

INSPECTION REPORT

Cansfield High School
Ashton-in-Makerfield

LEA area: Wigan

Unique Reference Number: 106521

Headteacher: Mr Michael Southworth

Reporting inspector: Mr Akram Khan OBE

Dates of inspection: 20 - 24 September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707991

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Old Road Ashton-in-Makerfield Wigan WN4 9TP
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr E. Foster
Date of previous inspection:	30 October - 3 November 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Akram Khan, OBE, RgI Sarah Drake, Lay Inspector	Science N/A	Leadership and management Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Curriculum and assessment Key Stage 4 Curriculum Efficiency Careers Extra-curricular activities Attainment and progress N/A Pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Special educational needs. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Anthony Bell	Mathematics	
Niall Carr	History	
Michael Gallagher	Geography	
Winifred Burke	Art	
Moira Fitzpatrick	English, drama	
John Morrell	Music	
Robert Tweed	Religious education	
Richard Patterson	Design and technology	
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Judith Tolley	Physical Education Modern foreign languages	Teaching Equal opportunities

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The head provides thoughtful and perceptive leadership and clear educational direction. The senior management team, staff and governors have a strong commitment to raising pupils' attainment.
- Teaching in 95 per cent of lessons was satisfactory or better; it was good or very good in over 60 per cent.
- A supportive and caring environment promotes positive attitudes, good behaviour and a strong positive ethos.
- Careers education and pastoral guidance are very good and procedures for monitoring progress and promoting good attendance are effective.
- There is good provision for extra-curricular activities which are well supported by pupils.
- Development planning is good, the finances of the school are well managed and day-to-day administration is very good.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. There is scope for further improvement in raising pupils' attainment in most subjects.
- II. The length of the school week, provision for pupils' personal and social education in Year 9 and distribution of individual lessons across the curriculum adversely affect some subjects.
- III. Statutory curricular requirements in respect of information technology are not met.
- IV. There are insufficient learning resources to support work in mathematics, science, design and technology and music.
- V. There is an insufficient number of support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum.

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 made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and all issues identified in the 1995 OFSTED report have been addressed effectively and efficiently. Teaching and planning have improved considerably. Helpful policies and curricular plans for all subjects ensure that pupils progress well throughout the school. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, though below the national average, is above average in comparison with similar schools. Over the last four years, GCSE results have varied and in 1997 the percentages of pupils obtaining grades A*-C (43.4 per cent) and A*-G (90.8 per cent), were in line with the national averages but dropped in 1998 to 35 per cent. During the same period, the GCSE point score per pupil has shown a rising trend in line with the national trend but has remained well above that of similar schools. Pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages with the exception of religious education and information technology at Key Stage 4. The headteacher provides strong and highly effective leadership. There is a greater emphasis on promoting consistency of standards and higher expectations through "Learning School Policies." Measurable targets for improvement are set after detailed analysis of performance data, and rigorous monitoring of standards in teaching and pupils' work by the headteacher. In the last three years, the proportion of girls entering the school has increased significantly. There has been a corresponding improvement in the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science but not all subjects have used these performance data to build on pupils' strengths and address weaknesses. Statutory requirements in respect of collective worship are fully met. Policies to promote good attendance and improve pupils' behaviour are proving successful. Recent attendance rates show a marked improvement and exclusion rates have decreased. Form tutors are effective in monitoring pupils' homework diaries and progress. Statutory annual reviews of pupils with special educational needs are carried out effectively though the school recognises the need to provide additional classroom support for these pupils. Systems and structures for improvement are effective and the school is well placed for further improvement.

Standards in subjects

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

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

Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national averages but above average in comparison with similar schools. GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 are below the national average but well above average when compared with similar schools. The strongest subjects at GCSE are art, art and design, drama, music, modern foreign languages, history and information technology. The weakest subjects are science, design and technology (textile), geography, child development and social science.

Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations in English, mathematics, science, French, German, design and technology, music, drama, physical education and geography. In information technology and history pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations and in art it is above. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is below national expectations in English, mathematics, science, French, information technology, design and technology and geography. In German, drama, history and physical education attainment is in line with national expectations and in art it is above. In religious education pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the Locally Agreed Syllabus but by the end of Key Stage 4, their attainment is below this. GCSE results for pupils with special educational needs show that the majority achieves at least five A* - G grades. At Key Stage 3 pupils' progress, as judged from observation of their work in lessons, discussions and examination of pupils' written work, is good in information technology, art, French, German and religious education. Progress is satisfactory in all other subjects. At Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress in art, drama, French and German. Progress is unsatisfactory in information technology and religious education. In all other subjects pupils make satisfactory progress.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, mathematics, information technology, modern foreign languages, art, music, religious education	
Years 10-11	Good	English, drama, mathematics, information technology, modern foreign languages, art, music, history.	
English	Good		

The quality of teaching was sound or better in 95 per cent of 194 lessons seen: it was good or better in just over 60 per cent at both key stages. In satisfactory lessons teaching promoted sound learning and in good or very good lessons teaching had a marked effect on pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. Clear presentations and objectives and well-sequenced activities make a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of concepts. Generally good teaching occurs in English, mathematics, information technology, modern languages, art, music and careers. Only nine lessons in all were judged unsatisfactory (one each in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, religious education, art, music and personal and social education at Key Stage 3 and in modern languages and physical education at Key Stage 4) and contributed to unsatisfactory progress in those lessons.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Most pupils behave well and work well together. There has been a significant reduction in the number of exclusions. Unacceptable behaviour by some boys disrupts learning in a small number of lessons.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most pupils attend school regularly and arrive punctually.
Ethos*	Teachers create a good atmosphere for learning. Pupils have positive attitudes to work; relationships are good. Staff, parents and most pupils are committed to raising standards.
Leadership and management	Highly effective and competent. The governing body is very supportive. There is strong commitment to raise standards further. There is good capacity to take the school further. Most heads of department provide effective leadership.
Curriculum	Broadly based but teaching time is less than recommended and there are anomalies in the allocation of time to some subjects. There is inadequate coverage of information technology at Key Stage 4. Provision for the personal and social education is good in Years 7 and 8 but unsatisfactory in Year 9. Provision for careers education and extra-curricular opportunities is extremely good.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision for moral and social education is good and provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good provision. There are effective procedures for identification of pupils' special educational needs. Targets in individual plans are precise and systematic assessment and annual reviews are carried out.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good: the school has sufficient, well-qualified teaching staff. In-service training needs in some subjects. Valuable support is provided by the non-teaching staff. There is inadequate technician support in some subjects. Inadequate in-class support for pupils with special educational needs. Many subjects are inadequately resourced.
Value for money	Satisfactory: Pupils generally make satisfactory progress in both key stages. The school has effective development planning, target setting and very good financial planning and daily administration.

**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. They feel welcome in school;

What some parents are not happy about

XIII. Insufficient, relevant homework;

- VII. They are well informed about their children's progress;
- VIII. The school provides helpful information about GCSE choices and good careers advice;
- IX. The school enables children to achieve good standards of work;
- X. Staff respect their children's individuality;
- XI. All pupils are encouraged to take part in activities;
- XII. There are high expectations of behaviour.
- XIV. No lockers for pupils;
- XV. Long lunch queues.

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views on expectations of behaviour, provision for extra-curricular activities, careers education and quality of information provided by the school. The lunchtime homework club and the use of the 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 systematic implementation and monitoring of the homework policy. Greater efforts are needed to improve the quality of homework assignments, which could help pupils to consolidate understanding and support their study and research skills. There is no suitable provision of lockers for the safe keeping of pupils' books and equipment and occasionally this has led to thefts. The school's senior management team works hard, within the constraints of the dining room facilities, to ensure smooth running of lunchtime and to cut down long queues. The school has good working relationships with parents, which enable pupils to benefit from the educational opportunities that are offered. Every effort is made to inform parents as soon as pupils cause concern.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to raise standards and improve the quality of education provided, the governors, senior management and staff of Cansfield High School, with the help of the local authority, should:-

XVI. raise pupils' attainment in most subjects by:

- . using Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results to build on pupils' strengths and address weaknesses;
- . monitoring the impact of various "Learning School initiatives" to improve literacy, numeracy, teaching and learning and assessment;
- . targeting in-service training on effective teaching strategies, where needed;
- . matching classroom practice to departmental policies and declared aims;
- . challenging the unacceptable behaviour of some boys in lessons;
- . implementing the subject specific recommendations in different parts of this report.

(paras: 11-26, 94-98,100, 105, 116-119, 128, 129, 130-132, 138, 145, 152, 160-161, 166, 167-168, 179, 188, 190, 197, 198 and 204)

●. review the management and organisation of the curriculum by:

- increasing the length of the school week;
- ensuring that all pupils receive their entitlement to information technology at Key Stage 4;
- reviewing the provision of personal and social education in Year 9;
- reviewing the distribution of time allocation across the curriculum in Key Stage 3.

(paras: 42-44)

●. provide more learning resources to support work in mathematics, science, design and technology and music;

(paras: 87-89, 93, 127, 137, 166, and 197)

●. provide additional learning support staff to meet the growing demands of pupils with special educational needs.

(paras: 82-83)

In addition paragraphs: 50 - marking, 52 & 57 - spiritual and cultural development through subjects, 65 - risk assessment, 70 - links with business and 86 - accommodation, 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. Cansfield Community High School is situated in Ashton-in-Makerfield and provides education for 437 boys and 433 girls in the 11-16 age range. It draws from 33 primary schools with nine main feeder schools accounting for over ninety per cent of the intake. The school serves an area designated as that with "greater or greatest need," where there is a considerable degree of deprivation and where unemployment is much higher than the Wigan and the national averages. The percentage of pupils eligible for free meals, 22.3 per cent, is above the national average. The social context of the school is changing and now about 20 per cent of the new intake comes from a relatively advantaged background. Only two pupils come from homes where English is not the first language.
2. The attainment of the majority of pupils on entry to the school is below the national average which is confirmed by the NFER Cognitive Abilities Tests. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, in the National Curriculum Tests in English, mathematics and science was also below the national average. There are 49 pupils with statements of special educational needs and a further 202 pupils are on Stages 1 to 4 of the Code of Practice. The percentages of pupils with statements of special educational needs and pupils on Stages 1 to 4 are well above the national average. The proportion of girls entering the school has increased significantly and there has been a corresponding improvement in the ability profile of pupils in Years 7 and 8.
3. The school's aims and values set out in the staff handbook are suitable. The school aims to provide a broad, balanced, relevant and coherent curriculum which enables all pupils to reach their full potential, intellectually, creatively and physically, within a happy, safe and caring environment. It is committed further to fostering pupils' self esteem, self-discipline and inter-personal social skills and developing their skills, knowledge and spiritual and moral values regardless of gender, disability, social status or ethnic origin.
4. The school was last inspected in November 1995. The school's action plan and subsequent development plans include its response to all the key issues identified in the report. Central to the principles and purpose of the school's development plan are the strategies for improvement to raise attainment and improve pupils' progress. The areas identified in the 1998-2000 development plan include:
 - raising levels of attainment in all subjects;
 - achieving national averages in the National Curriculum Test results at the end of Key Stage 3 and GCSE;
 - ensuring implementation of all policies, practices and procedures in 'Learning School';
 - improving monitoring and evaluation of the learning process and developing quality standards across all aspects of the school;
 - extending the use of the learning resource centre and information and communication technology to enhance teaching and learning;
 - facilitating clearer understanding by pupils of individual targets related to their attainment and progress.
1. The headteacher and the school's governors have kept parents informed of the progress made.

5. **Key indicators**

1. **Attainment at Key Stage 3¹**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	77	70	147

6. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	31	39	31
	Girls	47	36	24
	Total	78	75	55
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	55 (63)	52(57)	38 (56)
	National	65 (63)	59 (61)	56 (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	27 (12)	29 (26)	19 (12)
	National	34 (23)	36 (37)	27 (29)

6. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	22	35	28
	Girls	44	33	30
	Total	66	68	58
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	46 (66)	48 (65)	41 (43)
	National	(61)	(63)	(61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	16	17	16
	National	31(23)	37(37)	31(29)

2. Attainment at Key Stage 4¹

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	97	79	176

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	32	87	91
	Girls	30	70	75
	Total	62	157	166
Percentage achieving Standard specified	School	35 (44.6)	89 (90.8)	94 (94)
	National	44.6 (43.6)	89.8 (88.4)	95.2 (94.1)

.....

1

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

3. **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	7.7
	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	1.1
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

8.

9. **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:			Number
		Fixed period	35
		Permanent	2

10. **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	24
	Satisfactory or better	95
	Less than satisfactory	5

10. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

10. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

10. Attainment and progress

11. Attainment on entry is below national expectations. A large number of pupils enter the school with low reading ages and low levels of literacy and the percentage of pupils on the special needs register (29 per cent) is above the national average. In recent years there has been an imbalance of boys and girls in the school with numbers of boys outweighing girls by two to one. This too has had an impact on attainment since, nationally, boys perform less well than girls in tests and examinations. This is reflected in the 1998 National Curriculum test results which are below average at the end of Key Stage 3 in English and mathematics and well below the average in science. Taking these subjects together, the performance of pupils was below the average of their year group by an equivalent of 0.27 levels. The results in English have risen steadily for the past four years to 55 per cent for pupils attaining level 5 or above. The provisional results for 1999 show over 60 per cent of pupils attaining level 5 or above. There was an improvement in 1998 when 27 per cent of pupils attained level 6 compared with 12 per cent the year before. Results in mathematics at level 5 and above - 52 per cent - were consistent with those achieved in the previous three years. Provisional results for 1999 show a drop in attainment to below 50 per cent at level 5 and above. In science, results in the National Curriculum tests have remained well below the national average at level 5 in the past three years, but provisional results for 1999 show a rise from 38 per cent in 1998 to 51 per cent in 1999, in pupils attaining level 5 or above. Girls achieved significantly better than boys in English. There are no gender differences in mathematics and science. Pupils' performance in the National Curriculum tests in English and mathematics is above average for schools with pupils from similar background and performance in science is close to the average for similar schools. In the last three years, the proportion of girls entering the school has increased significantly and in Year 7 there are more girls than boys. There has been a corresponding improvement in the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science but not all subjects have used these performance data to build on pupils' strengths and address weaknesses.
12. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. General Certificate of Education (GCSE) results for 1998 show that 35 per cent of pupils attained five or more grades A* -C, which is below the national average of 44 per cent. This is a drop compared with the attainment in 1997 when 44 per cent attained these standards. There are two factors affecting this drop in results; one is the lower attainment of the year group on entry to the school and the other is the very high proportion of boys to girls. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more grades A*-G was 89 per cent, which is in line with the national average. The average GCSE points score for all pupils is close to the national average and shows a rising trend similar to the national trend. Compared with similar schools GCSE results are well above average. Girls perform better than boys overall, except in science where against the national trends, they attain consistently five per cent lower grades A*-C than boys.
13. The pattern of GCSE results, across the subjects, at all grades between 1996 and 1999 shows an improvement in results in modern foreign languages and history with results improving to reach the national average. Results in mathematics, science, geography and child development have fluctuated. In English, information technology, design and technology, art and music results have remained static. In English GCSE passes at A*- C have remained below the national average, while mathematics and science have remained well below the national average, apart from 1997 when both subjects were below the national average. Results have declined in business studies, geology and social science.
1. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations in English, mathematics, science, French, German, design and technology, music, drama, physical education and geography. In information technology and history pupils' attainments are in line with national expectations and in art they are above. Pupils' attainment in religious education is in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is below national

expectations in English, mathematics, science, French, geography, information technology and design and technology. In religious education pupils' attainment is below the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. In German, drama, history, music and physical education attainment is in line with national expectation and in art it is above. GCSE results for pupils with special educational needs show that the majority achieves at least five A*- G grades.

1. At Key Stage 3 pupils' progress, as judged from observation of their work in lessons, discussions and examination of their written work, is good in information technology, art, French, German and religious education. Progress is satisfactory in all other subjects. At Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress in drama, art, French and German. Progress is unsatisfactory in information technology and religious education. In all other subjects pupils make satisfactory progress.
2. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at both key stages and in some subjects, English, French, German, information and communication technology, drama, they make good progress. In all other subjects they make satisfactory progress. Most have targets which are related to either reading and writing skills or emotional and behavioural difficulties. By the end of Key Stage 3 their reading skills have improved significantly and they are able to read for meaning in the majority of lessons. Their listening skills are well developed and in drama they have learned to work co-operatively when developing ideas through discussion and improvisation. These skills serve them well in Key Stage 4 when they embark upon examination courses and continue to make progress in developing and using them. In science and design and technology, they enjoy practical activities and acquire sound manipulative skills but their understanding of scientific and technical vocabulary is weak. Although pupils with special educational needs reach standards of attainment which are below average at both key stages, they benefit from skilled teaching to achieve satisfactory progress. By the end of Key Stage 4, almost all pupils with statements achieve five or more A*- G grades in GCSE examinations, and their average grade in the core subjects is between a 'D' and an 'E'. Pupils with special educational needs make better progress in literacy than in numeracy skills. Those boys who exhibit behavioural difficulties make poor progress.
3. Pupils' literacy attainments on entry to the school are below average. The most significant weaknesses are in their inability to read fluently and for meaning and their inability to express themselves fully in speech. Writing attainments though varied are slightly better. As they progress through the school pupils' reading skills improve steadily and for some pupils with special educational needs they progress well. Pupils learn to read for meaning and higher attaining pupils are able to undertake independent research successfully. All pupils study GCSE literature and have a sound knowledge of texts from different eras and cultures. Their range of writing skills, though restricted for the majority, develops as pupils write for different purposes in the various subjects of the curriculum. Their ability to write independently is sometimes hampered by an over-reliance on the teacher who supplies notes for pupils to copy, as seen, for instance, in some science lessons.
4. Attainment in mathematics is below average. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have a good understanding of number and higher attaining pupils show a good understanding of algebraic notation. The good investigative work seen in some Year 11 coursework on triangles is not sufficiently developed in all classes. At both key stages, some pupils show limited skills in using and applying mathematics. Aspects of numeracy are obvious in some subjects - for example, tables, graphs, use of decimals, measurement and weighing, particularly in science, information technology, design and technology, geography and history but there is inconsistent use of these skills. Though some teachers provide appropriate activities there are insufficient opportunities for some pupils to develop these skills.
5. In science, by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils show a broad and accurate knowledge and understanding across all attainment targets. Some Year 9 pupils conduct research to write a newspaper article on a balanced diet. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is still below the national average. Higher attaining pupils understand ideas connected with enzymes, digestive system and current voltage variations in simple circuits. There remain many pupils who have difficulty with concepts such as ecosystems, biomass and the periodic table. At both key stages pupils set up experimental work competently but have difficulty in formulating hypotheses and analysing results, the latter often because of weak numerical skills.
6. In design and technology, overall, pupils have higher attainments in making than they do in design, though they are capable of following the design process in all areas of technology. At Key Stage 4 there is considerable fluctuation of attainment across the separate subjects which make up design and technology. Pupils employ correct methods when working in resistant materials and textiles. In

graphics they use a suitable range of drawing techniques but their knowledge and understanding of computer-aided design is limited. In food and resistant materials pupils have a broader base of knowledge and understanding. At Key Stage 3 pupils cover all the elements of information technology. They use word processing to write letters and prepare a newspaper article; they use some data logging in science and geography and discuss the impact of information technology on society. At Key Stage 4 less than half of the pupils have planned access to information technology. Those who study the subject show better attainment in communicating and data handling but perform less well in controlling and measuring.

7. Pupils' attainments in religious education are best in factual knowledge about the major world faiths at Key Stage 3. They have difficulty in relating morality to religious beliefs. At Key Stage 4 pupils discuss concepts, such as love and marriage in the context of Christianity and know the outline of theories of evolution and creation.
8. At Key Stage 3, pupils' knowledge of geographical terms and their meaning is satisfactory but their understanding of these concepts is limited. At Key Stage 4 pupils show a good knowledge of the local region and can use maps to demonstrate their understanding of how motorway access restrictions have contributed to traffic problems in Ashton. They can construct graphs of population growth from new data but have difficulty in interpreting statistical information.
9. At Key Stage 3, pupils have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of an appropriate range of historical situations such as the Norman Conquest and the benefits to Britain in 1900 of colonial rule. They show good skills in investigating, sifting and debating historical evidence. Pupils at Key Stage 4 make good use of the limited index, library, documents, diagrams and charts in the Learning Resource Centre to demonstrate their ability to locate, observe and collect data. Pupils' progress, particularly at Key Stage 3, is hampered by lack of literacy skills and the poor behaviour of a few boys.
10. In modern languages pupils gain competence in all four skills at Key Stage 3. They take part in simple dialogues, respond to questions, read and write accurately in the target language in accordance with their level of attainment. At Key Stage 4 pupils write with reasonable accuracy and take part in extended conversation. Higher attaining pupils reach standards above the national average and cope successfully with a wider range of structures and vocabulary.
11. In music at Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils sing in tune and accurately and identify orchestral instruments they hear on recordings. They know some of the basic elements of music such as melody and rhythm. Few pupils study the subject at Key Stage 4. Those who do, identify different periods of musical history and have acquired a sound knowledge of the elements of music. In physical education games skills are below national expectation at Key Stage 3. Girls have insecure footwork and dodging skills; boys use front tackling skills effectively in practice but these break down during a game. In Key Stage 4 pupils improve their skills so that they are in line with national expectations. Girls use a range of tackling skills in hockey and boys plan to use more advanced skills in a number of games. The skills of coaching and officiating are under-developed.
12. Since the previous inspection the school has taken positive actions to improve attainment. The headteacher has taken a lead in monitoring classroom practice. This, together with other monitoring procedures undertaken by heads of department has led to a clearer focus on the professional development of teachers. There has been an emphasis on data collection and interpretation which has resulted in target setting for pupils in all year groups. New heads of department have been appointed who have reviewed curriculum provision within departments and where necessary have revised and improved this.

26. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

13. The school operates as an orderly place of learning in which pupils have good attitudes towards their work, behave well, develop good relationships and mature into pleasant young adults. Inspectors agree

with pupils and parents who said that one of the school's strengths is its friendly, happy atmosphere.

14. The majority of pupils settles well at the beginning of lessons and, where teachers expect it, as for instance in a Year 9 English lesson, begin routine reading tasks without being prompted. Year 7 pupils are very keen and interested in all the new experiences that the school has to offer them and are already growing accustomed to its routines and expectations. Pupils of all ages take pride in the presentation of their work and handle resources with care. They are willing to learn from their mistakes and from each other's contributions to lessons. Throughout the school pupils are good listeners and follow well teachers' instructions and directions, but many are less confident when it comes to using their own initiative. They are more used to being passive rather than active learners and, because they have few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, often find it hard to motivate themselves sufficiently to make the best use of time. When tasks set are challenging and teachers' expectations are high, pupils tackle their work with sustained interest, concentration and enthusiasm. In a Year 11 music lesson, for example, pupils concentrated hard and worked productively on their own, and in a badminton lesson Year 11 boys worked very well throughout, even when not directly supervised by the teacher. On the few occasions when pupils' attention wanes, lesson content does not match pupils' prior attainment and offers little challenge. Pupils do use the Learning Resource Centre for personal study and research but few ask the further questions that will enhance their learning and not all of them willingly complete the homework set.
15. Most pupils behave well both in lessons and around school. Conduct is orderly and well managed by staff, despite the congestion which occurs in some corridor areas between lessons and at lunchtime. Pupils are polite and courteous and many will open doors for their peers as well as adults. Pupils respond sensibly to the trust that teachers place in them, when they allow them to stay in most areas of the building during break times. There is very little evidence of graffiti, although some pupils drop litter carelessly. Pupils' behaviour during the whole-school assembly was remarkably good and contributed positively to the creation of a sense of community. There is, however, a small minority, most of whom are boys, who persistently attempt to disrupt lessons, thereby impairing the education of both themselves and others. These pupils generally respond well to good teaching with firm, consistent discipline but, when unchallenged, are restless, noisy and inattentive. Since the previous inspection the school has succeeded in halving the number of fixed period exclusions during a year; the number of permanent exclusions is the same as four years ago and less than the average for schools of a similar size and type. Neither of the pupils permanently excluded last year started their secondary education at Cansfield.
16. Pupils with special educational needs show good attitudes to learning. They appreciate the difficulties they face and work hard to overcome them. The summer school, which they attend voluntarily prior to starting in year 7, helps to prepare them for life in the school. They take good advantage of additional literacy support, the homework club and the paired reading scheme. Pupils with special educational needs are generally polite and well behaved. Those who have behavioural difficulties can be disruptive in mainstream lessons. Their personal development would benefit from a more systematic approach to behaviour management, supported by the School Psychological Service.
17. Relationships throughout the school are good. Pupils co-operate well with each other and staff, and they generally collaborate well when working in pairs and small groups. In a history lesson, Year 10 pupils helped each other to use complex sources of evidence to determine the origins of World War I, while those in a Year 11 careers lesson showed due respect for each others' views when thinking about the benefits of work experience. Pupils of all ages say there is very little serious bullying. Those pupils who have physical disabilities or other special needs are fully integrated into the life of the school, while those from the neighbouring special school who attend Cansfield part-time are also completely accepted as members of the community. These good relationships help to create a positive environment in which productive learning can take place.
18. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The number of opportunities to exercise initiative and responsibility varies considerably between different years but where they occur pupils respond in a mature manner and gain self-esteem. Some Year 11 pupils take responsibility for coaching younger pupils in extra-curricular sports activities and others help with the summer school for pupils starting in

September. Younger pupils new to the school relate how helpful and supportive they find older peers. Extra-curricular activities are well supported; one tenth of the school population was involved in the recent production of Oliver. Older pupils recently organised a concert to help an injured friend. Many Year 11 pupils volunteer to be prefects and they carry out their duties diligently and with sensitivity. However, there is considerable scope for developing pupils' sense of responsibility, personal initiative and leadership skills and providing opportunities for them to contribute to the community through, for instance, school council, clubs, presenting assemblies or becoming involved in mini-enterprises.

Attendance

19. Pupils' overall levels of attendance at the school are satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. In the most recent full academic year the average attendance of each year group was around ninety-one per cent. Attendance levels at the school have risen consistently since the time of the previous inspection and this is having a positive effect on the standards that pupils achieve.
20. The great majority of pupils arrives punctually in the morning, but many show little sense of urgency when moving between classrooms. This has the inevitable consequence that teaching time is lost in an already short teaching week, thus reducing the rate of pupils' academic progress.

34.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

34. Teaching

21. The quality of teaching was sound or better in 95 per cent of the 194 lessons seen: it was good or better in just over 60 per cent at both key stages. In satisfactory lessons teaching promoted sound learning and in good or very good lessons teaching had a marked effect on pupils' attainment and progress. Consistently good teaching occurs in English, mathematics, information technology, modern languages, art, music and careers. Nine lessons were judged unsatisfactory: one each in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, religious education, music and personal and social education at Key Stage 3 and in modern languages and physical education at Key Stage 4; they contributed to unsatisfactory progress in those lessons.
22. Overall the quality of teaching is good in both key stages. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and of the requirements of the National Curriculum in those subjects. They make good use of this to plan their lessons and very good planning is a feature in modern languages, music and careers. Clear presentations and objectives and well-sequenced activities make a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of concepts. In most lessons teachers have appropriate expectations of the pupils in their charge and use a variety of methods to ensure that pupils maintain concentration and interest. For example in modern language lessons games, songs, mime, rhythm and improvisation are used imaginatively and very effectively to practise new language and develop speaking and listening skills. In history the variety of tasks provided increases pupils' enjoyment of the subject and provides an appropriate challenge. In religious education imaginative tasks are used to stimulate reflection for example in a lesson where pupils were asked to reflect upon the life of a leaf. In physical education pupils are encouraged to work out the best techniques in rugby and use this information to help each other improve. In English teachers make good use of discussion to allow pupils to develop ideas about character in "Hobson's Choice" and become more adventurous in their contributions to the lesson. In some science lessons teachers enhance pupils' understanding of new concepts by asking probing questions. Teachers make good use of resources to clarify ideas and increase understanding: for example in mathematics good use is made of display to reinforce learning and clarify ideas and in religious education artefacts are used effectively to increase understanding. In modern languages teachers make good use of overhead transparencies and flashcards to focus attention and clarify meaning, of puppets to increase confidence and interest in speaking and listening; information technology is used very effectively to reinforce and extend learning, allowing pupils to progress at their own pace in all four skills. However in some lessons resources, such as worksheets are not adapted to support lower attaining pupils and those pupils with special needs. In some science lessons work is too closely prescribed by the teacher and pupils are not always given opportunities to explore, test hypotheses, put their skills to the test, participate fully in activities or evaluate their own learning. Generally teachers make good use of time and there is a brisk pace, though this is not consistent across the whole curriculum.
23. Lesson planning is sound in Key Stage 3 paying close attention to the requirements of the National Curriculum and ensuring continuity and progression. In Key Stage 4 it is linked to examination

syllabuses. Within lessons teachers are generally effective in monitoring the progress of individuals and giving help where necessary but they do not always plan their lessons in detail for specific outcomes for these pupils. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and control and management are effective, as a result pupils listen attentively and concentrate on tasks set. In many lessons where pupils are given the opportunity to work in small groups and pairs participation and understanding are improved. In a few isolated lessons, teachers do not apply the school's behaviour policy rigorously and consistently. Unacceptable behaviour of a few boys affects adversely the progress of many.

24. Special needs teaching from specialist staff is skilled and focused, using a range of phonic-skills-based approaches such as *THRASS & ARROW*. Teaching is well paced and expectations of pupils are high - for example in an English lesson on media where pupils debated the value of television. Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) are used effectively in most departments, particularly in physical education and English. There is a high degree of joint planning to achieve objectives and meet the needs of the pupils.
25. In the small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are low, so that activities provided are not sufficiently challenging for some or all of the pupils within the group and planning is not always sufficiently focused on desired outcomes. In some science and geography lessons tasks are not sufficiently varied or challenging and opportunities to work in pairs or small groups and acquire practical skills too infrequent. The pace in these lessons is usually slow and activities are not sufficiently exciting or stimulating to engage the pupils' interest and move them forward in their learning. Some lessons are too heavily directed by the teacher, thus reducing the opportunities for pupils to learn through their own experience or participate fully.
26. Most teachers mark work regularly and give pupils useful indications of how they can improve their work but this is not consistent across the curriculum. Both the quality of homework set and the responses of pupils to homework have improved. Pupils' planners have been introduced and their completion is monitored regularly by staff, who ensure systematic implementation and monitoring of the homework policy. Good use of homework is seen in mathematics, drama, modern languages, religious education, art and music to extend learning and prepare for the next lesson. In many lessons, such as in modern foreign languages, information technology, and physical education, teachers monitor pupils' progress closely and give appropriate help and encouragement to individuals. In most subjects homework is usually set conscientiously to reinforce learning and extend work in class.
27. Effective strategies are being developed over time to improve the quality of teaching and learning in all areas of the curriculum and the school's initiative to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning is having a positive effect, encouraging teachers to share ideas and spread good practice within departments. Since the last report satisfactory progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and - through "the Learning School policies" - in achieving consistency across the curriculum although there is still considerable scope for further development.

41.

The curriculum and assessment

28. The curriculum provision is satisfactory. However, curriculum time is significantly below the national recommendations. Taught time is twenty-three hours and twenty minutes as against the recommended time of twenty-five hours. Personal and social education, delivered in the tutor time, is timetabled to make up the shortfall. However, a significant proportion of this time is spent on daily routines such as taking the register, checking up on absences and discussing individual issues. Also time is regularly lost when assemblies carry through into lesson time.
29. The curriculum offered at Key Stage 3 is appropriately broad and meets the statutory requirements. Pupils follow appropriate courses that cover the subjects of the National Curriculum, together with personal and social skills, drama and religious education. Coverage of information and communication technology is met through a separate information technology course. However, personal and social education in Year 9 is delivered through other subjects and in tutor time. Though the programmes are

well planned there are inconsistencies in the provision of personal and social education lessons and monitoring systems are not well developed to ensure these programmes are fully delivered. The school plans to monitor this provision more rigorously. There are inconsistencies in the allocation of time in some subject areas. In modern foreign languages, history and geography some pupils have two lessons one week and one lesson the next. In science pupils have four lessons in Year 7, two lessons in Year 8 and three lessons in Year 9. These anomalies affect adversely pupils' progress and preparation for the National Curriculum tests in science.

30. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum is generally broad and relevant but the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) does not meet statutory requirements. Some pupils do not have information and communication technology lessons and there is no provision for them to have access to some aspects of the Programmes of Study through other subjects. This apart, all pupils follow a balanced curriculum which includes English, mathematics and science, personal and social education, religious education and a selection of other subjects from a range of options. All pupils take one arts subject and a modern foreign language. The personal, social and health education programme which covers sex, health and drugs education and aspects of these are taught through science.
31. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. A curriculum committee has been established. Considerable attention has been given to improving the quality of the curriculum and curricular planning. The governing body plays an active part in curriculum developments. The curriculum committee has accepted the recommendations of recent government reports. As a result, suggestions have been fed back to departments in order to influence provision. A literacy policy is in place and the development of literacy skills is well established. However, in some subjects insufficient time is given to the development of speaking skills. There is no whole school numeracy policy though plans are in place to develop a numeracy strategy. Systems to monitor the breadth and balance of experiences within departments and curricular planning, both within and across key stages, are not yet embedded in the organisation of the school. The length of the taught week is still less than the recommended time.
32. In planning, attention given to the requirements of pupils' varying attainment is still insufficient in some subject areas, both within groups that are set by ability and in mixed ability groups. There is a rolling programme of policy review. Schemes of work have been written which reflect all aspects of the Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum. Many of these schemes, for example in science, English and modern foreign languages, are good and developed fully to provide an effective framework for consistency in teaching and to promote learning in lessons. However, several are recently re-written and have yet to become embedded in day-to-day practice or to have a positive impact on attainment and progress.
33. Curricular provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is good, particularly in relation to literacy development. Pupils with special educational needs follow broadly the same curriculum as their peers, although withdrawal for small group literacy work deprives pupils of some religious education, art and music. Extra-curricular activities make a positive contribution to their learning, for instance through the club for dyspraxic pupils which enhances their motor skills in physical education.
34. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities including an annual school production and varied sporting, dramatic and musical activities which enable pupils to raise the standards of their work. Additionally subject departments make facilities available to meet the needs and interest of pupils at lunch times and after school. These extra-curricular activities, including visits and excursions at home and abroad, are well planned across the academic and pastoral curriculum and published in a booklet form so that everyone is aware of the overall provision. Teachers give generously of their time. Older pupils benefit from the opportunity to take responsibility and share their expertise by helping to organise sports' clubs. From the evidence gathered during the inspection week pupils appreciate the range of opportunities offered and numbers using the facilities in most curricular areas are high. Computers and the learning resource centre are freely available for the homework club and provide a valuable opportunity for pupils to do personal study and research. Funding for enrichment activities in some subjects has been cut back recently, and this has affected adversely subjects like English, history and art.
35. Preparation for the next stage of education is good. The careers programme is well planned to develop knowledge, skills and good attitudes to higher education and employment. A careers adviser is in school for several days each week and works closely with the careers teacher. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils undertake work experience which is well planned and monitored effectively. They benefit a great deal from a careers convention, held every two years in a local school. There is a programme of outside speakers, mock interviews and visits to colleges and local businesses. A series of action-planning

sessions and interviews was held for Year 9 in the summer term in collaboration with the careers department.

36. The quality of assessment overall is satisfactory. The policy for assessment, recording and reporting has been updated recently. This provides clear guidance on the procedures and practices required. However, this is not yet fully embedded in practice and there are inconsistencies within departments. A large amount of information is gathered which is used effectively to measure attainment and progress, to set pupils and to analyse trends over time. This is fed back to faculties to help when planning future teaching and learning strategies and to set targets. There are few opportunities for pupils to be involved in their own assessment and in some subjects assessment information is not used effectively when planning future teaching and learning programmes. The quality of marking is inconsistent. Some teachers mark work carefully and make helpful comments on ways to improve. However, in some books careless and untidy work escapes comment, large sections are not marked and there are few comments on ways to improve. In some faculties, the systems to monitor the quality of marking are not fully established and lack rigour. Systems and procedures have not yet been established to monitor the consistency and effectiveness of the use of assessment, both within departments and across the school.
37. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) ensures that pupils' individual educational plans provide relevant and focused targets and that these are properly shared with subject teachers. Pupils' work is assessed accurately against these objectives, and reports to parents provide a clear picture of what their children know and can do.

51.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

38. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The way in which the whole school assembly is conducted makes a significant impact by encouraging pupils to reflect on moral issues in an atmosphere of quiet reverence and self-discipline. Year assemblies do not achieve this so successfully. Tutor time in classes sometimes includes opportunities for reflection and spiritual awareness. Subject lessons make too little impact on spiritual awareness, apart from religious education, which focuses strongly on awareness of Creation and gives pupils a sense of a purposeful God. Opportunities in a few subjects to develop pupils' sense of wonder about the natural world are not exploited.
39. The school has an excellent document entitled "The Beginning of the School Day" which clearly sets out the school's expectations for form based assemblies. The arrangements outlined fully meet requirements for collective worship, and in the assemblies observed there was a purposeful start to the school day. In some Year assemblies, however, the prayers said were perfunctory and made little impact.
40. The quality of provision for moral development is good. The school's code of conduct is prominently displayed in corridors to remind pupils of the standards of behaviour expected of them. Teachers set good role models of personal behaviour. They are courteous towards pupils and expect courtesy in return. Religious education in particular plays an important role in helping pupils to understand their responses to the moral dilemmas that they will face as adults. The "Thought for the Day" in class assemblies encourages pupils to think about moral issues. School, year and class assemblies all help to emphasise the distinctions between right and wrong behaviour.
41. Class assemblies, lessons and extra-curricular activities all contribute to the school's good provision for pupils' social development. Pastoral arrangements are highly effective and play a key role in this provision. There are some good examples of ways in which pupils have to assume roles of responsibility, for instance as prefects. Older pupils are encouraged to monitor behaviour around the school, and do so with authority but without bullying. High expectations of social behaviour are set in subjects such as drama and modern foreign languages, where pupils are expected to support and recognise each others' achievements. Physical education provides good opportunities for Year 11 pupils to coach younger ones. After-school activities such as homework clubs and sporting activities offer

valuable social experiences.

42. The school is a caring community with strong values, which encourages the personal development of pupils with special educational needs. Their social development in particular benefits from the fact that they play a full part in school life, acting as prefects and representing the school in sports teams. Older pupils with special educational needs help younger ones with their reading, and the assistance they are able to offer greatly enhances their own self-esteem. Although there are few opportunities for pupils to undertake work in the local community, the school accepts pupils with severe learning difficulties from a nearby special school into classes. This integration gives pupils a valuable opportunity to develop healthy social attitudes.

43. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. English, art, music and modern foreign languages are among the subjects which contribute to pupils' awareness of other cultures through the range of their curricular experiences. Pupils are made aware of artistic tradition both from West European and other cultures. They learn American poetry and experience music from Indonesia, India and other places. More generally subjects provide very few opportunities to encourage an awareness of the pupils' own culture. Pupils' studies in a few subjects make disappointingly little impact on their cultural development.
44. Since the last inspection, the school has developed an approach to the "taught" hidden curriculum which has had a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In order to improve provision further, the school should broaden the range of opportunities within lessons which can provide spiritual and cultural experiences for pupils.

58.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

45. The school provides good support for its pupils and has developed very good procedures for monitoring their academic progress, personal development and attendance, which are used well in order to offer pupils appropriate guidance that is tailored according to their need. Pupils are confident that, should they need help, a member of staff will listen to them; they like the fact that they are well known by staff, and are treated as individuals, not compared with others. The cohesiveness of the various systems has improved since the previous inspection.
46. Staff are working hard and successfully to refine their arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic and personal progress so that they directly interconnect with each other. Heads of year maintain impressive cohort files in which they record each pupil's academic scores, rewards, sanctions, attendance, medical records and the like, in order to build up an individual profile that can inform them when they offer guidance to pupils. These are passed on to the following year head in order to maintain continuity of care. The school has in place good systems of communication which ensure that important information reaches the relevant member of staff. Form tutors play an important part in recording day-to-day information about individuals and regularly reminding them about the school's expectations. Pupils also monitor their own progress and targets so that the whole school community is working towards the same end of raising standards.
47. A strong reward system is now in place to promote good effort and behaviour. Pupils value receiving the accolade of 'Star of the Week' and are eager that their form should have the best attendance in the year. However, at the moment not all staff have consistently high expectations of behaviour which means that the system is not fully effective in ensuring good discipline at all times. The school takes any reported incident of bullying very seriously and all pupils spoken with consider that the steps taken by staff are effective in eliminating harassment.
48. The school works very closely with educational welfare officers from the two authorities in which pupils live and also has very good internal systems in place to track absence and promote attendance. Staff try to make telephone contact with parents on the first day of a pupil's unexplained absence, and they make it extremely hard for pupils to leave the site undetected during the lunch break. On the other hand, the school is prepared to be very flexible in its approach when developing individual timetables for those who find attendance at school difficult for a variety of reasons. This balance of monitoring and support has led to pupils' attendance increasing each year since the previous inspection so that it is now in line with the national average. Procedures to ensure child protection are also very good. Staff have received appropriate training and are provided with clear guidance on how to act. There is good liaison with outside agencies, the named responsible person keeps thorough records and he ensures that these remain confidential.
49. Provision for the support and guidance of pupils with special educational needs is good. The arrangements for monitoring their progress through the link teachers in departments are very effective.

Arrangements with external agencies such as the Psychological Service are very close, and play an important part in ensuring pupils' welfare.

50. The school sees good care for pupils as having a direct impact on the academic standards they achieve and so staff work hard to make pupils feel at ease. The deputy head and head of Year 7 work closely with colleagues at primary schools in order to help pupils settle well. The special needs co-ordinator attends review meetings for pupils in Year 6 so that she has a good idea of their individual needs before they arrive at the school. Detailed information about pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is transferred to heads of faculty. At the other end of the school, pupils in Year 11 have access to good guidance about the possibilities open to them post-sixteen. Pupils in Year 9 receive guidance about option choices during the fifteen-minute Individual Development Programme period at the beginning of three days each week. The value of this programme is very dependent on individual form tutors and, at the moment, it is unclear how successful the school is in providing sufficient personal and social education and guidance for pupils in this year group.
51. On a day-to-day basis the school promotes effectively the health, safety and general well-being of its pupils. There are good arrangements for looking after pupils who have accidents or feel unwell and, during her weekly sessions in school, the nurse is available for pupils to drop in and seek her advice. Staff conduct checks of the site in order to highlight any safety issues, and those with responsibilities in this area worked very hard to ensure the safety of all members of the school community during the recent extensive building programme. Members of the science and design and technology departments carry out regular risk assessments in order to highlight potential hazards and the action taken to avoid them, but this is not the case in other departments or for the school as a whole. This is an area of weakness that, once staff have received appropriate training, needs to be tackled. Various minor concerns about health and safety were raised with the school during the inspection.

65.

Partnership with parents and the community

52. Parents feel welcome in school and consider that they are kept well informed about both school events and their children's progress. The school has built up a good partnership with parents which enables pupils to profit fully from the educational opportunities that are open to them. Parents have confidence that staff respect the pupils' individuality and will act in their best interest. The school informs parents when their children are achieving success as well as when they are causing concern, with the result that parents are happy to work together with staff for the benefit of pupils.
53. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school issues a considerable amount of information for parents. The prospectus and governors' annual report give a clear overview of the life of the school which is complemented each term by the informative, well produced newsletter 'The Word Is'. Heads of Year maintain personal contact with parents during the year and there are good lines of communication should pupils be, for example, unexpectedly absent from school. Parents can discover what their children are learning both through notes at the front of their exercise books and through their homework diaries, and they are kept well informed about pupils' progress. The school issues mid-year screening sheets and more detailed end-of-year reports which clearly identify what level pupils are working at, how much progress they are making and what they need to do in order to improve. Parents consider that progress reports have improved since the previous inspection.
54. Parents support their children's work through the interest they take in pupils' homework and through their willingness to talk with staff during the year should there be any concerns. Parents' evenings are reasonably well attended and staff follow up those who do not attend in order to maintain lines of communication. The Parents and Friends Association raises considerable funds during the year which are used to provide the 'extras' that enhance school life. Last year they funded, among other things, new encyclopaedias and computers for the Learning Resource Centre, an electric piano and a sound system for the theatre.
55. In some areas the partnership that the school has developed with members of the wider community is very strong but in others it is surprisingly weak. The long standing partnership with a local special school, some of whose pupils attend the high school regularly, is of great benefit to both sets of pupils. Those at Cansfield learn about tolerance, acceptance and the value of all individuals; those from Hope

school have the opportunity to sample life in a large and bustling community. The school has also developed very useful pastoral and curricular links with its feeder primaries so that staff in the different institutions can increase their knowledge of pupils' individual and overall understanding and coverage of different subject areas. There are also well-developed links with Wigan and Leigh College, which means that pupils have good information on which to base their choice of courses after GCSE. The school's good partnership with clubs and other sporting institutions contributes positively towards developing pupils' interest and expertise in this area.

56. The school's partnership with the business community is not well developed. Year 11 pupils benefit from a well-organised work experience programme and also from the mock interviews with representatives from business that form part of their careers programme. However, the school does not hold an industry day nor do different departments use links with industry to enhance the curriculum offered to pupils, thereby firing their interest in work and enabling them to see the relevance of their studies to life beyond school.

70.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

57. The leadership of the head is a real strength for the school. He provides highly effective and purposeful leadership and there is a clear and well-understood educational vision based on determination and fairness in his dealings with staff and pupils. He has succeeded in creating an environment in which both staff and pupils can achieve. A high priority is given to pupils' attainment and progress, team building and redefining the senior management team's responsibilities. Since the last inspection there has been a good rate of improvement and the pace of change is measured and appropriate. The new initiatives have included:

- promoting consistency of standards and expectations through "Learning School Policies" and establishing forums for educational debate and staff development;
- reorganizing staffing structures and redefining the roles of the senior management team to support pastoral and academic teams;
- strengthening middle management in English, mathematics and restructuring modern foreign language;
- reviewing and updating schemes of work; developing portfolios of good exemplars of materials at all levels/grades; promoting monitoring and evaluation of practices and introducing an annual evaluation of subject performance against agreed targets;
- developing literacy and numeracy skills and establishing curricular links with Ashton Cluster Primary Schools.

1. The lines of communication between the head and staff have been strengthened. The systems and structures necessary to sustain the continued improvement are now in place. The impetus for improvement in standards is provided through target setting and extensive monitoring of standards by the headteacher. The use of assessment information and analysis of pupils' performance enable appropriate targets to be set for individuals and year groups. This system is highly developed and invaluable for judging whether value-added progress is being made. The head monitors standards in teaching and pupils' work closely and systematically. Reviews of standards in individual departments are particularly rigorous and well organized. He has, with the help of the Local Education Authority's (LEA) link adviser and other subject specialist advisers, observed and evaluated the work of the humanities, science, design and technology and modern foreign languages departments and provided them with constructive feedback. Over the last few months the senior managers have developed systems for supporting different departments and for more rigorous monitoring of pupils' attainment and prediction of their future performance. At the level of senior and middle management, the will to support the head is evident and in most cases the departmental priorities reflect those of the school. The

head's efforts are much appreciated by governors, parents, staff and pupils, who all comment favourably on the changes made in recent years.

2. The school has an appropriate mission statement and aims, with a clear focus on raising pupils' attainment and progress. There is a positive ethos in the school and the pastoral system is effective in providing good support and care. Relationships at all levels are good, and the staff and pupils alike are aware of the increasing level of expectation of academic success. Over the last four years, the GCSE point score per pupil has shown a steady increase. The average total point score per pupil is close to the national average and is well above the average for similar schools.

3. The management skills of middle managers are improving in most areas. Among the subjects of the curriculum there are examples of good leadership in modern foreign languages, English, religious education, history, art, physical education and careers. At the departmental level the quality of curricular planning is strong and departmental schemes of work are detailed and provide an effective framework for teaching but in some cases are not fully translated into successful practice. Monitoring of the quality of provision and of pupils' attainment and progress is not yet developed fully in all subjects. Most subjects are beginning to adopt OFSTED-style classroom observation, target setting for pupils and analysis of performance data. Through well-planned staff appraisal and the in-service training programme, teachers are well supported in raising pupils' attainment.
4. The special educational needs department is ably led by the SENCO who has been in post since September 1998. She is building strong links with subject departments, and monitors the progress of pupils with special educational needs very effectively. A useful learning support handbook, with appropriate policies and procedures, provides an effective framework for the work of the department and there are strengths in the way pupils' individual education plans are supported and monitored across all departments. The SENCO enjoys good support from the school's senior management team, and also from the named governor who fulfils her role as "critical friend" to the department most effectively. There are good links with the LEA's Special Educational Needs Support Team and there are very good links with the local College of Further Education, which most of the pupils attend when they leave the school. The school development plan's targets for special needs are precise and focus on effective and efficient methods to improve standards. The need for further development of whole-school co-ordination and additional in-class support is recognised. The arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress through the link teachers in departments are very effective.
5. The main focus of the school's development plan for 1997-2000 is to raise standards of pupils' achievement. The plan has some good features, such as clearly defined tasks, responsible staff and strategies for curriculum development. The development plan addresses effectively all of the weaknesses which have persisted since the time of the last inspection and includes strategies for remedying them. It recognises the need to improve and extend systems for monitoring, evaluating and further developing good classroom practice. Not all the department plans reflect the school's commitment to raise standards and evaluate the impact of policies on specific targets in order to make an objective assessment of pupils' attainment and progress between key stages and success criteria are not explicit; very few success criteria refer to specific outcomes for pupils.
6. The governing body is very supportive and is involved actively in overseeing the work of the school. With the exception of information technology in Key Stage 4 and carrying out risk assessment, the governing body meets its statutory duties. Positive relationships and mutual trust exist between the governing body and the senior management team. Governors understand their role in strategic planning, critical support and monitoring and evaluation. They receive detailed reports on the issues identified in the last inspection, from the headteacher, who gives them the best advice possible. They readily question policies submitted to them, particularly in respect of curricular planning, pupils' attainment and progress, financial and staffing decisions. The governors' main interest is in the quality of education and they frequently visit the school to sample pupils' work. Constructive links exist between the governors and the special educational needs department. 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 Key Stages 3 and 4.
7. The day-to-day administration is efficient and lines of communication are clear within the school, between the school and parents, and with the wider community. 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. The school has now a strong commitment to raising pupils' attainment. The recent literacy, numeracy and learning school initiatives, closer and effective curricular links with Ashton Cluster Schools and raising staff awareness are aimed at improving the quality of education but how effectively these

policies are implemented needs continuous monitoring by middle managers. Since the last report the school has made satisfactory improvement. The average GCSE point score per pupil has improved from 31.5 per pupil in 1994 to 34.17 in 1996-98. Attendance rates, in recent months, show a marked improvement. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher and the excellent support of the governors, the school is well placed for, and is capable of, achieving further improvement.

79. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

Staffing

9. The school has sufficient, well-qualified specialist staff who are deployed efficiently to meet pupils' and curriculum needs. All teaching is undertaken by staff who are qualified in the subjects that they teach and have a suitable range and depth of experience and expertise. The ratio of pupils to teachers and the contact ratio are broadly in line with national averages. The staffing of the school is enhanced by visiting specialists for music, as well as weekly visits by a school nurse, and specialists from the Visual Impaired and Hearing Centres.
10. A clear programme of teacher training needs in each subject is established through to the following year. This gives priority to specific in-service requirements. These are matched to the school's development plan targets. However, in some subjects including physical education, modern foreign languages and design and technology, the courses identified in these targets are not being provided. There is an urgent need for in-service training for textiles teachers and non-specialists in religious education. An appropriate and effective induction programme is in place to support newly qualified teachers and those teachers new to the school. The school also has effective links with Edge Hill University College and there is a good support programme for the training of teachers.
11. The support staff work effectively and efficiently, and make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school. However, there is an acute shortage of technical assistance in design and technology.
12. There is a high level of expertise amongst the teachers and support assistants in the special needs department, which is reinforced by a commitment to ongoing in-service training. All staff have very detailed and clear job descriptions. Bearing in mind the high number of pupils on the Code of Practice register, the level of support, particularly in the foundation subjects, is not yet adequate. Non-specialist teachers in some departments would benefit from further in-service training in specific areas. For example, teachers in the mathematics department do not at present develop mathematical language sufficiently.

Accommodation

13. The school occupies a pleasant site with a mixture of old and new buildings. Accommodation is generally well maintained. Specialist facilities for English, music, information technology and science are good. There have been some significant improvements to the accommodation since the last report. The English and music departments are now housed in new, purpose-built suites, with music being in a separate block from the main school building. The school continues to offer an attractive environment to pupils. Most teaching areas and corridors are attractive and well maintained with some excellent displays.
14. The school continues to benefit from having community facilities on campus. The swimming pools, crèche and fitness suites provide many important benefits. The problems identified in the previous report have been largely overcome, in that the school now has full access to the gymnasium and theatre, and there is improved availability of swimming facilities. Although the theatre requires some refurbishment, the school may benefit in future from a potential source of revenue, through letting facilities.
15. There are, however, still some shortcomings in the existing accommodation, which affect adversely the quality of education provided. There is inadequate space for the whole school to meet. Full school assemblies are held in the sports hall, which is unsatisfactory as an auditorium. The lack of space for examinations causes the gymnasium to be out of use for the physical education department, for up to six weeks a year. Surfaces for physical education require attention. The gymnasium floor shows signs of wear and tear due to a water leak, and the all-weather playing surface is deteriorating rapidly. The

provision for design and technology is inadequate. The resistant materials rooms are not attractive and do not provide a stimulating environment for modern design and making. Textiles is taught in art rooms, with lack of electrical servicing. The graphics studio is too small to serve the new GCSE courses.

Resources for learning

16. The quality and range of resources in the school are barely adequate and the level of resourcing in many subjects has now become inadequate. There is a shortage of modern textbooks in modern foreign languages, mathematics and history. New equipment and consumables are in short supply in science, music and design and technology, reducing opportunities for pupils to carry out practical tasks in small groups and gain first-hand experiences.
17. The school now has a new computer network based in the learning resource centre, and this extends to a learning resource base in the modern foreign language suite. This provides good access to up-to-date software as well as networked CD ROMS. In addition the network gives Internet and Intranet facilities. The school now has a ratio of pupils to computers of 10:1 which comes close to the national average. However, there is still an insufficient number of computers to develop subject specific-skills in art, design and technology, science, music, mathematics and religious education.
18. The learning resource centre, which also houses the school library, is well organised and the book stock of fiction and non-fiction is appropriate to support the curriculum. It is well supplemented by the new computer network, audio-visual material and photocopying facilities. It is very well managed and run, with effective assistance from some pupils. Library resources are generally used well for leisure and learning. At some busy periods it is becoming over-stretched, with classes being taught as part of the skills programme. The book stock is adequate, although non-fiction is not loaned and is not used effectively to support learning.

89. **The efficiency of the school**

19. The school manages its resources efficiently and effectively. The quality of financial planning is good. Current planning covers a five-year 1995-2000 development cycle and a detailed twelve-month plan is produced each year. There is an exhaustive twelve-month profile of the school development plan reviewed initially by the headteacher and senior management team. Staff groups and governors also contribute. There is full cover of all financial aspects and the review is coherent. Through staff training exercises objectives and priorities are made clear. Each new twelve-month plan is circulated. During the same time scale, subject groups review and evaluate subject development plans using the details of the school development plan. Effective and efficient procedures and systems are in place to ensure that financial decisions on spending are informed by the school's development needs.
20. Governors are actively involved in scrutinising and agreeing the budget allocations. The governors' finance committee monitors expenditure closely and ensures that the school's policies on financial matters are followed. There are a number of examples of effective planning such as spending on computers, the allocations to premises costs and the management of lettings. The school development plan sets realistic targets, is costed and sufficiently flexible to allow the school to re-focus and it is the primary vehicle for informing budgetary decisions. The governing body's resource committee meets frequently and reviews progress effectively. Departmental bidding for annual funding is well managed. The allocation of funds to departments is open, fair and equitable and matches subject-specific needs. Effective controls are in place to monitor expenditure. Auditors' reports are detailed and recommendations are acted upon.
21. The school allocates sufficient sums to promote its main function to provide quality learning for all pupils including pupils with special needs. The school's funding for the special needs department has generated a good stock of appropriate schemes and materials to develop phonic and word attack skills, such as the *THRASS & ARROW* schemes. Resources are used efficiently and the special needs department achieves good outcomes in terms of pupils' learning with the resources available. However, the number of such pupils demands greater investment year by year. Current use of staff for support and teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are deployed to maximise their expertise and experience. Managers are effective at almost all levels.

22. Approximately two per cent of the total budget allocation is rightly designated as contingency. Funds not spent are targeted appropriately for the development of the school. The current school development plan highlights a number of concerns for the efficient running of the school. These concerns have been largely addressed. A number of temporary classrooms have been replaced by a re-building programme completed recently. However, space remains at a premium. There are no reserve places in an emergency. A large sum of money will be needed to sustain the existing building. The school's roll has fluctuated over the last three years with a consequent reduction in budget. Additional funds may have to be found to sustain staffing levels. The sums allocated to develop the learning resources centre are modest amounts. To improve the quality of provision targeted in the school development plan a considerable investment will be needed over the next few years. Information technology provision will continue to require large amounts of funding. Despite these limitations the school uses its accommodation and resources well to enrich the curriculum. Routine management is efficient and there is a dedicated team of administrators supporting the school. The school's financial management produces a cost per pupil which is in line with expectations for a school of this size though with the fluctuations in intake numbers that is not easy. There is a satisfactory teacher to pupil ratio and contact time is average per teacher. In view of this and the level of pupils' attainment, progress and development when compared with similar schools, the quality of teaching and general educational provision the school gives satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

93. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

23. In the 1998 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, 39 per cent of pupils achieved A*-C grades. This is below the national average, but is above average in comparison with similar schools. Ninety-eight per cent of pupils achieved A*-G grades which is in line with the national average. These results signal a drop in attainment over previous years at A*-C grade. One reason for this drop in overall attainment is the high number of boys in the 1999 examination group. They outnumbered girls by almost two to one and there is a national trend for boys to under-perform against girls in this subject. Provisional results for 1999 indicate a further drop in attainment at A*-C grades with 32 per cent of pupils achieving these grades. Results in English literature tend to mirror those in language.
24. The results in the 1998 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the national average for all schools but are above average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving level 6 doubled between 1997 and 1998 to 27 per cent. In 1999 provisional results for the National Curriculum tests indicate a rise of seven per cent of pupils gaining level 5 or above. This improving picture is due in part to the development of more detailed schemes of work and a sharper focus on developing literacy through regular reading in class.
25. The majority of pupils enters the school with below average attainment in English and overall, attainment in lessons at both key stages remains below national expectations as they move up the school. Pupils in Key Stage 3 listen well, following the teacher closely, often through lengthy explanations. The majority of pupils give ready answers to teachers questions which are factually accurate but they seldom volunteer more than is asked for and often keep their responses brief. Pupils read aloud accurately but they use little expression and are sometimes inaudible. By the end of the key stage pupils' standards of speaking are below the national average. All pupils sustain silent reading at the start of lessons. They select their own books and higher attainers explain their preferences and name favourite authors. The highest attaining pupils discuss specific genres which appeal to them. In their writing higher attainers selected content and language to match their target audience when preparing leaflets about the local shopping centre. Lower attaining pupils write clear descriptive pieces on the same subject.
26. Improved schemes of work which include all National Curriculum Programmes of Study are having a significant impact on progress at Key Stage 3, which is satisfactory. Across the key stage pupils are making gains in knowledge about language and have an increasing fluency with technical vocabulary. Year 9 higher attaining pupils are able to understand and explain the differences between diary writing from the seventeenth century and contemporary English. Pupils develop their skills in writing to shape ideas in a variety of ways for different audiences. They use skills of analysis in their study of literature and use their growing knowledge of genre to write detective stories in Year 8. Although there is some redrafting occurring in classes at Key Stage 3 this is not enough to ensure that pupils see the benefits of reflecting on, discussing and recasting their writing to make improvements. Pupils with special educational needs are supported to make good progress in both reading and writing at this key stage. They are helped to do this by the organisation of classes into groups of similar ability and by the well planned and taught lessons given by the special needs co-ordinator as well as the English teachers.
27. At the end of Key Stage 4, about forty per cent of pupils are attaining in line with the national average. The highest attaining pupils show a sound knowledge of a range of writing styles and write with a sense of audience, adapting their style and vocabulary to suit. Higher attaining pupils also show an understanding of different genres in writing. They identify particular features and then adopt them in their own writing. Lower attainers write with factual accuracy and correct sequencing using mainly a narrative style. The majority of pupils read with adequate understanding and appreciate the main forms of literature. Their reading for research, however, is limited to skimming GCSE texts for suitable

quotations to support their written work. Planning and note taking skills tend to remain in the hands of the teacher so that pupils remain dependent in these areas of their learning.

28. All pupils have good listening skills. They are attentive and respond to teacher's questions appropriately. Their speaking skills are not so well developed overall, though there are instances of pupils initiating and shaping ideas through sustained talk. In such a lesson on the relationship between Billy Casper and his mother, in the novel "A Kestrel for a Knave", pupils were assisted by the careful planning of the teacher and the good relationships in the class to speak with confidence and make independent and sensitive observations. Few instances of this were seen during inspection and the majority of pupils gave brief answers and seldom elaborated their own or others' ideas in talk.
29. Speaking and listening are given uneven weight as vehicles for learning across the curriculum. In the main, the majority of pupils listen closely, follow what is said and carry out instructions appropriately in all subjects of the curriculum. Speaking is not so well used. In drama and religious education pupils are regularly and as a matter of course expected to use talk as a means of reflecting and developing thought. Most subjects use talk as a way of assessing what pupils have retained from a previous lesson. There is insufficient emphasis on standard English outside of English lessons. In mathematics and science questions are often closed and allow pupils to make only brief answers. Although pupils make gains in reading for understanding the habit of reading for information is not promoted by all subjects. In English' pupils begin each lesson with a routine private reading session and read widely from literature texts. In most other lessons reading is restricted to worksheets or short extracts from text books often read by the teachers. Writing for different purposes is used in only a few subjects outside of English lessons. In history pupils write from different viewpoints and have opportunities to present information in different ways. Few opportunities are provided for extended writing and in science lessons there is an over-reliance on copying the teachers' notes. Spelling and handwriting are generally weak: only the commonest words are spelled with consistent accuracy and large numbers of pupils in Key Stage 4, use print rather than cursive script.
30. Progress for pupils at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory overall. In many lessons seen pupils make good progress but this is not sustained over time. There are two principal reasons for this. One is the weak retention skills of pupils; all but the highest attainers have difficulty in recalling work done in the past. The second is that the majority of pupils do not have a strong knowledge base about language upon which to develop their speaking and writing skills. They have not benefited from the good scheme of work now in place at Key Stage 3. Despite this pupils make sometimes good gains in knowledge about literature from the texts they study. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and acquire good knowledge about texts. Average attaining pupils are supported to a deeper understanding of character in their reading by well-constructed group discussion as was seen in a Year 11 lesson on "*Hobson's Choice*".
31. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. In Key Stage 3 they are enthusiastic and well organised. They show growing independence with the routines they use at the start of lessons, settling quickly to silent reading after organising the materials they need for the lesson. High expectations of teachers and clear guidance on blackboards support pupils to develop these good attitudes to learning. At Key Stage 4 pupils are conscientious in their attitude to coursework. They prepare well in class and through homework and make lessons flow smoothly through their sensible approach and determination to do well. When given the opportunity all pupils collaborate well, sharing ideas and giving each other support with their work.
32. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department. Forty two per cent of teaching is very good, 22 per cent is good and 29 per cent is satisfactory. In only one lesson, was teaching judged to be unsatisfactory; in one other it was excellent. Each teacher is a subject specialist and has very good subject knowledge. This, together with the individual enthusiasms they bring to the subject, gives breadth and colour to their teaching. All teachers in the department share a commitment to achieving high standards. This is demonstrated firstly in their detailed planning for lessons. Lesson plans take the abilities and interests of pupils as starting points. They provide for a good balance of activities, which cover all attainment targets and deliver progress in clear stages throughout the lesson as in a Year

7 class where pupils compared style in contrasting texts and made good progress in identifying features of writing. The range and quality of resources used by teachers is another aid to good and sometimes very good progress for pupils in lessons. Many of these are in-house products and match the needs of the learning objectives and the pupils very well. Taped extracts from stories which pupils read along with, were very effective in giving pupils a clearer sense of the drama of the text in a Year 7 and in a Year 11 lesson. The management of pupils' behaviour is always conducted through the teaching which moves at a brisk pace. There were no instances of lessons slowing in order that teachers might resolve inattention. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is currently developing many strands of independence in pupils, who are given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. This is not always the case at Key Stage 4 where pupils are sometimes presented with too much structure and support. This is the case for pupils of all abilities and teachers' over-concern prevents them from making the best progress on occasion.

33. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 has recently been reviewed and a new scheme of work written. This complies with the National Curriculum requirements and is an improvement since the previous inspection. Assessment is integral to all units of the scheme, which provides a good basis for developing portfolios of common work and moderating standards in the subject. The selection of texts for the GCSE course shows an awareness of pupils' interests and abilities and provides a good balance for all pupils.
34. The recently appointed head of department has a strong commitment to the highest standards for all who pass through the department - teachers and pupils alike. In a short time she has established a new scheme of work and developed the confidence of colleagues to the point where they are extending these and are informally sharing good practice. Her open style of management is well suited to the enthusiastic team she leads, giving space for individuals to take the initiative and follow their expertise and enthusiasms in developing the department further. She has the full trust of colleagues who readily turn to her for support and suggestions on professional matters. In order to improve standards further the department should:
 - plan more structured opportunities for developing talk as a vehicle for learning as well as communicating;
 - extend the very good range of curriculum content and teaching styles being developed in Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4.

· Drama

1. In the 1998 General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations (GCSE), 62 per cent of pupils achieved A*-C grades which is in line with the national average. One hundred per cent of pupils achieved A*-G grades, which is above the national average. Over the past three years results have fluctuated, but have always been at, or above, the national average for A*- C grades. Girls' results are better than boys. Provisional GCSE results for 1999 indicate a drop in attainment. The reasons for this are the low prior attainment of pupils sitting the examination in 1999 and the impact of a high imbalance of four to one in the numbers of boys and girls sitting the examination.
2. Pupils join the school with a limited experience of drama; overall their attainment in the subject on entry is below national expectation. In Year 7 pupils co-operate and listen closely; they learn the skills of mime and use them in their improvised scenes. Pupils nearing the end of the key stage create natural scenes drawing on their own experience for plot and dialogue. Higher attainers shape these scenes into drama combining the skills they have learned during the key stage. They use freeze frame and chanting appropriately and their work both entertains and informs. Pupils develop the skills of evaluation and positive criticism throughout the key stage. By the end of Year 9, though the majority of pupils is still attaining below the national expectation.
3. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 3 where they learn a range of personal, performing and theatre skills; in some lessons they make good progress. By the end of the key stage the

majority of pupils has learned to work as part of a team, to negotiate and to integrate the ideas of others with their own. In all lessons seen pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to others in the class. They are supported in this by the nature of lessons which do not rely on reading to understand the content or tasks which are set. In many instances drama lessons are seen as a vehicle for raising the self-esteem of pupils with special educational needs because they succeed in line with their peers.

4. The attainment of pupils currently nearing the end of Year 11 is in line with the national average. They create drama using a wider repertoire of skills such as monologue, thought tracking, split scenes and flashback. They initiate ideas and develop them into dramas applying the theatre skills they have mastered. Higher attainers show a good insight into situations and sometimes a very good understanding of the best dramatic techniques to apply for maximum dramatic effect. A good example of this was seen in the work of a Year 11 group in their presentation about teenage pregnancy.
5. The majority of pupils is assisted to make good progress throughout the key stage because of the well-planned lessons and the high expectations of some teachers. Others make only satisfactory progress because of lower teacher expectations. Pupils with special educational needs make good and often very good progress in lessons and over time. They perform well in the GCSE examinations because the main assessment is of their practical work.
6. The majority of pupils has very good attitudes to the subject. They take responsibility for their own learning and by Key Stage 4 pupils' autonomy is well developed and supported by very good relationships. In few classes where pupils' behaviour is poor, this is mainly in response to low expectations from the teacher and ineffectual behaviour management strategies.
7. Overall the quality of teaching is good and in half the lessons seen the teaching is very good. There was some unsatisfactory teaching in one lesson. The teachers have good and in some cases very good subject knowledge which is effective in establishing good starting points for skills and knowledge learning. In some lessons this knowledge was used to intervene and adapt the work of pupils and move them on to a higher level of activity as seen in a Year 11 lesson where pupils discussed the implications of teenage pregnancy. Most teachers have very high expectations of pupils and signal these in their insistence on respect for the work of all pupils and in the brisk pace at which they conduct their lessons. In the unsatisfactory lesson expectations were not high enough and teachers' over-use of praise had a negative effect on the efforts of pupils. All lesson planning is competent and the majority is detailed; it identifies learning outcomes and the timing of activities so that a brisk pace is ensured. In one instance a teacher made very good use of teaching mime skills to rearrange the classroom quickly and quietly providing an excellent example of using teaching to manage classroom organisation without interrupting the flow of learning. All teachers use assessment as a natural part of the learning process throughout lessons. They intervene during tasks to prompt and move pupils on and give them the opportunity to evaluate their own and others' work. The majority of teachers integrate their behaviour management strategies with their teaching to provide unobtrusively effective control of their classes. Where teaching is unsatisfactory there is a lack of clear expectation from the teacher and challenging pupils are not dealt with promptly or effectively, with the result that the lesson is wasted and pupils make no progress. All teachers set appropriate homework and ensure that pupils complete it.
8. Drama provides good access for all pupils, particularly pupils with special educational needs who find success in the subject. The curriculum places an emphasis on self-knowledge through practical activity and talk and is well matched to the learning needs of the pupils at both key stages. Assessment procedures are good. They are integrated into lessons and inform the teachers and the pupils about changes to the learning process. The subject makes a very good contribution to the social development of pupils through extended self-knowledge and carefully developed collaborative skills.
9. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department has a clear commitment to high standards and attainment in the subject and this is very well communicated to colleagues and pupils. The department scheme of work is well thought out, provides a very good base for teachers' planning and is well suited to the needs of the children. The head of department has achieved all the targets of

the department's last development plan and has a programme for future development.

10. The department lacks enough space dedicated to the teaching of the subject and some of the spaces where drama is currently taught diminish the impact of good teaching. In order to improve further the department should:
 - ensure effective support for the new colleague in the department;
 - take steps to maintain the standards of learning in the department by ensuring that strategies are in place to improve behaviour management where this is necessary.

· Mathematics

1. At the end of Key Stage 3, in 1998, pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests was below the national average with 52 percent achieving a level 5, or above, compared with a national average of 60 per cent. The percentage of pupils achieving a level 6, or above, was also below the national average. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The results for 1996 to 1998 show a performance below the national average by 0.23 levels. However, the percentage of pupils achieving a level 6 or above has increased steadily from 26 to 29 percent over the past four years. When compared to schools of a similar background, pupils' performance in mathematics tests in 1998 were above the national average.
2. The GCSE results for 1996 to 1998 show significant variation, though all are below the national average; the results for 1997 are better than for the other years. In 1998, 34 per cent achieved higher grades A*-C compared with 42.5 per cent nationally. The percentage of pupils achieving the range of grades from A*-G has increased steadily over the period from 1996 to 1998. In 1998, 94 percent achieved grades A*-G which is almost in line with the national average of 94.6 per cent. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys or girls.
3. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is below average. However, in some lessons pupils achieve levels above national expectations. They show good understanding across all attainment targets. They have a good grasp of number and can use number effectively when solving problems. Higher attaining pupils show good, and sometimes very good, levels of attainment. The level of attainment of pupils on entry has increased over the past three years. The current Year 7 has a much higher proportion of higher attaining pupils than in previous years. These pupils are already achieving levels above national expectations. For example in a sharply focused lesson on the turning patterns of shapes, pupils used new words confidently and with understanding. They quickly recognise patterns and are able to apply these skills from two-dimensional to three-dimensional work. Pupils show increasing confidence in number and can apply this effectively when solving problems. However, sometimes this is not underpinned by understanding of basic mathematical concepts. Lower attaining Year 8 pupils are able to add and subtract decimals accurately but some show a poor understanding of the basic concept of decimals and can not explain why we use a decimal point. Year 8 pupils produced a display in the mathematics area on sunshine. This illustrated their skills in gathering information, constructing tables and graphs and interpreting them.
4. Overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. Most pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding across all attainment targets. Higher attaining pupils use number effectively when working out the areas of parts of circles and lengths of parts of the circumference. Average and low attaining pupils in particular have difficulties recalling previous work and with some of the language. Their work is often not underpinned by sound understanding. For example some Year 10 pupils when looking at the chances of different events happening could not remember how to cancel down fractions into simpler equivalents. Lower attaining pupils working on areas of shapes understood that larger units are needed for larger areas. Some were aware that larger areas are measured in square metres, though some were not sure how long a metre is. Some could not estimate simple lengths in metres. At both key stages, some pupils show limited skills in using and

applying mathematics. Though some teachers provide appropriate activities there are insufficient opportunities for some pupils to develop these skills.

5. Progress at both key stages is satisfactory overall. There has been a period of instability within the faculty, caused by staff illness, which has had a significant impact on progress. With a new head of faculty, new schemes of work and more rigorous assessment and recording systems there is a clear focus on objectives for learning. Clear progress is evident both in books and in records of attainment. In lessons observed, progress is often good and sometimes very good, as a result of good teaching and the positive attitude of most pupils. At Key Stage 3, pupils develop satisfactory understanding of number. They use number effectively when solving problems, such as finding the areas and perimeters of shapes. Higher attaining pupils made good progress in understanding properties of shape; they learn to use calculators effectively to solve problems and demonstrate increasing confidence with number. Most pupils develop an understanding of the properties of shapes through a range of practical activities. Some develop the language and can use it appropriately when describing shapes. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to talk about their work and some pupils are unsure of the correct words to use. They develop accurate measurements using correct units in a range of contexts. However there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise estimating lengths and these skills are weak. Pupils develop their skills of data handling by gathering data and displaying this information in tables using increasingly complex graphs. Most pupils with special educational needs attain appropriate levels and make satisfactory progress. In some lessons, particularly in Year 7, support staff are used to enable pupils to follow the work of the group as a whole. This is often inappropriate, since the work can be too difficult and their individual needs are not being addressed. These pupils make unsatisfactory progress.
6. At Key Stage 4 pupils make satisfactory progress. Some pupils develop good skills in number and algebra. Higher attaining pupils are able to use these skills when working with circles and calculating different lengths and areas. Pupils progress satisfactorily in shape, space and measures. They use different measures with increasing accuracy. They develop their knowledge of the language of shape and use this appropriately when talking about shapes. Higher attaining pupils learn how to calculate the sides, angles, areas and volumes of different shapes. Most pupils of average and lower attainment develop understanding of handling information, drawing graphs and commenting on the results. However, some of these pupils have poor recall of previous work and some underlying mathematical concepts are weak. For example, some pupils in an average ability Year 11 group had limited knowledge of some of their previous work on gathering information and finding the averages.
7. In almost all lessons pupils have a good attitude to their work. This has a positive impact on the quality of their attainment and progress. Most show good levels of concentration. Low attaining pupils are capable of sustained concentration, for example when working out the areas of shapes. Most take pride in their work which is neat and well presented. However, a minority of boys has a poor attitude and work in their books is careless and untidy. Most pupils have respect for adults and property. There is little damage to books and resources.
8. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good and is a strength of the department. This had a significant impact on the attainment and progress during the inspection week. Only one poor lesson was observed. Most lessons are good and often very good. Teaching has a clear focus and the team is working effectively together. However there has not been sufficient time for this to fully impact on attainment and progress over time. In better lessons teachers manage the pupils well and making sure that they are well behaved. Staff have good knowledge and understanding of their subject that is demonstrated through clear introductions, careful questioning and effective planning to cover the topic taught, building on previous work. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils. Homework is set regularly. Additionally, in good lessons, teachers mark the work carefully, identifying problem areas and suggesting ways to improve. They develop problem solving and investigational skills and look for ways to make the lesson interesting, for example by using computers or doing practical activities. Display in some classrooms is good and is very good in the mathematics area. This positively enhances the working environment. Homework is well used to support work in lessons.
9. In lessons which are not so good, marking is poor, pupils have few opportunities to develop speaking

skills, work does not cater for the ability range within the class, pupils are not well managed and too much time is spent explaining the work. Some lessons are over-directed by teachers, with few opportunities for pupils to carry out extended pieces of work or to develop their speaking skills. There are very few opportunities for pupils to use computers to enhance their learning or to develop their speaking. Some high attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged and the work for some low attaining pupils is inappropriate. Support staff give good support to individual pupils, though this is rarely targeted to individual areas of weakness.

10. Pupils are assessed regularly to measure their attainment and progress. This information is also used to assist in setting pupils. However, not enough use is made of assessment information to decide the content of future lessons, nor is that information used to identify areas of weakness for pupils with special educational needs in order to design individual learning programmes. In some classes, books are marked effectively but in many classes the quality of marking is inconsistent. In these classes, only a proportion of the work is marked and few comments are made on ways to improve or when pupils produced careless or untidy work.
11. Overall, leadership of the department is satisfactory. There are regular faculty meetings and faculty documentation is developing. Schemes of work are being re-written. However, these have yet to become embedded in the day-to-day routines of the faculty. Links have been established with local primary schools and as a result a numeracy programme is to be developed. Pupils with special educational needs are being withdrawn for targeted support. All teachers set termly targets for pupils though these lack individual detail. Targets for children with special educational needs are not sufficiently tied to individual areas of weakness. The newly appointed head of faculty has not had the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching and learning within the faculty. There is a good ethos for learning.
12. Accommodation is satisfactory. There is a suite of new rooms, which helps liaison between staff on a day-to-day basis, and a useful resource room. However, classrooms are small and when there is a large group in the room there is little space for manoeuvre or to accommodate computers and there is no access to water. The quality of resources is unsatisfactory overall. Practical resources are adequate but book resources are old and out-of-date and computer resources are virtually non-existent. There are no computers within the faculty and little software. As a result most pupils get little access to computers to enhance the teaching and learning in mathematics. This severely hampers the standards of attainment and progress.
13. Plans are in place to develop a whole school strategy to develop numeracy skills. However there is no numeracy policy at the moment. In some subjects, such as science and design and technology, pupils lack confidence in using and applying number and other mathematical skills to solve simple problems. They are given insufficient opportunities to develop their graphical skills. Some have poor grasp of tables and inadequate understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages.
14. There has been some progress since the last inspection, though problems of staff absence have severely impeded developments. New schemes of work are in place for several year groups, problem solving and investigational work is developing along with portfolios of work, staff are beginning to use information technology to enhance lessons and some teachers are using a range of teaching and learning strategies. In order to further improve the quality of attainment and progress, the faculty needs to:
 - develop long term plans to incorporate the use of information and control technology in the teaching and learning;
 - develop the monitoring role of the head of faculty to monitor effectively the quality of teaching and learning;
 - provide more up-to-date and appropriate book resources;
 - develop a whole-school numeracy policy.

Science

15. At the end of Key Stage 3, in 1998, pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests was well below the national average, with 38 per cent achieving level 5 or above, against a national figure of 56 per cent. The percentage of pupils reaching level 6 was also below the national average. Since the last inspection in 1994, the results show that the performance of pupils in science is below the national average: it falls below the national average for their age group by the equivalent of one-third of a level. Pupils' performance in these tests was, however, average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The provisional 1999 results show a significant improvement (13 per cent) on the 1998 results. GCSE results for the last three years show marked variations. The best performance was in 1997, with 43.4 per cent of pupils achieving higher grades A*-C compared with the national average of 46 per cent. The GCSE results in 1998 were well below the average for all maintained secondary schools, with 26.9 per cent achieving higher grades A*-C against the national average of 47 per cent. Overall pupils' attainment in science, over the last three years, is in line with the average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The provisional results for 1999 show a significant drop in the percentage of pupils attaining higher grades A*-C to about 20 per cent but the school has appealed to get some scripts remarked. At the time of the inspection no response had been received from the examination board. In all three years 1996-1998, boys, against the national trends, outperformed girls by five per cent. The girls' under-performance is a serious cause for concern, which requires urgent remedial strategies.

16. Inspection evidence confirms that by the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is below average. Only about one in two pupils attains in line with national expectations. They show broad, accurate knowledge and understanding across all attainment targets. They show satisfactory grasp of simple experimental techniques, such as filtration; evaporation and distillation; materials and their properties; acids and alkalis; and living things in their environment and life and living processes. In some lessons, improved teaching, which now focuses more sharply on conceptual development, thinking skills and appropriate context, enables better understanding of scientific concepts. Pupils in Year 9, studying the amount of vitamin C in different fruit juices, could suggest the importance of a balanced diet and research relevant information to write an article for the newspaper. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy practical activities but find the language of scientific concepts difficult to master. The presence of pupils on Stages 2 to 5 of the Code of Practice is recognised but they are not supported effectively, their needs are not well understood and they experience difficulty in drawing ideas together and recalling knowledge with understanding from earlier work.

17. Overall, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. About forty per cent of pupils studying a double award science course attain in line with the national average and these high attaining pupils demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of ideas such as enzymes, the digestive system, current voltage variations in simple circuits, properties of alloys, and the relative activity of different metals. Some pupils in Year 10 could talk with confidence on safety aspects of electrical fuses and could apply their understanding of voltage and wattage to determine safe fuses for every-day electrical appliances. More generally pupils' grasp of scientific ideas is weak and they need considerable support to apply conceptual understanding to solve problems. In lower sets, pupils have difficulty with simple concepts such as ecosystems, biomass, the periodic table and the particulate nature of matter. Pupils with special needs enjoy practical activities but find it difficult to recall scientific ideas with understanding.
18. New schemes of work place greater emphasis on clear objectives and a sharper focus on pupils' attainment. In Years 7 and 8 the pupils' attainment in science has shown improvement. With all these contributory factors, pupils at both key stages make satisfactory progress and they make satisfactory gains in knowledge, understanding and practical skills. At Key Stage 3, high attaining pupils begin to display good standards of practical skills. Younger pupils in Years 7 and 8 make a satisfactory start to accurate measurements using correct units in a range of contexts and appreciate the necessity of repeating readings to ensure accuracy. Older pupils gain confidence in setting up experiments, making accurate observations and recording results. More generally, pupils develop reasonable competence in setting up investigations and observing and recording but their skills in forming and testing hypotheses and analysing and evaluating experimental data remain unsatisfactory.
19. At Key Stage 4, pupils progress satisfactorily to perform experimental work competently and safely but their progress is modest in making predictions and evaluations, which are not always justified with appropriate scientific explanations. The notion of fair testing is understood but pupils' ability to control variables, test hypotheses and design experiments, is less well practised and refined. Most pupils with above average attainment handle simple problems, involving graphical skills, with confidence but their problem solving skills involving numerical data are not strong. Pupils' GCSE coursework assignments are prepared well and presented attractively but excessive and, at times, indiscriminate use of copying inhibits progress in their writing skills. For lack of opportunities, the pupils' ability to debate scientific ideas is weak. The school's central computer resources are used effectively to support data-analysis and course work assignments but the use of information technology in data logging, control and simulation is under-developed.
20. In the majority of lessons pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They are attentive, respond well to teachers' questions and co-operate sensibly when carrying out practical work in small groups and many pupils work with a sense of commitment. Pupils, however, demonstrate undue dependence on the teacher. Generally, they are compliant rather than enthusiastic learners and much of the learning environment is transitory. Pupils very rarely ask questions and seek answers and there are few instances where they learn from their mistakes as well as their successes.
21. The quality of teaching at both key stages is satisfactory and enables pupils to understand scientific concepts and make satisfactory progress. Teachers have sound understanding of the subject and the requirements of the National Curriculum. Lesson planning is generally sound but does not always take into account the specific learning needs of pupils, and teachers' expectations vary. At Key Stage 3, three very good lessons were interactive and probing questions elicited a very good response from low attaining pupils and challenged high attaining pupils. More generally there is little use of 'what', 'where,' 'why', and 'how' or emphasis on you "must", "should" and "could" to share lesson objectives and consolidate pupils' understanding. Some practical work is over-prescriptive; in these lessons pupils would benefit from more opportunities to design experiments to test their own ideas and consolidate learning. In some good lessons at Key Stage 4, teaching gave clear explanations and achieved a balance between the direction of learning and encouraging pupils to work on their own initiative. In some practical lessons pupils need more opportunities to speculate and evaluate results. More generally, the higher attainers need demanding tasks and pupils with special needs require greater support for learning. Some complex and abstract scientific concepts require clear explanations, related to pupils' every day experiences. Homework is set regularly and many tasks involve completion of work started in

the class or written tasks based on practical work attempted in lessons. More extended tasks and problem solving enquiries, which require research and the use of the library and CD-ROMs, should improve the progress pupils make. Assessment, recording and reporting meet the statutory requirements. End-of-module tests are marked systematically. Extended science investigations are marked using examination criteria and the National Curriculum levels but overall, the quality of marking varies. Some marking contains positive and constructive comments but often the marking of pupils' work is superficial and does not challenge errors and understanding. Pupils are not sure about the criteria being used or ways in which their work might be improved. Teachers do not always use the results of pupils' assessments to inform planning of work. The reports issued to parents provide useful information on pupils' attitudes and practical skills but give few details about subject-specific levels of attainment.

22. Overall the management of the department is satisfactory. The head of department and the deputy head work as a team to develop shared strategies for effective planning. Pupils study a broad and balanced science curriculum. A range of strategies has been developed and a very comprehensive scheme of work and very useful policies provide an effective framework for teaching and learning but there are serious gaps and deficiencies between actual practice and departmental aims and objectives. The departments need to bridge these gaps. Teachers are qualified suitably, experienced, hard working and they are now deployed efficiently to reflect their strengths. The technician's support, though inadequate for the amount of practical work involved, is excellent in quality. Six spacious, suitably serviced laboratories provide good specialist accommodation, which is sufficient to support teaching and learning. Resources are barely adequate although generally well used to support teaching and learning. Book provision is unsatisfactory and not all pupils are issued with science textbooks. The library resources are too modest to support research on scientific themes. A good range of extra-curricular activities, such as the Crest science club and revision sessions, are well supported by pupils. Visits to places of scientific interest, such as Hope Carr Barn, North West Water Environmental Centre and the Blue Planet Aquarium, and participation by Year 9 pupils in the North West Water problem-solving day at Edge Hill University College extend and enrich pupils' learning experiences.
23. The department has made good progress in addressing positively the issues identified in the last OFSTED report. Since the last report, the staff have focused rightly on raising pupils' attainment. The department has benefited from external evaluation by the headteacher and the LEA's advisers. Better-planned investigations are being attempted, in order to consolidate pupils' understanding. Development planning is good and measurable targets are set but supporting strategies and actions lack rigour. In order to raise pupils' attainment at both key stages the departments needs to:
- make better use of pupils' performance data at the end of Key Stage 2;
 - implement rigorously departmental policies on teaching, learning and assessment;
 - challenge under-achievement amongst girls;
 - develop a portfolio of good practice which identifies clear expectations for each year;
 - evolve strategies to challenge high attaining pupils and support pupils with special educational needs;
 - provide more opportunities for extended writing;
 - provide planned opportunities for pupils' participation in class discussion of scientific ideas and concepts;
 - strengthen further the curriculum links between information technology and science.

• OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Information technology

1. 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 three years. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can use a variety of software packages with some independence. Strengths include using information technology to communicate effectively. A word-processed letter to primary schools is the culmination of learning skills in formatting in Year 7. In Year 9, pupils can use desktop publishing to communicate to a wider audience, with a well-styled brochure for a ski-trip. However there is 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. In Year 9 they can design simple questions and are working towards devising more complex queries. Pupils 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 and geography, and using procedures that involve use of variables in control work. At Key Stage 4, information technology is taught as an option for about half the year group. Attainment is above national averages for this full GCSE course. For the remaining pupils, who do not follow a course meeting the statutory programme of study, attainment is well below average. Pupils taking the option 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. Knowledge of control and data capture is average for GCSE pupils. There has been a steady rise in the number of pupils gaining grades A*-C, with girls outperforming boys, by a margin that is greater than the national difference.

2. 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 English and modern foreign languages. In a lesson taught by an information technology and a French teacher, a class of low attaining pupils grasped quickly the skills required to combine scanned images, labelling these in French, and learning how to format accents. Special needs pupils make progress across Key Stage 3 to match that of their peers due to such well-differentiated and motivating lessons.
3. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress across Key Stage 4, except on the optional information technology GCSE course. Pupils do not develop their information technology skills beyond Key Stage 3. For those taking the RSA CLAIT, there are insufficient gains in the knowledge and understanding within the statutory programme of study. This 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. However, pupils taking GCSE information technology as an option make good progress, as in a lesson using data handling, where pupils in a short time learn to design data tables and complex queries. Pupils with special needs in this lesson also made good progress, due to sensitive intervention by the class teacher, and the setting of appropriate tasks.
4. 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. In a Year 9 data-handling lesson, pupils were curious to learn about new features such as sorting and searches. In the learning resource centre, a pupil was spending much time assisting in the design of the school web site. Pupils are willing to devote extra time outside the school day, to the preparation of coursework.
5. Overall, the quality of teaching in both key stages is good. In the best lessons, the teaching is well planned, with careful consideration of pupils' prior attainment, using assessment data to establish individual targets. Teachers have a good understanding of the new software and they are quick to give individual help in lessons. Appropriate homework tasks have been prepared, which provide increased rigour for high attainers. In lessons where information technology teachers support other specialists, the teachers work well as a team, maintaining a good pace of learning in both information technology and the other subject. There is an expectation of high standards for all pupils, as in the word-processed work in Year 7, and coursework in Years 10 and 11. Relationships are invariably very good.

6. The school does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4, where about half of years 10 and 11 fail to receive the National Curriculum programme of study. Further, the school is in breach of statutory requirements for the use of ICT in science, mathematics, design and technology and geography. Management of these aspects of provision in information technology provision has some shortcomings.

7. There have been significant improvements in information technology since the last report. Resources have improved with the learning resource centre and the modern languages base having excellent new facilities, preparing the school for a local area network linked to the national grid for learning. 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. In order to improve standards further the school should:
- meet statutory orders at Key Stage 4 by providing appropriate courses for all pupils in Years 10 and 11;
 - meet statutory orders by providing suitable opportunities in science, mathematics, design and technology and geography for pupils to develop and apply IT;
 - extend the existing good practice being established for cross-curricular information technology into other subjects;
 - consider offering opportunities to extend experiences in using information technology to communicate, such as web-page design and multi-media work.

Religious Education

1. Pupils' attainment in religious education, at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with that expected in the Locally Agreed syllabus but is below it at the end of Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils acquire a sound factual knowledge of Christianity and a broad knowledge of other world faiths such as Islam and Judaism. They have a good knowledge of the main Christian festivals and the "Five pillars of Islam". Pupils in Year 9 discuss moral issues such as stealing and relate them to their own experience. Pupils with learning difficulties have a sound factual knowledge of Christianity but do not fully understand the origins of the Christian faith. Pupils at Key Stage 4 can discuss concepts such as love and marriage in a Christian context and know the main outline of the biblical account of the Creation.
2. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3, but their progress at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. Their attainments on entry to the school are generally below average, and most pupils have only a modest knowledge of bible stories. Enthusiastic and well-planned teaching helps them to develop a good spiritual awareness in Years 7 and 8, but in Year 9 they are less well motivated. Many pupils find the progression from knowledge of the different world faiths to understanding of their origins and principles difficult. The lack of a GCSE course at Key Stage 4 diminishes the importance of the subject for most pupils. Less able students in particular find more complex ideas difficult to grasp.
3. At both key stages, pupils are encouraged to discuss religious ideas and the subject makes a good contribution to the development of their speaking and listening skills. They are also encouraged to read and understand text, although their opportunities for extended writing and the use of information technology are more limited.
4. Pupils respond well in lessons at both key stages, and many pupils at Key Stage 4 indicate a willingness to enter for the short course GCSE examination. Most pupils behave well in lessons and work hard without excessive supervision, both individually and in small groups. They are keen to ask and answer questions, and treat each others' views seriously. Some older pupils do not see religious education as important to their education, and the progress they make in lessons is weakened by their overall attitude to the subject. The head of department's plans to enter a significant cohort for the short course GCSE should go some way to improving the standing of the subject in pupils' eyes. Greater opportunities for independent learning, for instance through the use of the library for research, would benefit pupils' personal development.
5. Religious education is taught imaginatively at both key stages, particularly by the specialist teacher who heads the department. Lessons are well planned and securely linked to the Agreed Syllabus. There is a good foundation of subject knowledge in relation to the concept of religion as a shared, spiritual human

experience. Video is used very effectively, for instance in illustrating the debate about biblical Creation in America. Lessons are conducted with humour and purpose, and pupils are challenged to think about the meaning of faith in Christianity and Islam. Artefacts are used sensitively, for instance in illustrating the importance of prayer as one of the pillars of Islam. Marking of pupils' written work gives both encouragement and pointers to how work can be improved. Homework is used effectively to follow up work done in lessons.

6. Religious education benefits from committed and enthusiastic leadership, which works within the school's ethos of high standards. Teachers have opportunities to meet and share ideas on the future direction of the subject. Non-specialist teachers would benefit from closer collaboration with the head of department on teaching styles, for instance through observation of exemplar lessons. There are some attractive displays in the classroom and corridor, which celebrate students' achievements. The department has some particularly good boxes of artefacts relating to the principal world faiths.
7. Since the last inspection, the head of department has been successful in promoting the more reflective and spiritual content of lessons. This gives greater weight to religious understanding and encourages pupils to develop their own beliefs. In order to improve standards of education further, the school should:
 - develop the confidence and skills of non-specialist teachers through carefully targeted in-service training;
 - encourage pupils to enhance their independent learning skills through enquiry; and
 - increase the subject's profile and esteem through GCSE entries and school-based accreditation.

Art

1. GCSE results in 1998 were below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C but above for A*- G. Girls performed significantly better than boys, gaining results above the national average for both categories. Over the 1996 to 1999 period GCSE results followed the 1998 pattern, except in 1996 where results were above the national average for both grades A* - C and A*-G.
2. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average overall. In Year 9 higher attaining pupils achieve standards, which are above average in observational drawing and in their knowledge and understanding of art processes. Higher attaining girls, in particular, are well organised and their written evaluations and research into the work of artists reflects this development. Pupils with special educational needs often achieve average standards in drawing and experimental work, but if they are required to read or write about art processes or artists, their contributions are limited and spelling and presentation are below the standard which might be expected.
3. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in two- and three-dimensional artwork is above average. Higher attaining pupils, often girls, show above average levels of research and experimentation and draw bold and abstract ideas into relief prints or decorative textiles. Lower attainers, often boys, are too dependent upon the teacher and limited in their understanding of their learning goals.
4. Progress in both key stages, in practical activities, is good for the majority of pupils, but more varied where oral or written work is introduced into the art curriculum. In Year 9 the best progress was where pupils were really motivated by a request to produce a symbolic portrayal of themselves in white card. Year 7 progressed well when line and colour were introduced in an exciting and meaningful way, and group discussion allowed pupils time to develop their own ideas. Progress in Year 8 was good as pupils related previous knowledge about the artist and designer William Morris to their present study of interlocking patterns. In Year 10 good progress was evident in the drawing of still-life groups, whilst Year 11 produced bold compositions based on chair studies. Progress in Years 10 and 11 was well supported by visits to a local gallery and by extra support at lunchtimes, but there are no gallery visits

outside the locality.

5. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development, throughout the school, are usually good. The majority of pupils are interested in the tasks set and behaviour is good. The exception is in one Year 9 class where large numbers and a lack of engagement with the task set, led to unsatisfactory behaviour and in turn unsatisfactory progress for the majority of pupils.

6. The quality of teaching in both key stages was good: it was good in over half the lessons seen, very good in a quarter, excellent in one and unsatisfactory in one. Most teaching is in the good or very good category. At both key stages, teachers have secure subject knowledge and use this effectively to teach a broad range of technical skills and to convey visual ideas and concepts. Where teaching is excellent pupils' motivation is high, their problem solving strategies are fully engaged and learning gains are evident for all pupils. Lessons are planned carefully, time and resources are used efficiently and well-established routines enable practical activities to be managed effectively. Art teachers work closely as a team; they are generous with their time, enthusiastic and committed to achieving higher standards. Policies for homework, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and assessment are all contributing well to pupils' progress. An exciting new venture, which one of the teachers has been involved in, is in the production of a teaching video with the Open University, highlighting the possible problems and benefits of introducing information and communication technology within art.
7. The accommodation is suitable and quality displays enhance the provision. Statutory requirements are met. The department is well managed although lack of technical help is having an adverse effect on the time which can be devoted to the development of literacy strategies within art, the monitoring of teachers in their classrooms and the improvement of boys' GCSE results. Sound progress has been made since the last inspection, except for the failure to provide computers and suitable software for use within art.

159. **Design and technology**

8. The attainment of pupils in design and technology at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are able to follow the design process in five specialist areas – resistant materials, food technology, electronics, graphic products and textiles and to produce straightforward specifications, but few are able to write clearly how their design incorporates form and function. For example, specifications for a lesson making hats in Year 9 were not challenging especially for high attaining pupils. Making is better than designing. Pupils are aware of the properties of materials and components. An example occurred in Year 8 lesson, when describing a moisture detector circuit many pupils knew and understood the purpose of sensors and the transistor. There is a welcome trend of improvement over the last three years. Girls' attainment, against the national trends, is better than boys, in the school.
9. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average and attainment in lessons matches examination results. Results in GCSE textiles have been lower than in the other areas of the subject. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils can work with increased independence in the workshops and food room, and have a deeper understanding of the design process. In food technology, pupils design time plans and apply these to their practical work, and have a good knowledge of hygiene. In resistant materials pupils show a wider range of skills and are able to produce basic designs for storage products. In textiles, current pupils show improved knowledge of the subject and their coursework is on schedule.
10. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. Their knowledge increases steadily as they move through a sequence of fifteen projects over the three years. In Year 7 food, disassembly skills and practice with measurement help broaden their knowledge of familiar products. There are significant contributions to numeracy when pupils measure and mark materials and consider scaling as happened in a lesson on designing a watch holder. When evaluating food products there are important gains in literacy as they are reminded by the teacher of a range of words to describe their products. Special needs pupils make satisfactory progress, equal to that of their peers. In a Year 9 lesson pupils successfully worked together to mass-produce cakes, and with judicious advice from the teacher, were able to work independently. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. In graphics, pupils make modest gains in knowledge of drawing techniques, consolidating their work from Year 9. In a Year 10 food lesson, there was rapid progress as the teacher expected pupils to work accurately to time plans, and they consolidated their making skills from Year 9.

11. Pupils' attitudes are good. In nearly all lessons seen, pupils listen and carry out instructions, and use equipment and machines responsibly. They are interested in using tools correctly and apply new techniques in their designs. In a textiles lesson, pupils showed interest in clothing production techniques photographed by their teacher in Sri Lanka. They have good relationships with their peers, and are able to collaborate effectively, as in a Year 7 lesson investigating fruit salads. Here, pupils worked well with those from a local special school, co-operating as part of a team.

12. Overall, the quality of teaching in design and technology at both key stages is satisfactory. It is good or better in half the lessons. In the best lessons the teaching is focused, with much help given to individuals when needed. Teachers provide clear explanations when introducing new processes to classes. All teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects except in textiles, where there is a lack of knowledge in teaching the design and making of more complex garments. However, they lack training in using computer aided design and manufacture for use in the graphics, textiles and resistant materials course at GCSE. In one unsatisfactory lesson for a high attaining group, there were many missed opportunities to stretch pupils in their initial designing. Resources such as home-work sheets could be written to help high attaining pupils study at home with greater rigour.
13. The department offers a wide choice of specialist areas across both key stages. Since the last report, the weaknesses in teaching design have been remedied, but there is still capacity to improve. In particular, the head of department is not yet co-ordinating the team of teachers to establish benchmarks for each project across Key Stage 3 related to levels. Doing this would enable achievable targets, specific to the project, to be given to low, middle and higher attainers. Better assessment is taking place, but there are no separate levels for designing and making. Graphic skills are not consistent across the five specialist areas.
14. There are weaknesses in the staffing, resourcing and accommodation of design and technology. There is no technician to help with food, graphics, electronics, textiles or resistant materials; preparation of materials and maintenance is carried out by teachers, making inefficient use of their time. General consumables are in short supply, which restricts the range of materials and size and quantity of paper used per project. Many drawings are condensed onto A4 size. There is a paucity of new equipment in most areas, and in particular to meet the newer GCSE courses. This impairs standards. Two examples are the lack of an over locker in textiles and provision for specialised items for the graphics course. The departmental accommodation is unsuitable, with rooms being poorly maintained and unattractive and lacking services such as storage and electrical points. The graphics studio is very small, with no easy access to computing or a photocopier. In order to raise standards at both key stages the department should:
 - provide appropriate in-service training for textiles teachers;
 - provide training in CAD/CAM as needed;
 - improve provision of ancillary staff and improve resources, giving priority to key deficiencies in equipment for GCSE;
 - establish separate design and making benchmarks for each project, and provide specific targets for pupils, that match national exemplars;
 - review the teaching of graphic techniques by all Key Stage 3 teachers, establish consistency in standards.

Geography

1. Attainment on entry is low. Although some pupils demonstrate familiarity with maps and have a good sense of place, others do not recognise an outline map of the United Kingdom. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national expectations. Most pupils can locate places on maps using an atlas and can make deductions from pictures regarding climate and population and can define, in simple terms, an increasing number of geographical terms. In Year 9, pupils know the differences between active, dormant and extinct volcanoes but their understanding of concepts is shallow and superficial. Their writing skills are poor and many pupils are still printing their letters. Attainment in Key Stage 4 is below average. Pupils show a good knowledge of the local region and can use maps to demonstrate their understanding of how motorway access restrictions have contributed to traffic problems in Ashton. Some have difficulty in interpreting pictograms representing cereal production but can construct graphs of population growth from new data. However, pupils have rudimentary understanding of the factors influencing the growth or fall in population.

2. G.C.S.E. results in 1998 at grades *A-C were below the national average and below the previous year's figures. Provisional results for 1999 show a further large fall in higher grades although every candidate achieved a grade. The number of pupils choosing to study geography at Key Stage 4 has declined steadily since the last report. This decline is most marked in the number of girls electing to take the subject. The current numbers studying geography have shown an upturn overall.

3. Pupils make satisfactory progress in both key stages. Throughout Key Stage 3 pupils' knowledge of geographical terms and their meaning is increasing. Understanding of the concepts underlying these definitions is more limited. Pupils make greater progress in the skills of diagrammatic representation than in map construction, though map interpretation is satisfactory. In Key Stage 4, though progress overall is satisfactory, pupils make good progress in some lessons where the demands of the curriculum bring a fresh teaching style and the work is seen as more relevant to the pupils' lives. This is best exemplified in the preparation for field studies. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in both key stages. In Key Stage 3 they make good gains in factual knowledge of volcanic eruptions but understanding of the impact such events have on peoples' lives remains limited.
4. Pupils' attitudes to their work are good. They are quiet and attentive, willing to ask and keen to answer questions. They collaborate well in pair and group work, though opportunities for this are infrequent.
5. Teaching is always satisfactory and is good in one quarter of lessons. All teachers of the subject show confidence in their knowledge of the course content and control and manage well the pupils in the classroom. Planning of lessons is usually satisfactory and sometimes good but lesson objectives are not always achieved. However, pupils' learning experiences lack variety. The level of challenge presented to them is variable and expectations are not set sufficiently high. Tasks set to pupils, such as copying from text or blackboard, are often mundane and do not stimulate interest or challenge pupils' thinking. Time is managed well and appropriate pace ensures progression but opportunities for assessment are not always exploited.
6. The curriculum meets all requirements for coverage of places, skills and thematic studies and there is progression through and across key stages. A humanities course, combining studies in history and geography leads to the Certificate of Educational Achievement. Assessment policies in the department are good but practice is inconsistent. Pupils are often unclear about grade criteria and teachers' comments in exercise books, though invariably supportive, do not assist pupils to improve their attainment.
7. Leadership of the department is unsatisfactory. Formal procedures for monitoring the work of the department are infrequently carried through. Developmental planning requires greater rigour with more precise costings and success criteria. The teaching staff are capable and experienced. They operate in adjacent specialist rooms, which have good display facilities. Purchased resources are adequate in range and number and school-made worksheets are of good quality. The resources of the department, both human and material, are deployed efficiently.

173.

History

8. Attainment in history at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Pupils' historical knowledge and understanding on entry are below average. The high attaining pupils in Year 7 studying the Norman Conquest could explain the relationship of serf and lord in peace and war. The low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs could easily identify medieval characters from a range of illustrations. At Key Stage 3, pupils' listening and reading skills vary. A Year 9 class examining the benefits to Britain in 1900 of colonial rule was constantly disrupted by the lack of attention of a few boys. The high attaining pupils speak clearly and precisely and a few are attaining good standards in writing. They show good skills in investigating, sifting and debating historical evidence. However, for most pupils verbal responses are too short and many pupils are poor at reading aloud. Prior work in exercise books demonstrates poor grasp of spelling and punctuation which affects their understanding of history. Pupils with special educational needs gain much from the interpretation of pictures and videos, which enables them to work above their expected standard.
9. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average overall. They have satisfactory knowledge of a wide range of historical facts which they are able to remember and use effectively in order to illustrate their answers. They make good use of the limited index, library, documents, diagrams and charts in the

Learning Resource Centre to demonstrate their ability to locate, observe and collect data. GCSE results have improved over the last three years for grades A*- C. In 1998 and 1997 they were a percentage point above the national average for all maintained secondary schools. The 1999 A*- C grades have fallen below those of 1998 because of a high number of low attaining pupils in Year 11. Compared with similar schools pupils' attainment in history is above average. The results for the grades A* to G have been 100 per cent in each year since 1996. Pupils performed better in history than in most other subjects though the percentage of each year group entered for the examinations has ranged from 24 per cent to 13 per cent which is low.

10. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4. The lower attaining pupils make sound progress when they are challenged to recall and build on their prior learning to make reasoned judgements about people and events. They complete a satisfactory quantity of written work. Progress is consistently satisfactory in Year 8 and 9. Pupils with special educational needs develop a sense of empathy about historical characters and usually respond readily to teacher's questioning. In some classes in Key Stage 3 progress is hampered by the restless behaviour of a few boys. At Key Stage 4, many pupils' skills of selecting and using knowledge and understanding are well developed and they can explore and illustrate their ideas correctly. A majority of pupils extracts information from many sources, writes their views down and is prepared to recognise the importance of research in the study of history. The low attaining pupils find it difficult to memorise dates, names of people and the events leading to a piece of history. Their notebooks are often empty or presented poorly. In a Year 10 history class looking at the origins of World War 1 many lower attaining pupils struggled to see the failure of the Schlieffen Plan and the resultant horrors of trench war from 1915.
11. Most pupils give a positive response to history at each key stage. Many are motivated and sustain an argument well in relation to their prior attainment. Most classrooms are orderly and generally girls' behaviour is good. There were a few examples of disruptive behaviour by boys. The worst examples showed a level of unacceptable discourtesy to their teacher. Relationships are sound between most pupils and their teachers.
12. The teaching of history is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. In the best lessons teachers' expectations are high and most pupils respond to good teaching. All lessons begin with a review of previous work. The strengths of the teaching include the sharing of clear aims and objectives for coursework, the organization of independent research and the preparation of homework. Such teaching is confident and well informed. A Year 8 class made very good use of the Encarta encyclopaedia CD-ROM to produce a desktop published page on Henry V111. Additional support and guidance are given to the lower attaining pupils needing it. However, the support given to special needs pupils is in many cases inadequate. Lesson planning is good and tasks are clear in detail and structure. The production of differentiated materials helps a number of struggling pupils. The content and level of work in Year 11 are sufficiently demanding to lead to GCSE successes. In most classes pupils have the opportunity to participate in discussion or to work in small groups.
13. The history department is well led and there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. There is an effective scheme of work supplemented by detailed supporting documentation. The department has made an improved use of information technology to enhance pupils' learning. To raise standards further the school should:
 - continue the revision of schemes of work;
 - share the good practice in teaching and learning strategies;
 - continue to improve GCSE results;
 - continue to improve the standard of boys' behaviour in classrooms.

Modern foreign languages

1. By the end of Key Stage 4 the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in German is above national averages; in French it is below national averages. The percentage gaining A*-G grades in both

languages is above national averages. The percentage of the cohort entered for German is above national averages. Results fluctuate in French for A*-C grades but standards achieved in German are improving steadily. Girls achieve better than boys in both languages. Pupils achieve better in German than in other subjects.

2. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils achieve below the national expectations. They can describe events in the past and present. Lower attainers use set phrases, substituting words to change meaning, participate in simple dialogues and respond with single words. Higher attaining pupils can apply patterns in the languages and can construct sentences to a model. Pupils identify the main points and specific detail from short texts and extracts of speech containing familiar vocabulary; higher attainers understand more detail from speech and writing including some unfamiliar language. All pupils respond appropriately and with little hesitation to routine instructions and questions at normal speed, copy fairly accurately and match print with meaning and sound and higher attaining pupils write at some length and in detail. All pupils express simple opinions and preferences and justify their views, higher attainers supplying more detail. Most pupils write for a variety of purposes.
3. By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils achieve below national averages but in line with the requirements for grades C to G at GCSE in French. Standards achieved in German are generally in line with national averages. Pupils describe events in the past, present and future in speech and writing and for a variety of purposes, take part in extended dialogues, express opinions about a variety of issues and identify the main points and detail from a variety of texts containing language from a good range of topic areas. Higher attainers achieve standards above national averages and in line with higher grades at GCSE; they cope successfully with a wider range of structures and vocabulary and manipulate the language to suit their own needs. These pupils display a good understanding of the way the languages work ; all four skills are well developed.
4. Pupils make good progress developing all four skills in lessons. Rates of progress are very good where pupils are given the opportunity to practise informally, engage in real communication and are encouraged to use resources to progress at their own pace, for example where pupils are encouraged to use interactive language programs available on computer. In the most effective lessons the enthusiasm and high expectations of the teachers are contagious and result in pupils being eager and confident to try out the language for themselves; in these situations progress for pupils of all ability is rapid. Progress slows when teacher led activities become lengthy or resources are not adequately focused on the needs of all pupils. Progress over time is slower because of the uneven distribution of lessons and the difficulty a large number of pupils have in recalling what has gone before.
5. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning languages. They listen attentively, concentrate on the tasks set, display enjoyment in oral activities and are concerned to do well. They are very well behaved in lessons and work well as a whole class and in pairs and small groups. Pupils enter and leave classrooms in an orderly, calm fashion and settle quickly. They display respect for their teachers and for others and treat property and materials with care. They have very good relationships with each other and their teachers and are mutually supportive.
6. The quality of teaching overall is good: 72 per cent of lessons observed were judged to be good or better and 28 percent very good or excellent. More lessons were judged to be good or better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. All lessons in German were judged to be good or better, but the quality of teaching is less consistent in French. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and they use it very effectively to plan lessons and to sequence activities and presentations so that pupils are able to build successfully on previous learning. They respond sensitively to the pupils in their charge and adapt activities to suit their needs. The language being learned is used effectively and often exclusively to conduct lessons and this is very effective in developing pupils' listening skills. Expectations are usually high and pupils respond positively to this, being keen to contribute to oral work in class and participate in activities, often volunteering to attempt tasks in front of the class. Lessons are well planned and activities well sequenced. In the most effective lessons teachers' planning includes effective support for lower attainers and challenge for higher attainers and there is a good variety of appropriate activities. At other times however, the range of activities is narrow. For example pupils are encouraged to practise informally in

pairs but these activities are often limited to rehearsal and pupils are sometimes given insufficient opportunity to use the language for real purposes or use more than one skill. Very effective use is made of improvisation, songs, games, gesture, rhythm and mime to reinforce learning and develop listening and speaking skills. Control and management of pupils is usually very good and often excellent; teachers are successful in creating a very supportive and purposeful atmosphere where pupils feel confident to try out the language themselves and are not afraid to make mistakes. Relationships are very good and lessons are often conducted with humour. Teachers make good use of the resources available; flashcards and the OHP are used to focus attention and clarify meaning and patterns and information technology is used very effectively in lessons to reinforce and extend learning in all four skill areas, allowing pupils to progress at their own pace. In the less effective lessons resources are not always adequately adapted to meet the needs of lower attainers or to challenge the higher attainers, particularly in classes containing a wide range of ability. Lessons are usually conducted at a brisk pace but in less effective lessons inappropriate or lengthy teacher-led activities slow the pace and pupils' rates of progress. Teachers monitor individual progress effectively and react sensitively to pupils' response; they are aware of pupils' progress through National Curriculum levels and towards examination grades, share this information with pupils and give useful guidance to individuals about how to improve standards. Good use is made of homework; pupils are often encouraged to engage in research tasks using information technology and dictionaries to extend their learning.

7. The department is very well led with a clear vision of the way forward and provides a very orderly and supportive environment for language learning. They work very well as a team, observing each others' lessons, sharing ideas and expectations and developing strategies. The department is able to set groups according to their achievement in languages in Year 8 but when they reach Year 9 groups are set according to their attainment in English and Mathematics. As a result groups contain a much wider ability range and this arrangement in addition to the uneven distribution of lessons and the length of lessons makes continuity and progression difficult and slows progress. Pupils have open access to language facilities and resources throughout the day and are encouraged to learn independently.
8. Arrangements for assessment are very good; pupils track their own progress through National Curriculum levels of attainment in Key Stage 3 and through GCSE grades in KS4. The department is very successful in increasing pupils' belief in themselves as competent linguists and this is evident in lessons.
9. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last report. The department has maintained its high standards and has developed the use of information technology effectively to enhance its efforts in encouraging pupils' independence and responsibility for their own learning. There has been a steady improvement in examination results in both languages and in the quality of teaching in both key stages. The time allocation for the second language has remained low. The strong leadership, effective teamwork and the department's commitment to raising standards indicate that the capacity to develop and improve standards further is very good. In order to improve standards the department could:
 - develop activities and resources to increase opportunities for pupils to use the languages for real purposes and use more than one skill to complete tasks;
 - continue to share ideas and spread good practice to achieve consistency across the department;
 - continue to develop use of IT with all pupils;
 - continue to develop independence and involvement of pupils in their learning through the production of resources linked to NC levels and examination criteria.

Music

1. Pupils' attainment in music at the end of Key Stage 3, based on teachers' assessments, is above national expectations. Less than one in six pupils was below the age related standards, whilst one in three was above them. Attainment of pupils with special educational needs is in line with their prior attainment. In the GCSE examinations for 1998, ten pupils were entered, achieving results above the school and national averages. Provisional results for 1999 show a significant drop, with no pupil obtaining higher A*-C grade. However further analysis shows that for many of the six pupils who achieved a grade D,

this was their highest grade. There has been a lack of consistency in teaching in the department owing to the need to employ supply teachers to cover for a shortage in full time staff.

2. Inspection evidence however, indicates that present attainment in Key Stage 3 is below average. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a mixture of musical skills and experiences, the majority of them obtaining below the expected standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Most pupils are able to sing in tune with acceptable tone, identify orchestral instruments accurately, and can define some of the basic musical elements, "pitch" and "melody" and "rhythm". All pupils are unfamiliar with the remaining elements. They are unable to use information technology to explore and record sounds, sing in two or more parts or improvise on either a melodic or rhythmic idea. Pupils' attainment in Year 8 is also below the standard expected for the end of Key Stage 2. Their knowledge of the basic musical elements is insecure, and they still are unable to use symbols when performing and communicating musical ideas. Pupils in Year 9 are able to define some of the basic musical elements, and follow the notes of a simple tune when it is played on the piano. However they lack the knowledge and confidence to use musical language fluently; their recognition of orchestral instruments is insecure and they are unable to relate music to its historical context.

3. At Key Stage 4 classes comprise pupils who have elected to study music for GCSE and attainment is average. Both year groups are achieving in line with the national expectations. Pupils in Year 10 have a good basic knowledge, but lack the confidence to use it to solve elementary examination based questions. Pupils in Year 11 have become accustomed to the requirements of the examination questions and are able to identify from a CD the different periods of musical history, and list the factors contributing to their decision.
4. Progress in both key stages is satisfactory in relation to pupils' previous attainment. There are small groups of pupils who experienced little music making in their primary schools because of the removal of music from the National Curriculum requirements. Pupils in Year 7 become accustomed to singing in two parts, broaden their knowledge of musical vocabulary, and develop their listening skills. Pupils in Year 8, develop their knowledge of the different instruments by putting them in families and indicating in which ensembles they would be found. Pupils in Year 9 learn to play a well known melody on the keyboards, develop listening skills by listening to a Beatles song and answering related questions, increase their knowledge of musical form and improve their reading of notation.
5. Pupils in Year 10 increase their musical experience and begin to use previously acquired knowledge to tackle the listening aspect of the GCSE examination. Pupils in Year 11 are refining their performances by practising their chosen pieces and performing them to the class and other audiences. They are learning to recognise cadences, and are improving their analytical skills to enable them to answer the examination questions in more detail.
6. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to teachers and work in both key stages are good. Pupils in Year 7 are eager to answer questions and react promptly to instructions. Most pupils show sustained concentration, assisted by well-timed changes of activity, and participate satisfactorily in singing, with the majority of the class making a good effort. They take care over the presentation of their work. Pupils in Year 8 listen attentively to the teacher and follow directions well. Initially some pupils lack confidence in their ability to answer questions, but encouragement from the teacher leads them to become more involved in the lesson. In group work pupils in Year 9 persevere with the set task and take pride in playing the results to the remainder of the class. Older pupils in Key Stage 4, listen attentively, apply themselves to the set tasks, and can work well on their own. The less academically able pupils are also well motivated. In group work some pupils help their less confident peers with areas of difficulty.
7. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good overall, but embraces a range from very good to unsatisfactory. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good in both year groups. Both members of staff are qualified and experienced teachers, and their knowledge of the subject is good, giving them the confidence to share with pupils the aims and objectives of the lesson clearly. Their understanding of the learning process is demonstrated by the manner in which they explain any unfamiliar aspects of the tasks, and take pains to ensure that all pupils understand the nature of the tasks set. Lessons have clear and effective organisational strategies, with a good range of activities for pupils of all abilities. Effective and efficient use is made of the time, resources and accommodation available with some activities taking place in different parts of the room. In the majority of lessons, management of pupils is good. Isolated incidences of disruption are quickly tackled, and the lesson proceeds in an environment conducive to learning. Assessment information at the end of topics and at the end of the school year is used effectively to inform planning. Homework is set after every lesson and is usually an activity related to that particular lesson or preparation and research for the next lesson. Assessment is well planned, pupils have clearly stated targets and parents are informed about the pupils' progress.
8. Teachers from the Wigan Music Service come to teach singing, guitar and keyboard. There is a growing range of extra-curricular activities each week, and a production is staged every year, involving pupils of all ages and support from many departments. There are also opportunities for giving concerts both in school and in the community and attending professional performances at local venues.

9. The head of department is committed to a wide range of responsibilities in addition to the normal head of department duties. Lessons that take place in an ordinary classroom are restricted by the lack of soundproofing and permanent equipment. When two classes are taught together, there are insufficient instruments to meet the needs of the curriculum. In order to raise pupils' attainment the department needs to:
- revise the scheme of work to bring forward the introduction of computer based work, alongside the present musical activities, into Year 7;
 - increase the number and quality of computers to ensure equal access for all students;
 - acquire sufficient appropriate software, CD-Rom, videos and books to support and further the learning experience which takes place in the classroom;
 - acquire sufficient instruments to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum, especially in the area of multi-cultural instruments;
 - increase the exposure of pupils to visiting professional musicians, especially in the multi-cultural area.

Physical Education

1. The attainment of pupils in physical education at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national expectation. Although the most recent teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 judged the attainment of pupils to be close to the national expectation for most pupils, teachers have not had an opportunity to moderate their judgements beyond the school and these assessments are not fully secure. The attainment, overall, is below the national expectations and is not as high as it was at the time of the last inspection. Boys generally attain more highly in games than the girls. Standards overall are higher in Years 7 and 8 than in the activities observed in Year 9. Pupils' performance in school teams is often at a higher standard than that seen in many lessons. The school is particularly successful in the local badminton competition. Individual pupils are successful at local, county and sometimes national level, in hockey, soccer and badminton. By the end of Key Stage 3 girls' performance in netball is below average. The majority of girls have insecure footwork. They do not make the best use of the space on the court to "get free" and maintain possession of the ball. A small number of girls, around one in five pupils performs at a higher level. Boys' performance in rugby in Year 9 is below average. Boys' tackling skills often break down when they use them in a small game. When half the class quickly set up a line for attack and defence the other half of the class were slow to establish these basic formations.
2. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national expectation. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. By the end of Key Stage 4 boys plan, use and evaluate advanced soccer strategies in response to different games scenarios. Girls have more refined hockey skills and they use a suitable range of attack strategies. Pupils in both key stages have weak evaluation skills. Few pupils in Key Stage 4 have well developed coaching and officiating skills and only those pupils who have followed the fitness option have sufficient health related knowledge and understanding.
3. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. In nearly half the lessons pupils make at least good progress and in almost one third of lessons progress is very good. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. In nearly one third of lessons progress is good or very good. Progress was unsatisfactory in just one lesson. In the best lessons in Key Stage 3 pupils make significant improvements to their performance in soccer, rugby and gymnastics lessons. In these lessons pupils are required to evaluate performance and suggest improvements; to work out solutions to problems; to work hard physically and to rise to the high expectations of the teacher. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in some lessons because teachers give them tasks with added challenge. Inappropriate curriculum planning in Key Stage 3 restricts pupils' progress. Pupils learn too many different activities over too short a length of time. Consequently, they have difficulty in making significant improvements to their performance in any one of them.

4. In Key Stage 4 pupils continue to improve their skills in games and improve their understanding of rules and strategies. They learn their chosen activity over a longer time and this enables them to make better progress. Pupils with special educational needs in both key stages make satisfactory progress because teachers match tasks and equipment to their ability and experience. The extra-curricular general activities club run for pupils with special educational needs helps these pupils to gain confidence and control in a variety of physical and social skills. In both key stages less progress is made in improving pupils' evaluation and planning skills, coaching and officiating skills because these activities are not often planned as part of lessons.
5. The majority of pupils has a good attitude to learning. Pupils generally enjoy lessons, maintain good levels of physical activity and concentrate well. Pupils listen carefully to instructions. They generally answer questions but are less confident when they talk to each other about performance. There are few pupils excused from lessons. Many pupils prepare themselves safely for lessons. However, a number of pupils leave shoelaces insecure and long hair loose and these are unacceptable risks to safety. Almost half of the pupils take part in extra-curricular activities regularly and many pupils have benefited from the visits of coaches from local sports clubs, in particular rugby, badminton and netball. A significant number of Year 11 pupils takes responsibility for coaching younger pupils in extra-curricular activities. Pupils are generally well behaved in lessons. However, occasionally a small number of pupils, often boys, does not respond positively to the teachers' expectations of behaviour. Pupils work well together when practising games and relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Pupils respond well to a firm but friendly approach and generally help with equipment when requested.
6. Teaching in physical education is satisfactory overall, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. In Key Stage 3 teaching is good or better in almost half of lessons and very good in almost one third of lessons. In Key Stage 4 teaching is good or better in almost one third of lessons and was very good in one lesson. Teaching was unsatisfactory in just one lesson in Key Stage 4. All teachers have a specialist qualification in physical education and know their subject. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils. There is urgency to the lessons and teachers use a good range of approaches. They expect pupils to maintain good levels of physical activity and to improve their performance of skills and their understanding of techniques and games strategies. They expect pupils to reflect on their own performance, observe and analyse the performance of other pupils and work out how best to make improvements. For example, in a boys' rugby lesson in Year 9, boys worked out the best technique for front tackles with guidance from the teacher. The teacher encouraged the boys to describe the technique and say why it was successful. The boys then used this information to help each other to improve. Teachers' planning is good overall. Lesson objectives are clear, shared with the pupils and reviewed at the end of the lesson. Teachers generally give good demonstrations of skills and practices. They use questions well to check what pupils have learnt and to develop their understanding. In the best lessons teachers use open ended questions to encourage pupils to think about their performance and they encourage pupils to use the technical language of the subject. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. They praise good performance and effort and their encouragement helps to motivate the pupils. Teachers assess the pupils regularly both at the end of the unit and from week to week. They use this information suitably to guide their planning. For example, in a Year 9 rugby class, two groups worked on a similar task at a different pace. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, a number of features can be improved. The pace of the warm-up activity is sometimes less than vigorous. There are too few opportunities for pupils to reflect on, evaluate and improve performance and to improve coaching and officiating skills in Key Stage 4. These were weaknesses in the teaching at the last inspection. Sometimes games' skills are taught in isolation without reference to their use in a game and consequently pupils do not improve their use and understanding of game tactics and strategies. Non-participating pupils are not involved in the lessons as fully as they could be. In some lessons teachers are not sufficiently vigilant in ensuring pupils are safely prepared for lessons. Where teaching is unsatisfactory the activities planned are inappropriate to the prior experience of the pupils. Consequently the pace of the lesson is slow and little is learnt.
7. The department has the capacity to improve and in order to raise standards further it should:
 - review and adjust the Key Stage 3 curriculum to ensure that activities are taught over a long enough period to allow pupils, especially girls, to make sufficient progress over time;
 - provide opportunities for pupils to plan, evaluate and improve their work;

- . ensure that all elements of the National Curriculum are taught;
- . target in-service training to improve the quality of teaching and to share good practice;
- . gain a broader view of standards in order to improve the accuracy of assessments.

· PART C: INSPECTION DATA

· SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

1. Twelve inspectors who spent a combined total of 48 days in the school undertook this inspection of Cansfield High School. The evidence in the report is based upon a total of 185 hours observation from 194 lessons or part-lessons, distributed across Key Stages 3 and 4.
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 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;
 - discussions with the chair of governors before and during the inspection;
 - discussions with the chair of finance committee;
 - discussions with the heads of departments;
 - discussions with pupils in each age group about aspects of their work;
 - discussions with members of teaching, learning support and non-teaching staff;
 - discussion at a meeting attended by 15 parents prior to the inspection;
 - 109 responses to the parents' questionnaire.

· DATA AND INDICATORS

207. Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	870	49	251	194

208. Teachers and classes

208. Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	52
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.7

208. Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of education support staff:	8
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	161

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 75

Average teaching group size:	KS2	N/A
	KS3	23.7
	KS4	22.8

208.

209. **Financial data**

Financial year: 1998/99

£

Total Income 1,904,919

Total Expenditure 1,896,238

Expenditure per pupil 2,312.49

Balance brought forward from previous year 90,546

Balance carried forward to next year 99,227

210. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 890

Number of questionnaires returned: 109

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	24	66	7	2	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	42	53	3	2	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	25	57	14	4	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	24	61	11	4	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	39	51	6	4	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	39	56	5	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	37	50	9	4	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	31	53	4	10	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	33	56	9	2	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	29	58	10	4	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	31	58	6	4	1