

Weston Road High School
Stafford

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique Reference Number:124446

Headteacher: Mr G W A Cooper

Reporting inspector: Mr T W M Comer

Dates of inspection: 20 – 24 September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708254

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive school
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B A Carter
Date of previous inspection:	17 March 1995

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Mr N Shelley, Lay Inspector		Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Mr J Paddick	Mathematics	The efficiency of the school
Mr L Robarts	English	
Dr D Tracey	Science	
Mr C Kendrick	Geography	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr A Pearson	Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mr A Henderson	Physical education	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
Mr J Ratcliffe	Modern languages	
Mrs A Lees	Music	
Mrs H Marsland	Design and technology	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The school is well managed.
- Teaching is generally good.
- Pupils make good overall progress.
- Discipline is effective; the school provides a good climate for learning.
- Pupils' progress and their personal development are monitored thoroughly.
- The school provides a good curriculum and broad range of extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils respond well to the good quality of education they receive. They enjoy school. Attendance is above average and behaviour is good. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good. Extra-curricular activities are popular and a quarter of all pupils regularly participate in organised team games and sports.
- The school is efficient and gives good value for money.

Where the school has weaknesses

- Though pupils reach average standards, teachers could push them still further and aim higher in a number of subjects.
- Basic numeracy skills are weak and need attention.
- Progress is unsatisfactory in some Year 10 and Year 11 mathematics classes for lower attaining pupils.
- Pupils have satisfactory computing skills but these skills are not used enough in some subjects.
- A more consistent approach is needed for the teaching of the various design and technology subjects.

This is a good school with strengths which considerably outweigh its weaknesses. The weaknesses will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The most important improvement is that GCSE and A-level examination results have risen broadly in line with national trends. Teaching is now much better than it was at the time of the previous inspection. The accommodation has been improved. The teaching of information technology has improved though the school is still short of computers. The school has made satisfactory overall progress with the matters for improvement raised at the previous inspection though there is still no religious education for sixth-form students. The management of the school has the capability and necessary strategies to make further, sustained improvement.

Standards in subjects

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

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
Key Stage 3 Tests	C	E	<i>Well above average</i> A
GCSE Examinations	C	C	<i>Above average</i> B
A/AS – levels	D		<i>Average</i> C
			<i>Below average</i> D
			<i>Well below average</i> E

Art and history are the strongest subjects.

Key Stage 3 Tests English test results were well below average in 1998 and pulled down the overall results so that they were well below average in comparison with similar schools. The teachers' own assessments indicated much higher attainment in English. The 1998 mathematics and science test results were average. In 1999, the test results vastly improved in English, matching the teachers' assessments, and test results also improved in mathematics, though in science the results were similar to those of 1998.

GCSE Overall results were average in 1998. 1999 results were a little lower than those of 1998. Over the four-year period 1995-98, the GCSE results were average and steadily improved in line with the national trend.

A-level Results were below average in 1998 and were similar in 1999. The results are satisfactory because many students with modest grades at GCSE take A-level courses and results in all subjects are what would be predicted. Over the period 1995-98, the results were below average but steadily improved in line with the national trend.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Art, history	Design and technology
Years 10-11	Good	Art, history	Maths classes for lower attaining pupils, Design and technology
Sixth form	Good	History, biology	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

Teaching was satisfactory in 37 per cent of lessons inspected, good in a further 43 per cent, and very good in 17 per cent. There was no poor teaching, though weak points outweighed strengths in nearly four per cent of lessons. Teaching is very good in history, good in English, science, art, geography, modern languages, music, physical education and religious education. It is satisfactory in mathematics, design and technology, and information technology. Some teachers lack the confidence to teach their subjects through information technology. Teaching of some lower mathematics sets in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory, resulting in unsatisfactory progress. Overall, the teaching is good and has many strengths but achievement could be raised in a number of subjects. To raise standards further, teachers need to push pupils more, especially in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, information technology and modern languages. There is some inconsistency in setting homework.

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

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good. Pupils rarely misbehave in lessons or around the school. They have good attitudes towards their work.
Attendance	Above average. Pupils are generally punctual.
Ethos*	The management sets a good climate for learning. Discipline is good. Pupils are happy in school. Expectations for behaviour and personal development are high.
Leadership and management	Leadership is strong and purposeful and is concentrating on raising expectations and standards.
Curriculum	Good overall throughout the school. Good literacy strategy though no strategy is in place for numeracy. No religious education for the sixth form. Wide choice of A-level and vocational subjects in the sixth form. Award-winning careers education. Wide range of extra-curricular activities. Good assessment system provides clear information for monitoring pupils' progress and setting targets.
Pupils with special educational needs	Effective support in English but less effective in mathematics.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Satisfactory spiritual development. Good moral and cultural development. Very good social development.
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	Good pastoral system which looks after pupils well. Progress, behaviour and attendance are monitored effectively
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory staffing though class sizes are a little larger than in most schools. Insufficient computers. Some shortages of textbooks.
Value for money	The school is efficient and provides good value for money. The income per pupil is low. Pupils make good overall progress. The school 'adds value'.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They find staff approachable and willing to listen. • They appreciate the good discipline, good personal development and behaviour and strongly approve of the very good social development and relationships. • The pastoral system is caring and effective and monitors progress and personal achievement well. • The wide range of extra-curricular activities; parents greatly appreciate the teachers' hard work to lay these on. • The school's very good careers education and pupils' valuable work experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small minority find setting and checking of homework are inconsistent. • A few parents think the school does not give a clear indication of what is taught. • A small minority are dissatisfied with information on their children's progress, such as reports.

The inspectors agree with the parents' positive views of the school. Inspectors find that the school gives information on what is taught at least as well as other schools, for example on the school's Internet web site, and cannot support the opinions of the minority of parents who were dissatisfied. Again, the inspectors disagree with the minority of parents who indicated some dissatisfaction with the sufficiency of information on their children's progress. A substantial sample of reports was examined. The reports are well written and accurately summarise progress; however, they could give clearer information on how improvements should be made. Reports are followed up with consultation evenings which are very well attended. Inspectors find that homework is monitored by the senior staff and heads of subjects; nevertheless, they do agree with parents that there is some inconsistency in the setting of homework.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve further the quality of educational provision and educational standards achieved, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- ◆ improve attainment in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, information technology and modern languages, by raising teachers' expectations and pushing the pupils more (paragraphs 84, 88, 89, 95, 96, 109, 119, 120, 122, 126, 130, 139, 140, 142, 146, 148, 151);
- ◆ improve the teaching of mathematics for some lower attaining sets in Key Stage 4 (paragraphs 96, 99);
- ◆ improve pupils' mental arithmetic, making an action plan for numeracy similar to that for the school's effective plan for the improvement of literacy (paragraphs 95, 96, 101);
- ◆ provide more frequent opportunities for pupils to use computers (paragraphs 90, 143);
- ◆ improve the approach to teaching design and technology subjects so that each subject similarly reflects the characteristic skills of problem solving, design and manufacture that are common to all of them, developing each of these separate skills more consistently (paragraph 119).

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

- ◆ it is understood that the school will soon be in a position to spend more money on resources for learning in the near future; inspectors suggest that the priorities should be textbooks and computers;
- ◆ homework needs to be set more consistently;
- ◆ there is yet no deadline set for the introduction of religious education in the sixth form.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Weston Road High School is a large, mixed, community comprehensive school of the Staffordshire Local Education Authority, educating 1059 pupils (522 boys and 537 girls) in the 11-18 age range. Most of the A-level sixth-form students study at Weston Road High School, but some of the A-level teaching, and all vocational courses, take place in the Chetwynd Sixth Form Centre in Stafford.
2. The school has a pleasant semi-rural situation but pupils come from a wide, mixed area. Overall, pupils' socio-economic circumstances are broadly average for England as a whole. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to a free school meal is in line with the national average. The proportion of ethnic minority pupils on roll is below the national average. The proportion with English as an additional language is low.
3. The school intake has the full range of ability. Standard tests indicate that the overall attainment of the annual intake of Year 7 pupils is a little below average overall, and that there are smaller proportions than would be expected of higher achieving pupils. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is broadly average. However, the proportion of pupils with formal statements is above average and has doubled since the previous inspection. Around seventy per cent of the pupils remain in full-time education post-16.
4. The school aims to establish a caring and responsible community in which pupils maximise their potential across a wide spectrum of achievement. Priorities expressed in the school's plans for the future include greater challenge to pupils' learning; improving literacy; involving parents more in the work of the school; improving information technology facilities to enhance learning across the curriculum; improving the management of pupils' behaviour; improving the sixth-form curriculum, particularly with new A-level syllabuses and learning of key skills.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	93	86	179

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	70	67	60
	Girls	73	69	64
	Total	143	136	124
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	80 (50)	76 (71)	69 (67)
	National	- (65)	- (60)	- (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	25 (19)	48 (38)	24 (24)
	National	- (35)	- (36)	- (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	55	63	56
	Girls	73	58	56
	Total	128	121	114
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	72 (71)	68 (72)	64 (75)
	National	- (62)	- (64)	- (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	24 (36)	46 (46)	26 (33)
	National	- (31)	- (37)	- (31)

Attainment at Key Stage 4³

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	104	73	177

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	39	99	104
	Girls	32	69	73
	Total	71	168	177
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	41 (49)	95 (89)	100 (96)
	National	- (44.6)	- (89.8)	- (95.2)

Attainment in the Sixth Form⁴

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

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	15	22	37

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	15.3 (14.8)	19..5 (15.2)	17.8(15.1)	0 (2.5)	0 (1.5)	0 (2.0)
National			(17.6)			- (2.8)

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

	Number	% Success rate
School	2	100 (67)
National		

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

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

Attendance

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

		%
Authorised	School	7.1
Absence	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised	School	0.4
Absence	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	11
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	17.4
Satisfactory or better	96.4
Less than satisfactory	3.6

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

5. The previous inspection found that standards of educational achievement were broadly average in each key stage and the sixth form, although there was little work of the highest quality. Standards have risen over the years since the previous inspection, matching the national trend of improvement.

Recent test and examination results

6. The overall results of the 1998 national Key Stage 3 tests were broadly in line with the national average for all maintained secondary schools. When compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds, the overall results were well below average, however, because the English test results were well below the national average for all schools and very low in comparison with those of similar schools. Mathematics results were average in comparison with all schools and above average for similar schools. Science results were average, both in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. Teachers' own assessment of pupils' attainment in English was much higher than the national test results indicate and well above the national average. In the past, the English teachers attached insufficient importance to the tests and did little to prepare pupils for them. This has now changed and in 1999, pupils were more thoroughly prepared as a result and the average level achieved by pupils, as measured by the tests, rose substantially. Although no national comparative data are yet available for 1999, the school's 1999 test results were very satisfactory. In the past, girls outperformed boys in the tests but, as a result of the school's effective action to close the gap, boys have caught up and results are now broadly similar to those of the girls.

7. The 1998 GCSE examination results, as measured by pupils' average points scored in the examination, were close to the national average, both for all maintained schools and similar schools. Girls outperform boys at GCSE, the differences in performance over the three-year period 1996-98 broadly reflecting the national picture. The proportion of Year 11 pupils achieving grades A*-C in five or more subjects in 1998 was close to the national average for all schools and above the average

for similar schools. The proportion achieving A*-G grades in five or more subjects was broadly in line with the national average for all schools but well below average in comparison with similar schools. This was because a significant proportion of Year 11 pupils sat for examinations other than GCSE, for which the pupils' achievements were not accredited in the school's performance figures. In 1999, however, far fewer pupils sat for these alternative examinations with the result that a high proportion of Year 11 (94 per cent) achieved grades A*-G in five or more subjects. Over the five-year period 1994-98, the GCSE results improved at a rate broadly in line with the national trend. GCSE results show clear differences in performance between subjects, indicating room for improvement. Results in science, English literature, art, history, modern languages, and physical education were above average in 1998. Results were average in mathematics, geography and design and technology. In English and music the results were below average. The 1999 year group was unusual in that it had many more boys than girls. The 1999 results declined slightly from the previous year, perhaps because of boys' tendency to achieve less well at GCSE than girls. Results improved in English. In design and technology subjects, 1999 results declined significantly from the previous year partly because the teachers entered pupils for some new examination courses which they had not taught before and for which the pupils were not fully prepared.

8. The sixth form A-level results were below average in 1998. Over the three-year period 1996-98, the results were consistently below national averages for all maintained secondary schools, as measured by average points scores. However, over this three-year period, the results improved steadily in line with the national trend. 1998 A-level results were above average in biology and art; they were average in English, chemistry, physics, history, sports studies and general studies; they were below average in mathematics, geography, French and German. The 1999 results show substantial improvement in the overall average points score, and individual subject results improved, especially in English and geography. Only a few students chose to take GNVQ courses in 1998. 67 per cent of such students successfully achieved a qualification, with a wide spread of results. This proportion rose to 100 per cent in 1999.

First-hand inspection findings

9. Pupils' overall attainment is a little below average on entry to the school. Bearing this factor in mind, inspectors find that pupils make good overall progress over Key Stage 3, with broadly average overall attainment for their age by the end of Year 9. Pupils make satisfactory progress in English and good progress in mathematics and science. The evidence of the inspection indicates that, by the end of the key stage, attainment in relation to standards expected nationally is average in English and science and above average in mathematics. In other subjects in Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is above average in history and art, and generally average in all other subjects. Very few pupils have English as an additional language. These pupils make excellent progress throughout the school.

10. Key Stage 3 pupils with special educational needs make good progress in English and satisfactory progress in mathematics. Poor literacy is tackled through an intensive programme in English lessons, strengthened effectively by specialist support teachers. However, overall progress of other low attaining pupils is no more than satisfactory in English because they are not challenged enough in many lessons. By contrast, higher attaining pupils thrive in English lessons, making good progress. In mathematics, pupils generally make good progress, though lower attaining pupils develop new skills slowly and the success of the school's strategy for literacy is not yet matched by a similar strategy for numeracy. Progress is generally good in science but higher attaining pupils sometimes make insufficient progress when the work is not demanding enough.

11. Pupils make steady, satisfactory overall progress in Key Stage 4, with broadly average attainment by the end of Year 11. Pupils make satisfactory progress in English and good progress in science. In mathematics, progress is satisfactory overall and the great majority of pupils make good progress. By the end of the key stage, attainment is average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in subjects other than English, mathematics and science, and make good progress in art, geography, history and modern languages. By the end of Year 11, attainment is above average in art, history, modern languages and music, and is average in design and technology, geography, information technology, physical education and religious education.

12. Key Stage 4 pupils with special educational needs make good progress in English and nearly all achieve a GCSE grade in English. As in the previous key stage, however, other lower attaining pupils make progress that is no better than satisfactory in English, again because they are not challenged enough. As before, higher attaining pupils make good progress in English. In mathematics, pupils with special educational needs and other lower attaining pupils make unsatisfactory progress because they are not taught well enough though 93 per cent of all pupils do achieve a GCSE. By contrast, higher attaining pupils make good progress in mathematics as a result of good teaching.

13. Despite overall good progress in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory overall progress in Key Stage 4, some pupils fail to make the progress they should in a number of subjects in each key stage, mainly because the work is insufficiently demanding. This is the case in design and technology and the unsatisfactory structure of the Key Stage 3 course in that subject also affects progress. Higher attaining pupils could achieve more in information technology in each key stage. Reading and writing are insufficiently well developed in modern languages in each key stage. In geography, further work needs to be done to develop problem-solving and analytical skills, particularly in Key Stage 4.

14. Sixth form students make satisfactory overall progress and the great majority succeed with their examinations and, on the whole, achieve close to average standards. The students generally achieve the A-level grades predicted from their GCSE points scores. Overall attainment in lessons is broadly average. Attainment is above average in English and mathematics, and average in science subjects. The highest standards are currently achieved by art students. Attainment is at least average in all other A-level courses. Though few students have English as an additional language, in recent years these students have achieved very highly.

Literacy skills

15. A large number of pupils have reading and writing difficulties when they join the school. The recently introduced programme of reading and spelling in English is improving literacy standards. This is well supported by most other subjects. However, there is insufficient use of information technology to assist pupils to improve their standards of presentation, spelling and punctuation.

Numeracy skills

16. Pupils have good opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding in other subjects. This they do effectively, especially in science, geography, history and design and technology. Pupils use calculators skilfully but often use them for calculations which should be done mentally. Despite the good test results and average GCSE results in mathematics, mental arithmetic is a weakness. Basic number knowledge is unsatisfactory; for example, many pupils do not know their multiplication tables well enough. This factor inhibits the development of pupils' understanding of number and therefore hinders their progress.

Information and communication technology skills

17. Pupils have satisfactory skills and can use computers effectively in the work when they have the opportunity to do so. However, such opportunities are not provided frequently enough because the school has insufficient computers and because some subject teachers lack the confidence to use them.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

18. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall and are only rarely less than satisfactory. Pupils approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm, are well prepared and willing to learn. They sustain their efforts and concentrate well in most subjects. Relationships are very good, both amongst pupils, and with teachers and other adults, resulting in a pleasant, purposeful atmosphere in most lessons. Pupils take pride in their work and are aware of their progress. They value their records of achievement, and use their homework diaries effectively to organise their work. Assignments are mostly completed, and standards of presentation are usually good, although corrections are not always done. Books and resources are treated with care and respect. Independent learning and research skills are not as well developed as they might

be because, in some subjects, pupils have no textbook to use at home and much work is done through worksheets.

19. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the support they receive. Other pupils help them to become increasingly independent, to form constructive relationships and take responsibility.

20. The school is very orderly. Pupils behave well in class and about the school. Occasional misbehaviour in lessons is linked to ineffectual teaching with work which is not well matched to pupils' attainment levels. Pupils are helpful and courteous to each other, to staff and visitors. No pupils were permanently excluded from school over the previous year. A small number of pupils were excluded temporarily. Instances of conflict or bullying rarely occur and are handled swiftly and effectively.

21. Pupils' personal development is good. All pupils are expected to take responsibility and show initiative, for example, through involvement in assemblies, fund-raising for charity. Year 8 pupils help the new Year 7 when they transfer from their primary schools. Nominated pupils are trained to counsel and support Year 7 pupils, resolving conflict and alleviating feelings of insecurity. Pupils appreciate this facility which effectively contributes to good relationships. Older pupils benefit from work experience, and some participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Sixth form students support pupils with learning difficulties in lessons, coach sports activities and, through their own Sixth Form Committee, support a wide range of school functions, as well as making a significant contribution to the good order and smooth-running of the school.

Attendance

22. Attendance rates are above average and have slightly improved since the previous inspection. Unauthorised absence is well below the average for secondary schools. The large majority of pupils arrive punctually for the start of the school day but a small minority have a record of lateness. Pupils are punctual to lessons.

23. A small but significant number of parents withdraw pupils during term time for the purpose of private holidays. This disrupts the continuity of learning for the pupils concerned and inconveniences teachers who must subsequently make special arrangements to enable pupils to cover lost ground.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

24. At the time of the previous inspection, teaching was found to be satisfactory in each key stage and good in the sixth form. Since that time, the quality of teaching has improved substantially.

25. Teaching is now good overall and good in each key stage. It is also good in the sixth form and is better there than the key stages. It was judged satisfactory in 36 per cent of all lessons visited in this inspection, good in 43 per cent of lessons, and very good in a further 17 per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in nearly four per cent of lessons but there was no poor teaching.

26. Teaching is good overall in English and science and is satisfactory in mathematics. It is very good in history, good in art, geography, modern languages, music, physical education and religious education. It is satisfactory in design and technology, and in information technology. Teaching of the sixth form GNVQ courses is consistently good.

27. Teaching of English and science has improved since the previous inspection and the teaching of mathematics has improved greatly; however, mental arithmetic needs to be improved throughout the key stages and some unsatisfactory mathematics teaching still occurs in lessons for lower attaining

pupils in Key Stage 4. Teaching of history, modern languages, music, physical education has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching is most effective in art and history in each key stage, and in history and biology in the sixth form. Though teaching is satisfactory in all subjects, it is least effective in design and technology in each key stage, and in some Year 10 and 11 mathematics classes for lower attaining pupils.

28. Teachers know their subjects well. Though there is still some lack of confidence in the ability to teach their subjects through information technology, this has improved since the previous inspection. Lesson planning is usually thorough and well matched to the National Curriculum programmes of study and examination syllabuses. Teachers of the sixth-form GNVQ courses are well on top of their subjects and the distinctive teaching and learning styles which are features of such courses.

29. Expectations for pupils' attainment are consistently high in history lessons. Despite good or satisfactory teaching, pupils should be challenged more in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, modern languages and physical education. In English, teachers generally adapt the tasks effectively to individual needs in lessons for mixed ability classes, but some weaker teaching gives one task to all pupils and expects everyone to proceed at the same rate, which slows progress. In mathematics there is sometimes insufficient insistence on good standards of presentation and precision in graphs and diagrams; teachers also tend to follow the mathematics textbook too closely and as a consequence spend too long on elementary work which is well known. In science, some work fails to stretch the more able pupils. Teachers make considerable demands on pupils through oral work in modern languages but writing tasks are not sufficiently challenging. Occasionally in physical education lessons, a better match of tasks and resources for the most and least able pupils would help them to make better progress.

30. Resources are mostly used well though information technology should be used more often to practise and extend pupils' skills in all subjects. Teachers use lesson time effectively; for example, in mathematics, activities are planned to ensure that all of the lesson time is used productively.

31. The teaching of pupils with special needs is good in Key Stage 3. Many pupils receive special help in English and other subject lessons to improve their reading and writing skills and this is effective in improving literacy. Much subject work is intensively taught to these pupils and very little time is wasted, particularly in the withdrawal groups at this key stage. In Key Stage 4 lessons, teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, except in mathematics, where there is no diagnostic assessment of the specific needs of individual pupils. The learning support assistants are often a decisive factor in determining the quality of teaching at both key stages. In general, however, subject teachers should make more effective use of the skills of these assistants.

32. Homework makes a considerable contribution to pupils' progress and consolidation of classwork though there is some inconsistency in setting it. English teachers have a conscientious approach to marking and assessment, which is helping to raise levels of attainment in Key Stage 3, as the 1999 national test results show; this is a significant improvement since the previous report. Pupils appreciate teachers' advice which shows them how to improve their work. In mathematics the quality of marking has improved since the previous report and most is done rigorously; however, some work is still not marked frequently enough. Most of the marking in history is consistent in approach and is informative, but occasionally some unfinished work is allowed to pass. In physical education GCSE examination lessons, and in design and technology, pupils are not always given clear information on what they need to do to improve and work is not always marked and returned promptly.

The curriculum and assessment

33. Overall, the curriculum is good in each key stage and in the sixth form. It provides well for pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development.

34. The time allocated for teaching is above the minimum recommended nationally for each key stage. Throughout each key stage, pupils are taught in mixed ability classes, or in sets based on ability or attainment, according to professional decisions made by heads of subject. These arrangements are effective.

35. There are no modifications of the curriculum for pupils with statements of special educational needs. The curriculum provides broad equality of opportunity for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs follow the same pattern of National Curriculum subjects as other pupils in each key stage.

36. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and all statutory requirements are met. The balance of time given for each of the subjects is satisfactory. The curriculum includes all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. All pupils follow a well-planned and effective programme of personal and social education (PSE) which includes drugs education and health education. Sex education is taught as part of the PSE programme and in science. Additionally, all pupils take two modern languages: French and German. The curriculum is further enhanced by the addition of drama beyond what is required in English. A Thinking Skills course taken by all Year 7 pupils is a good feature, which helps pupils to make a solid start in secondary school.

37. In Key Stage 3, subject planning is sound in most subjects. In design and technology, however, the planning is unsatisfactory because the common principles of problem solving, design and manufacture are not planned in a co-ordinated way.

38. In mathematics, the scheme of work for Key Stage 4 is not complete and does not yet provide sufficient guidance on the approach to be used for pupils with special educational needs, or the use of new textbooks to the best effect with pupils of different levels of attainment.

39. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is also broad and balanced. All pupils take the full range of the National Curriculum subjects and religious education. Pupils have a good range of choices from academic and practical subjects, though there is no vocational education. All pupils take dual award science to GCSE and all take a short course to GCSE in information technology. All pupils take religious education, and all Year 10 are taking a short course GCSE in this subject. The PSE course continues throughout Key Stage 4.

40. The school's literacy programme is effective in developing pupils' skills in Key Stage 3 but insufficient emphasis is given to developing pupils' numerical skills in mathematics. In general, not enough opportunities are planned for pupils to use computers in lessons.

41. In collaboration with the Chetwynd Sixth Form Centre, the school provides a broad range of A-level and vocational courses, offering students choices of combinations of subjects appropriate to their interests and career aspirations. Students can choose from more than 20 A-level courses and GNVQ Intermediate (one year) and GNVQ Advanced (two year) courses in each of art and design, business studies, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. Many of the A-level courses are also offered at AS level. A GCSE programme in English and mathematics is also provided for students who wish to improve their examination grades in these subjects. Physical education is provided for sixth form students though, as at the time of the previous inspection, there is no religious education.

42. The sixth form curriculum includes a very good complementary studies programme. The programme includes a professional studies course, A-level general studies, the University of Liverpool enrichment course, Young Enterprise, and Young Reporters for the Environment.

43. Very good careers education is provided from Year 9 onwards. It provides effective advice for course options in Years 10 and 12 and for preparation for further and higher education and employment. The school holds an award for the quality of its careers education. Work experience is a particularly good feature. All Year 10 pupils benefit from a short programme of work experience. Sixth form students are offered work experience or work shadowing.

44. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities provides good opportunities for pupils throughout the school to take part in sport and competitive team games including rounders, netball, cricket, football, rugby, gymnastics, athletics, cross-country running, swimming, badminton, hockey and tennis. Around a quarter of all pupils regularly participate in organised team games and other outdoor activities. Many pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Extra-curricular cultural activities include dance, drama and musical productions. Pupils have good opportunities for visits abroad.

45. The school assesses pupils effectively at key points in their school career. Nationally standardised tests of cognitive ability help to judge the overall attainment of the Year 7 intake of pupils. The test results also help to identify those with learning difficulties, and to serve as a basis for tracking pupils' progress and to predict GCSE examination results. GCSE results are analysed effectively to predict A-level results.

46. Statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are carried out as required for all subjects. These are accurate in most subjects except design and technology and, in geography, teachers need to be more aware of pupils' attainment levels in order to match planning with the pupils' needs.

47. The assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are very effective in English and enable their progress to be measured accurately; however, this is not so in mathematics. Individual education plans are in place, with appropriate targets set for literacy, and all teaching staff are aware of their significance. Diagnostic assessments with respect to literacy are made regularly for pupils with statements, enabling effective monitoring and recording of progress and attainment. Pupils with difficulties in reading benefit from a paired reading scheme. Pupils with special educational needs also benefit from extra careers provision from Year 9 onwards.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

48. The previous inspection reported that the school was generally successful in promoting pupils' moral and social development but was less secure in the promotion of their spiritual and cultural development.

49. The school now makes good overall provision for the personal development of its pupils. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory overall. Provision for collective worship is broadly satisfactory. Year assemblies include worship and are regularly led by visiting local clergy. Pupils also produce and lead these assemblies; for example, a sixth-form assembly seen during the inspection, based on the interpretation of a poem from a spiritual viewpoint, was well prepared and led by two students. Though arrangements to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils in form-time are inconsistent, they have improved since the previous inspection. As at the time of the previous inspection, there is no religious education for the sixth form though the school intends to teach it from an unspecified future date. Spiritual development in other subjects of the curriculum is most evident in English, and in art, where, for example, pupils discuss spiritual aspects of work such as Picasso's *Guernica*.

50. Moral education is good. Parents agree that the school's attitudes and values have a positive effect on their children. Pupils' good behaviour is a response to clearly identified expectations and a framework of values. Personal and social education lessons deal with relevant issues in modern society such as substance abuse and responsible citizenship. Sex education is taught within a moral framework and emphasises responsibility. Most subjects deal with moral issues in lessons; for example, codes of conduct and behaviour, rules and conventions are explored through physical education. In geography, pupils study relationships between developed and developing countries and in history they are expected to make reasoned moral judgements about the rise of political intolerance in the twentieth century. Pupils are involved in projects dealing with care of the environment, and sixth form students also tackle these matters through *Young Reporters for the Environment*; a project which has earned the school a national award.

51. The provision for pupils' social education is very good. Form tutors stay with the same class for a number of years and are thus able to build secure and effective relationships. In most subjects, pupils learn to collaborate effectively with one another, for example, in role-play in history lessons. As part of their personal and social education programme, Year 9 pupils organise fund-raising for charity. The sixth form students' professional skills course includes participation in group investigations, work shadowing and work experience. They also provide support for younger pupils in lessons. The sixth form committee represents the pupils' views to the school's management effectively. Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility; for example, acting as guides for parents' evenings and giving talks to Year 6 pupils.

52. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The school has maintained the wide range of extra-curricular activities noted at the time of the previous inspection; in particular, team games remain strong and attract many pupils. Music offers experience of a wealth of musical styles and pupils benefit from participation in drama presentations. Art relates pupils' work to different cultures. There are regular visits to art galleries and museums and the professional theatre. Visiting performers include medieval musicians, theatre groups and the Medieval Longbow Society. Pupils have opportunities for educational visits to France and Germany and pupil exchange visits. Some sixth form students undergo work experience in France.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

53. At the time of the previous inspection, support, guidance and arrangements for pupils' welfare were reported as good in most respects and this remains the case. The school achieves its aim that all pupils may equally expect every encouragement in their learning and receive appropriate support and guidance.

54. Since the previous inspection, registration periods have a more defined structure and are used more effectively. The policy for sex education was adopted by the governors immediately following the previous inspection and is now implemented.

55. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are effectively monitored by form tutors. Pupils receive appropriate guidance in making choices about subject options. The personal and social education programme is good, broadly based and taught mainly by form tutors during a weekly lesson.

56. Good relationships between staff and pupils are the foundation of the school's ethos and pastoral care. Teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. An effective system of merit awards encourages good behaviour. Self-discipline and responsible attitudes are consistently expected in all subjects.

57. Monitoring of attendance and punctuality is very effective and contributes to the good attendance figures.

58. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and are understood by staff. The health and safety policy is implemented consistently and risk assessment procedures are in place. The school has an adequate number of staff qualified to deal with accidents and emergencies, and to administer first aid.

59. The national Code of Practice for teaching pupils with special educational needs is in place. These pupils generally receive good support; their individual education programmes are constructively written, with clear and measurable targets, so that progress can be monitored effectively. Facilities for physically handicapped and disabled children are good; for example, pupils who use wheelchairs are adequately catered for.

Partnership with parents and the community

60. The previous inspection report on partnership with the community was very favourable though it questioned the effectiveness of curricular liaison with associated primary schools. Discussions about curricular matters now feature in meetings with primary school staff.

61. The school's partnership with parents and community continues to be good. The very large majority of parents appreciate and support the work of the school and find staff welcoming and approachable. The learning support department works effectively in partnership with parents.

62. Parents are generally well informed about the life and work of the school and the progress which their children make. Annual school reports are generally good and parents are quickly informed of significant under-achievement.

63. The school makes sure that parents have full information on what is taught. This is done at curricular information evenings and the details of the Key stage 4 are published on the school's Internet web-site.

64. Parents are pleased with the home-school agreement and the consultation about homework policy. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association gives considerable support to the school. Several parents help in school from time to time and some take a training course for voluntary helpers.

65. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, enables pupils to enjoy contact with other schools and the wider community. The school's business links are very well developed and contribute considerably to the effectiveness and quality of the work experience programme.

66. Several subject departments have productive links with business, including invitations to visiting speakers and participation in business-sponsored competitions.

67. The school links effectively with other primary and secondary schools. Arrangements with other secondary schools using the Chetwynd Sixth Form Centre enable the school to provide a much broader sixth form curriculum than would otherwise be possible.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

68. Overall, the school is well led and managed. Leadership of subject departments is generally good and the pastoral system works very well. All senior managers have well-defined areas of responsibility which include effective links with middle managers so that the senior staff are in a strong position to improve the work of the school. The management of subjects is generally effective and the learning support department is well managed.

69. The governors are very supportive of the school. They work effectively through their committees and as the whole Governing Body, monitoring the curriculum effectively and receiving reports from subject departments. On the whole, governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively and all statutory requirements are met, except for the provision of religious education for all sixth-form students, as was the case at the previous inspection.

70. The school achieves considerable success with its aims. The school's ethos is good. In particular, the school provides a happy and disciplined learning environment. Very good relationships and good behaviour enable pupils to take full advantage of the opportunities offered. Pupils generally have equal opportunities to study the full range of subjects.

71. The leadership of the school is strong and purposeful and provides clear direction. The senior managers' monitoring of teaching and learning is generally effective and is leading to higher standards. Development planning identifies the school's priorities as:

1. greater challenge to pupils' learning;
2. literacy skills;
3. greater involvement of parents in the work of the school;
4. development of information technology to enhance learning across the curriculum;
5. continuing strategies to manage pupils' behaviour;
6. the introduction of new A-level syllabuses and key skills.

The priorities accurately reflect some of the school's most important needs, especially the need to raise teachers' expectations and provide greater challenges in a number of subjects. In addition to the priorities identified in the school's plan, numeracy needs to be tackled in the same way as literacy. The teaching of some lower attaining pupils in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, and the fragmented approach to the teaching of design and technology subjects are also weaknesses.

72. Since the previous inspection, the school has tackled all of the issues for action, mostly successfully, and has the capability to make further improvements.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

73. The previous report found a good match of teachers' qualifications and subject experience and this remains the position. The pupil-to-teacher ratio has risen significantly in the last two years and is higher than the national average but the school has sufficient staff to teach the curriculum effectively, though some further training may be necessary in the use of information technology. The roles of heads of department have been clarified, and an effective system of professional development is now in place. Overall, support staff work effectively and continue to have a positive impact on the quality of lessons. Special educational needs support has been strengthened since the previous inspection though some training may be necessary for teaching lower Key Stage 4 classes in mathematics.

74. Overall, the accommodation is good and provides a favourable environment for learning in all subjects. Previous shortcomings have been addressed within the scope of the budget and significant improvements have been made. Accommodation for geography, religious education, music and modern languages is now improved. The school still lacks sufficient storage space. The library is now less used for general teaching than it was. The school's premises committee ensures that maintenance is carried out and that the school is tidy and pleasant.

75. Shortages of subject textbooks, for example in English, science, mathematics, design and technology, geography and music mean that pupils often cannot take a book home. This restricts what can be done for homework and leads to over-reliance on worksheets. The library is a good feature. However, the school has insufficient computers: the ratio of computers to pupils is about half the national average.

The efficiency of the school

76. Systems for financial planning are very good. Basic income per pupil is very low compared with other schools of the same type nationally so the compilation of the annual budget and its administration require and receive a great deal of care and attention to detail. Budget elements are planned carefully each year using accurate historical data, and almost all of the current allocated proportions of the total annual expenditure are broadly average compared with other schools nationally. Since the school operates with a smaller than average income for size, staffing costs, especially of teaching, are significantly higher than average. The decision to allocate these higher proportions of the budget to staffing has been carefully made so that class sizes can be kept at sensible levels, though the pupil-teacher ratio is above average. The school is currently running with a deficit of approximately 1.5 per cent of budget, largely as a result of supply teacher costs for long-term

sickness over the last year. Plans to reduce the deficit and move to a small surplus are in hand for the current financial year. Development planning is careful, involves all subjects, and when funding is agreed, links with the annual budget cycle. Governors are fully involved in the compilation of annual budgets, which are regularly discussed at finance group and full governing body meetings.

77. Financial control and school administration are very good. Expenditure is monitored carefully by the school's administrator, the senior teacher for finance, and the governors. Areas of concern, such as the amount spent last year on supply cover for long term sickness, are thoroughly investigated, and attempts are made to reduce spending wherever feasible. The administrator provides accurate financial information for the school's management both frequently and regularly. Hence, spending can be compared with original budget figures in time to take decisions. The school administrator operates thoroughly dependable systems for controlling spending on educational resources. Administration staff perform their tasks efficiently and are well-managed, keeping the required information flowing smoothly. They assist the teaching staff with clerical work in addition to their work in the school office, where they act as the first point of contact for visitors and parents, providing the school with a welcoming reception area.

78. The deployment of the school's teaching and administration staff is satisfactory. The vast majority of lessons are taught by subject specialists. Managers have sufficient non-contact time to meet their responsibilities effectively, and the proportion of teachers' time spent in classrooms is average. There are, however, some instances of teachers being used for duties which could easily be done more efficiently by less expensive learning support assistants.

79. Resources and accommodation are generally used efficiently to promote the progress of pupils. The school makes the best use of available time.

80. The school gives good value for money as it did at the time of the last inspection. Unit costs are very low, but outputs are good in terms of pupils' attitudes to work and the progress which they make. Educational standards are higher in age-related terms at the end of Key Stage 4 than they are on entry to the school so that there is considerable 'added value'.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

81. Standards in English were below average at the time of the previous inspection. This was reflected in GCSE and A-level examination results in English literature which were below national averages. GCSE English results were above average. There was some unsatisfactory teaching, and English teachers were criticised for weaknesses in planning and teamwork. Results have improved overall because teaching is much better and planning is now good. The quality of leadership and teamwork is strong. English has moved a long way forward since the previous report in 1994.

82. National Key Stage 3 test results declined in 1997 and 1998, but greatly improved in 1999. In 1998, the test results were well below average for all maintained secondary schools and very low in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Results in 1998 and 1999 were below those in mathematics, but above those for science. The wide difference between the achievement of boys and girls found at the time of the previous inspection has since significantly narrowed. GCSE English literature results were above the national average in 1998, reversing the poorer results reported in 1994. Advanced level English results were below the national average in 1994, but were average in 1998, and improved even more in 1999.

83. Progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is average. Many pupils in Key Stage 3 have spelling and reading weaknesses which improve after special attention. Most pupils read with a basic accuracy and understand its importance in their progress. A regular programme of supported reading allows their reading to be checked frequently. An example of how seriously many pupils take their reading was seen in a Year 7 lesson in the school library. Each pupil had a personal reading book and set to work immediately. The atmosphere was quiet and the pupils worked to a well-established routine. Good quality books were chosen during the lesson, and pupils were writing lively diaries, recording their thoughts and impressions of their reading. Pupils made good progress in this lesson because they enjoyed being worked hard and saw the value of the reading tasks they were given. Quality of writing is improved by redrafting, which is no longer the straight copying reported in 1994 but a process demanding that pupils have second thoughts about what they have written. However, information technology is not available to assist them in improving spelling and presentation. Pupils are lively speakers in Key Stage 3, especially when they talk about their own experiences or what they have read. They listen carefully to each other and to their teachers.

84. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good in both key stages, so that nearly all gain a GCSE. Those with low levels of literacy are helped to improve their skills by an intense programme in English, which is strengthened by effective specialist support teachers. The overall progress of low attaining pupils is no more than satisfactory in both key stages because they are not challenged enough in many lessons. High attaining pupils in the key stages thrive in English: they lead discussion, read avidly and write accurately, experimenting with style and vocabulary.

85. Progress in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. The gains made in Key Stage 3 are maintained, except that fewer pupils read fiction for personal pleasure. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is average. Pupils write across a wide range and for various purposes. They redraft their work to improve the accuracy of spelling, punctuation and written expression. Information technology is not generally available to assist them in this. Pupils' speaking about a poem or novel in lessons is characterised by weak vocabulary and everyday expressions. Yet pupils' reaction to each other's contributions to lessons is spirited and enlivens their learning. They make better progress when they are encouraged to think about what they have read and what they are preparing to write, as was seen in two Year 10 and Year 11 lessons. Pupils were given guided tasks relating to their GCSE study of *Love is a Many Splendoured Thing* and *A Kestrel for a Knave*. They were trusted to work in groups, commitment to their progress preventing them from straying from the topic. Their progress was highest when they were talking to each other, selecting some ideas and explaining why others had to be rejected. They knew they had a deadline to keep in order to report back to the class. In lessons that did not require the same intensity of thinking and speaking, progress was not as good.

86. Progress in the sixth form is good. English takes in large numbers of students with broadly average attainment who achieve well at the end of the course. Their reading ranges across time and cultures: students are expected to study modern and classic texts, including Jonson's *The Alchemist*. Speaking has the weakness displayed by pupils in Key Stage 4, but students produce thorough written criticism, clearly based on the text, and with supporting evidence. By the end of the A-level course, overall attainment is above average.

87. Pupils enjoy their English lessons and willingly follow instructions. Their interest in the work allows most of them to maintain concentration. They respond positively when working in small groups and develop their independence as learners. Pupils' good relationships with each other and their English teachers are turned to advantage in the best lessons.

88. Overall, the teaching is good and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 in just over half of all lessons, good in a quarter, and even better in the rest. In Key Stage 4, it is good in a third of lessons, better in another third, and satisfactory in the rest. In the sixth form, teaching is good overall. Thorough planning is characteristic of English. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and many adapt the tasks given to pupils to suit individual needs in the mixed ability classes. Weaker teaching gives one task to all pupils and expects everyone to proceed at the same rate, which slows progress. Often the writing in these lessons is the recording of facts or checking

information rather than exploring feelings created by a book, article, poem or play. English teachers have a conscientious approach to marking and assessment, which is helping to raise levels of attainment in Key Stage 3, as the 1999 national test results show. It is a significant improvement since the previous report. Pupils appreciate teachers telling them how to improve their work.

89. To raise standards further, English teachers should make sure that in mixed ability classes each pupil has work geared to his or her individual needs, and should raise the quality of teaching overall to the level of the best.

Key skills - literacy

90. A large number of pupils have reading and writing problems when they join the school. A recently introduced programme of reading and spelling in English is improving literacy standards. Most pupils in Key Stage 3 receive special help from support teachers to improve their reading and writing skills. However, information technology is not available in subjects to assist pupils to improve their standards of presentation, spelling and punctuation. There is also support for literacy skills in subjects other than English. In mathematics, science and religious education, pupils get help with their spelling. In art, they produce substantial pieces of writing. Opportunities to read aloud are provided in science and religious education, though other than in English there are few wider reading books. Help with reading is provided in mathematics. There are many opportunities for discussion in art, design and technology and geography and pupils answer questions from teachers with confidence, though often only in short phrases. The school is aware that it needs to tackle literacy skills in all subjects, and has made it a priority in its current development programme.

Drama

91. Standards in drama at the end of Key Stage 3 are satisfactory. Drama is offered as part of English curriculum time and helps improve pupils' attainment in English. Year 7 pupils soon adapt to the effective emphasis on thinking and speaking rather than acting, which is a good characteristic of drama in Weston Road. During Key Stage 3, they begin to explore thinking about others and what it is like to live in a different society and how it might feel to be elderly, for instance. Pupils bring enthusiasm to the lessons: this was noticeable in a Year 9 lesson in which pupils were committed to their drama and did not seek approval for their ideas, as if the rest of the class were an audience. Teaching is mainly good, though there is some unsatisfactory teaching when pupils do not believe in the usefulness of drama and the teaching is not attuned to their needs. Drama makes a strong contribution to the social and cultural life of the school.

Mathematics

92. Results of the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 1998 were above the national average for all schools; they were also above average for schools drawing pupils from similar backgrounds. Over the last four years, there has been a rising trend in Key Stage 3 test results, which have improved from average to above average. In 1999, the results improved still further. Over the last four years, results for girls have generally been slightly better than those achieved by boys, reflecting the national picture.

93. In 1998, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE results in the range A*-C was average. Girls' results were better than those achieved by boys. These results were similar to those achieved in 1997. However, in 1999, GCSE results declined, but this time there was little difference between girls and boys. Over the last four years, the school has entered the vast majority of its pupils in Year 11 for this examination, and almost all of them have achieved a GCSE.

94. 1998 A-level results were average and all students passed the examination, but a considerable proportion of the small group taking the AS course failed and this pulled down the overall results to below the national average. A greater proportion of students achieved grades A and B in the 1999 A-level examination than in the previous year though two failed. Over a four-year period, the A-level results were around the national average.

95. Attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3 has improved since the last inspection, when it was average. Pupils enter the school with a largely average profile of attainment in mathematics. They generally make good progress through Key Stage 3, although lower attaining pupils develop new skills rather slowly. Special needs pupils generally make satisfactory progress. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is above average. Pupils have above average knowledge and understanding of number, algebra, shape and space, and data handling though their attainment in using and applying mathematics are average. Pupils can use calculators skilfully but rely on them too much for simple calculations which could be done mentally. As a consequence, skills in mental arithmetic are insufficiently well developed.

96. Most pupils in the top four sets out of seven in Year 11 are working at a level which is compatible with at least GCSE grade C. Progress is satisfactory throughout the key stage and most pupils build successfully on their achievements at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils in some of the higher sets are making good progress as a result of the good quality of teaching, which they are receiving. However, pupils in the lowest sets in Years 10 and 11 do not make enough progress. They use the skills which they have to answer questions in class but they are not learning new techniques at an adequate rate. Several special needs pupils are taught in these classes, and hence their progress is also unsatisfactory. The unsatisfactory teaching of these classes is the cause of the pupils' underachievement. Despite this important factor, overall attainment is above average by the end of the key stage. As in Key Stage 3, attainment in number, algebra, shape and space, and data handling is stronger than the application of mathematics, and mental arithmetic skills are insufficiently developed.

97. A-level students make good progress. Lively discussion coupled with good teaching leads to standards which are at least satisfactory in relation to the requirements of the course. End of module test results already achieved, and the standard of work and discussion in class, indicate that standards at the end of Year 13 are above average for A level. At this level, students benefit particularly from teaching which is very well related to their needs, and good quality individual attention.

98. Pupils' generally display good attitudes to learning. They usually behave well, co-operate thoroughly, listen attentively to the teacher, and to answers, which other pupils give orally. They use lesson time productively. Attitudes are good in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 4, although the working atmosphere in lessons is still satisfactory, there are some instances of less than total concentration and slightly too much chatter. There is a strong relationship between the pupils' response to their lessons and the quality of teaching. Where teaching is good, pupils are motivated and attitudes help to promote a good learning atmosphere, and good rates of progress in class. Where teaching is satisfactory pupils normally use most of the lesson time productively, and even when it is unsatisfactory they still behave well and try to answer questions.

99. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection, when one third of all lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4 were unsatisfactory. Teaching is now good overall in Key Stage 3, satisfactory in Key Stage 4, and good in the sixth form. Overall, teaching is good in around half of all lessons, and at least satisfactory in eighty five per cent. Some unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 4 of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs was seen during the inspection. Overall, however, teaching ensures at least satisfactory progress in the great majority of classes. Lessons link well with previous work, objectives are shared with the class, and there is a good match to pupils' needs. Sometimes, in Key Stage 4, teachers do not adapt the work in the textbook sufficiently and as a consequence spend too long on work which pupils have done several times previously. Again, in Key Stage 4, there is sometimes insufficient insistence on good standards of presentation, precision in graphs and diagrams, and the showing of sequenced working to GCSE standard. The structure of lessons is generally good, and planned activities ensure that all of the lesson time is used productively. Relationships with the pupils are normally good. Teachers usually explain the work clearly to the pupils and mark their books well. Marking has improved since last year but there are still classes where far too much work is not marked, either by pupils or teacher. This leads to bad habits, incomplete exercises, and less than satisfactory presentation. The small number of unsatisfactory lessons are characterised by insufficient urgency and expectation, explanations which do not fully

engage the attention of the class, poor blackboard technique, and insufficiently prompt assessment of written work.

100. At the time of the previous inspection, assessment did not contribute sufficiently to the work in mathematics, and marking was of variable quality. Improvements have been made: regular tests now help the teachers to measure the progress made by pupils, and results are used to move them to more suitable sets when necessary. There is now an urgent need to complete the scheme of work for Key Stage 4 and to improve the subject handbook because these documents do not yet provide sufficient guidance on important matters such as the approach to be used for pupils with special educational needs, or how to use the new textbooks to the best effect with pupils of different levels of attainment.

Key skills: numeracy

101. Pupils are provided with plenty of opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding to work in other subjects of the curriculum. Their skills are sufficiently developed to allow them to use mathematics in science, geography, history and design and technology. In science, calculator work and the drawing of graphs enable them to interpret the results of investigations, and in geography they confidently produce and interpret graphs of population and climate. Their understanding of scale is used and developed in map work, and precision of measurement and graphical presentation are features of their work in design technology, particularly in Key Stage 4. In history in Year 9, statistics are used to assess countries' strengths and weaknesses, and overall prospects of success in the First World War. The insufficiently developed mental arithmetic skills act as a brake on progress in information technology, especially in work with spreadsheets.

Science

102. The previous inspection found that pupils achieved standards that were sound or good for their age and capabilities. A-level results were below average. There was little evidence of effective use of information technology skills in science. Since that time, standards in science have improved. A range of policies and curriculum developments has been put in place and teachers are aiming to raise achievement in science.

103. Results of the national Key Stage 3 tests in 1998 were close to the national average for all maintained schools and in line with those of similar schools. There was little difference between boys' and girls' achievements. 1999 results were similar to those of the previous year.

104. The 1998 GCSE examinations were above the national average for all maintained schools. Over the past three years, results were consistently above average but declined in 1999. A-level results were generally average, though the biology results were above average.

105. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in all aspects of science, including experimental and investigative science. Lower attaining pupils, for example, investigating the speed of a boat suggest factors affecting the speed and plan experiments to test their predictions. Pupils of average ability understand that friction is a force and what its effects are. Higher attaining pupils explain their experimental results of a model gut in terms of large molecules of starch being broken down by enzymes into smaller molecules. The full range of the first-hand inspection evidence indicates overall attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is about average.

106. Attainment is average by the end of Key Stage 4. Again, through this stage, pupils make good progress. Lower attaining pupils make good progress in materials and its properties; they have, for example, a good knowledge of the chemistry and uses of limestone. Average attaining pupils are aware of the physical processes associated with transfer of energy. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of living things and life processes such as transport systems in plants. All pupils in this key stage are improving their experimental and investigative skills. Throughout Key Stages 3

and 4 pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of individual attention given by class teachers.

107. Attainment by the end of the sixth form A-level course is average overall. Students are making good progress acquiring experimental and problem solving skills necessary for success at this level.

108. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their studies; they are well behaved and courteous to adults. Written work is well presented. Scientific curiosity is well developed and pupils have increasing confidence in their ability in science as they progress through the school. There are very good relationships between pupils and teachers which do much to raise confidence and assists pupils' progress.

109. Teaching is predominantly good and some very good teaching was seen in each key stage. Teachers have a very good command and knowledge of their subject specialisms, particularly post-16. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Lessons are well planned and teachers use time and resources effectively. However in some classes the work is pitched at the middle and lower ability ranges and fails to stretch the more able pupils. Pupils' work is assessed regularly as they complete modules of work. Marking of pupils' written work is satisfactory. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 do not have their own text books, which restricts what they can do for homework and therefore affects progress.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

110. Since the previous inspection, good standards have been maintained in each of the key stages and improved in the sixth form. A new GNVQ Advanced course in Art and Design is now provided.

111. The examination results are good. GCSE examination results are consistently above average. In 1998, the results were above average with a high proportion of pupils achieving grades A* and A. The 1999 results were similar to those of previous years. A-level results were well above average in 1998, with no students achieving lower than grade C and the vast majority achieving grade A or B. Again, these standards have been maintained in 1999.

112. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3 though the timetabling of the subject leads to some loss of continuity. Good individual teaching ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in relation to their differing starting points. Pupils develop their ability to investigate problems and to produce finished work. The development of understanding of art is good, for example, through study of the work of known artists and art movements in Year 8. Pupils produce good work in a broad range of two and three-dimensional media, including clay. Computer graphics is well developed and Year 8 pupils produce imaginative computer animations. The school's website displays a very good range of artwork. Good observational drawing is the basis of most projects and pupils make good use of sketchbooks. By the end of the key stage, pupils' overall attainment is above average.

113. All pupils choosing the subject as a GCSE option make good progress over Key Stage 4, whilst the higher-attaining pupils make very good progress. Pupils develop confidence in their use of materials and media and learn to work on a large scale early in the course. Most pupils do not develop individual personal styles until towards the end of the course partly because of the lack of continuity in the previous key stage and the wide range of media introduced in Year 10. Nevertheless, pupils work confidently across a broad range of work. Drawing and painting are good and include much work that expresses depth, particularly in portraiture. Three-dimensional work is well developed in clay and other materials, such as the large heads displayed in the library. There is some very good work in textiles, particularly batik. Standards at the end of the key stage are above average with some work of the highest standard and little poor work.

114. A-level students make very good progress and GNVQ students make good progress. Both A-level and GNVQ Advanced students are taught with students from other schools at the Chetwynd Sixth Form Centre. The ethos for art at the centre is one of high expectation of effort, responsibility and achievement which has a major impact on the progress the students make and the high standards they achieve. Students work confidently in a wide range of styles and materials. Their work shows a depth of understanding, which is reflected through the exploration of ideas in their sketchbooks. Discussion between students and teachers shows maturity. Attainment by the end of the A-level course is well above average. The attainment of GNVQ course students is average.

115. Most pupils have positive attitudes to art and are often eager to carry out, show and talk about their work. They use equipment responsibly and behave well, working independently without direct supervision. Pupils collaborate well when working on group projects. Most pupils respond positively to lessons in which spiritual, moral and cultural dimensions of art are discussed.

116. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good or very good in more than half of lessons. Although more good and very good lessons were observed in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4, samples of practical work indicate that teaching overall is good throughout the school. Teachers set high standards as a matter of course. Teachers have a good balance of skills amongst them. Their knowledge of art and their personal capability as artists are both good and are well used to demonstrate and to support pupils individually. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm for art to the pupils. Lessons are progressive, well planned and have clear objectives. Timetable arrangements in Key Stage 3 lead to some loss of continuity though pupils nevertheless make good progress. Homework is set regularly and effectively complements class-work. Assessment is well used to set targets for pupils.

Design and technology

117. In 1998, the teachers' statutory assessments made at the end of Key Stage 3 indicated very low attainment with only 17 per cent of pupils achieving nationally expected standards. In 1999, the results of the teachers' assessments improved greatly and indicated that 62 per cent of pupils achieved the expected standard. However, these results need to be treated with caution as there are no moderation procedures in place.

118. Overall GCSE results in technology subjects consistently improved over the three-year period 1996-98, in line with the national trend. The overall results were broadly average in comparison with all maintained secondary schools. Girls strongly outperform boys, differences being greater than those found nationally. 1999 GCSE results were below average, with the weakest results in Electronic Products, in which subject only 10 per cent of pupils achieved grades A*-C.

119. The inspection shows that overall progress is no more than satisfactory in Key Stage 3, and higher and lower attaining pupils sometimes fail to make the progress they should though pupils with special educational needs generally receive good individual support from classroom assistants and make good progress. Whilst additional emphasis has been placed on skills, an issue in the previous inspection report, the course structure inhibits progression. The lack of a coherent approach results in unsatisfactory understanding of the concepts and processes involved in design and technology. Pupils are insufficiently challenged in their mixed ability classes and tasks are sometimes undemanding; for example, when Year 9 pupils were wasting time cutting pictures from catalogues when designing and manufacturing a travel game. The use of information technology to enhance pupils' learning is gradually improving but the school has insufficient computer-assisted hardware and software. On the other hand, technical vocabulary is well developed and pupils use a range of tools, materials and equipment competently. Despite the important shortcomings noted above, the present Year 9 pupils are achieving broadly average standards overall.

120. In Key Stage 4, overall progress is just satisfactory. Designing and drawing skills are good in graphic products but weak in resistant materials. Research skills are quite well developed in food technology. In all technology subjects pupils apply their sound mathematical skills for accuracy in

measurement. Higher attainers extend their thinking well enough but average attainers make only satisfactory progress. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs mostly make satisfactory progress but not, as is sometimes the case, when pupils are set low level tasks and expectations are not high enough. A substantial majority of Key Stage 4 pupils, particularly in food technology and child development, are skilled in the use of information technology to enhance their projects, for example to produce questionnaires and present their findings in graphical form through the use of pie and bar charts. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is average.

121. Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well. Most pupils are keen to succeed, enjoy practical activities and sustain their concentration throughout the lesson except in a minority of lessons where neither clear goals nor short-term targets are set to motivate them. Pupils form good relationships with one another and with their teacher and work collaboratively in pairs and groups. Opportunities to develop independence in their learning are restricted because of the lack of suitable reference materials in use for independent study. Too much use is made of photocopied worksheets. Attention is generally paid to health and safety but laminated work surfaces in the kitchens are in need of replacement and Health and Safety qualifications of staff need to be up-dated.

122. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching and on occasion very good teaching as, for example, in food technology where pupils are involved in undertaking experimental work, drawing their own conclusions and seeking deeper understanding. In a minority of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory; expectations are low, pupils are not challenged adequately and they are not clear about what they are to achieve. Neither are pupils always given clear information on what they need to do to improve their work. Work is not always marked or returned promptly.

123. Day-to-day running of the technology faculty is satisfactory but curriculum planning and monitoring of lessons require improvement. In Key Stage 3, design and technology operates as two distinct subjects: craft, design and technology, and home technology. There is an urgent need to review the current arrangements so that the common principles of problem solving, design and manufacture are established and taught consistently. Monitoring of lessons more rigorously would help teachers to identify and share good practice.

Geography

124. The previous inspection reported average standards of achievement at each key stage and in the sixth form.

125. Since the previous inspection in the period 1996-98, GCSE examination results have improved in line with the national trend. The 1998 results were broadly in line with the national average for all maintained secondary schools. Boys' attainment in that year was better than girls' and above the national average. In 1999, girls' results remained broadly the same, but boys' results declined significantly. A-level results were below average in 1998. In 1999, they improved and all students passed the examination.

126. Lessons and samples of written work indicate average overall attainment by the end of Key Stage 3. Progress is generally good with most pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils are acquiring and consolidating knowledge well. Examples of good progress were seen in a lesson for Year 8 on differences between northern and southern Italy and a Year 9 lesson on weather and climate. Analytical and problem-solving skills of middle and lower attaining pupils should be improved. Vocabulary, oral and written skills improve steadily and, by the end of the key stage, most pupils have sound geographical knowledge and skills which prepare them adequately for the GCSE course.

127. Pupils choosing geography at Key stage 4 make good overall progress with pupils applying knowledge effectively in a variety of contexts and situations; for example, in a lesson on the recent Turkish earthquake, pupils considered and assessed its effects through a broad range of evidence. By the end of the GCSE course pupils' attainment is broadly average. Some GCSE project work is notably good.

128. A-level students make good overall progress. In particular, they develop analytical and decision-making skills effectively. By the end of the course, attainment is average.

129. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently good. Pupils enjoy geography, and this is helped by the constructive relationship between them and their geography teachers. The take-up of this subject at Key Stage 4 has risen significantly over the past three years.

130. Teaching is good overall. It is similarly good in each key stage and the sixth form. It was judged as good in two-thirds of the lessons seen and was never unsatisfactory. Some very good teaching was seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge, prepare well and present lessons effectively using a range of methods. Class management is good and time and resources are used efficiently. Lessons effectively improve pupils' understanding of geographical patterns, processes and relationships. Teachers need to be more aware of pupils' attainment levels and, as at the time of the previous inspection, the match of tasks to pupils' attainment needs to be improved, especially for middle and lower attaining pupils in large Key Stage 3 classes. Teachers need to raise their expectations of these pupils and, in addition, find ways to improve analytical and problem-solving skills in Key Stage 3. Insufficient computers generally and a shortage of textbooks for GCSE classes restrict progress.

History

131. GCSE results were well above average in 1998 and show a consistent trend of improvement over a three-year period. The 1999 results declined significantly, however. The A-level results are average.

132. In Key Stage 3, most pupils make good progress. Extended written work shows good knowledge and understanding of the elements of the subject and the ability to use them to evaluate the effect of one event on another. All pupils, including those with special needs, have the ability to do independent research work, and the higher attaining pupils can identify different interpretations from a number of sources, select, analyse and prioritise evidence to present their judgements coherently. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is above average.

133. Pupils make good overall progress in Key Stage 4 in both the understanding and interpretation of source material and investigative coursework. Most pupils have well-developed research skills and the ability to perceive situations and events in their historical context. They acquire a good understanding of how to extract relevant evidence from sources, and to distinguish between opinion or bias and objective fact in order to formulate their own interpretations. In an in-depth study of Lenin and Stalin, most pupils show the ability to evaluate the effects of personalities and ideologies and make judgements of the consequences, both long and short term, for Russia and its people. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is above average.

134. In the sixth form, A-level students make satisfactory progress overall. The more able students have highly developed research and note-taking skills. They identify more clearly the key issues involved in areas of study, and present them coherently with well substantiated judgements. In the extracts from Lenin's April Theses, they discern levels of agreement and disagreement. In preparation work for debate on the controversy around Chamberlain as prime minister and the appeasement policy, they show the ability to understand situations and events in a global perspective. By the end of the A-level course, attainment is average, reflecting the recent examination results.

135. In a secure learning environment, the pupils' attitude to the subject across all key stages and the whole ability range is very positive. They respond well to the teachers' high expectations with well sustained motivation and commitment. They enjoy good relationships with the staff and each other and respond purposefully to opportunities to work independently and collaboratively. In lessons, they listen intently and respect the opinions of others. They show confidence and competence in asking questions and present their own opinions to the class. Overall, the written work reflects their commitment to their studies and concern for their level of performance and progress.

136. Teaching is very good overall and is very effective. It was often very good in the lessons visited and was never unsatisfactory. Lessons are thoroughly prepared, varied and well structured. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and set them challenging targets. Achievement is monitored effectively and consistently. Effective discipline and efficient use of time and resources ensure a good climate for learning which has a positive impact on pupils' motivation and achievement. In general, marking is consistent in approach and informative, though there is need to ensure that work is always completed.

137. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The systematic introduction of targets and appropriate assessment procedures has helped pupils to reach higher levels of attainment and has significantly reduced the difference between girls' and boys' performance. The improved accommodation reduces considerably the number of lessons taught in other areas of the school, and this has also had a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning.

Information technology

138. Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 4 has improved since the previous inspection. The GCSE results in the short course in Information Technology were close to the national average in 1998 and improved substantially in 1999. Very few pupils achieve GCSE A* or A grades in this subject.

139. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 3 and achieve average standards by the end of the key stage. This is supported by the teachers' own assessments made at the end of Year 9 in 1999. A carefully planned scheme of work introduces them to a wide range of computing skills which, as well as using the standard office software, includes using computers for control, using the Internet, and a very successful project in computer animation. Higher attaining pupils are often insufficiently challenged and do not have enough opportunities to extend themselves in lessons designed to teach basic skills which they have already acquired. However, more is now being expected of Year 9 pupils; for example, they design documents for a specific purpose and decide for themselves how to resolve problems and, in these lessons, higher attaining pupils are making the progress that they should. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs mostly make satisfactory progress. By the end of the key stage, the majority of pupils are effective and independent users of information technology. The continuing shortage of computers has a negative impact on overall progress and the quality of pupils' learning.

140. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4 and achieve average standards by the end of Year 11. All pupils study for the GCSE short course in information technology in conjunction with their optional technology subject. A significant proportion of pupils do not understand the relevance of information technology to their option choices and do not work hard enough. These pupils make unsatisfactory progress. Very few pupils reach high standards because teachers do not set them sufficiently challenging projects to work at individually. However, careful planning of the scheme of work to cover all aspects of the examination syllabus has enabled the majority of pupils to make satisfactory progress and has substantially increased the proportion of pupils achieving grade C or better in 1999.

141. Most pupils show interest in their work in Key Stage 3, particularly when tasks are designed to be fun. For instance, the computer animation project for Year 8 pupils as part of the work in art sets high standards to which the pupils respond enthusiastically. In Key Stage 4, pupils are interested when the tasks are related to their technology options, for example, when pupils taking the food technology option use a spreadsheet to model recipes. When tasks are unrelated to their optional technology subject, and especially when they lack a practical dimension, pupils show less enthusiasm. In these lessons, behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory. Most pupils use computers independently, and consequently the computer suites are fully used throughout the day. Positive attitudes are a significant factor in the overall average attainment which is achieved with limited resources.

142. The teaching was at least satisfactory in all but one of the 11 lessons seen during the inspection. In Key Stage 4, half of the lessons were good. All the teaching at both key stages is done by teachers for whom information technology is not their main subject. Whilst they have developed the skills to teach the essentials of the scheme of work, many lack confidence to adapt lessons to meet the needs of pupils of differing attainment and expectations of higher attaining pupils are not high enough. In lessons where teachers are more confident with the subject, the teaching is better. When teaching is unsatisfactory, tasks and organisational strategies have not been sufficiently well adapted to the pupils' needs. In general, lessons are carefully planned to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE examination syllabus. Individual help to pupils with special educational needs is generally effective so that these pupils and other lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress.

Key Skills across the curriculum – information and communication technology

143. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to apply their skills and extend them in the full range of subjects because of the shortage of hardware and software and because the teachers lack confidence to use computers in their teaching.

Modern languages

144. Significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection. The modern language teachers have achieved a greater consistency in the quality of their teaching and have implemented schemes of work and assessment. A new thirty-five-booth language laboratory has also been installed.

145. From the time of the previous inspection, GCSE results have fluctuated but with an overall upward trend reaching a peak in 1998 when in both French and German the results were well above average for all maintained schools. The 1999 results in both languages declined though they were broadly satisfactory. At the time of the previous inspection, A-level results were good but in 1998, results were below average taking both languages together though numbers of candidates were small. In 1999, there were two candidates in French and both achieved grade A. There were no examination candidates in German.

146. Throughout the school a consistent strength of language learning is pupils' competence with the skills of listening and speaking. Reading is relatively underdeveloped, and writing is a weakness. To some extent this relates to book shortages which restrict the pupils' ability to work independently at home. Girls outperform boys in all aspects of the subject, as is the case nationally.

147. In Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in speaking and listening, acquiring a degree of confidence which stays with them as they move up the school. Reading and writing are generally satisfactory but the lack of course books to take home is a brake on progress for some pupils, especially the potential higher attaining pupils. There are in particular too few opportunities for pupils to create their own texts. Pupils with special educational needs cope as well as others with listening and speaking, which is a prominent feature of lessons at this school. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is average and this is confirmed by the outcomes of the Key Stage 3 assessments which show outcomes in line with such national data as are available.

148. In Key Stage 4, pupils make good overall progress. They continue to make good progress in speaking and listening skills. Although there are opportunities for reading and writing, as required for GCSE, these skills could be developed still further. Most pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but there are a few whose progress is unsatisfactory. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is above average.

149. In the sixth form, three students in each of Years 12 and 13 are taking A-level French. These students are making make good progress. Later in the course, students undergo work experience in France, which does much to develop their speaking through real communication. By the end of the A-level course, overall attainment is broadly average.

150. Pupils respond readily to invitations to speak their language, and enjoy their learning. They listen attentively so as to model their pronunciation on that of the class teacher, and where writing is involved they take pride in their work. At all ages pupils work well in pairs or groups. Most are well motivated and take their language learning seriously. They behave well, remaining on task until the end of the lesson.

151. Teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Half of the lessons seen were good, a fifth were very good and the remainder were satisfactory. Teachers speak their languages fluently and confidently and use them effectively in lessons. Expectations regarding pupils' speaking and listening are high, but they could be higher with regard to writing. However, many more of the lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 now take GCSE in a foreign language, rather than a lower level certificate, than was formerly the case. Lessons are well planned and are anchored securely in a carefully prepared scheme of work. Pupils are organised into suitable groups to promote effective learning. Methods are varied and stimulating and include systematic use of the language laboratory. In class, good relationships between pupils and teachers ensure that pupils work effectively and successfully, for example, when working in groups or pairs for exercises in transactional language. Time is effectively used, so that the pace of activities is sustained to the end of the lesson. What resources are available are well used, and the major resource, the language laboratory, is well organised according to a fortnightly schedule. Assessment is good, beginning with self-assessment in pairs and extending through three further levels to termly or yearly examinations. Homework is coped with by the provision of worksheets in addition to learning assignments but, in Key Stage 3, there is still a need for more books so that pupils may take them home.

Music

152. Relatively few pupils take the GCSE course in music; results over the last few years have fluctuated and have shown a downward trend since the previous inspection. No sixth form student took A-Level music in 1999, a situation which is repeated in the present Years 12 and 13.

153. Music has gone through an unsettling period with several changes of teaching staff in the last two years and this is reflected in the standards achieved at Key Stage 3. Nevertheless, overall progress is satisfactory through the key stage and overall attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 9. Listening and appraising skills, and some performing skills are average, but composition is insufficiently well developed. Also the department has insufficient computers to enable pupils to hear, amend and develop their compositions immediately. However, in performing and listening lessons, pupils make good progress because the teaching is enthusiastic and challenging. Year 7 pupils have shown how quickly they respond by improving the tone and intonation of their singing and by combining two songs together successfully. Their response to call and answer rhythms is alert and prompt but the inclusion of triplets provides them with problems that are not altogether overcome. Year 8 pupils maintain simple rhythms in counterpoint and the majority can transcribe the sounds into notation. They learn to exploit a good range of dynamics even though they find maintaining a steady beat more difficult. However, this also improves during the lesson. Singing improves after attention to breathing and technical control. Pupils play the three chords on the keyboard using a reasonable three-finger technique. Moving from one chord to another in sequence is slow but some progress is made. The guitar course being piloted in Year 9, on recently acquired instruments, shows that pupils are progressing well with chord playing. Good group work and responsible attitudes to practice are assisting with this. Longer-term progress is limited owing to few opportunities being provided for reflection and self-evaluation in the lesson, as part of an on-going assessment policy. Also pupils do not yet know what they are expected to achieve in the National Curriculum for music at this stage.

154. Pupils studying music for GCSE make good overall progress through the key stage. Year 10 pupils develop listening skills soundly due to carefully composed examples to allow the pupils to focus on particular aspects of music. Their compositions show a wide range of standards from very elementary single line melodies to completed songs of considerable sophistication. Progress with these compositions varies quite considerably. Higher attaining pupils progress steadily with the development of their compositions because they can hear and process the sounds in their heads. These

pupils also would benefit from composing with a computer. Year 11 GCSE class is a large group of above average ability. Some are of a very high standard. This is evident particularly in performance, where lively and careful instrumental teaching from the County Music Service supports good progress and high standards. Many of these pupils are also involved in the good range of extra-curricular activities that are on offer in the school. Aural skills are also well developed in Year 11, due to interactive listening and immediate assessment. By the end of the key stage overall attainment is above average.

155. Pupils enjoy music. Their enthusiasm in lessons is directly attributable to the level demonstrated by the teacher. Pupils are lively but well behaved and courteous, and the relationships between them and with their teachers are caring and constructive.

156. Teaching is good in each key stage. It is never less than satisfactory and in many aspects it is very good. Lessons are well planned with a good variety of teaching and learning strategies, marking an improvement since the last inspection. As a result, pupil's concentration has also improved. The lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace that takes account of the abilities of the pupils and the nature of the subject aspect. All resources are very well used. Teachers monitor and support the pupils whatever their attainment level, particularly in the keyboard and guitar courses which provide appropriate materials for all pupils. Teachers are at their best when they focus on the lessons' objectives, challenge and inspire the pupils and communicate the great enthusiasm they have for the subject.

157. The teachers are working hard to introduce more practical work into an otherwise well rounded curriculum which promotes the music of their own culture particularly well. Music from other cultures is listened to but lack of good percussion instruments is severely hampering the practical application of world music. The school has worked hard to rectify the poor resources but a drum kit and recording technology equipment are still badly needed. The accommodation has been upgraded and now provides a satisfactory environment for the subject.

Physical education

158. Since the previous inspection, examination courses in physical education have been introduced. Initial results in 1997 were well below the national average, but in 1998, results for both boys and girls showed notable improvement and were well above the national average for all maintained schools. The 1999 GCSE results declined to below previous levels. However, the results were in line with teachers' predictions. A-level Sports Studies has also been successfully introduced since the last inspection. Results were above the national average in 1998, when all candidates were successful, although none achieved the higher A-B grades. These results were sustained in 1999.

159. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are mainly average for both boys and girls with a substantial majority of pupils reaching expected standards. By the end of Key Stage 4, and also by the end of the sixth form, overall attainment is average. Pupils following the examination courses are reaching average standards in both theory and practical work, little difference existing between the attainments of boys and girls.

160. Pupils make satisfactory progress consistently throughout each key stage, including those pupils with special educational needs. Pupils make good progress, notably in Year 8 dance and rugby, in Year 11 badminton and football, in Year 10 GCSE theory work, and in Year 13 sports studies. In all these aspects, pupils' good progress is founded on knowledgeable teaching linked to high expectations and challenging pace.

161. Pupils are co-operative and behave well in physical education. Attitudes are positive towards the subject, and pupils show interest and enthusiasm. Participation rates are good, particularly in Key

Stage 3, and this contributes to continuity and progress in learning. In general, pupils work physically hard, and many show commitment to their work. They usually listen well to advice from their teachers and try to use it purposefully to improve their skills.

162. Teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory, and is more frequently good. Subject knowledge and understanding are very secure. Teachers work hard in both their curricular and extra-curricular work. Their lessons are soundly planned and structured. Progress has been made in ensuring sufficient opportunity is provided for pupils to engage in the planning and evaluation of their work, an area noted for development in the previous inspection. However, there is a need to extend the process into games teaching where problem-solving approaches are inconsistently used. Tasks are usually well matched to developing the skills and capabilities of the majority of pupils, although on occasion a closer definition of the tasks and resources required for the most able and less gifted pupils would help to accelerate their progress. Relationships are strong and class management is good. Some lessons are slow to start, but, when underway, are usually purposeful and busy, and frequently drawn together in effective summaries which probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Homework is regularly set in examination courses, although GCSE marking does not always provide sufficient guidance for improvement. With welcome and effective support from non-specialist colleagues, the subject provides a good range of competitive and recreational extra-curricular opportunities for boys and girls which are popular, well supported, and which enable some to achieve high standards.

163. The programme for girls is well balanced, but team games for the boys are over-emphasised at the expense of other activities. Assessment has improved since the previous inspection with the introduction of a cumulative pupil profile which records attainment through Key Stage 3. This good practice could usefully be extended into Key Stage 4.

164. Although daily administration is sound, routines and policies are not always consistently followed. Procedures for monitoring teaching and the curriculum are not yet in place. The teachers need a proper subject room for GCSE theory work and to allow effective storage of resources.

Religious Education

165. The previous inspection reported that standards were generally in line with national expectation at the end of Key Stage 3 and below average at the end of Key Stage 4, because the subject was not taught in Year 11. There was no general provision for religious education in the sixth form. Teaching was judged to be mostly good. Subject planning did not meet the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus; religious objects and visits were not being sufficiently used to support the teaching; more clarity was needed to ensure awareness of continuity and progression and subject expenditure was low. The position has now greatly improved though the statutory requirement to provide religious education for the sixth form is still not met.

166. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3 despite limited time for teaching the subject. There is no difference in the progress made by pupils of differing attainment, including those with special educational needs. This is due to good teaching and because the majority of pupils have positive attitudes to the subject. They are encouraged from Year 7 to be open and receptive to the study of beliefs and experiences which differ from their own. Pupils steadily gain knowledge and understanding of the key features of Christianity and other faiths as they pass through the key stage, from a practical viewpoint; for example, Year 8 pupils develop their knowledge of Islam in discussion of the practical problems which Muslim children may face in this country. Their knowledge and understanding of the key features of Christianity and Islam are sound and adequate in the case of Sikhism. Pupils describe differing beliefs and distinctive features of worship and draw comparisons. Pupils produce detailed descriptive work in their study of Christian marriage, and higher attaining pupils develop their own personal views effectively, considering the implications these have for their own lives. Pupils understand the place of symbols and imagery in religion and their technical vocabulary is good. Their factual knowledge is better than their capacity to make a reasoned response

to religious questions. By the end of the key stage, pupils' overall attainment, in terms of the expectations set by the Local Agreed Syllabus, is broadly average.

167. All pupils follow a short GCSE course in Key Stage 4 and are making satisfactory overall progress. The current Year 11 pupils will be the first to sit the examination, in 2000. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, build effectively on their previous learning about Christianity and Islam. Pupils' good attitudes and sound teaching make a strong impact on progress. The evidence of the inspection indicates average overall attainment by the end of the course. Pupils have a sound understanding of the impact of Christian and Islamic beliefs about creation on relationships with the natural world. They understand the meaning of ritual and liturgy and describe and explain differences between the main Christian denominations. For, example, they can describe differences in belief about the Eucharist although their explanations tend to be superficial.

168. Good teaching helps pupils sustain a genuine interest in the subject and this is apparent in the way they share opinions and ask questions. Key Stage 4 pupils are well motivated to study the GCSE course. Concentration is well sustained with few exceptions by a variety of learning activities. However, pupils seldom develop their capacity for personal study. Behaviour is almost uniformly good. Pupils are polite and courteous to teachers and visitors. They collaborate effectively in pairs and groups. Boys and girls work naturally and easily together.

169. The overall quality of teaching is good; it is never less than satisfactory and some teaching is very good. In general teaching is better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. Teachers are secure and confident in their subject knowledge and make good use of questioning to challenge pupils. Teaching methods are generally well matched to pupils' abilities. Learning activities and resources are well chosen to sustain interest though there are few opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they have learnt. Lessons are well planned to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and create a relaxed but orderly working environment in which they read to the class confidently and answer pupils' questions. It was impressive to see a teacher's first lesson with a Year 7 class where pupils were quickly and sensitively put at ease and were successfully engaged in the lesson, making good progress. Pupils' exercise books are regularly and thoroughly marked but there is some inconsistency in the use of comments to help pupils to see how they can improve their work. Homework is used to develop and extend pupils' learning and is set regularly.

170. The subject has acquired higher status because of improved leadership, curriculum and teaching. A formal assessment policy is now needed. The subject makes a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

171. The inspection was conducted by a team of 14 inspectors. The inspection covered all National Curriculum subjects and religious education in Key Stages 3 and 4, and optional subjects in Key Stage 4. The inspection covered sixth-form academic, vocational and religious education, and the complementary studies programme. The inspection also investigated the quality of personal, health and social education, careers education, sex education, form-time, registration, assemblies and extra-curricular activities.

172. More than 52 inspector-days were spent in school, 195 lessons were inspected, and more than 153 hours were spent in lessons. Many hours were also spent inspecting samples of pupils' written work, in discussions with pupils, and in other observations of the work of the school. All staff timetabled for teaching and present during the inspection were seen teaching and received reports on the quality of lessons taught by them.

173. Meetings were held with the governing body before and after the inspection. Interviews were held with the headteacher and other senior staff, all heads of department, and with other staff with posts of special responsibility. Four evening meetings of the inspection team were held during the inspection week and the conclusions of the report represent the corporate views of the team of inspectors.

174. Before the inspection, 203 parents completed and returned questionnaires sent to them by the school and the registered inspector held a meeting attended by 30 parents. Views expressed by parents in the questionnaires in writing, and raised at the meeting, were noted and fully taken into account by the inspectors.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7-13	1059	38	126	98

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	59.05
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.95

Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of education support staff:	18
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	340

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	76.3
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Average teaching group size:	
KS3	25
KS4	24

Financial data

Financial year:	1998-99
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	£
Total Income	2125022
Total Expenditure	2106947
Expenditure per pupil	1989.56
Balance brought forward from previous year	-32110
Balance carried forward to next year	-14035

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:
 Number of questionnaires returned:

1049
203

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	70	9	3	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	33	57	6	4	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	16	52	28	4	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	13	65	13	8	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	27	59	4	9	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	25	64	8	2	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	30	57	11	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	18	59	11	9	3
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	17	61	18	4	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	12	62	22	3	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	33	53	9	5	0