaching and pupils' progress.

### *Travel and tourism*

208. Travel and tourism was first examined as a GCSE course in 1998. Results for the 23 pupils taking the course that year were above the national average and the subject performed relatively well in relation to other school subjects. Results for the 20 pupils taking the course in 1999 were well below average. The inspection evidence on current attainment was limited but was in line with the 1999 GCSE results. Attainment is below expectation for this course. Pupils' responses are often superficial and factual, rather than showing understanding of the nature of the leisure industry. Many find difficulty evaluating evidence and making relevant judgements. This reflects the fact that the course recruits a disproportionate number of middle and lower attainers. A few pupils of higher attainment produce work that is close to the expected standard.

209. Most pupils show satisfactory attitudes towards their work. but some are inattentive or passive. Pupils' progress is satisfactory in relation to the tier of the examination for which they are studying. They

consolidate a simple understanding of types of leisure through the use of case study material and worksheets. They apply their personal experience of activity holidays when studying national parks. They acquire basic knowledge of the work of a travel agency. On the limited evidence, teaching is just satisfactory. It is well planned, classes are firmly led, relations with pupils are constructive and relevant homework is set. However, the pace and challenge is too low. Pupils spend too much time copying or reading through information or considering questions that are too simple. Activities are not sufficiently practical. Typically, progress in lessons is steady but slow.



209. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

209. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

210. The inspection was carried out by 13 inspectors, who spent a total of 49 days in the school. During the inspection, 165 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. These involved all teachers who taught during the week and some were seen several times. Around 140 hours were spent in observing lessons, and around 36 hours in evaluating work and in discussions with pupils. Observations were also made of assemblies, registration and form periods, movement around the school, arrivals and departures and other activities involving pupils.

211. Inspectors examined the work of a sample of six pupils from each year, including the work of pupils with special educational needs. Planned discussions took place with pupils in this sample and informal discussions took place with many others.

212. Planned discussions, around 40 in total, were held with the Headteacher, senior and middle managers, the Chair of Governors, other governors and support staff. Inspectors also reported back to senior managers and subject area leaders about their findings and to individual staff on their teaching. Before the inspection, briefing meetings were held with the school governors, staff and the Headteacher.

213. A meeting was held with parents before the inspection and a questionnaire about the school was issued to parents. Of the 1,840 questionnaires sent out, 265 were returned. A questionnaire was also sent to a number of representatives of the local community. Inspectors took all views into account when making their judgements.

213. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

213. **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 - Y11	921	40	149	127

213. **Teachers and classes**

213. **Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	55.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.7

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

Total number of education support staff:	13
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	317

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 70

Average teaching group size: KS3 26  
KS4 21

213. **Financial data**

Financial year: 1998-99

	£
Total income	1,808,937
Total expenditure	1,814,782
Expenditure per pupil	2,037
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,780
Balance carried forward to next year	16,935

213. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:	1840
Number of questionnaires returned:	265

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	18	50	16	2	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	24	59	5	5	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	13	49	22	10	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	12	60	18	8	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	20	53	13	13	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	23	66	7	3	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	23	59	11	5	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	20	67	8	8	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	20	48	21	5	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	16	44	22	7	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	23	62	10	3	2

213. **Other issues raised by parents**

Relatively few concerns were expressed and these were not supported by the majority of the parents who gave a view. The inspection evidence supports parents' views about children liking the school and enjoying a range of extracurricular activities. Staff are caring and responsive. Homework is generally appropriate. Overall standards were average rather than good in 1998, but they were good in comparison with similar schools. Results were, however, below average in 1999. The poor behaviour of some children in some classes impedes the progress of others, but teachers usually tackle these problems successfully. The school does not give parents enough information in reports about individual children's progress in the curriculum.