

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Blessed William Howard Catholic High School**  
Stafford

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique Reference Number: 124455

Headteacher: Mr R M J Lister

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Reporting inspector: Mr Akram Khan OBE

Dates of inspection: 29 November - 3 December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708256

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Rowley Avenue Stafford ST17 9AB
Telephone number:	01785-244236
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr F W Burns
Date of previous inspection:	21 - 25 November 1994

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

<b>Team members</b>	<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
Akram Khan, OBE, RgI Gwynne Oakley-Smith, Lay Inspector	Information technology N/A	Leadership and management Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Careers
Gill Bremner	Geography Special educational needs	
John Brigden	Art	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Allan Brewerton John Mallinson John Morrell Sheila Nolan	Science History Music Mathematics	N/A Efficiency Extra-curricular activities Curriculum and assessment Key Stage 4 Curriculum
Alan Pemberton	Design and technology	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Jacqueline Pentlow Carmen Rodney Bill Stoneham Judith Tolley	Physical education English, drama Economics Modern foreign languages Equal opportunities	N/A Attainment and progress Sixth Form Teaching

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership and clear educational direction.
- The senior management team, staff and governors have a strong commitment to raising pupils' attainment. Parents are very supportive.
- Pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum Tests and GCSE is above the national average.
- The educational provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. It is satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average.
- The supportive and caring environment promotes positive attitudes, good behaviour and a strong positive ethos.
- Very good provision for spiritual and moral development.
- Very good provision for careers and extra-curricular activities which are well supported by pupils.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. There is scope for further improvement in raising A-level students' attainment in most subjects.
- II. Current statutory curricular requirements in respect of design and technology, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages are not met.
- III. Consistent application of the school's assessment, recording and reporting policy.
- IV. The roles of senior and middle managers do not extend to include monitoring, challenging and evaluating teaching and standards against subject specific measurable targets.
- V. Improve financial planning and learning resources, including library provision.

**The weaknesses are outweighed by what the school does well, but will form the basis for the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has responded well to its 1994 report and has made good progress. Under the highly effective leadership of the headteacher and with considerable support from the governing body, the senior management team, staff, parents and the local education authority there have been significant improvements in many aspects of the school's provision. The revised mission statement reflects the school's strong commitment to the Catholic faith and high academic and moral standards. Over the last three years, attainment in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science, has consistently been well above the national averages. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more passes both at the higher grades A\*-C and at A\*-G in the GCSE examinations is well above the national average. High standards have been maintained in the GCSE examination results since the last OFSTED inspection in 1994. The school's performance, in comparison with all schools nationally and with schools with pupils from a similar background, is well above average. In 1999, 67 per cent (56 per cent in 1995) of pupils achieved 5 grades A\*-C compared with the national average of 47.8 per cent. A level results have improved since the previous OFSTED inspection though results in 1999 were not high enough. Though the actual pass rate at A level rose to almost 93 per cent, the average points score per student fell from 18.8 in 1998 to 15.8 in 1999. The quality of teaching has improved from 90 per cent judged satisfactory or better in 1994 to 98 per cent in this inspection. Pupils' attendance rates are better than the national average. The senior managers are now attached to subject departments but their line-management roles do not yet include monitoring teaching and challenging and raising pupils' attainment. Teachers are well supported by the heads of most subject departments. The school's development planning is effective, based on measurable targets but departments do not include subject specific targets. Systems and structures for improvement are effective and the school has a good capacity for further 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 1999:

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

The 1999 results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, in English and mathematics are well above the national average and in science are average. Over the last three years, attainment in these tests for 14 year olds has consistently been well above the national averages. GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above the national average. High standards have been maintained in the GCSE examination results since the last OFSTED inspection in 1994. The stronger subjects at GCSE are English, literature, sciences, geography, history, German, French and physical education. The weakest subjects are art and design and technology. In 1998, results in art were significantly better than the national average. The attainment of students in 1999 was below the national average and reverses the trend that the school has been achieving.

Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations in English, mathematics, design and technology and music whilst in all other subjects it is in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is well above average in economics, history and music, above average in English, mathematics, German, French and in line with national expectations in all other subjects except information technology where it is below average. At A level students' attainment is well above average in economics, above average in history and in line with national expectations in all other subjects except mathematics, where their attainment is below the national expectations.

## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, mathematics, science, information technology, design and technology, history, geography, music, physical education	
Years 10-11	Satisfactory	English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, music	Economics
Sixth form	Good	English, science, art, Economics, music, geography, history, modern foreign languages,.	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The quality of teaching was sound or better in 98 per cent of 208 lessons seen, it was satisfactory in 32 per cent, good in 50 per cent, very good or excellent in 16 per cent and unsatisfactory or poor in two per cent. Teachers have good command of the subjects they teach. They plan their lessons well. Nearly all lessons are orderly and purposeful. Very good teaching occurs in music throughout the school and science at Key Stage 3,



and German in the sixth form. Teaching is consistently good in all years in English, history and geography. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form the quality of teaching is good in art, and modern languages, in information technology at Key Stage 3 and in both key stages in design and technology. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in all key stages. It is good in the sixth form and in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory overall in Key Stage 4. Only four ineffective lessons were seen and contributed to unsatisfactory progress.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Good: behaviour in and around the school is good. Levels of exclusions are very low.
Attendance	Above the national average. Most pupils attend school regularly. For some pupils, punctuality is less than satisfactory, mainly due to coaches being delayed by traffic.
Ethos*	Very good. Teachers create a good atmosphere for learning. Relationships are good at all levels. Strong commitment to good quality education.
Leadership and management	Highly effective and competent. The governing body is very supportive. There is a strong commitment to raising standards further. There is good capacity to take the school further. Senior managers and middle managers roles need to include monitoring, challenging and raising standards.
Curriculum	Good at Key Stage 3. Legal requirements in respect of design and technology, information technology and modern languages are not being met. Extremely good provision for careers and extra-curricular activities.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good provision. There are effective procedures for the identification of pupils' special educational needs. Targets in individual plans are precise and systematic assessment and annual reviews are carried out.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Provision for spiritual and moral development is very good, and social education and cultural development is good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory: the school has sufficient, well-qualified teaching staff. There are in-service training needs in some subjects. Valuable support provided by the non-teaching staff. Variable accommodation and insufficient learning resources in most subjects: shortages of books, unsatisfactory library resources.
Value for money	The school gives <b>good value for money</b> . From a very low funding base it delivers results in GCSE that are well above the national average, and at A level results only just below the national average.

*\*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**

- VI. The school enables their children to achieve good standards of work.
- VII. It is easy to approach the school with questions and problems.
- VIII. It has a caring ethos.
- IX. Its musical tradition is strong.
- X. Many governors and teachers have their children at school; a vote of confidence.
- XI. Staff organise a wide range of extra-curricular

**What some parents are not happy about**

- XII. Homework is not challenging.
- XIII. Lack of stability in staffing in some

activities, including educational visits.

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views on standards, ethos and the strong music tradition. Staff work hard to provide an extensive range of extra curricular activities, which are well supported by many pupils. The leaning support club and the use of the 'Active Learning Resource Centre' are positive initiatives to implement and monitor successfully the school's homework policy. Pupil-planners have been introduced and their completion monitored regularly by staff, which ensures the systematic implementation of the homework policy. Greater efforts are needed to improve the quality of homework assignments, which could help pupils to consolidate understanding and extend their study and research skills. The process of post-16 guidance and admission is thorough, and parents and students are well informed about courses at school and the Chetwynd Centre. The governors' report to parents does not include all the necessary data and information. The school has coped reasonably well with several long-term absences of members of staff but it has not always been possible to ensure continuity and this has affected adversely pupils' progress. The school is keen to strengthen already good relationships with parents, to enable pupils to benefit from the educational opportunities that are offered.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to sustain and continue to develop the good work of the school, the governors and senior management of Blessed William Howard RC School, with the help of the local education authority, should give attention to the following issues:

- **Raise students' attainment in the sixth form by:**
  - using GCSE results to build on their strengths;
  - targeting in-service training on effective teaching strategies, where needed;
  - implementing subject specific recommendations in different parts of this report.
  - (Paragraphs: 12, 84, 115, 123,124, 173)
  
- **Review the curriculum at Key Stage 4 by:**
  - ensuring that all pupils in Key Stage 4, receive their curriculum entitlement in design and technology, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages;
  - monitor pupils' information technology skills and ensure effective applications across curriculum.  
(Paragraphs: 46, 131, 129, 131,137,146, 155, 169, 186 )
  
- **Improve the effectiveness of the management by:**
  - setting subject specific measurable targets to determine value added achievement between key stages;
  - developing further senior and middle managers roles in monitoring more rigorously the quality of teaching and standards in their subjects;
  - complying with legal requirements to include appropriate data and information in the governors' report to parents.  
(Paragraphs: 71, 74, 76, 79, 94, 109, 130,145, 156,168, 186, 208.)
  
- **Ensure that the school's assessment policy is applied consistently by setting targets for individual pupils and using information to plan for the next stage of teaching and learning.**
  - (Paragraphs: 43, 53, 56, 107, 121, 129, 136)
  
- **Improve financial planning by linking closely the school's budget to the priorities identified in the school's development plan .**
  - (Paragraphs: 76, 92 96.)

- **Improve the provision of learning resources by:**

- improving the funding of the library (resource and active learning facilities) and by ensuring that departments encourage its day-to-day use;
- increasing further the range of hardware and software for the teaching of information and communication technology;
- improving the number and range of text books throughout the school;
- increasing budget allocation in some subjects.

(Paragraphs: 89, 90, 93, 130, 138, 169, 186, 200.)

- In addition paragraphs:

- 56- punctuality;
- 86- specialist accommodation for modern foreign languages, drama, biology and mathematics;
- include weaknesses which have not formed the basis of 'Key Issues' identified above; the school should consider including these in the governors' post-inspection action plan.

## - **INTRODUCTION**

### - **Characteristics of the school**

1. Blessed William Howard RC High School educates 553 boys and 542 girls in the 11-18-age range. It is located in Stafford and, being the only Catholic school in mid-Staffordshire, draws pupils from up to 26 primary schools across a wide geographical area. The school is very popular and heavily over-subscribed. Each year 100 non-Catholic families apply for a small number of places available after Catholic children and siblings have been admitted. Approximately seventy per cent of its pupils are Catholic and the remainder are from other Christian denominations. There are no precise indicators of pupils' social background although slightly over half the pupils come from economically and socially advantaged parts of Staffordshire. Parents hold a variety of jobs; professional, semi-professional, skilled and semi-skilled jobs. The proportion of pupils eligible for free meals, at 6.3 per cent, is below the national average. There is only a very small percentage of children from minority ethnic families at the school.
2. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, which is confirmed by the NFER Cognitive Abilities Tests. There is an improvement in the ability profile of pupils in Years 7 and 8 as confirmed by the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, in the National Curriculum Tests in English, mathematics and science which was above the national average. Twenty-eight pupils have statements of special educational needs and a further 104 pupils are on Stages 1 to 4 of the Code of Practice. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average but the percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average.
3. The influence of the Roman Catholic faith extends beyond the teaching of religious education and Acts of Worship to the school's aims, ethos and curriculum which are rooted in the mission statement. The school's mission statement makes a strong commitment, "to meet everyone on their faith journey to God, forming them in the Catholic spiritual and moral tradition to enable them to reach their full potential." The school aims to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which, based on Gospel values, will help "to teach the whole child giving recognition to excellence, the spiritual, academic and social aspects of each individual's development."
4. The school was last inspected in November 1994. The school's action plan and subsequent development plans include its positive response to all the key issues identified in the report. The headteacher and the school's governors have kept parents informed of the progress made. Central to the principles and purpose of the school's development plan are the strategies for improvement to raise pupils' attainment

and improve progress. The school's development plan for 1999/2003 reflects new agreed priorities and targets for the current and succeeding years under five main planning areas- teaching and learning; staff development; curriculum development; pupils' attitudes; behaviour and social development and management. The main priorities include:

- continue to raise levels of attainment in all subjects;
- support staff by developing appropriate teaching and learning policies;
- create opportunities for all staff to become more familiar with data analysis, value- added issues and target setting.
- improve monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- develop a more pro-active partnership with the home to enhance and sustain a work ethic.

### **Key indicators**

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	108	105	213

5. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	81	78	63
	Girls	87	73	60
	Total	168	151	123
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	79 (71)	71 (80)	58 (70)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	31 (44)	46 (46)	23 (31)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

5. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	97	71	61
	Girls	97	70	68
	Total	194	141	129
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	91 (82)	66 (72)	61 (45)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	60 (63)	38 (47)	35 (20)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

.....

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

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

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	90	97	187

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	57	87	89
	Girls	69	97	97
	Total	126	184	186
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	67 (63)	98 (94)	99 (96)
	National	47.8 (46.3)	88.4 (87.5)	93.9 (93.4)

.....

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

3. **Attainment in the Sixth Form**<sup>3</sup>

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	27	47	74

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	14.0 (14.2)	16.2 (22)	15.4 (18.8)	0.0 (6.0)	0.8 (5.0)	0.5 (5.7)
National			(17.6)			(2.8)

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

4. **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed			%
Through absence for the latest complete Reporting year:	Authorised	School	6.1
	Absence	National comparative data	9.1
	Unauthorised	School	0.1
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

9. **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during The previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	25
	Permanent	0

10. **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	16
	Satisfactory or better	98

10.



## 10. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

### 10. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

#### 10. Attainment and progress

5. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes both at the higher grades A\*-C and at A\*-G in the General Certificate of Secondary Education(GCSE) examinations is well above the national average. High standards have been maintained in the GCSE examination results since the last OFSTED inspection in 1994. The school's performance, in comparison with all schools nationally and with schools with pupils from a similar background, is well above average. Standards have been maintained in the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grades, over the last five years and are in line with the national trends. In 1999, 67 per cent of pupils achieved 5 grades A\*-C compared to the national average of 47.8 per cent. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE grades at grades A\*-G has been above the national average for sometime now. Overall, girls continue to out perform boys even though the boys' results are above the national average.
6. A level results have improved since the previous OFSTED inspection and there are now more passes in all subjects. Attainment of students studying A levels in 1999 was below the national average. Though the actual pass rate at A level rose to almost 93 per cent, the average points score per student fell to 15.8. This figure is below the national average and reverses the trend that the school has been achieving. From 1995 to 1998, the average point score per student rose from below the national average figure to well above. The school's A level results in 1998 were well above average. A profile of the 1999 results shows that attainment at grades A and B declined compared to the previous year and, though the performance of boys was largely unchanged, the attainment of the highest grades by girls declined significantly. Music was the only subject to record results that were well above national average expectations for A and B grades in 1999. The overall attainment of present A level students is in line with expectations. In some subjects, such as economics and history, attainment is above average, but in many subjects attainment is variable. Where attainment is above average, students show an increased capacity for independent study and are emerging as confident learners.
7. The progress of most A level students, in most subjects, is good. Many students build successfully on their achievements at GCSE. They consolidate their knowledge, acquire new skills and the vast majority attain further academic qualifications which allows progress to the next stage in their careers. Most students leave school to pursue a course of study in higher education. Progress is being further enhanced by the monitoring and assessment procedures that are practised. The school subscribes to the A Level Information Scheme(ALIS) scheme and the data generated by this project is used for target setting and monitoring individual performance.
8. The National Curriculum tests were not taken at the time of the last inspection. Over the last three years, attainment in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science, has consistently been well above the national averages. When the three core subjects are taken together, pupils do better in mathematics than in English. However, the science results are below the standard achieved in English. In English, the proportion of pupils attaining level 6 or above has been well above the national average for the past three years. The percentage achieving level 5 or above has been in line with the national average. There was a substantial increase in the performance of pupils in the 1999 tests with 79 per cent achieving level 5 or above.
9. In English pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is above average at Key Stage 3. Oral skills are good from the start of the key stage and pupils express their viewpoints fluently and have a good command of standard spoken English. In Key Stage 4, pupils articulate their responses to questions clearly and language is used with precision when speaking. Years 12 and 13 students engage in high quality discussions to explore their learning and they use sophisticated vocabulary when exploring their work. Standards in reading are good in all three key stages. Statemented pupils and pupils with a special educational need read fluently to reflect their level of attainment and use appropriate strategies to

pronounce words and develop meaning. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils read texts closely before giving a personal interpretation. Statemented pupils and pupils with special educational needs also have a sound grasp of texts as seen in their responses to a wide range of literary texts. The A-level students have a good level of textual analysis and appreciation and understand the use of form and structure as well as the use of language to develop meaning. Writing is a strength and attainment is above average, with some outstanding and creative pieces of writing in all three key stages. Creative writing is well promoted in all year groups and a wide range of writing skills is developed as pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences.

10. High standards of literacy skills contribute to the good progress pupils make in all subjects. They are articulate and use good oral skills when taking part in question and answer sessions. Discussion skills are, however, under developed in Key Stages 3 and 4. Reading is encouraged in most subjects and pupils read accurately, with understanding and expression. Research and retrieval skills are not well developed in most curriculum areas. Pupils organise and express their ideas coherently using grammatical features correctly. The processes of writing are used extensively by pupils to organise and develop their writing skills.
11. In mathematics, the National Curriculum test results have been well above the national average for pupils achieving level 5 or above over the last three years and in line with averages for similar schools. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls at Key Stage 3. The GCSE results are well above the national averages and at A level results are below the national average. Pupils have good mathematical data handling skills and are very numerate when calculating figures. Their algebraic skills are the weakest aspect in mathematics whilst their understanding of shape and space is satisfactory. The use of information technology in the subject is weak and only LOGO is used in Year 7.
12. Numeracy skills are mainly used in subjects such as economics, science and design and technology. In Year 11, pupils' understanding of applying numerical skills to their work is satisfactory. In science they use mental arithmetic when calculating large numbers. Design and technology lessons develop numeracy skills through graphics in Years 8 and 9. In economics, pupils in Key Stage 4 work on graphs, percentages and multiplication and in the sixth form, numeracy skills are enhanced through the analysis and interpretation of data in pictorial form, dual form, as well as complex graphs and their interpretations.
13. Standards of attainment in science are close to the national average. There was an upward trend in the science results at Key Stage 3 between 1996-1998 but results dipped in 1999. Attainment improves at Key Stage 4 and results in the GCSE examinations have been well above the national averages in both the dual and single award science. Inspection evidence indicates that high and many average attaining pupils at Key Stage 3 have a good grasp of scientific concepts such as the electromagnetic fields and the digestive system. Lower attaining pupils are less secure in their understanding of scientific ideas. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is average. Students in Year 12 demonstrate a sound understanding of the subjects in comparison with students in Year 13 who are underachieving and making less progress than expected in comparison to their relative performance in the GCSE examinations. Students in Year 13 experience difficulties in explaining a number of basic scientific phenomena and changes. Overall, progress is good at Key Stages 3 and 5 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4.
14. In information and communication technology, most pupils at Key Stage 3 can log-on to the network and access appropriate applications, such as spreadsheets and databases. They can design an attractive Website using Microsoft Publisher. High attaining pupils can import pictures and designs to a desktop publishing programme and enter text to complete a page for a newspaper. Weaknesses in ICT include insufficient opportunities for data logging in subjects such as science, design and technology and geography. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in information technology is below national expectations. Pupils in Year 10 attain average standards in information communication and modelling but below average in control, data capture and measurement. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across Key Stage 3. They show good levels of confidence to cut, paste, select fonts, create tables and import pictures to enhance simple Websites.

15. Standards of attainment in art are in line with the national averages in all three key stages. At Key Stage 3, pupils can express their ideas in a range of two and three-dimensional materials. Their drawing and design work is better developed than craftwork and painting. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment at Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average. Pupils in their artwork make good use of visually stimulating and vibrant images and the higher attaining pupils organise and present visual sources and ideas for their work. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 when they are taught how to evaluate their work and progress is good at Key Stage 4 when they organise and present visual sources and ideas for their work. In the sixth form, progress is good but gains made are hampered when students do not use their investigative work to develop their creative ideas.
16. Attainment is above average in design and technology at Key Stage 3 and average at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, pupils can apply most aspects of the design process and standards of finish on products are good. Standards at Key Stage 4 reflect the limited range of prior attainment of pupils taking the subject. Overall, progress is good at Key Stage 3 as pupils apply the design process to make and evaluate their work. Progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 4.
17. Attainment in economics is in line with national averages at Key Stage 4. The higher attaining pupils have a good grasp and understanding of economic issues but many middle and lower attaining pupils are unable to apply basic economic terms when analysing situations. In the sixth form, attainment is good and students adopt an analytical approach when applying economic concepts to situations. Progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and pupils use their prior knowledge to develop their understanding of the subject. In Years 12 and 13, students make good gains in their understanding of numeracy and when handling data. Very good progress is made in developing research skills.
18. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are above the national averages in geography and pupils understand and know how to use a range of geographical techniques. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also well above the national average. The older pupils have a satisfactory grasp of geographical concepts as illustrated in the Year 11 discussion on industrial decline and location. Attainment in Years 12 and 13 is in line with the national average. However, there has been a decline in the percentage of students achieving grades A-B over the last three years. Students have a good grasp of geographical terms, and use good investigative techniques during fieldwork. Overall, all pupils make good progress during all key stages.
19. Attainment in history is just above the national average at Key Stage 3 and in the GCSE examinations, standards are much higher than the national average. Pupils have a sound grasp of historical knowledge, and can interpret events and causes and effects but their recall of chronological events is weak. In Years 12 and 13, the standard of coursework is very good; however, although students have a sound grasp of the subject, they do not adopt an analytical approach when discussing events and many do not show a good grasp of the technical terms used during teaching. Progress is good over time and pupils develop a greater awareness of how to handle and use different source materials and to comment on bias and sufficiency.
20. In modern foreign languages, at the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils achieve standards that are in line with the national expectations. Oral skills are sound and pupils can respond appropriately and correctly in the target language. Listening skills are well developed particularly in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The lower attaining pupils are less well skilled at responding to listening tasks at Key Stage 3. Pupils can write short accounts and engage in discussions in French and German in both Key Stages 4 and 5. The older students in the sixth form write fluently and accurately in the target language. Progress is good in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and satisfactory at Key Stage 3.
21. A comparison of the results at the end of Key Stage 3 and the GCSE examinations showed that pupils with a statement and those with special educational needs are making good progress based on their prior level of attainment. Standards achieved in the public examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 showed that 66 per cent of pupils with special educational needs achieved GCSE grades in 1999 which were better than their predicted results. Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science,

music, history, geography and physical education. Specialist teachers in small sets in English, mathematics and science teach them and these factors contribute significantly to their attainment and progress. Pupils also make very good progress when subject specific targets are set as part of the individual educational plan. Such targets are set and reviewed regularly in English, mathematics, science, music, history, and information and communication technology. Progress is good in both key stages when work is carefully matched to the needs of pupils. However, there is insufficient planned use of individual education plans in some subjects.

22. In music, pupils in Key Stage 3 are able to play “Shepherds’ Hey” on the recorder and some can read musical and rhythmical notation. They progress to play elementary chords on the guitar, accompany themselves whilst singing a song, and demonstrate a good knowledge of musical rudiments. Pupils in Year 9 can play pieces on electronic keyboards with varying degrees of ability. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are working beyond the standards required by the GCSE examination syllabus with work on the sonata form. They are also able to identify the period of composition of previously unheard pieces and give well-informed reasons for their decision. Students in the Sixth Form have an adequate grasp of harmony and history, but are unable to use their knowledge fluently in conversation. Their instrumental ability is in line with this stage in their preparation for the A-level examination.
  23. In physical education most pupils at Key Stage 3 display games skills in line with the national expectations and they are able to perform a variety of gymnastics movements. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils display more advanced skills and techniques and use them to play effectively a variety of games, such as netball, volleyball, football and badminton. A number of pupils have gained success at local and county level both as individuals and as team members. There is no formal physical education in the sixth form for students other than a few studying the A-level course, though some activities are organised by students themselves for their own recreation.
  24. The school has recently introduced and is trialling a new procedure for recognising and rewarding academic and pastoral achievement and service. Incorporated into this award is recognition of attainment, effort, progress and community service. Such a merit system is designed to encourage pupils to aim for high standards in all areas of their work. Value added analysis and whole school target setting is beginning in all three key stages. Findings showed that pupils at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 make good progress particularly when the data are used to support them in their work. In Years 12 and 13, the value added analysis showed that overall boys were under achieving in relation to girls and that although there was a steady improvement in the percentage of students achieving A level passes, there was also a decline in the average points score in a number of subjects. Overall, the value added analysis shows that the school adds value to pupils’ attainment particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4.
30. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
25. Pupils’ attitudes to learning are good. Most are keen to do well and concentrate on tasks set. They work well in pairs and groups, collaborating effectively when necessary. They respond well when given opportunities to show initiative, and can easily adapt to a more independent learning environment. In science, design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education they show respect for equipment and work competently, with proper regard to safety. In lessons where expectations are clear and their needs are met, pupils conduct themselves sensibly. In English they recognise the value of work prepared for them and they seek to rise to the challenge. When there is an appropriate challenge and activities are varied and stimulating, pupils display enjoyment in their work and take pride in their achievements. However, when teaching lacks appropriate pace and challenge activities are limited in variety, some pupils become restless and lose interest and a minority display unacceptable behaviour. In some isolated instances, poor classroom management caused unnecessary disruption to pupils’ learning. In art, design and technology and modern foreign language lessons, most pupils are concerned to do well but a minority of pupils lose interest when tasks are not well matched to their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated fully into all aspects of school life.

26. Behaviour in and around the school is good. There are good relationships between staff and pupils, they relate well to each other and they are courteous and welcoming to visitors. Outside the lessons pupils' behaviour is good. The school is an orderly community and conduct around the school is well managed despite the congestion that occurs in some corridors and shared spaces due to the design and layout of the school buildings. Pupils queue patiently near the dining room, make their way to assemblies in a calm manner, respect others in the library and work quietly and purposefully. There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour in and around the school, which are shared with parents through the Code of Conduct. Parents and their children sign this on arrival at the school and it is implemented consistently with beneficial effect. Incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively by staff. Temporary exclusions are low and in the last five years only two pupils have been excluded permanently. Since the last report a system for rewarding achievement has been introduced in an effort to encourage pupils to make consistent and sustained improvements in their attitude to work. That system was introduced at the beginning of this term and is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.

27. The personal and social development of pupils has been addressed in a careful, thorough and exemplary scheme of work, which was agreed by the Governors in July of this year. It clearly maps all aspects of pupils' personal and social development throughout their school career. There is an effective anti-bullying policy. In reviewing this aspect of school life, a peer mediation scheme was initiated and training in counselling undertaken by sixth formers, specifically targeting Key Stage 3. It is now in its second year of operation, and well established to the benefit of both age groups, helping to alleviate stress caused to pupils.
28. The school has introduced successfully Year Councils as a result of the last inspection. These are now an established part of school life and pupils who represent their tutor groups take a mature and responsible attitude to the issues concerning them. The personal, social and moral education programme is comprehensive and provides opportunities for pupils to explore and discuss pertinent issues and make informed decisions. A large number of pupils take part in extra-curricular activities mainly concerned with sport, music and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Many sixth form students act as classroom assistants to support teaching in Key Stage 3 and to enhance provision for pupils with special educational needs. However, there is scope for further opportunities for pupils, in the lower school, to show initiative and take responsibility both for themselves, their work and the school community as a whole.

#### 34. **Attendance**

29. The school's attendance rates are better than the national average. Unauthorised absence is low and authorised absence has reduced by nearly one per cent during the 1998/99 academic year. The introduction of an optical mark-reader has helped to monitor pupils' attendance more effectively.
30. Registration meets statutory requirements though punctuality remains unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Buses carrying pupils to school from the large and scattered catchment area arrive frequently late due to traffic congestion. This often results in registers in the morning being collected an hour after registration. Afternoon registrations also have more than half the registers returned late. However, determined efforts of staff during the inspection ensured prompt return of registers.

### 36. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

#### 36. **Teaching**

31. The quality of teaching was sound or better in 98 per cent of 208 lessons seen, it was satisfactory in 32 per cent, good in 50 per cent, very good or excellent in 16 per cent and unsatisfactory or poor in two per cent. In satisfactory lessons teaching promoted sound learning and in good or very good lessons teaching had a marked effect on pupils' attainment and progress. Very good teaching occurs in music throughout the school, science at Key Stage 3 and in German in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teaching is consistently good in all years in English, history and geography. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form the quality of teaching is good in modern foreign languages, in information technology at Key Stage 3 and in both key stages in design and technology. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in all stages and contributes significantly to pupils' learning and good progress. It is good in the sixth form and in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory over all in Key Stage 4.
32. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects is a strength and they use this to plan lessons effectively and present work clearly. For example in design and technology teachers give clear and confident demonstrations which enable pupils to understand and apply techniques for themselves and in geography this results in pupils being able to engage in interesting discussions about settlements in Years 7 and 8 and about shopping patterns in Year 10. In music confident teachers' expositions and effective strategies ensure that pupils grasp of musical concepts is secure. There is growing emphases in

- many mathematics lessons on the effective use of language in the development of mathematical understanding. In science, well planned class investigations, effective teacher demonstration lessons and probing questions consolidate pupils' understanding of concepts. In modern foreign languages, teachers have a very good command of French and German and often conduct lessons entirely in the language being learned; this is very effective in reinforcing learning, challenging higher attainers and developing listening skills.
33. Lesson planning is good overall and in the vast majority of lessons; activities are appropriate and well sequenced to ensure pupils build successfully on previous learning and they challenge effectively higher attaining pupils. In some instances, however, lesson planning does not focus sufficiently on the progress of individual pupils so that not all pupils are challenged appropriately. The teaching of pupils with statements of special needs is good. Teachers within learning support have a very good subject knowledge and understanding which gives pupils confidence. Planning and preparation are very good with detailed records and monitoring of individual pupils taking place. High expectations, the use of a wide range of resources and teaching strategies challenge the pupils to achieve success. Pupils are well managed in a calm, supportive atmosphere in the learning support area where pupils are encouraged to learn. Individual Education Plans are not used sufficiently by subject teachers and some departments in their planning to allow pupils to fulfil their potential within the classroom. As a result some resources and tasks are not adequately matched to their needs in order to overcome difficulties or to allow them to make significant progress.
34. Teachers make good use of resources and lessons are usually conducted at a brisk pace to achieve objectives. For example, in history World War 1 artefacts were used effectively to stimulate interest and discussion, in modern languages teachers make good use of overhead transparencies and flashcards to make patterns in the languages clear and to clarify the meaning of new vocabulary. In information and communication technology, effective use of CD-Roms and Internet facilities give access to a wide range of good quality information. In economics worksheets were used to very good effect to guide students in the sixth form in using a variety of sources for research in order to compile explanations about inequalities in income. However in some lessons resources are not always adapted adequately to meet the needs of all pupils particularly the lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs. In science very good use is made of time so that teachers are able to summarise what has been learned at the end of each lesson and prepare pupils for the next lesson.
35. In the more effective lessons teachers use a good variety of strategies to promote learning and maintain interest. For example, in biology role-play was used effectively in Year 13 to enable students to explain the important points of the Krebs cycle. In a German lesson in Year 12, pair-work activities enabled students to gain confidence in speaking and listening and to develop negotiating skills in the language and in French in Key Stage 4 teachers make effective use of questioning by pupils to allow them to gather information and solve problems. In science discussion was used very effectively in a Year 7 class to enable pupils to interpret a graph and determine the mass of an unknown object. However, in the vast majority of lessons the teacher heavily directs activities and this decreases opportunities for pupils to work independently, engage in discussion or explore issues for themselves and sometimes slows the pace.
36. Homework is usually used effectively to consolidate and extend learning. In history for example, teachers' high expectations of pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form classes, are evident in challenging homework assignments which require a great deal of research skills. Teachers have good control and management skills and good relationships with pupils and in the vast majority of lessons this ensures a purposeful and effective atmosphere for learning. Control is less secure where teacher-led activities are lengthy requiring pupils to listen for extended periods.
37. Assessment is used satisfactorily in most subjects to inform planning but this is an area which is under developed in most subjects. The quality of marking varies considerably, some pupils receive valuable information about how to improve, while for others it is less useful. Some subjects such as history and mathematics give some helpful advice and feedback on how to improve. Teachers monitor pupils' progress and intervene appropriately but this is not always planned sufficiently in advance. In science, the computerised system assists teachers to identify underachievement rapidly. Some subjects do use assessment effectively to improve standards, for example in physical education pupils are encouraged to

evaluate one another's performance and give guidance on how they might improve and in information technology teachers set individual targets and are quick to give help in lessons. Recording provides less helpful direction in information technology, where there are inadequate records of individual pupils' progress.

38. There has been satisfactory improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is a strength. There are variations in the teachers' expectations of pupils and some inconsistencies of approach, as a result, in some subjects. The school recognises the need to spread good practice through monitoring and observation of lessons.

#### **44. Curriculum and assessment**

39. At Key Stage 3, the school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which fulfils its aims and meets the needs of all pupils. All subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education and personal and social education are taught. From Year 7, pupils study either French or German but currently have no opportunity to study a second language in Year 9. Information technology is taught as a discrete subject throughout Key Stage 3. There is insufficient time given to drama as a result of its integration into the English curriculum. Dance and music enhance pupils' opportunities in the performing arts. Careers education, sex education and health education, including education on drug misuse, are covered thoroughly in the well-planned personal, social and moral education lessons.
40. At Key Stage 4 all pupils follow a core of English, mathematics, single science, religious education and physical education. From the options on offer pupils make four choices. However, the school does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4. Pupils in Year 11 do not receive the National Curriculum Programme of Study in information and communication technology. Currently there is no provision to enter pupils for a GCSE examination in information technology. The school also fails to meet statutory requirements for the study of a modern foreign language and for design and technology. There are no short courses offered but all pupils have the opportunity to choose both modern foreign languages and design and technology. At present over 30 per cent of pupils do not study a foreign language and over 50 per cent do not study design and technology. The provision for the arts suffers from a lack of GCSE drama. Pupils continue to take part in a comprehensive programme of careers education, sex education, health and drugs education and a useful introduction to work experience.
41. The breadth of the sixth form curriculum was an issue at the last inspection. The curriculum provided for the sixth form has now been broadened to increase the range of choices available through the school's involvement in the Chetwynd Centre. The main A levels offered by the school are augmented through the centre by a range of options, including computer studies, sports studies, psychology, business studies, design and technology and geology. Advanced level GNVQ in health and social care is also available. There is also the opportunity to study a number of GCSE subjects at the centre. The range of options now offered is wide enough to provide appropriate combinations of subjects. The curriculum is further enriched by religious education and a worthwhile personal and social education programme which includes careers guidance and some general studies. There is a Young Enterprise scheme and students have considerable responsibility for the running of the school bank in conjunction with the Yorkshire Bank. There is, however, no planned physical education programme and not all students undertake work experience. Those studying modern foreign languages undertake work experience in both France and Germany. Apart from music, there is little provision for the performing arts. Take-up rates for the sixth form are growing. The response of the students to the extended opportunities at the Chetwynd centre is positive.
42. Pupils with special educational needs have access to a broad and balanced curriculum at both key stages. They are well supported through the substantial school provision. English and mathematics, through the small groups offered in conjunction with the special needs department, meet the curriculum requirements of the pupils in literacy and numeracy. Some subjects, such as mathematics, offer the Certificate of Achievement. Their curriculum is enhanced through the Youth Award Scheme.



43. The curriculum is planned effectively in most subjects and provides continuity and progression both within, and across, key stages. Schemes of work provide appropriate information for the teaching of the National Curriculum. A strength of the school is the detailed and comprehensive programme of personal, social and moral education. The well-planned units ensure progression in topics so that they are appropriate to the pupils' ages and stages of development.
44. The provision for careers education and guidance is very good. This programme benefits from the quality support of the independent careers service, liaison with Staffordshire University and the mock interviews organised through a commercial concern and the school's governors. Pupils are well prepared for option choices in Year 9. In Key Stage 4 the pupils regard work experience as a strength of the curriculum. In the Sixth Form students are given good guidance on career choices and applying for higher education.
45. The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Physical education and music make outstanding contributions. Events include choir and orchestral tours, opera workshops and the dance production. The school provides a cricket school for which it is a centre of excellence. Pupils benefit from opportunities such as exchanges and school journeys. Field trips, theatre visits, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and the mathematics Junior Challenge all enrich the life of the school. They are much appreciated by pupils and parents alike.
46. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in widening the provision for the sixth form. The personal, social and moral education programme has improved significantly. However the school has made unsatisfactory progress in adjusting the option choices to ensure that statutory obligations are met. A modern foreign language is still not compulsory at Key Stage 4. Additionally, arrangements for design and technology and for information technology do not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4.
47. With its comprehensive whole-school policy for assessment the school has established a good basis for procedures to assess pupils' attainment. The policy provides clear and practical guidelines to assist departments in formulating their own policies on assessment, marking and recording. Most subjects have now established useful policies to ensure consistency within the department. In a few subjects assessment procedures are still not developed sufficiently nor linked clearly to National Curriculum requirements.
48. Within departments there are many examples of good practice in aspects of assessment. History uses detailed data analysis to establish the performance of different groups of students. It has well differentiated assessment tasks which allow teachers to identify underperformance. The moderation of pupils' portfolios ensures consistency in assessment within English. In music, the good management of differentiated practical tasks contributes positively to the accurate assessment of pupils' work.
49. Legal requirements for recording National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are met. For pupils with special educational needs annual reviews of statements are carried out effectively and efficiently. Statutory requirements for their assessment are met fully. Good liaison with the main primary schools, identifies those pupils with special needs. For English and mathematics, there is further effective screening to inform setting arrangements.
50. The school has efficient systems in place to collect Key Stage 2 data and other standardised information about pupils' attainment on entry to the school and at the end of the key stages. Over the last two years this information has been readily available to departments. However, baseline data is not yet fully used as a basis for the tracking of individual pupils' progress and for target setting for all pupils as they proceed through Key Stages 3 and 4. Academic and pastoral information gathered from reports and monitoring by the heads of Years is held centrally in year groups but monitoring is not frequent enough to identify rigorously under performance. Through using the information it collects, the school aims to improve its examination results and the individual performance of the pupils. Expected annual targets are set for subjects at Key Stage 4, based on Yellis data. Pastoral and academic monitoring for sixth

form students is regular. There are three thorough interim assessments and two full reports, supplemented by meetings with parents, for students across Years 12 and 13.

51. Since the last inspection the school has made satisfactory progress in reviewing the school's policy on assessment, recording and reporting. The present policy reflects the consensus achieved among the staff. Satisfactory progress in collecting and using data has also been made. A successful policy for the assessment and identification of pupils with special educational needs has also been established. The school now has the potential to use assessment data consistently to monitor pupils' progress at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to support target setting for individuals.

**57. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

52. The school makes very good provision, for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The strengths of provision are in spiritual and moral development, which are both very good. Social and cultural developments that were highlighted as an issue for improvement in the 1994 report are now both good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development feature strongly in the mission statement and in the policy and syllabus for religious education. Many aspects are covered systematically through a very well planned programme for personal, social and moral education (PSME) which is taught by form tutors on a weekly basis. There is also very good support for this aspect of the curriculum from a number of subjects.
53. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. As a Catholic school, a wide range of opportunities is provided to foster spiritual awareness and development. Religious assemblies are very effective and enable pupils and students to reflect on how they apply Christian beliefs and values. Pupils in Year 8 have raised a substantial amount of money for the Pilgrimage Chapel, at Stafford General Hospital. Pupils and students contribute to spiritual reflection through readings and musical performance. In religious education, pupils study the beliefs and practices of Judaism and Islam. This contributes to the preparation of pupils taking their place in a multicultural society. Pupils are given very good opportunities in English to develop a sense of curiosity and to reflect on their own and the lives of others when they study the work of writers such as Thomas Hardy. In music, pupils consider the feelings and emotions evoked by different kinds of music and musical performances.
54. The provision of moral development is also very good. A code of conduct for behaviour in the school is managed with a very clear sense of fairness and justice. The code is signed by parents and emphasises the importance of showing respect for others. A strong moral framework is provided to help them to distinguish right from wrong. Teachers provide very good role models and in subjects such as modern foreign languages they have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons. In Personal, Social and Moral Education pupils learn about citizenship, human rights and equal opportunities. They develop a very good sense of moral responsibility through other subjects in the curriculum. In other subjects they learn about societies around the world and compare different attitudes to moral issues such as social and political freedom. In science, moral issues associated with family life are taught very effectively as part of pupils' sex education. Reading in English includes opportunities to consider controversial topics. Pupils in Year 9 look at the issue of violence and the influence of television on young people. In economics, food production techniques are considered and issues related to environmental damage and resource depletion.
55. Social development is good and is rooted in Catholic values. It is planned to promote the importance of service to the school and the community. Older students are encouraged to form 'buddy' relationships with younger pupils. Pupils say this arrangement is good and provides additional support for them in their early years in the school. A School Council is now established and all pupils have an effective means of expressing their views about aspects of their school life and welfare. Good progress has been made in this respect since the last inspection. Sixth form students take on responsibility and show their initiative when they help to run the school bank and act as classroom assistants to support teachers in the lower school. In musical activities, pupils develop very good team skills when they perform together. They also learn to appreciate each other's skills and talents. In science, pupils help each other

to learn and are prepared to take the lead in discussions to give verbal feedback about their investigations. Very good group work takes place in modern foreign languages. A number of pupils have been heavily involved in helping the school support the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development. Over the past three years, they have run the 'Gambia Project' to provide funding to educate underprivileged children.

56. Cultural development, overall, is also good. There are very good opportunities for pupils to enrich their understanding of their own culture. In art they visit the Shire Hall Gallery in Stafford and the galleries in London. There is a biennial art exhibition to celebrate the artistic achievements of pupils of all ages. In English, pupils go on trips to theatres and are involved in drama workshops. Well-established links with France and Germany enable pupils to be involved in exchange visits. In music, concerts are given in local churches, other venues and on foreign tours to places such as Hungary and Italy. The school orchestra and choirs enable access for all children in the school to musical performance of a very high standard. Dance performances provide pupils with opportunities to appreciate different forms and styles of gesture and movement.
57. Opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures are satisfactory. The school's policy on equal opportunities was developed, soon after the 1994 inspection report, to promote an appreciation of different social and cultural traditions and customs. Good progress has been made to develop this aspect in the curriculum since the last inspection. There are examples of satisfactory or better practice in a number of subjects. For example, Christian festivals are compared with those of other religions around the world. In music, pupils learn to appreciate some of the music from India and China. In art, pupils study the artefacts of North American Indians and the Australian Aboriginal and in geography pupils' study includes work on Japan.

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

58. The quality of support and guidance, together with the caring ethos of the school has been maintained effectively since the last report. Overall, the school's pastoral arrangements for support, guidance and pupils' welfare are good.
59. The staff show concern for their pupils, and respond to their needs. Parents are confident that their children are well treated whilst they are in the school's care. Procedures for monitoring the progress and personal development of pupils are good. The school has effective monitoring systems in place to record pupils' academic progress but in the majority of subjects it is not yet used rigorously and consistently to inform planning for their continued progress. Pupils' personal development and behaviour are addressed through a comprehensive and exemplary scheme of work. This fosters care and concern for others, which are exhibited by all members of teaching and non-teaching staff. Annual reports to parents conform to most criteria. They do not, however, contain the targets to inspire effort and improvement in order for pupils to make progress.
60. Attendance figures have improved since the introduction of a computerised system of registration. The school has good procedures for following up any concerns about absences that are unaccounted for. The education welfare officer provides effective support to challenge cases where there is cause for concern. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good, and a system is in place to monitor the attendance of pupils whilst they are being educated off-site.
61. Effective procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour have now been incorporated into the pupils' record of achievement. The Code of Conduct is applied consistently in conjunction with parents and pupils and is fairly enforced by all adults who work in the school. There is an effective and very successful peer mediation scheme, now in its second year, whereby pupils from the sixth form, who have been specially trained, help to resolve difficulties between pupils in Key Stage 3.
62. The school's procedures for child protection and the promotion of pupils' well being, health and safety are good. Child protection procedures are firmly in place and the headteacher acts as the appointed child protection officer. Attendance at case conferences for those children who are on the register is delegated appropriately to heads of Year as part of their pastoral responsibilities. The vice-chair of governors, who has expertise in this area, undertakes training on an annual basis. First aid arrangements are good, with proper records kept of treatments applied to staff and pupils. The school actively promotes health and safety awareness through the personal and social education programme as well as through the subjects of the curriculum. Appropriate arrangements are in place for sex education and the promotion of drugs awareness. A health and safety policy is in place, but is soon to be updated in view of the new audit requirements recently put into place by the local authority.

### **68. Partnership with parents and the community**

63. Overall, the school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and the community. The school values the supportive links established with parents and is continuing to extend and develop links into the community. It aims to work in partnership with parents in supporting their children's education. Parents' questionnaires indicated that the quality of information for parents has strengths and weaknesses. There are newsletters for parents that are sent out each term. It aims to keep parents well informed about the day-to-day life of the school although it contains a lot of information which is retrospective rather than a help to parents in preparing for forthcoming events
64. The headteacher is approachable and easily accessible to parents. For some years he has held 'surgeries' once a month for any parent who has a problem to come along and talk to him about it. However, due to other events taking place this term, that has not been possible. New parents receive a full hour's talk in a meeting specifically designed to inculcate the distinctive values of the Roman Catholic nature of the school and its adherence to the Christian family tradition. The Parent Teacher Association, with a few

dedicated helpers, has been successful in raising funds for many aspects of school life, for example, school equipment, resources and visits.

65. All parents are given good opportunities to discuss their children's progress and pupils from Year 11 onwards are invited to accompany their parents to the meetings about their progress. There is an additional meeting for parents of Year 7 pupils during the first half of the autumn term. Pupils' homework diaries enable parents to see what homework has been given, but frequently the amount and nature of homework varies from subject to subject. The planners are not used as means of communication between teachers and parents. Annual reports to parents fulfil most of the statutory requirements; however, they do not contain any detailed information about how pupils can make progress in the written sections, with the exception of Music at Key Stage 3. Parents of children with special needs are fully involved in annual reviews of the individual education plans.
66. The school has very good links with the community. The curriculum is enhanced by many extra-curricular activities and visits to places of interest locally, nationally and internationally. Sports fixtures bring pupils into contact with other schools and the Choir and Orchestra have toured Europe and sung in both Lichfield and St. Paul's Cathedrals. There is a vibrant Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme with increasing numbers each year wishing to participate. The school has good contacts with business and industry. The work experience programme for Year 10 pupils is well organised and leaders from local business take part in mock interviews for Year 11 pupils. Overall, the links maintained by the school have a positive impact on standards.

72.

**THE**

## **MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **72. Leadership and management**

67. The leadership of the headteacher is a real strength of the school. He provides strong and highly effective leadership and there is clear educational vision based on determination and fairness in his dealing with staff and pupils. He enjoys the full confidence of the governing body and is ably supported by the two deputy heads and the rest of the senior management team. They have been successful collectively in creating an environment in which both staff and pupils can achieve. The school responded positively to its 1994 OFSTED report. The pace of change is appropriate and the rate of improvement is good. The new initiatives have included:
- promoting consistency of standards and expectations through teaching and learning policies;
  - using the Chetwynd Centre as a Post-16 consortium for widening curricular opportunities at Key Stage 5.
  - promoting curricular liaison with pyramid primary schools to build on the Literacy Hour in Key Stage 2.
  - carrying out conversions and planning accommodation with the addition of a proposed second music room and a new laboratory.
  - improving the library resources and other learning facilities.
  - enabling greater involvement of pupils and students through the establishment of Year Councils and the Sixth Form Council and 'Peer Mediation Scheme.'
1. At the time of the last inspection, development planning, monitoring and evaluation of school policies and initiatives were at an early stage of development. The senior management team works hard to involve staff and governors in decision-making, consultations, planning and review. Since the last inspection, some key appointments have been made and lines of accountability have been firmly established. There are well-planned meetings of the senior management team, curricular and pastoral teams, planning groups and task groups. The new deputy headteacher spends considerable time and effort in analysing public examination results to evaluate the comparative performance of subjects and

has provided effective training to all heads of departments on data analysis and value added target setting. Members of the senior management team have responsibility for subject departments but do not yet participate with staff in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, standards and aspects of other provision. There is a need to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the senior and middle managers to include these responsibilities. External evaluation and support by the LEA's advisory service, for example in the reviews of art, history, modern foreign languages and in-service training in areas such as assessment and 14-19 curriculum development, have played an important part in raising standards. There are clear and well managed systems for the induction of newly qualified teachers.

2. The school's mission statement and aims refer to the distinctive nature of the Catholic school and makes a strong commitment, "to teach the whole child giving recognition to excellence, the spiritual, academic and social aspects of each individual's development" The school's mission statement and aims are suitable and reflect the school's strong commitment to good quality education and high standards of attainment. To a very large degree the school achieves these aims. The school has a commitment to provide pupils with equality of opportunity which enables them to develop to their full potential. The ethos in the school is excellent and relationships are very good at all levels. The pastoral team is very effective in providing good support and care. Pupils' attendance rates are better than the national average. Staff and pupils alike are aware of the increasing expectation of academic success. Over the last three years the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 was well above the national average. Similarly the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C has risen from 56 per cent in 1995 to 67 per cent in 1999. A level results have improved since the previous OFSTED inspection though attainment of students in 1999 was below the national average and reverses the trend that the school has been achieving.
3. Staff and governors are involved actively in the process of creating the school's development plan which, for the current year, has many good features and includes the key issues from the 1994 OFSTED report. Well led by the deputy head, the planning group of staff and governors, reviewed and moderated self-reviews with departments, using an adaptation of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. Appropriate strategies are now in place to ensure effective planning. The school's development plan is an effective document which is linked appropriately to its mission statement, aims and values. There are appropriate criteria for success, clear allocation of responsibilities and realistic timescales but all the school's priorities are not costed. The impetus for improvement in standards is provided through bench marking and setting measurable targets to make an objective assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Departmental development plans are variable in quality. Subject plans are not always linked specifically to the school's development plan and do not set specific quantifiable targets in order to make an objective assessment of pupils' attainment and progress between key stages.
4. The management skills of middle managers are improving in most areas. There are examples of very effective leadership in English, history and music and good in modern foreign languages, science, economics, geography, art, physical education and careers. Considerable effort has been made to ensure that curricular planning and the implementation of the curriculum are documented thoroughly. Aspects of monitoring and evaluation are incorporated but are not always translated fully into successful practice. The best departments are scrutinising pupils' work, analysing National Curriculum tests and GCSE performance and raising the level of discussion and action. The heads of year play an important part in the school's systems of support and guidance and monitor effectively the work of form tutors whose role is well developed in monitoring pupils' academic and social development. Through well-planned staff reviews and the in-service training programme, teachers are well supported in raising pupils' attainment.
5. The management of special educational needs is good. An appropriate policy document provides an effective framework for the work of the department. The arrangements for supporting and monitoring pupils' progress, across all subject departments through link teachers, are effective. The communication amongst the governors, headteacher, senior management team, and the special educational needs co-ordinator is good. A link governor supports effectively the work of the special needs department. The school values close partnership with parents in setting specific targets for work to be completed at home. There are productive links with the local education authority's special educational needs support service and the county educational psychological service, other local high

schools and Stafford College of Further Education.

6. The governing body is very supportive, meets most of its statutory duties through its well-structured committees and is involved actively in overseeing the work of the school. However, it does not ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement curriculum in design and technology, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages. The support of the governors for the Catholic character of the school and all its varied work is seen by the school as crucial. Ten out of twelve Foundation Governors are, or were, parents of pupils in the school. Positive relationships and mutual trust exist between the governing body and the senior management team. The supportive and discursive nature of the governing body allows the senior management team to attend governors' meetings and discuss key issues relating to curriculum, finance and staffing. The governing body plays an active role in strategic planning, critical support and monitoring and evaluation. The governors' main interest is in the quality of education and some governors use their expertise to good advantage in supporting and challenging existing provision in aspects such as special education needs, curriculum, finances and management. The governors receive updates of the school development plan, subject development plans and they monitor progress against the post-OFSTED action plan throughout the year. The headteacher and the chair of governors meet regularly. The annual report to parents includes much useful information such as details of the curriculum and the provision for special educational needs and pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form.
7. The day-to-day administration is efficient and there are generally clear lines of communication both within the school, between the school and parents, and with the wider community. There is a well-established cycle of meetings for the whole staff and for pastoral and academic teams. This enables senior management to be well informed of issues arising in all areas of the school's organisation. Moreover, staff feel their views are taken into account and opportunities for comments are available. The headteacher and senior staff are approachable and approached. Parents' involvement in the life of the school and their children's education is good.
8. Since the last inspection there have been substantial improvements in management procedures and the school has now a strong commitment to raising pupils' attainment. The investment of the school in training days to revise the school's mission statement, increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning, staff questionnaires and reviews have raised their awareness aimed at improving the quality of education. The supportive role of the governors is complemented by the support of the vast majority of parents for the school's ethos and its determination to consult parents on major issues. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher and the excellent support of the governors and parents, the school is well placed for, and is capable of, achieving further improvement.

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

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81. Staffing
9. The school has sufficient teachers and support staff to meet pupils' curricular needs. They are well qualified to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum throughout the school, including the sixth form. Teachers' responsibilities are well matched to their qualifications and experience. There is a major imbalance amongst senior post holders and within the senior management team, where men significantly outnumber women. This was noted at the time of the previous inspection and has not changed significantly, despite the co-option of a female member of staff to the planning team. The school has coped well with several long-term absences of members of staff by engaging specialist teachers, so that as far as possible, the quality of teaching has been maintained. However, it has not always been possible to ensure continuity which has affected adversely the progress of some pupils.
  10. The school is well served by non-teaching staff. A strength of the school is the team of support staff who assist pupils with special educational needs. Technicians facilitate pupils' learning through the effective practical support they provide in subjects such as science, information and communication technology, art and design and technology. They ensure that audiovisual equipment and other learning resources are

well serviced for effective teaching of these practical subjects. There are enough members of the school's administrative team; they work hard to ensure that the day-to-day running of the school is effective and efficient.

11. There is an effective induction programme for new staff who are well provided with good support both at departmental and school levels. They have mentors to support and guide their work in classrooms. There is no formal system of appraisal to determine the professional needs of teachers. Training is driven by issues arising from the school's development plan from which departments bid for resources. Priorities agreed, after school audit and staff reviews, such as those concerning school improvement, form the basis on which allocations are made. Whole-school training on teaching and learning is proving helpful in raising pupils' attainment and progress. The system to monitor the classroom practice means that this approach to training lacks precision, particularly in relation to meeting teachers' individual needs to improve the quality of their work.



## Accommodation

12. At the time of the last inspection, the school's accommodation was deficient and highlighted as a matter for special attention. As a result of the school's action plan and high level of commitment of the governing body, it is now satisfactory. The school has resolved problems caused by a serious shortage of offices for some heads of department, storage rooms and specialist facilities, especially for science and music. It has addressed issues concerning the size of the staff room and the poor state of the floor in the sports hall. Additionally, the library has been relocated and extended and the entrance foyer enlarged. Although the specialist rooms for science and music will not be ready until September 2000, within the constraints of a limited capital budget, the school has done as much as could be expected to improve deficiencies.
13. Despite these improvements, the governors' admissions policy continues to put a premium on teaching spaces, which are used for 96 per cent of the week, and other deficiencies persist. Facilities for drama are poor; lessons are taught in the hall, which is also used for physical education. There are still shortages of teaching areas for aspects of modern languages and biology in Year 13, and the scattered location of rooms for mathematics makes it difficult to use centrally located resources effectively.
14. Satisfactory use is made of the Chetwynd Centre. This is a post-sixteen consortium base which the school uses for a General National Vocation Qualification course in health and social care. It also provides a base for the teaching of psychology, sociology, sports studies, business studies, commerce, geology, music, art and design, design and technology and information technology. The Centre's provision greatly enhances what the school itself offers.
15. The school has enough outdoor space and facilities for a range of sporting activities. The building is in a reasonable state of repair and is clean and tidy, although many classrooms are in need of redecoration.

## Resources

16. The range and quality of learning resources are generally satisfactory. These are often extended by the initiatives of individual departments to acquire materials through links with the local business community. Within the school's limited budget, funds are allocated equitably according to a known formula. Nevertheless, departments struggle to incorporate information and communication technology as a central support for their work. The school's pupil-computer ratio is only marginally better than at the time of the last inspection; this limits opportunities for pupils to research through the Internet, to word process and to analyse data.
17. At the time of the last inspection, resources provided through the school's library were unsatisfactory. Although a new Resources and Active Learning Facility has been set up, including the appointment of a part-time librarian, serious weaknesses remain which makes it unsatisfactory. The stock of books is poor; the school's investment is modest in the updating and extension of books, with some additional resources acquired through the fund for Books for Schools. The careers section is well-stocked with prospectuses and work experience booklets. There is no formal system to enable departments to review and request books and other resources to support their subjects. As a result, most subjects are poorly represented; many books are old and reference sections are limited. The four computers are not connected to the Internet and lie idle for long periods. There is considerable scope to develop library and learning resources in most subjects.

## 90. school

## The efficiency of the

18. Despite considerable difficulties, the quality of financial planning is satisfactory. The income per pupil which the school receives through the Local Education Authority is amongst the lowest in the country. This has had a number of adverse effects. Over the last eight years the school has had progressively to

reduce the number of teachers employed, resulting in larger classes. Some of the plans to improve the accommodation have had to be shelved. There is a small deficit which the school hopes to remove in the current year, but no means of creating a contingency reserve. The school receives small additional sums from lettings, the parish levy and school fund, all of which are audited properly. However the school is still feeling the effect of having to pay for resurfacing the sports hall floor. Finance is handled by the headteacher and a senior teacher who teaches for two thirds of the week, supported by a part-time accounts clerk. Given such financial stringency it is remarkable how well the accounts have been managed.

19. The school's development plan has many good features but does not take account of future staffing needs nor the priorities for building new accommodation or repairing the old. There is no analysis of staffing ratios in different year groups or at the Chetwynd Centre. However, recent analysis of pupils' academic progress over time has given valuable insights into the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
20. The school makes good use of its staff, accommodation and learning resources. The ratio of staff to pupils is well below the national average, and the percentage of time spent in contact with pupils is economical. Cleaning and maintenance costs are exactly in line with national averages, and the work is carried out efficiently. Departments make good use of the learning resources at their disposal. The new computer rooms are well used. However the library, though recently moved and enlarged, is unsatisfactory in all respects. Its funding is low, so the number of books is less than half the national average; their quality is poor; there is no money to pay a full-time librarian; the furnishing and general appearance is drab; and its day-to-day use is not promoted effectively by the subject departments. The delegated funds received for pupils with special education needs are used well.
21. Some A level groups are small and over half the students study at the Chetwynd Centre. This arrangement places a drain on the school's finances, but it does allow more choice and this provision supplements the sixth form curricular provision. The school has not attempted to evaluate whether the expenditure involved is justified and the school's governors do not declare the academic results gained by students via the Chetwynd Centre in their annual report to parents. This is a breach of statutory requirements. In all other respects, the resources made available to the sixth form are deployed suitably.
22. Financial control is much improved and is satisfactory. The Support Officer for the County's Education Joint Finance Unit inspects the accounts once a term and reports that all is in order. The District Auditor's report is delivered every two years. His recommendations of two years ago have been carried out, and the report presented to the Governing Body. The school allocates funds to departments according to a formula which is now open to all staff. Each teacher responsible for a fund receives a monthly print-out of the account, so spending is scrutinised regularly. Secretarial and other support staff provide an excellent service, and the school runs well on a daily basis.
23. The school has addressed the concerns expressed by the Auditor, and made its financial arrangements transparent to staff. Governors are kept well-informed. The development plan now has more detail, but is still not costed fully. There is scope for more forward planning, whatever the difficulties, with more analysis of cost-effectiveness. The school gives good value for money. From a very low funding base it delivers good results in GCSE that are well above the national average, and A level results only just below the national. Teaching is good, and the range of extra-curricular provision is very good.

## 96. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

### 96. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

96.

#### English

24. Overall, attainment in English is above average and standards have improved significantly since the last OFSTED inspection. Results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds have been above average for the last four years. In 1998, the percentage of pupils achieving level 5, or above, was close to the national average and the proportion reaching level 6 or above was well above the national average. High standards were achieved in the 1999 tests with 78 per cent of pupils achieving level 5 or above. The school's performance, in comparison with all schools nationally and with schools with pupils from a similar background, is well above average. Girls achieve higher levels than boys but overall, the attainment of both groups of pupils exceeds the national average.
25. The GCSE examination results in both English and English literature have been above the national average for the percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C in both subjects and standards have been maintained over the last three years. In 1998, 69 per cent of pupils achieved A\*-C in English and 76 per cent achieved similar grades in the literature examination. A higher standard was achieved in the 1999 examinations particularly in English literature with 90 per cent of all pupils achieving GCSE grades A\*-C. Just over one-fifth of all pupils achieved the top most grades A\*-A in both subjects. The school's performance, in comparison with all schools nationally and with schools with pupils from a similar background, is well above average. The proportion of boys achieving good pass grades is well above the national average and the gap between boys and girls is now less pronounced. In Year 13, the proportion of students achieving grades A to B in the A level literature examination is above the national average. Most students achieve a good pass grade and the average points score is just above the national average.
26. Inspection evidence confirms that effective teaching combined with high expectations and well motivated pupils are contributory factors to all pupils, including those with special needs, achieving high standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.
27. Attainment in speaking and listening is above average at Key Stage 3. Oral skills are good from the start of the key stage and pupils express their viewpoints fluently and have a good command of standard spoken English. They listen attentively before responding to questions and responses are well organised when they intervene and answer questions. By the end of the key stage, Year 9 pupils speak with confidence and know how to adapt talk to different situations. However, discussion skills are less well developed. In Key Stage 4, pupils articulate clearly their responses to questions and language is used with precision when speaking. They ask perceptive questions as seen in a lesson in Year 10 where pupils analysed Browning's *Porphyria's Lover*. They also listen attentively and can promote a viewpoint. Good oral skills are used when pupils work collaboratively but they have not developed discussion skills to extend each other's ideas. Students in Year 12 and 13 engage in high quality discussions to explore their learning and they use sophisticated vocabulary when exploring their work. Good discussion skills and well presented papers in seminars impact on their learning as they identify key points and make evaluative comments when responding to each other. This was illustrated well in a lesson in Year 13 on *The Tempest* where pupils researched and presented papers on the text.
28. Standards in reading are above average in all three key stages. At the start of Key Stage 3, pupils begin to critically analyse and respond positively to both literary and non literary texts. They read accurately and fluently using good intonation to establish meaning. By the end of Year 9, pupils read competently but stumble at unusual and unknown complex words. They talk about their reading and select salient points to demonstrate their understanding of a text. Statemented pupils and pupils with a special educational needs read fluently to reflect their level of attainment and use appropriate strategies to pronounce words and develop meaning. They read and interpret text accurately as seen in a lesson in Year 9 where pupils analysed a GCSE comprehension paper.

29. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils read texts closely before giving a personal interpretation. In reading and responding to a range of texts, pupils identify techniques used to create effect and they demonstrate a secure understanding of textual analysis as seen in their responses to set texts for coursework. High attaining pupils read and interpret texts with insight and explore language and style confidently as seen in their response to Macbeth. Statemented pupils and pupils with special educational needs also have a sound grasp of texts as seen in their responses to a wide range of literary texts. Older students have a good level of textual analysis and appreciation and understand the use of form and structure as well as the use of language to develop meaning. This was well illustrated in their reading and interpretation of Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and Bennett's *Talking Head*.
30. Writing is a strength and attainment in writing is above average, with some outstanding and creative pieces of writing in all three key stages. Creative writing is well promoted in all year groups and a wide range of writing skills is developed as pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences. Pupils have an assured sense of readership and pupils from Year 7 upwards use the processes of writing to produce well crafted and structured essays, short stories or articles. Planning always precedes writing and proof reading skills are well used and there is not an over dependency on teachers to correct every mistake. The high and many average attaining pupils write with precision and their command and use of the language is very good.
31. By the end of Key Stage 3, extended essays are well planned and structured. In Key Stage 4, pupils write analytically and succinctly and paragraphs are well linked, expression is controlled and a wide vocabulary is used and they are confident when structuring their work and experimenting with words as seen in their poetry and narrative work. Year 12 and 13 students make good use of notes to develop their ideas and structure their work. Those working towards a high grade show good technical mastery when planning and writing. Students use dictionaries and thesauruses in lessons and they use a range of information and communication technology skills and packages when they design and present their work.
32. Pupils make good progress in all areas of the curriculum and statemented pupils and pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. By the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills by their readiness to respond appropriately and effectively during question and answer sessions. They make less progress in using discussion skills. Year 12 and 13 students make good progress in their oral work, as they are articulate and analytical when giving their viewpoint. Good progress is made in developing reading skills by the end of Key Stage 3 as pupils show a good understanding of the writer's use of language to create a particular effect. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils read with greater insight when interpreting texts. Pupils with a special educational need make very good progress in developing their understanding of texts and the older students in Key Stage 5 demonstrate good progress in analysing and interpreting their reading. Writing skills improve as pupils progress to each key stage. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils make good gains in using a range of writing skills and techniques to soundly structure their work and by the end of Key Stage 4, there is greater maturity and control. Statemented pupils and pupils with special educational needs make good progress in using a wide vocabulary and in expressing complex ideas in soundly structured work. Year 12 and Year 13 students make good progress in developing their writing by the attention given to detail in their essays and creative writing.
33. Pupils display a positive and mature approach to their work. They work with sustained interest and concentration and these characteristics combined with high motivation contribute to the good progress in lessons and results in the public examinations. They do not waste time in lessons. Pupils recognise the value of the work prepared for them and seek to rise to the set challenges. Behaviour is very good and often exemplary in Years 12 and 13. Their positive attitudes and maturity contribute to the flow of lessons and they intervene in a polite and non-obtrusive way to give their opinions. They respect their teachers and relationships are good.
34. Teaching is predominantly good or very good in all three key stages and is a strength of the department. Teachers are experienced specialists with a thorough knowledge of their subject, which they seek to

pass onto pupils. They broaden pupils' understanding of both language and literature and the relevance of the subject to life is highlighted particularly with the older students when literary criticism is undertaken. Teachers have high expectations and teaching is highly effective as progression is built into planning. Clear targets, interesting resources and tasks such as seminars, videos, discussions and reading materials are used to challenge pupils and involve them in their learning. Lengthy exposition is used effectively and makes a significant impact on good learning outcomes. Previous learning is always reviewed, talk is integral to lessons, and pupils are well supported and are allowed to intervene and share their views as well as to extend teaching points. In Key Stage 5, teachers provide insight into literary criticism and use questions and a running commentary to illuminate students' understanding of texts. Marking is carried out constructively and comments are instructive. Target setting is however not carried out and lessons are not always summarised. Activities are timed but pupils are not given a time constraint in which to complete work.

35. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in all respects and the department has made progress in developing and integrating drama into the English curriculum since the last OFSTED report. Drama is not taught as an option even though pupils make good progress in the subject in both Key Stages 3 and 4. There is insufficient time in the English curriculum to cover in depth the planned scheme of work. The resources are inadequate in relation to a lack of space to teach the subject which is mainly taught in classrooms. As a result, pupils are unable to rehearse or use good improvisation skills as there is limited space and the acoustics are poor in classrooms. Planning is purely academic and this affects their ability to develop good drama skills. The subject is without a drama studio, props, and a specialist teacher. The English department is without adequate language books and wider reading materials to meet the demands of the new orders at Key Stage 3. There are still insufficient literary texts from other cultures.
36. The subject is a strength of the school and the department is well led by an experienced practitioner who has established clear and direct procedures for its development. The development plan fully reflects the school development plan but targets are not quantifiable and procedures for developing key issues are not clear. The monitoring of teaching has not improved since the last inspection and line management is not carried out formally with the setting of clear targets to move the department further.

### Literacy

37. Pupils have above average literacy skills in all areas of the curriculum. Oral skills are good in many subjects and they can express their ideas clearly and confidently. The majority of pupils speak fluently and at length and takes part in question and answer sessions and discussions particularly in English and science. Discussion skills are the weakest in the sixth form in modern foreign languages and maths. In physical education, Year 10 pupils readily take part in discussions about their work but many do not listen attentively to each other. Good oral skills are not always used in some subjects such as history where pupils' responses are short. In information and communication technology, pupils at Key Stage 3 and in Year 10, used desk top publishing software to produce good quality written presentation. In economics, some pupils, including the sixth form students, are reticent speakers and in modern foreign languages, the lower attaining pupils lack confidence in speaking. Pupils' command of subject specific vocabulary is good particularly for the high attainers at Key Stage 4 and the students in Years 12 and 13. In modern foreign languages they demonstrate a good understanding of phraseology and in English, pupils in all key stages use technical language effectively when talking about their work. Reticent speakers and those lacking confidence are encouraged to participate in oral activities. Listening skills are very good and pupils are alert and able to detect the implications of what is being said.
38. A literacy policy is not yet in place but plans are being developed to set up a working group as a result of some members of staff receiving appropriate in-service training on literacy across the curriculum. Reading is encouraged in most subjects and pupils read accurately, with understanding and expression. Pupils have good reading skills to meet the demands of the curriculum. However, research and retrieval skills are not well developed in some subjects. These skills are used extensively in geography for fieldwork and coursework. In English, Year 12 and 13 students use the Internet and other secondary source materials to carry out research when preparing for seminars and researching into texts. Wide

reading is encouraged in the English department during time tabled reading lessons and as part of the department's policy on developing good reading habits and skills. Pupils read independently but the rate of borrowing from the learning resources centre is low as it is under resourced and there is not a wide selection of books or information for pupils to select and use for research or wide reading. The quantity and quality of academic books for Year 12 and 13 students is also inadequate in all subjects. Some departments such as economics and special educational needs have very good lending libraries.

39. Pupils write fluently and accurately for a range of purposes and audiences. Writing is well organised and pupils express their ideas coherently using grammatical features correctly. These skills are used accurately by pupils in modern foreign languages but there are insufficient opportunities for them to develop their ideas. They write at length and can plan, draft and edit their work. For example, in history, pupils in Key Stage 4 write in a mature style when doing argumentative essays on World War. They write persuasively on for example the New Deal and can synthesise information from a number of sources. However, although Year 12 and 13 students' writing is mature there is a tendency for some to be verbose. The lower attaining pupils have a good command of the use of language but essays lack in depth analysis. Pupils with special educational needs and statemented pupils make good use of writing frames to organise their ideas. Pupils can make notes and summarise and re-present information effectively. Handwriting is legible and good work is neatly presented often using information and communication technology to organise their work.

112.

## Mathematics

40. Attainment in mathematics is well above average at the end of Key Stage 3. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment has been consistently well above the national average for several years with over 70 per cent of pupils gaining level 5 and above. In 1999, 31 per cent of pupils achieved level 6 and above, compared with 46 per cent in 1998. When compared to similar schools, Key Stage 3 results in mathematics vary. In 1998, results were above average at both level 5 and level 6, but in 1999, results were below similar schools. Mathematics results compare favourably with those in science. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls at this key stage.
41. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in mathematics is also well above the national average. In 1999, 64.5 per cent of pupils gained a GCSE grade of A\* - C in mathematics, a rise of 10 per cent over the 1998 results. GCSE results are also above average when compared to similar schools. Pupils with special educational needs attained an A\* -G grade contributing to the schools' very high percentage. Boys' and girls' results are again close. When compared to other subjects at the end of Key Stage 4, mathematics results are above average.
42. Attainment in mathematics at A level is below average in 1999. Over 1998 and 1999, the number of candidates has been small. In 1998, there were more higher grades than in 1999. Three out of the six candidates obtained grades A and B in 1998, in line with the national average. In 1999 only one candidate out of 5 obtained a grade A. In both years all candidates obtained at least a pass grade.
43. Attainment as observed in lessons and work seen confirms the above average results obtained at the end of key stage tests and examinations. Across all groups at Key Stage 3, attainment in numeracy is improving and pupils are confident in their use of data handling skills. A Year 8 group showed a clear understanding of percentages and fractions enabling them to apply mental methods to solve problems. Year 9 pupils are able to work systematically on investigative tasks with many pupils able to generalise their findings. High attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 can interpret confidently the meaning of gradients in distance, speed and time graphs and find areas under curves. Other pupils preparing for GCSE exams show good competence in algebraic substitution and in re-arranging variables. Work seen in pupils' exercise books and investigative tasks confirms that pupils are competent in topics related to shape and space at both key stages. They are able to find areas of irregular shapes in Year 9 and can find angles in circles or polygons in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs work well with pie charts in Year 11 and in Year 9 they are able to use the 24-hour clock and to read train timetables. Post- 16 students work diligently, with the assistance of their teacher, in applying differentiation to solving

problems involving maximum volumes. Some students in Year 13, however, had to be reminded of techniques related to interpreting scatter graphs.

44. Pupils make some use of numeracy in a few subjects apart from mathematics. For example, Year 13 use their data handling skills well in economics. Science provides an exciting context for pupils to apply their number skills. They are competent in estimating lengths. Pupils achieve accuracy of measurement through their projects in design and technology. In information and communication technology, pupils in Key Stage 3 and Year 10, make good use of spreadsheets to analyse statistical data and draw good quality pie and bar charts, which they interpret accurately. In geography, pupils enhance their weather studies and their field work through their graphical skills. In music, pupils apply their understanding of fractions to identify the length of notes. There is still insufficient support for numeracy from many subjects where pupils do not practise numerical skills enough.
45. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress at Key Stage 3. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment in mathematics is broadly average as measured by nationally recognised tests. The department's focus on building confidence in mathematics in Year 7 contributes well to the pupils' progress. In Years 8 and 9, the structured lessons and the pupils' motivation and concentration further contribute to their progress. Progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 4. The highest attaining pupils do sustain their good progress, aided by teachers' secure subject knowledge and support for individuals. Average and below average attaining pupils make satisfactory progress through examinations suitably chosen for their level of attainment and through teachers' sympathetic interventions to aid their understanding. Progress in the Sixth Form is satisfactory for some pupils although some do not fulfil the promise displayed at Key Stage 4. Their limited progress results from their too ready reliance on their teachers to direct their studies. Progress is better in lessons in Year 12 than in Year 13 as many in the group seen showed little recall of work already covered.
46. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 their progress is satisfactory although that of Year 11 is better than that of Year 10 as a result of the good continuity in teaching. The teaching in Year 11 is more carefully planned to facilitate the pupils' concentration in lessons. At both key stages, the pupils benefit from small groups which allow for individual attention. Pupils make good progress toward their targets in their individual educational plans where these are specifically mathematical.
47. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Behaviour in mathematics lessons is rarely less than good. Pupils work co-operatively with their teachers in all lessons. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on probability, pupils sustained concentration for a long period in order to find a pattern for independent events. Pupils listen courteously to each others' answers to teachers' questions. This assists them in clarifying problems and in acquiring a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. Take -up rates for A level mathematics are now improving. There are over 20 students in both Year 12 and Year 13. They show confidence in their future success in the subject.
48. Teaching in mathematics is good at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. At post-16, teaching is satisfactory. All specialist mathematics teachers are well qualified and show secure subject knowledge. Some have a clear understanding of pupils' common mistakes, enabling pupils to avoid common pitfalls, as in a Year 13 lesson on correlation and in a Year 8 lesson on translating simple statements into formulae. Content is well planned in most lessons but some lessons lack a variety of learning and assessment activities to allow for pupils' different modes of learning. Where there is variety, as in a Year 7 lesson on algebra using a snakes and ladders game and in a Year 8 lesson on probability, pupils make rapid progress. Teachers make insufficient use of information technology to enhance pupils' learning in mathematics. Only Logo is included in the Year 7 scheme of work at present. There is growing emphasis by many teachers on the importance of language in the development of pupils' mathematical understanding and more opportunities are being offered for oral work. Pupils' work is marked regularly. There is appropriate written feedback to help pupils make progress. They benefit from the departmental consistency in both marking and the recording of their progress as a result of the thorough monitoring of departmental practice. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and set appropriate homework to further encourage progress. Teachers' assessments are supplemented by pupils' self assessments and

negotiated target setting at the end of the termly tests. However, the reporting of pupils' progress to parents is insufficiently informative of pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

49. The department is well led and is in a strong position to raise attainment further by using the assessment data now available to focus more closely the short term progress of pupils across both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. At the time of the last inspection, results of GCSE examinations showed approximately 50 per cent of pupils gaining A\*- C grades. The department has made good progress with results at Key Stage 4 improving. Teaching has also improved, although greater variety in activities for pupils is still required as is a greater use of information technology. Other significant factors affecting attainment in mathematics include the department's accommodation. Although it is better than at the last inspection, the department is still scattered, causing difficulties in the use of resources and in creating a mathematical environment.

122.

122. **Science**

50. At the end of Key Stage 3, in 1999, the attainment of pupils in the National Curriculum tests was close to the national average with 58 per cent of pupils achieving level 5 or above and 23 per cent level 6 or above. The difference between the attainment of boys and girls was small. By comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, however, the results are below average. Science results were not as good as those for English or for mathematics. Whilst the trend from 1996 –98 was upwards, results showed a marked decline in 1999. GCSE results in dual award science also showed a marked decline in 1999 compared with previous years with 68 per cent of pupils achieving higher grades A\* - C compared with 73 per cent in 1998. The number of pupils entered for dual award science, 66 per cent of the year group, was well below the national average of over 80 per cent. In single award science GCSE, results in 1998 and 1999, at 26 per cent, were well below those for 1997 (51 per cent). Overall, the results for both dual and single award GCSE were well above the national averages for maintained secondary schools but below those for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. There was little difference between the attainment of boys and girls in dual award science, but girls performed significantly better than boys in the single award. The average point score achieved by students at A level was below average in biology, chemistry and physics. Results at A level have declined by an average of one grade per subject since 1997 when they were close to the national average overall.
51. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. In general, pupils are able to recall knowledge from earlier work with understanding. Higher attaining pupils for example, could explain the strength of an electro-magnet depends upon the number of turns of wire surrounding a soft iron core and upon the electric current passing through the wire and could also explain how amylase acts as an enzyme catalyst in breaking down starch into glucose in the mouth. Low attaining pupils, however, have a more fragile grasp of scientific ideas as indicated by an insecure understanding of the differences between power, energy and current in an electrical circuit. While attainment is consistent across each Attainment Target, there is little evidence of the planning and evaluation elements in investigational science, which was otherwise well integrated into the normal scheme of laboratory work. Current attainment in Key Stage 4, as shown by inspection evidence, is also in line with the national average. Higher attaining pupils can explain that iron, the more reactive metal, displaces copper from copper sulphate solution. Lower attainers, however, are less secure in their scientific knowledge and understanding; they have difficulty in comparing the relative reactivity of metals. In the sixth form, inspection evidence indicates that attainment overall is in line with that expected of students at this level. There are, however, significant differences between the attainment of students in Years 12 and 13. In Year 13, results in recent end-of-module examinations show that attainment is below average. However, the attainment is in line with what would normally be expected of students at this point in Year 12. For example, Year 12 biology students could demonstrate confidently their understanding of the Krebs cycle and the chain of electron transfer in respiration.
52. At Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress in each Attainment Target. In all lessons progress is at least good and in many it is very good. Progress is best in lessons where teachers have high expectations and where pupils are excited by challenging work. This is an improvement on the previous report which indicated that more challenge was required for high attaining pupils. Good use is made of Cognitive



Acceleration in Science Education (CASE) in improving investigative skills. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 can set up simple experiments, make accurate observations and record results, sometimes in graphical form. In Year 9, pupils understand the importance of fair testing, can formulate and test hypotheses and analyse results. However, the skills of planning and evaluating experiments are less well developed. Data logging and other information and communication technology skills are developing in some classes; an improvement since the previous report.

53. At Key Stage 4, progress is at least satisfactory in all Attainment Targets, and is good with higher attaining pupils in particular. There is evidence of challenge, and progress is made which is in line with pupils' prior attainment in science. For example, Year 10 pupils, investigating the effects of exercise on pulse rate, made significant gains in their knowledge and understanding of aerobic and anaerobic respiration. There is evidence of good progress in investigative assignments, which are well prepared and presented, demonstrating that pupils are confident in planning, completing and evaluating scientific investigations. Progress in all A-level subjects in Year 12 and Year 13 is good. Pupils with Special Educational Needs in all key stages, make good progress, particularly when assisted by support teachers.
54. Overall, across both key stages and at sixth form level, behaviour and attitudes to work are at least satisfactory and often good or very good, although a few pupils require firm management at times. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, show high levels of concentration, are eager to carry out tasks, work hard and often continue with tasks without further direction. Lower attaining pupils work better in a well-structured environment. Where classroom management is good there are good relationships between pupils and teacher and between pupils. They co-operate with, and help, each other. Pupils show respect for each other, speak openly and with confidence and most clearly enjoy being in lessons. They take pride in their work and are careful with their presentation. No racial or gender issues were observed.
55. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good. In all twenty one lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory or better. Almost half the lessons were good and one third very good. Classes are now well managed and teachers take considerable care to ensure that pupils understand their work. However, during the past two years the frequency of changes in teaching staff and the inconsistencies in the quality of part time and temporary teachers have affected adversely continuity and progress which, in turn, have been major contributors to the decline in attainment in Key Stage 3 tests and in GCSE and A level examinations in 1999. At Key Stage 3 teaching, overall, is very good. Teachers demonstrate high levels of knowledge and understanding in their own subjects and in non-specialist subjects. In the best lessons, challenging and adroit questioning is used to aid progress and understanding. For example in a Year 7 lesson good questioning and good use of demonstration by the teacher enabled pupils to explain why bi-metal bars bend on heating. Overall, the quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. In good and very good lessons teaching was challenging; there were searching questions which aided understanding and explanations were clear and concise. Many lessons, however, were too structured and did not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently. At sixth form level teaching was always good or very good. Teachers used very good subject knowledge to explain difficult topics and to challenge students. Nevertheless, in many in many lessons, particularly in Key Stages 4, work is over-directed. Pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunity to develop the skills of independent learning. As a result, many students in Years 12 and 13 have yet to fully develop more advanced skills of independent research and the development of topics, both of which are prerequisites of A level courses. This affects seriously their attainment at A level. Marking at Key Stages 3 and 4 is usually consistent with the marking policy and many good diagnostic and encouraging comments are made, but comments do not always indicate what pupils might do to develop their understanding. This is not the case in the sixth form where comments nearly always explain how students might improve. This is an improvement since the previous report which indicated that marking was inconsistent and rarely diagnostic. Self review and target setting by sixth form students is being developed and is welcomed by the students. More focused, subject specific, target setting for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 needs to be developed. Homework in all years is well used to consolidate and to extend class work. The reports issued to parents provide useful information on pupils' attitudes and progress but give limited details about levels of attainment and do not provide focused, subject specific, targets for improvement.

56. The curriculum is broad and balanced. However, overall, at Key Stage 3, teaching time is inadequate because time allocation in Years 8 and 9 is nearly 20 per cent below average. There has been little improvement in this respect since the previous report. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. All pupils have the opportunity to experience a wide variety of science topics. Work is well matched to the relative abilities and attainment of the pupils. The curriculum generally provides equal access and opportunity for all pupils. The criteria for choosing courses leading to dual or single award GCSE science need to be reviewed. Even though the use of information and computer technology to support teaching progress has improved since the last inspection, greater emphasis needs to be placed on the use of ICT as an investigative tool.
57. The department is well led by a head of department who is enthusiastic and who engenders a positive ethos. While there are minuted departmental meetings which provide helpful opportunities to develop strategies for planning and to share good practice, the monitoring of standards of teaching and assessment is less well developed. A detailed departmental development plan is in place. This includes curriculum development, priorities, and targets and staff development. Planning is effective and manageable, but targets and success criteria need to be more focused. Currently teachers in the department are suitably qualified and experienced. However, instability in the department caused by frequent changes in teaching personnel during the past two years, has affected continuity and has contributed significantly to the decline in test and examination results. Technician support is very good. In both key stages planning for continuity and progression has been thorough. The effectiveness of support by classroom assistants for pupils with Special Educational Needs, is good. At best, very effective support is provided by assistants not only for the pupils to whom support is directed but also to other pupils where a need is perceived. Procedures for assessment are well established and are used effectively to monitor progress and improve attainment. The analysis of assessment results provides for the early identification of underachieving pupils and enables the department to provide appropriate support. The results of assessment are also used to match pupils to ability groups but are yet to be used as an aid to curriculum planning. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are too few laboratories for a school of this size. The small sizes of some laboratories results in overcrowding and the inadequate number of laboratories means that one in twenty lessons are taught outside laboratories. As many as one third of Year 13 biology lessons are taught in ordinary classrooms. Even though there has been a small improvement since the last report the number and size of laboratories needs urgent review. The level of funding provided for books and equipment is well below average. There are insufficient numbers of course books for every pupil to have a copy and, while the quality of A level text and reference books in the departmental library is good, the number of them is woefully inadequate. Due to effective planning and sensible expenditure however, funding is used effectively to enhance progress.

**SUBJECTS OR COURSES**130. **Information technology**

58. The attainment of pupils in information and communication technology (ICT) at the end of Key Stage 3 matches the national expectations. Teacher assessments at the end of the key stage are in line with the national averages and show a slight rise over the last two years. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are autonomous users of information technology and there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Strengths include using information technology to communicate effectively. Most pupils in Year 7 and 8, can log-on to the network and access appropriate applications, such as spreadsheets and data bases. Year 7 pupils can design an attractive Website using Microsoft Publisher. Year 8 pupils were able to import pictures and designs to a desk-top publishing programme and entered text to complete a page for a newspaper. As a part of the consultancy contract, pupils solved real-life problems by searching the Internet to create imaginative documents to regain sales and preparing structured marketing questionnaires. In Year 9, pupils accessed the Internet to use desktop publishing to communicate to a wider audience. There is, however, sometimes an undue reliance on clip art, and pupils do not learn to work with multi-media packages where they can add sound and interaction. Pupils are familiar with professional database software. They can discuss the social and ethical problems of information technology and can produce extended writing through homework assignments. Weaknesses in ICT include familiarity with data logging in subjects such as science, design and technology and geography, and using procedures that involve use of variables in control work.
59. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in information technology is below national expectations. Pupils in Year 10 attain average standards in information communication and modelling but below average in control, data capture and measurement. The pupils preparing for the Cambridge University Certificate in information technology are able to identify their own problems, and design systems choosing a variety of software solutions, such as desk top publishing, spreadsheets and data handling.
60. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3. Their knowledge increases steadily as they meet a well-sequenced series of skills and problem solving exercises. For some topics, the progress in information technology is complemented by enrichment in other subjects such as geography, English, modern foreign languages and music. Special needs pupils make good progress across Key Stage 3. They show good levels of confidence to cut, paste, select fonts, create tables and import pictures to enhance simple Websites.
61. In Key Stage 4 progress is unsatisfactory though pupils in Year 10 make satisfactory gains in knowledge and understanding within some aspects of the ICT Programme of Study. The Cambridge University Certificate in information technology course concentrates on making progress in repetition of Key Stage 3 skills and accuracy when working to a time limit. Pupils do not broaden their knowledge or learn to understand more advanced features of software. In other subjects, pupils do not make sufficient progress in developing and applying their ICT. In science for example, pupils are not skilled in using data logging to design their own investigations. In design and technology, pupils do not progress to using computer-aided drawing or manufacture in graphics, textiles or resistant materials. Pupils, with special needs in a Year 10 lesson also make satisfactory progress, due to sensitive intervention by the class teacher, and the setting of appropriate tasks.
62. Pupils' attitudes to information technology are good. Pupils listen and carry out instructions, and use equipment responsibly. They have good relationships with their peers, helping each other with problems. Most pupils enjoy information technology lessons and concentrate well to complete tasks to a high standard. In a Year 9 data-handling lesson, pupils were curious to learn about new features such as sorting and searches. At lunch time, many pupils and sixth form students were seen exploring various applications of ICT including designing individual web sites. Sixth Form students are willing to devote extra time outside the school day, to the preparation of coursework.

63. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Year 10. Teachers have a good understanding of the new software and they are quick to give individual help in lessons. In the best lessons, the teaching is well planned, a wide range of objectives are communicated in writing and tasks set are challenging which allows pupils to work independently. Teachers' expectations are appropriate, as in the word-processed work in Key Stage 3 and coursework in Year 10. They consider pupils' prior attainment to set new individual targets. In Key Stage 4 lessons where information technology is taught as a discrete subject, the teachers work well as a team, maintaining a good pace of learning. Relationships are invariably very good. Appropriate tasks have been prepared, which provide increased rigour for high attainers though there are no opportunities to develop pupils' controlling skills. Formative assessment is not rigorous in identifying individual pupil progress. The school has inadequate records of individual pupils' coverage and progress across key stages.
64. The management of the department is satisfactory. The scheme of work is well planned to integrate the teaching of the various skills required in ICT. At Key Stage 3, the school offers a well-balanced curriculum. The school does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4, where pupils in Year 11 fail to receive the National Curriculum Programme of Study. Currently there is no provision to enter pupils for a GCSE examination in information technology or communications technology. Further, the school is in breach of statutory requirements for the use of ICT in science and design and technology. Management of these aspects of provision in information technology provision has some shortcomings. There is insufficient audit of the whole-school provision, for example, not all Sixth Form students have easy access to ICT resources.
65. There have been some improvements in information technology since the last report. The specialist accommodation and resources have improved, with the addition of 51 multi-media machines and acquisition of some good software packages. Plans are still not sufficiently systematic for the teaching of ICT across the whole curriculum. Specialist accommodation has improved significantly but one of the ICT rooms is small for large classes and restricts opportunities for independent learning. Moreover, additional resources, accommodation and staffing will be required to support ICT course in Years 11 and the Sixth Form. Specialist information technology teachers' knowledge of the new software has improved, as has the use of assessment data to provide targets at Key Stage 3 and 4. There are still deficiencies including the lack of breadth and balance between different aspects of IT capability and arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting. In order to improve standards further the school should:
- meet statutory orders at Key Stage 4 by providing appropriate courses for all pupils in Year 11.
  - meet statutory orders by providing suitable opportunities in science, mathematics, design and technology and music for pupils to develop and apply ICT.
  - consider offering opportunities to the sixth form students to extend their experiences in using information technology to communicate, such as web-page design and multi-media work.
  - develop an assessment profile to monitor pupils' attainment and progress across key stages.

#### Art

1. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in art is in line with the national expectations. In 1999, most pupils were at or above national expectations. A significantly high proportion of girls attained the higher grades compared with the performance of boys. Attainment in lessons is mostly in line with expectations. Pupils use successfully drawing in pastel and pencil to record with some accuracy still-life studies from direct observation. They develop, organise and present visual ideas and information in their sketchbook, using watercolour and mixed media techniques. Sketchbook work is good in Year 8 when pupils base their approach on the study of artists such as Picasso and O'Keefe. Sketchbook work has improved since the last inspection. Pupils learn from artists how visual elements such as shape, form, colour, and texture can be used. They express their ideas well in a range of two and three-dimensional materials such as painting, block printing, card construction and clay modelling. Drawing and design

work is better developed than craft work and painting. Pupils are not given opportunities to explore the expressive qualities or colour and paint. They learn about art and artists from different times and cultures such as the art of the North American Indian and the Australian aboriginal. Although they express ideas and opinions about their own work, they are less secure to make decisions about how to improve it. Pupils' understanding and use of technical terms is satisfactory.

2. Overall, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average. Over the last three years results in art have fluctuated. In 1999, 34.5 per cent of pupils entered for the GCSE art examination gained A\* - C grades compared with a national average of 63 per cent. This is significant fall compared with the results in 1998 when 77.3 per cent gained the higher grades. However, with the exception of the results in 1999, there has been a gradual rising trend with an improvement in standards since the last inspection. The attainment of girls is consistently significantly higher than the performance of boys. In lessons at Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils use competently their sketchbooks to design and create paintings, collage and card constructions. They base the ideas for their work on the study of nineteenth and twentieth century artists such as Kilmpt and Matisse. There are limited opportunities for pupils to work in textiles or ceramics. Pupils use bold and colourful designs to make visually stimulating and vibrant images. Higher attaining pupils progress thorough preparatory studies and investigate different ways of using source material and ideas to interpret a theme. They explore how different techniques can be used to express their ideas. They realise their ideas by combining the use of novel and interesting images with the careful control of media and of technical skills.
3. A level results for 1999 were average. Fluctuations in the number and prior attainment of students entered for the examination over the past three years has led to variation in the number attaining higher grades. In lessons, sixth form students' ability to investigate and develop creative ideas and responses to a theme is good. Year 12 students produced striking colour studies using geometric and abstract designs to explore the visual qualities of pattern and surface. Year 13 students produce paintings that show some discipline in the use of media and techniques.
4. During Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress. Their drawing and design skills improve over time. They make good progress when they are taught how to evaluate their work and ideas to improve it. Pupils make slow progress in acquiring a repertoire of well-practised two and three-dimensional craft techniques. Pupils at Key Stage 4 make satisfactory progress. They make rapid progress when they are taught how to organise and present visual sources and ideas for their work. They make slower progress in learning how to exploit the characteristics of media to express their own ideas and feelings. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Students in the sixth form make good progress when they investigate a visual idea or theme and use what they know about other artists' work to develop their creative ideas and practice.
5. At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils' response to art is at least satisfactory and often good. In the sixth form it is very good. Most pupils show positive attitudes to art and work with a sense of commitment. They participate well in practical activities and are keen to succeed. Art has a motivating effect on them and when they understand the purpose of the activity and what is expected of them. In Key Stages 3 and 4 there is a small but restless minority of mainly boys. They find difficulty sustaining concentration and interest and this adversely affects their progress. They are more responsive when art activities are closely structured and when they receive help with experimental work and with techniques. In the sixth form, students show a very good level of commitment.
6. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory: in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form it is good. In just over half of the lessons teaching was good and satisfactory in the remainder. Teaching was good in all lessons observed in the sixth form. Effective planning ensures well-managed and organised practical sessions. Specialist teachers use their specialist knowledge to set clear art tasks and targets. These are more effectively set with pupils and students in the Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form to take account of their varying rates of progress and prior levels of attainment. At Key Stage 3, too much time is spent helping pupils on an individual basis. There are missed opportunities to help groups of pupils with similar needs to plan the progress they need to make to complete an aspect of their art, design or craft

work. Whole class discussion is effective when it is used to demonstrate skills and techniques or to review pupils' progress. There is limited opportunity for pupils to discuss and evaluate their own and other artists' work. Occasional use is made in lessons of pupil or student's artwork to exemplify National Curriculum, GCSE and A level standards. Intervention is used effectively with well-judged praise and humour to encourage and motivate pupils and students. Procedures for assessment are good and teachers keep careful records of attainment and progress and this has improved since the last inspection. The use of assessment for planning pupils' progress at Key Stage 3 is less well developed. Homework is set and marked regularly and it is used very effectively to support artwork in school.

7. Management of the department is good. The head of department provides clear leadership and direction and staff work well together as a team. Specialist subject teachers are dedicated to promoting the status of the subject and to raising standards. The current scheme of work provides a good basis for developing the art curriculum. There is no long-term planning to clarify how progression and continuity occurs in art within and between key stages. The department makes good use of limited resources. Accommodation is cramped and the poor state of decoration adversely affects the learning environment. Line management arrangements are unsatisfactory. There is no established system for agreeing targets to improve standards or to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the subject in the school. In order to continue to improve further, the department should consider:

- Long-term planning to ensure progression and continuity within and between key stages.
- Medium term planning so that it includes adequate attention to the need for pupils to acquire technical control and skills to express their ideas and feelings.
- Improving line management arrangements to agree subject priorities and targets for improvement.

#### **Design and technology**

1. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the number of passes at grades A\*-C was below the national average. This was similar to the A\*-C grades gained in 1998 but better than at the time of the last inspection, when the number was well below the national average. Pupils did better in resistant materials, food technology and child development when compared with their grades in other subjects. They did about as well in graphic products but worse in control technology. The relatively low performance in control technology was because the specialist teacher left during the course. Attainment in design and technology is well below the school in general, when all subjects are taken into consideration. This is because of the option system at Year 9. The arrangement of subject choices means that as many as 52 per cent of boys and 62 per cent of girls do not follow the subject to examination level. The school therefore does not meet the statutory requirements for design and technology.
2. At the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessments across all aspects of the Programmes of Study show that pupils' attainment is above the national expectations. These assessments indicate that a large percentage of pupils, 81 per cent, gain the expected level 5 or above.
3. The very small number of students taking resistant materials to A level, two in the current year, are taught at the local consortium Chetwynd Centre. The results fluctuate and in 1999 there were no passes within the A-C grades.
4. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils apply effectively the design process in its entirety. In resilient materials and graphic products they exercise good judgement when researching ideas. In textiles, which is not taught after Year 7, and food technology, they apply clear factors to evaluate finished products such as fabric wall hangings and pizzas. Pupils achieve high levels of accuracy when bending acrylic to make watch stands and good standards of finish on end a grain of wood when making doorstoppers. With help from adults, pupils with special educational needs often produce models which are indistinguishable from those made by other pupils. In food technology, pupils know about the effects of yeast in bread making and understand the need for good nutrition. Pupils' ability to analyse the performance of systems in relation to control technology is not well developed. There is no significant

difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

5. Overall, pupils' attainment in design and technology is average. At Key Stage 4, pupils following a course in child development know that special tests are an essential part of pre-natal care. With help from their teacher, pupils with special educational needs know the names of tests and when they are undertaken. In food technology and resistant materials, pupils organise their work, draw up schedules for making products and carry out detailed evaluations of their work. Pupils with special educational needs sometimes struggle to understand the principles of tools and equipment but, with support, they often succeed. Pupils use graphics to convey ideas and to outline detail; those with special educational needs find difficulty with fine-line detail and require help to produce reasonable results. Girls and boys produce similar standards of work.
6. Practical work produced by sixth-formers is usually of a standard which suggests they could do better in examinations.
7. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress. By Key Stage 4 higher attaining pupils do not study design and technology the progress the remaining pupils make slows. However, in Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory. The most notable aspects of progress are the ways pupils consolidate and apply the design process, develop and extend their ability to use tools and equipment and learn about safety and routines in practical areas. The application of computers and control technology shows little improvement as pupils move through the school.
8. Most pupils show keen interest in their studies; they are always eager to get on and finish their work but tend to enjoy practical work more than the planning and designing parts. They help one another and usually pay attention when demonstrations are given. In many classes a small number of boys and girls do not always pay full attention and fiddle with equipment when they are supposed to be listening to their teacher; this often disrupts the flow of lessons and the progress made by other pupils.
9. The quality of teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. Some satisfactory and a small number of very good lessons were observed. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was judged to be sound. Teachers' secure specialist knowledge and their ability to plan in the medium-term are strong features of teaching. As a result, pupils are clear about what has to be done in lessons and always get good support when they ask questions or find difficulty with their work. A strength of the department is the emphasis placed on the design process. Workspaces are well organised and managed to enable pupils to work safely. Most lessons are sufficiently brisk and teachers know their pupils well, particularly those with special educational needs. Occasionally work is not challenging enough for higher attaining pupils whose understanding of the task is not deep enough.
10. Teachers mark work regularly but marking is not used to challenge pupils to do better or to set targets. Assessments at the end of modules are accurate and reveal pupils' attainment. The information from assessment and post-module evaluations is not used effectively to plan the next stage of pupils' learning. Questioning is used to check the knowledge and understanding of individual pupils, but is not fully exploited to check how far the whole class has grasped a particular point. Teachers are diligent in setting homework and this usually enables pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers' use of correct technical terminology noticeably extends the vocabulary of all pupils. Numeracy plays a part in most lessons and is often stressed and linked to pupils' understanding of mathematics. There is a hesitancy amongst teachers to use computers to support pupils' learning. The central computer facility is used infrequently.
11. The department has had a difficult time over the last year. Resources were stretched by staff absences and changes of teachers, which included the appointment of an acting head of department. The acting head of department does well to ensure stability but has little chance to develop the department's role. Some monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' work takes place. This is not extended into classrooms to check the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour. The acting head of department is aware of this, as he is of the need to consolidate the school's policy for assessment. With the

development of these matters and given the opportunity to cater for more higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4, the department is in a good position to make further improvements and raise standards in the subject.

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## **Economics**

12. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above average for all pupils for both grades A\*-C and A\*-G. In terms of A\*-C grades, girls are outperforming boys. At the end of A level, students' attainment overall is below the national average, particularly at higher grades A and B. However, boys perform better than girls and their attainment is in line with national expectations. For grades A-E, results are in line with national average expectations. The attainment of present pupils at KS4 is in line with average expectations, with no discernable variations in attainment between boys and girls. Most pupils have sound knowledge of basic terms but, higher attaining pupils are able to offer an analysis of the importance of terms. For example in one Year 10 lesson on wage rates, higher attaining pupils could identify factors responsible for wage variations within an occupational group and could explain variables such as promotion, qualifications and experience. These pupils could also analyse why the rewards to women might be less than their male counterparts within the same industry. Lower attainers were aware that differences existed, but were less confident of the reasons.
13. Students' attainment at A level, as observed in lessons, is above average. Higher attainers write well, are able to offer detailed analysis of economic situations and they use appropriate terminology with confidence and accuracy. For example, Year 12 students understood the theory of the Lorenz curve and could analyse the outcomes by referring to income distribution and inequality. This represents a sophisticated level of understanding and analysis. For a minority of students, whose attainment is average, their analytical skills are not well developed.
14. Progress at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. In most lessons pupils make sound progress in consolidating prior learning and in the use and application of new terms. Pupils also make satisfactory progress in their understanding of how economic factors influence outcomes. For example, good progress was made in two different lessons on firms. In one, pupils could identify a series of reasons restricting the growth of firms, with good ideas such as tradition being mentioned. In another lesson, pupils used an Internet press release to identify the various stages in the growth of a major firm identifying such things as when a partnership existed and when growth had occurred through takeovers and expansion into new markets. Progress at A level is good and, in some lessons, it is very good. Students are making good progress in their knowledge, understanding and in their ability to analyse and interpret data. Very good progress in research skills is fostered through the setting of some thoughtful and challenging tasks. For example, students' knowledge and understanding of terms such as 'income', 'wealth' and 'human wealth' was enhanced by the quality of exercises set. In a few lessons, the inter-relationship between concepts is not always well developed. For example, in a lesson on price elasticity theory, the link with total revenue was not made, though the crucial terms were covered adequately.
15. At Key Stage 4, attitudes, behaviour and personal development are satisfactory though, in two lessons, the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils was unsatisfactory. In most lessons, pupils settle quickly to their work, study with enthusiasm, sustain their concentration and show a capacity for personal study. Levels of maturity are often good, with pupils working both independently and collaboratively. Respect for property is good and pupils listen to the views of others and respect is shown for the views expressed. When behaviour is unsatisfactory, a small group of pupils disrupt the environment for all. These pupils are restless, tend to demand attention by shouting out comments and sometimes ridicule ideas expressed by others. Though these instances are infrequent, they impede the progress of all pupils.
16. At A level, behaviour is very good. The students are mature, keen to learn and enthusiastic, showing respect for their teachers and for one another. They are attentive, take pride in their work and exhibit an ability to work both independently and collaboratively. Levels of perseverance are good and, when speaking, students are polite and articulate, though in class discussions, many are reticent and hesitant



about expressing their views.

17. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In the good and very good lessons, teaching was impressive, planning was good and tasks set were both imaginative and challenging. Staff display good subject knowledge, which they deliver with confidence, conviction and enthusiasm, employing a variety of strategies designed to enliven the lessons. Pupils are generally well managed and the use of informal assessment helps to guide the pace of lessons. The most distinctive feature of the teaching, especially at A level, is that staff have high expectations of the students and are prepared to challenge their knowledge and understanding. In these cases, such high quality teaching is making a significant contribution to the pupils' attainment and progress. In two ineffective lessons, poor planning and the poor behaviour of a few pupils hampered progress. In a Year 10 class, an investigation involving the use of the Internet was planned inadequately. The aims were unrealistic and the task was too open-ended. Pupils experienced difficulty in accessing appropriate sites and, as their frustration levels grew the resultant anti-social behaviour affected adversely the attainment and progress of all pupils.
18. Management of the department is good, with the clear aim of raising standards of attainment. Another strength is the sound monitoring procedures employed by staff. The performance record sheets developed by the department offer a most effective way of monitoring and assessing pupils' progress at both Key Stage 4 and Post 16. Self-evaluation forms completed by the pupils themselves augment this scheme. This dual approach aids staff in their delivery of the curriculum, helps to shape revision programmes, allows parents to be better informed and aids the attainment and progress of all pupils.

### **Geography**

19. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Most pupils can explain with confidence the reasons for using appropriate map skills and can use geographical vocabulary correctly. They show good knowledge of settlement patterns, hierarchies and rank linked to services. However, teachers' assessment, at the end of Key Stage 3, indicate that pupils' attainment in geography is above the national average. Pupils make good progress through the key stage. During the key stage, pupils produce well presented, accurate and detailed work, including a range of geographical techniques and extended writing as shown in weather studies in Year 7 and fieldwork enquiry work on Cannock Chase in Year 8. Pupils, including those with special educational needs are acquiring and consolidating their knowledge of geographical concepts, skills and understanding. In Year 7, pupils gain good foundation knowledge in map work, which is consolidated in Years 8 and 9. In Year 7 pupils compare and contrast settlement sites over time, which is developed into wider settlement studies in Years 8 and 9.
20. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is well above the national average. Most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of geographical terms and high attaining pupils are able to use them with accuracy in their oral and written work. Pupils have good grasp of geographical concepts which they use to describe accurately industrial location and retailing patterns and changes over time. Most pupils understand the reasons for patterns in both physical and human geography and can justify their hypotheses. Pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations is also above average. The proportion of pupils gaining higher GCSE grades A\* - C has been maintained or improved over the last three years with girls outperforming boys in the higher grades. Pupils make good progress across the key stage. Pupils' written work is detailed, well presented and organised with a well-structured approach to each unit. Progress is evident in pupils' ability to recognise, understand and use specialist geographical vocabulary as shown in Year 11 work on the reasons for industrial growth and decline. Pupils work independently on coursework, an urban study in Stafford, confidently using a range of investigative geographical skills. Pupils use previously acquired knowledge in new situations as shown in a Year 10 analysis of shopping centre patterns. Year 11 pupils demonstrated good understanding of geographical concepts in linking the formation of physical features to a case study on aspects of rivers.
21. In the sixth form students' attainment is in line with national expectations. Students achieving A and B

grades has declined over the past three years. Students make good progress across the key stage. Students use prior knowledge to suggest patterns and processes as shown in discussion on an introduction to periglacial geomorphology. Students' fieldwork and assignments show detailed interpretation and analysis enabling them to reach valid conclusions as shown in physical studies in Aberystwyth. Students are knowledgeable and are able to explain patterns and processes with confidence as shown in discussion of social deprivation and rank order of wards. Departmental strategies focusing on examination questions and exercises have been introduced to good effect with students gaining additional confidence in their written work.

22. Pupils display positive attitudes towards work in geography. Behaviour is good, although a small number of pupils become passive in lessons when a task goes on for too long. Most pupils are motivated by their studies and are attentive, remain on task, concentrate and respond well. Pupils are capable listeners, ask questions and are keen to please and produce accurate, well-presented work. Pupils across all key stages show concern for other pupils' points of view. Pupils work at their best when teachers are enthusiastic, instructions are clear, expectations are high and there is a 'working together to find the solution' atmosphere in the classroom.
23. The overall quality of teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good with some satisfactory and very good teaching being observed. The best teaching is based on a secure knowledge of the subject. Such lessons are characterised by detailed planning, pace, high expectations and effective classroom management, with pupils engaged and challenged by their studies. Pupils have sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and extend their thinking, reading and extended writing skills particularly in fieldwork. High attainers have a good grasp of basic concepts and subject vocabulary, though there are insufficient extension exercises for them to fulfil their potential. Homework is set although it is not clearly identifiable in pupils' exercise books and does not provide sufficient extension exercises for the more able and appropriate tasks for the low attaining pupils from whom incomplete work is accepted. Marking and assessment is regular and corrective although it provides insufficient guidance on informing pupils on how they can improve. Information technology is used insufficiently within the geography curriculum both as a teaching or learning aid.
24. The geography curriculum meets all the statutory requirements and provides continuity between the key stages with skills, knowledge and understanding built upon within the units of work. All pupils have access to the curriculum and pupils with special educational needs are given good in-class support to help them achieve their targets. The head of geography manages the department well and there is a clear sense of teamwork and departmental identity. However, not enough emphasis is placed on monitoring and evaluation and the sharing of good practice to promote the quality of teaching and learning in raising attainment. The specialist geography accommodation is good and furniture is in a good state of repair. Display is limited, partially due to the lack of wall space, with insufficient student produced work to make a contribution to the pupils' learning. Resources are satisfactory and there is an adequate range of textbooks for research within the geography department. The resources within the library resource centre are unsatisfactory for all pupils. The limited number of computers is inadequate to promote the use of information technology in geography.
25. The department has responded positively to a range of issues raised in the last inspection. However, outstanding issues remain: insufficient learning resources such as the modest library provision and lack of access to computers.

## 170. **History**

26. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in history is just above the national average. In the teacher assessments two-thirds of pupils are attaining National Curriculum level 5 and above. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is well above national expectations, with nearly three quarters of the pupils achieving grades A\* - C in the GCSE. This is about twenty per cent higher than the national average, and better than most other subjects in the school. Results at A level have been in line with national averages over many years, exceeding it in the last two years. Girls perform better than boys in Key Stages 3 and 4, but

attainment is equivalent in the sixth form.

27. These standards are borne out by observation of classes and scrutiny of work. By the end of KS3 pupils can research diligently explaining clearly what they have discovered, as seen in projects on the Darby family of Coalbrookdale. Pupils have some understanding of what life was like in an earlier age: for instance, higher attaining pupils write powerfully about the Chartists and the reaction of the government; lower attaining pupils also achieve good standards of research, but write less fluently about their findings. Recall of previous work is strong in Year 7, less so in later years.
28. Pupils in Year 10 have a good grasp of events occurring between the world wars, understanding how the peace treaties caused problems later. They acquire insights necessary for interpreting sources, with an awareness of possible bias. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can research in great depth, at standards above national expectation, using evidence convincingly, and ending their essays with a clearly expressed conclusion. They are less confident in discussion, some finding it hard to remember what they have studied previously.
29. Sixth form students' essays show a hesitant approach, tending to contain a list of facts, rather than analysis. This was shown in essays on the unification of Italy, and the Congress of Vienna. The facts are accurate but ill digested. Students do not always understand the technical language used by the teacher. However by the end of the Key Stage 5, they are producing research work of a very high standard, arguing trenchantly, as they did in analysing the Cuban Missile crisis. They support their conclusions with a wide body of evidence, all fully referenced to comprehensive bibliographies.
30. Progress over time is good. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have acquired the skills of research, of perceiving cause and effect, and of possible bias. There is further good progress through Key Stage 4, enabling pupils to construct an essay effectively. Sixth form students have acquired a maturity of judgement with literacy skills sufficiently well developed to express those judgements with style and sensitivity. Comparing actual results with those predicted by earlier performance shows good rates of progress. Progress in some lessons is restricted by the passivity of pupils, who have too little opportunity to reflect and learn from each other. Pupils with special educational needs make progress at least appropriate to their prior attainment, and often better.
31. Teaching is good in all key stages. Teachers plan and prepare conscientiously. They know the subject well, and in some lessons make very good use of that knowledge. They have high expectations of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, where homework assignments require a great deal of research. The work that pupils do is always commented on helpfully. Explanations are always clear and often dramatically vivid. A Year 7 simulated radio interview of Queen Boudicca was particularly successful. Where information technology is used it is used well. However in many lessons teachers give pupils too little time to discuss. Pupils are seldom required to argue or comment on what others have proposed, thus restricting opportunities for testing out their own ideas or learning from others. That said, a great strength of the department is the relationship between teachers and taught, so pupils want to learn, and never cause any problems of discipline.
32. The high standards perceived at the last inspection have been fully maintained. In 1995 70 per cent of pupils were obtaining high passes at GCSE and over 30 per cent achieving grades A or B at A level. This very good success rate has been equalled in most subsequent years, and exceeded at A level in the last two years. Furthermore, the department has been innovative in several ways. Mutual observation of lessons has enabled teachers to learn much from each other, and in-depth analysis of performance in all key stages has given the department a tool for measuring progress and identifying weaknesses. Many lessons - but not all - are still strongly directed by the teacher, and in that there has been little change. This is a good department, leadership is strong and effective and objectives focus above all on teaching and learning.

177. **Modern foreign languages**

33. The percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C and A\*-G grades at GCSE is well above national averages in both French and German, though the proportion of the cohort entered for examination is low compared to national figures. In German the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C grades has increased steadily over time but numbers entered have decreased. The percentage of the cohort entered for GCSE in a modern foreign language is below national figures. At A level results in French have improved steadily over time and numbers of candidates have also increased significantly. In German numbers entered for examination have remained approximately the same. In German results fluctuate over time with no clear trend but average points scores are generally above national figures. In French they are in line with national figures.
34. Inspection evidence indicates that by the end of Key Stage 3 the majority achieve in line with national expectations in both French and German. Teachers' assessments are optimistic and do not match levels achieved in lessons. Some higher attaining pupils studying French in Year 9 achieve below national expectations but some average attaining pupils achieve in line with national expectations. This is due to teaching and in some lessons is focussed more effectively on increasing pupils' understanding of the way the language works and on enabling them to identify and apply patterns for themselves. Most pupils understand routine instructions and respond appropriately to questions in French and German but the majority do so briefly with set phrases and single words. Higher attainers respond with little hesitation in German but in French a significant number of higher attaining pupils lack confidence in speaking skills and find difficulty in responding to basic questions, without prompting. Most can participate in short dialogues to exchange information responding to written or visual cues or working to a model. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs use single words and set phrases appropriately but their understanding of patterns and their confidence in using the languages independently are weak.
35. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards achieved in lessons are above national averages in both languages. Higher attaining pupils and some average attaining pupils achieve above national averages and are confident in all four skills but lower attaining pupils achieve below national averages. Most are able to respond appropriately and promptly to instructions and questions in French and German and listening skills are well developed. The majority are able to identify the main points and specific detail from extracts of speech at normal speed, higher attainers requiring no repetition and interpreting some unfamiliar language for others. Higher attainers have a good understanding of the way the languages work and can explain and apply patterns in the languages successfully, for example agreements in French and word order in German. They are able to adapt the languages successfully to meet their own needs and most are confident in speaking tasks. Most can write short accounts in the past, present and future tenses, express opinions and higher attainers can give reasons for their views and write at some length and in detail. Most have a good range of vocabulary and use a good variety of structures. Lower attainers complete tasks using set phrases or following a model.
36. By the end of the sixth form students achieve standards in line with national averages at A level. In German students achieve standards above national averages and in line with the higher grades at A level and in French they achieve in line with national averages. Listening skills are very well developed in both languages and most students speak fairly confidently in informal situations displaying a good knowledge of how the languages work and a good range of vocabulary and structures. They are able to express opinions and justify their views to their partners and when asked by the teacher, for example when discussing smoking in French and holiday plans in German, but some students are not confident when speaking to a larger group. They are able to take part in debate and can identify the main points and details from a variety of texts and extracts of speech at normal speed, some needing guidance and repetition to do this. They write fairly accurately and at length for a variety of purposes including note taking, debate and narrative.
37. Rates of progress are good overall in both languages. During Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress consolidating vocabulary and structures and developing all four skills. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form progress is good. Progress is best where pupils are given the opportunity to practise

informally and are encouraged to put the language they have learned to the test in real situations, using more than one skill to complete a task. For example in a Year 12 German lesson students gained in confidence and competence in speaking when they were asked to work in pairs to exchange information and ideas whereas the same students were reluctant to speak in front of the whole class and only responded briefly to questions. In a Year 11 French class pupils made good progress when listening activities were stimulating and required them to use the language themselves to gather information. However, in some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3, the progress of some pupils is hampered by the lack of such opportunities. In such lessons activities are dominated by the teacher requiring them to speak in front of the class and decreasing opportunities for all pupils to participate, resources are not adequately adapted to enable them to complete tasks successfully or activities fail to challenge or stimulate their interest.

38. The majority of pupils are very well behaved and co-operative; they have good relationships with their teachers, especially in the sixth form. Most are concerned to do well and are well motivated but in Key Stage 3 many demonstrate undue dependence on the teacher and work with commitment but rarely display enjoyment or enthusiasm. In the most effective lessons pupils are keen to contribute to oral work in class but in less effective lessons they are reluctant to volunteer and lack confidence in speaking in front of the class. When they are asked to work in small groups and pairs they are much more confident and speak freely in the target languages. In a minority of lessons pupils become restless during lengthy teacher-led activities and some higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 French lessons display little interest in their work or respect for their teacher because the types of activities and support they receive are not always adequate to enable them to reach their potential. Similarly, lower attaining pupils in some classes lose interest or become frustrated because the resources provided are not adapted sufficiently to their needs and prevent rather than enable them to experience success. Pupils are rarely given the opportunity to work independently, use their initiative or take responsibility for their own progress.
39. The quality of teaching is good overall. In half of the lessons seen the quality of teaching was good or better. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. Teaching was good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 3. Examples of very good teaching occurred in German in Year 10 and in the sixth form. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach and use the language being learned effectively and often exclusively to conduct lessons. Language used is well matched to the experience and capabilities of pupils and is effective in reinforcing learning and developing listening skills. Lesson planning is good and teachers usually provide appropriate and well sequenced activities to ensure pupils build on previous learning but in Key Stage 3 it does not always take into account the specific learning needs of pupils and teachers' expectations vary. Teachers have high expectations of higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form but expectations are sometimes low for average and lower attainers, mainly in Key Stage 3; much of the work for these pupils is heavily guided by teachers and pupils are rarely expected to use their initiative to solve problems for themselves or deal with the unpredictable. As a result many pupils are hesitant and lack confidence in speaking and in operating without a model, glossaries or written prompts. Teachers monitor individual progress effectively and intervene to raise standards or ensure progress but this is often ad hoc and not sufficiently planned for in advance. Presentations, activities and resources are usually appropriate, pitched at an appropriate level and resources well thought out to ensure pupils build successfully on previous learning but in some less effective lessons presentations were not clear and resources and tasks were not sufficiently stimulating or matched to pupils' capabilities. This slowed the pace and resulted in pupils having difficulty in making progress without considerable intervention by the teacher. In the most effective lessons pupils are given the opportunity to practise in pairs and use the language to exchange or gather information but some activities are dominated by the teacher decreasing opportunities for pupils to participate and slowing the pace. Pair-work is often limited to rehearsal and opportunities are missed to allow pupils to put the language to the test in realistic situations. Where pupils are given the opportunity to practise informally and use the language for themselves to complete tasks they increase in confidence and are engaged by the tasks set but this is under developed. Control and management of pupils is very good and in the vast majority of lessons is effective in creating a supportive and purposeful atmosphere. Teachers make good use of OHPs and flashcards to clarify meaning and patterns in the languages, and games and songs to reinforce key words and phrases and elicit oral responses from pupils. In the best lessons a variety of resources are used to stimulate interest and materials used are of good quality and usually clear but where activities are restricted to the text book clarity of presentations is sometimes lost. In the best lessons pace is brisk but in many cases, particularly in Key Stage 3, pace is

slowed by lengthy teacher led activities and progress for higher attainers is hindered because activities are pitched at average or lower attainers within class. Resources are not always adapted sufficiently to support lower attaining pupils or sufficiently challenge higher attainers.

40. Statutory requirements are not met because almost a third of pupils in Key Stage 4 do not receive their entitlement to study a foreign language. It is difficult for pupils to study a second language since in order to do so they must begin from scratch in Key Stage 4; this disadvantages able linguists in the next stage of education. Schemes of work detail content and ensure continuity and progression but lack detail as to how topics and materials are to be approached by groups of differing ability within classes and this leads to inconsistencies in provision and outcomes. Timetable arrangements allow pupils to be set according to linguistic ability although the department chooses to teach the majority of pupils in groups containing a wide ability range but strategies to meet the needs of groups of differing ability are not sufficiently developed, however, to ensure all pupils reach their potential. Teachers work hard to maintain links with France and Germany so that trips abroad and the opportunity for A level students to undertake work experience in France and Germany considerably enhance the curriculum for pupils involved. Assessment procedures are thorough but not linked to National Curriculum levels of attainment in Key Stage 3 and pupils are not aware of their own progress through levels of attainment or how to improve. The quality of marking is not consistent across the department, some pupils receive valuable guidance on how to improve but some marking is irregular and unhelpful.
41. Leadership of the department is good. The staff meets regularly both formally and informally, work well as a team and share ideas but although policies and guidance are comprehensive and detailed these are not fully nor consistently implemented. Development planning is focused on departmental priorities but there is no indication of how progress is to be monitored or evaluated. There are plans to monitor teaching and learning across the department but this has yet to take place. Acoustics are poor in three classrooms and textbooks do not fully meet the recommendations of National Curriculum without much adaptation. The department is developing the use of information technology but this is hampered by the lack of appropriate software. Limited resources restrict the provision of the range and variety of activities recommended by the National Curriculum and the library is inadequate to support the subject.
42. Progress since the last report is unsatisfactory overall. Statutory requirements are not met in Key Stage 4 since a third of pupils do not receive their entitlement to study a language. Examination results, however, have remained high and numbers taking A level have increased significantly. The department has made good progress in providing an appropriate challenge for higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 but there is still scope for further development in Key Stage 3. Assessment procedures are thorough but their use is not effective in raising standards in Key Stage 3 and the department should consider linking schemes of work and assessment to levels of attainment to achieve consistency of expectations and outcomes for all pupils. Accommodation has improved slightly but there is still scope for further improvement. Resources are outdated and inadequate. In order to raise standards further the department could:
  - monitor teaching and enable teachers to observe each other in order to achieve consistency of approach and spread good practice.
  - ensure that all pupils achieve their potential by identifying and planning for desired outcomes.
  - ensure that resources are appropriately adapted to be accessible to lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs.
  - improve quality and quantity of resources, including subject specific resources for information technology, to fully meet the recommendations of the National Curriculum.

#### • Music

1. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, for 1999, indicate that pupils' attainment in music is well above the national expectations. One in eight pupils' attainment was below the age related standards, whilst three in eight pupils exceeded them. Attainment of pupils with special educational

needs is in line with prior attainment. In the GCSE results for 1999, 21 pupils were entered, achieving well above the school and national averages. In 1999 only four students were entered for the A-level examinations: two achieved an A grade, one a B grade and the other a C grade. The number of candidates entered in 1999 is too small to make valid any comparison with national data. In the 1998 A-level examinations seven of the nine students entered achieved an A grade, one achieved a B grade and the other a C grade.

2. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Pupils in Year 7 are able to play "Shepherds' Hey" on the recorder after three weeks tuition, and half of the year group can read musical and rhythmical notation. Pupils in Year 8 can play elementary chords on the guitar, accompany themselves whilst singing a song, and have a good knowledge of musical rudiments. Pupils in Year 9 can play pieces on electronic keyboards with varying degrees of ability. Some pupils can manage the right hand only, some are able to play both hands together, and a smaller proportion can play in time to a rhythmic backing.
3. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above average. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are working beyond the standards required by the GCSE examination syllabus with work on the sonata form. They are also able to identify the period of composition of previously unheard pieces and give well-informed reasons for their decision.
4. Students' attainment in the sixth form is average, although the department is making every effort to improve this. Students in Year 13 have an adequate grasp of harmony and history, but are unable to use their knowledge fluently in conversation. Their instrumental ability is in line for this stage in their preparation for the A-level examination.
5. The progress made by all pupils in Key Stage 3 is good. Each year group in Key Stage 3 learns a different instrument in class, and the resources prepared enable pupils of all musical abilities to make progress. Pupils who learn orchestral instruments are encouraged to bring them into lessons thus adding to the musical experience and their own progress. All of the Key Stage 3 pupils with special educational needs are integrated with the remainder of the class and make progress in line with their prior attainment. Two pupils in Year 7, however, miss one lesson every week to attend extra tuition. Use of a rota system covering several subjects would ensure that pupils do not miss so much of one subject.
6. Progress is very good at Key Stage 4. Pupils progress beyond the requirements of the GCSE syllabus, and the majority of pupils are able to work comfortably at this level. They use acquired skills to analyse Mozart piano sonatas, using technical terms fluently, and developing their skills in answering GCSE listening questions.
7. Progress in the sixth form is satisfactory in the theoretical and historical sections and good in the practical activities. Students in Year 13 are gaining confidence in using their harmonic skills to harmonise melodies in the style of J.S.Bach, discovering the art of counterpoint writing, and revising their knowledge of Mahler's First Symphony by tackling A-level type questions.
8. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to teachers and work in Key Stage 3 is good. They come to music lessons with positive attitudes. They settle down quickly and listen attentively to the teachers' explanation of the lesson content. All pupils participate enthusiastically in whole class activities, whether it is singing, playing the guitar, or a rhythm quartet. When working in groups or in pairs, a large majority apply themselves wholeheartedly to their work. They sustain their concentration, making every effort to improve their playing to the best of their ability. For all practical work, pupils collect instruments in an orderly manner with respect for the instruments they are collecting. When working in groups or pairs, they co-operate well with one another, considering everybody's views, and negotiating a final outcome to produce a good overall result. When sections of the class are performing to the remainder, pupils listen in silence and, when asked, give considered evaluations. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to teachers and work in Key Stage 4 is very good. Their written work shows a development of their ability to study individually. They work well in class either in groups, or individually, persevering well at the set tasks.

9. Sixth form students' behaviour and attitude to teachers and work are very good. However they display a reluctance to participate confidently in musical discussion, despite the encouragement of the music staff. The number of pupils studying music at Key Stage 4 has increased since the last inspection, but those studying A-level have declined. There are no students currently studying music in Year 12.
10. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is very good. Teachers' knowledge of the subject, the means of motivating pupils, and facilitating learning is excellent. Consequently the teachers are confident when explaining activities, or devising strategies to ensure that all pupils understand concepts being explored. Expectations of the pupils are high. Pupils are managed quietly but firmly and all teachers have established acceptable behaviour patterns. Good relationships exist in the classroom and in the extra-curricular activities, and many pupils agree that music making at the school is enjoyable. Planning of lessons is very thorough with good attention given to progression and the activities are well matched to pupils' prior attainment. Most lessons contain a variety of activities, some involving a different working location for each activity. Teachers make effective use of time and preparation in lessons and the use of resources is excellent. A new system of assessment has been devised recently which takes into account all the musical activities and gives appropriate credit for the contribution made by each pupil. Homework is set regularly usually in the form of instrumental practice or research activities where appropriate.
11. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is very good. The teacher's knowledge and her ability to work with maturing pupils play an important part in assisting pupils to achieve above expected standards. Good use is made of time, and preparation and choice of resources are very appropriate. The lessons are well planned to suit the variety of accommodation available for the lessons. Homework for Key Stage 4 is of a demanding nature, and is related to the requirements of the particular examination syllabus. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and equal to the challenge of facilitating students' progress from GCSE to A-level. An abundance of handouts and carefully prepared guides have been given to the students, and every assistance is given to them to enable them to achieve in line with previous years.
12. The present music curriculum is the result of several revisions that have taken place over the past decade in response to assessment and evaluation in the light of classroom experience. It illustrates the department's underlying philosophy that music is a practical subject, and consequently much of the early learning and enjoyment is achieved through practical activities. It is through the practical activities that the remaining aspects are experienced. A wide range of instrumental lessons and extra curricular activities cater for the needs of the more musically high attaining pupils. The music lessons taught to pupils in small groups, by eleven instrumental teachers from Staffordshire Music Service, are well planned and effective in supporting nearly two hundred pupils. Termly targets have been set for each pupil by the second in the department and an effective system for tracking the progress of each pupil is in operation. Pupils receiving instrumental lessons are also encouraged to participate in practical examinations in which commendable results are achieved. Pupils' musical experiences are further broadened by regular visits to concerts in Manchester and Birmingham, they perform in concerts held in and out of school, including Lichfield Cathedral, and they also undertake overseas tours. In all lessons and rehearsals good relationships were observed between pupils and between pupils and staff, and the pupils who choose to attend the school because of the quality of the music making are receiving a very good grounding.
13. The management of the department is very good and highly effective. The head of the department devotes a large proportion of his non-directed time to providing an increasing number of worthwhile musical experiences for as many pupils as possible. As he is also head of sixth form, he has delegated the organisation of the instrumental teaching to the second teacher in the department who has succeeded in enabling the lessons to take place with minimum disturbance to the pupils' and students' other studies. Since the last inspection, the department has addressed the issues that arose, where financial and accommodation restrictions have permitted. The head of department has made every effort and succeeded in securing the necessary funding to provide computers for the department and is spearheading a Year 2000 development plan to gain the necessary accommodation the department needs. Once the computers have been fully installed it is intended that they will enable yet more means of providing musical experiences for all pupils.



14. The last report stated that “music was recognised as an outstanding subject area, as a result of the after school activities, e.g. concerts”. Since then the staff have strived to make music recognised as an outstanding subject area as a result of the curricular activities, while maintaining the quality of the extra curricular activities. This has been difficult with the introduction of a shorter lunch hour, but the department has largely succeeded despite the accommodation restraints that dictate which pupils will receive one lesson per week in the music room and one lesson elsewhere. The teaching of Year 9 in full classes is already beginning to show in this years attainment judgement, and this will have implications on the number of pupils who will show interest in studying the subject at GCSE. To make further

progress the department should:

- expedite the introduction of information technology into the curriculum.
- restore the teaching of Year 9 to smaller groups to maintain the progress enjoyed in Years 7 and 8

#### · **Physical education**

1. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Most pupils understand the necessity of warm up exercises and have a satisfactory understanding of the safety aspects associated with practical activities and apply them appropriately. They are able to use their skills in a variety of small game situations and are able to perform a variety of gymnastics movements. Pupils do not have many opportunities for planning and evaluating their own performance or the performance of others but when these opportunities are available the pupils show a clear understanding of the tasks in hand.
2. GCSE results for 1999 show that 73.4 per cent of the pupils attained higher grades A\* - C. This percentage was well above the national average of 51 per cent. This is a marked improvement on the 1998 results and in line with those of 1997. The attainment of pupils following the core subject course at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations. Pupils are developing more advanced skills and techniques and use them to play effectively a variety of games, such as netball, volleyball, football and badminton. By the end of Key Stage 4, most girls and boys have developed sufficient skill and understanding of the rules to engage in, and obtain, a level of satisfaction from taking part in a competitive game and umpire or referee their respective game efficiently. GCSE pupils have good physical skills but they are less confident in handling class discussion. A number of pupils have gained success at local and county level both as individuals and as team members. In the 1998-99 season the under-16 netball team were county champions and represented the county at the national championships level and achieved tenth position. Physical education is not available at A-level, although a number of students follow the advanced level sports studies course at the Chetwynd Centre. The number studying this course is too small for any national comparison of standards to be undertaken although the majority obtain passes at grade C. There is no formal physical education for other pupils in the sixth form though some activities are organised by students themselves for their own recreation and some students attend the lunchtime extra curricular activities. Whilst girls and boys have different strengths and weaknesses overall there is no significant difference in their attainment.
3. The progress of pupils at both key stages is satisfactory and often good in relation to their previous levels of attainment. Pupils following the GCSE course make good progress. There are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils. Boys and girls take part in activities of the same area of the National Curriculum although the activity undertaken may not be the same, such as girls studying tennis whilst boys study badminton. However boys are not able to study dance and girls are not able to study orienteering. Satisfactory progress was seen within the lessons. Pupils at Key Stage 3 display increasing confidence in using gymnastics equipment and applying new skills learnt in game situations. Long-term satisfactory progress can be seen in the development of the skills used by the pupils in game situations from one year to the next. Pupils demonstrate increasing skills in the gymnastics activities attempted both in the difficulty of the movements and in the body awareness of the performance.
4. All pupils show a very good attitude to physical education and are well behaved in lessons. Good relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers, enhance learning outcomes. Pupils bring a change of clothing, as required and work well together in a variety of group situations. The balance of girls and boys taking GCSE varies from year to year but the numbers of both are increasing. Pupils respect the efforts of each other which was seen in the group of girls joining in with a year 10-football lesson, even though their skill level was lower. Worthy of special mention is the very good competitive way in which the pupils play games.
5. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with almost half the lessons seen at Key Stage 3 being good and a quarter of lessons at Key Stage 4 being good. The expectation is that pupils will continue to

strive to improve their work output and skill development. In the better lessons the warm-up and practices are linked specifically to the lesson and show a carefully thought out progression of difficulty, as seen in badminton, football and dance. Good lessons also involve the pupils in the evaluation of their peers' performance, with constructive points being made. The planning of lessons was variable; some were good but in others strategies were not included as to how the outcomes were to be achieved. The result of this was that at times pupils were not given specific points to improve and a repetition of poor performance was seen. Except in the GCSE course, most pupils do not have many opportunities to plan and evaluate their work. Staff make assessments at the end of each unit of work, but interim assessments are given rarely to the pupils so they do not understand fully the ways in which they can raise their level of achievement.

6. The curriculum for all of the pupils meets the National Curriculum requirements although there is a bias towards games. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the other areas are covered in sufficient depth. At Key Stage 4 pupils have a mixture of core and optional activities which enables a higher level of attainment to be achieved. Displays, based on commercially produced posters and newspaper articles, are used effectively to stimulate pupils' interest in the subject. There is a very good range of extra curricular activities organised each lunch-time which pupils can attend and matches are held frequently after school. This contributes significantly to improve their level of attainment. The school organised a 'Dance Extravaganza' last year and another is planned for the spring term, as seen in the video; these events give pupils an opportunity to work to a very high standard.
7. The management of the department is satisfactory and staff work as an effective team. The schemes of work are being reviewed but at present, with the exception of dance, the planning and evaluating element required by the National Curriculum has not been included; and those for Key Stage 4 are incomplete. The monitoring of teaching and standards has not been undertaken.
8. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress. Although the fitness room and equipment is no longer in use other facilities have been improved, in particular the sports hall floor. There has been some improvement of planning and evaluation skills but more development is still required. The repertoire of gymnastics movements has increased with some pupils achieving high levels of attainment although overall performance in games is higher. However boys still do not have the opportunity to study dance and no general physical education is available for sixth form students. The department has a good solid basis on which to continue to improve and move forward. In order to raise standards the department needs to:
  - Develop further all aspects of assessment.
  - Ensure that planning and evaluation is included in all areas of the curriculum.
  - Complete the scheme of work.

· **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

· **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

1. Thirteen inspectors who spent a combined total of 56 days in the school undertook this inspection of Blessed William Howard Catholic High School. The evidence in the report is based upon a total of 185 hours observation from lessons or part-lessons, distributed across Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form.
  
2. The evidence also includes:-
  - inspection of a range of other school activities, including assemblies and registration;
  - scrutiny of registers;
  - observation of lunchtimes, break times and informal discussions with pupils at these times;
  - inspection of whole-school policies and subject policies.
  - inspection of schemes of work;
  - inspection of development plans;
  - inspection of books and other work of three pupils from each age group, selected by the teachers to represent the full range of attainment;
  - inspection of written reports to parents;
  - discussions with the headteacher and the senior management team;
  - discussions with the chair of governors before and during the inspection;
  - discussion with six members of the governing body;
  - discussions with the heads of departments;
  - discussions with pupils in each age group about aspects of their work;
  - discussions with pupils and student councillors.
  - discussions with members of teaching, learning support and non-teaching staff;
  - discussion at a meeting attended by 58 parents prior to the inspection;
  - 260 responses to the parents' questionnaire.

· **DATA AND INDICATORS**

212. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1095	28	132	69

213. **Teachers and classes**

213. **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	61.30
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.86

213. **Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of education support staff:		13
Total aggregate hours worked each week:		308
Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:		78
Average teaching group size:	KS2	N/A
	KS3	24
	KS4	21.1

213.

214. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/99
	£
Total Income	2,471,980
Total Expenditure	2,451,970
Expenditure per pupil	2,239.24
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 20,010
Balance carried forward to next year	0

214.

215. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:	870
Number of questionnaires returned:	260

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	25	58	13	3	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	42	50	6	2	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	27	47	24	1	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	33	55	9	2	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	30	53	14	3	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	39	55	5	1	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	39	49	10	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	30	57	7	5	1

The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	39	49	11	1	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	35	53	8	4	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	44	47	6	2	1