

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**Fearns Community High School**

Bacup

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119745

Headteacher: Mr N Thornley

Reporting inspector: Mr T Wheatley  
10013

Dates of inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> March 2000

Inspection number: 185921

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Fearns Moss Bacup Lancashire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Baron
Date of previous inspection:	October 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Ted Wheatley	<i>Registered inspector</i>		How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed?
Ron Ibbitson	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
John Laver	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.	
Robert Shaw	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
Anthony McDermott	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
Jack Haslam	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information technology.	
Susan Schofield	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
Christine Humphreys	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
Allan Paver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; Vocational subjects.	How well are pupils taught?
Richard Merryfield	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	
Roslyn Fox	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
David Wigley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music; Drama; Equal opportunities.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
John Challands	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education; Special educational needs.	
Jackie Pentlow	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Fearns Community High School is on the outskirts of Bacup, midway between Bacup and Rawtenstall, and in its own spacious grounds. The school was built in the 1950s and since then has had some extensions, the latest of which was the community facility which provides sports and other recreational activities.

There are 937 pupils in the school, aged from 11 to 16 years, which is average for this type of school. Numbers fluctuate from year to year, but are broadly stable when taken over several years. However, the numbers of pupils entering local primary schools have fallen significantly, and the school expects this to have an impact on numbers entering the school in the near future. The school is in an area of high unemployment, and there is considerable movement of people in and out of the local area. All local primary school pupils have the opportunity to take the entrance examination for the grammar school, which is about half a mile away. The attainment of pupils entering Fearns Community High School is well below average. Twenty-three per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above average. 6.7 per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs, which is above average, and the proportion of pupils on the school's register of special needs is close to the average at 19.3 per cent. The local education authority provides further support for up to thirty per cent of pupils.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school provides a sound standard of education for its pupils overall, although there are some deficiencies in modern foreign languages. Overall attainment is below average, but a small proportion of pupils achieve good standards at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good at Key Stage 3. The school is well led, with clear direction for raising standards, and management is generally effective. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- The school's commitment to improving literacy throughout the school is starting to have a positive effect on raising standards, especially at Key Stage 3.
- The leadership of the school is effective in providing clear direction for standards to improve.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and has considerably improved since the last inspection. The quality of classroom support for pupils is very good.
- The attitudes of the great majority of pupils to school are good, and good relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults have a positive effect on pupils' achievements.
- The school's provision for personal and social education is good.
- The school's provision for careers work is very good, and there are effective relationships with other schools and institutions of further education.
- The provision for moral and social development is good.
- The procedures to promote good behaviour are effective, and the school provides good support and guidance for its pupils and monitors personal and academic progress well.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Attainment is below average overall, and in geography, modern foreign languages and physical education it is below the attainment in other subjects.
- The attendance and punctuality of some pupils are unsatisfactory, particularly at Key Stage 4, and this has a detrimental effect on these pupils' achievements.
- Teaching in about one in twelve lessons is unsatisfactory, and worse at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3.
- Procedures to evaluate the performance of the work of departments are not sufficiently well established to ensure that the good development seen in some subjects is consistent to all subjects.
- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for modern foreign languages at Key Stages 3 and 4, for physical education at Key Stage 4, and does not provide a balanced experience for pupils at Key Stage 3.
- Spiritual development is not sufficiently well promoted throughout the curriculum.
- Form tutorial time at the end of the day is not consistently well used.
- Long-term development planning is unsatisfactory because the school does not know what numbers of pupils will be entering the school in Year 7 until very late in the summer term.
- Statutory requirements to publish GCSE targets in the governors' annual report to parents are not met, and health and safety risk assessments are not carried out and recorded consistently.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in October 1995. The quality of provision for special educational needs has improved considerably, and the quality of support pupils now receive is very good and is clearly focused on raising standards of literacy and numeracy in particular. Standards have improved in history, although there is still some way to go, but in modern foreign languages standards have not improved. The school has worked hard on its methods to improve attendance, with a small decrease in the level of absence. Curriculum development has been unsatisfactory, because there is insufficient time at Key Stage 4 for physical education and many pupils do not continue with a modern foreign language through Key Stage 4. Improvements in development planning are satisfactory overall. Development planning in departments is generally consistent with school plans, and subject development plans are appropriately prioritised and costed. Medium-term and long-term planning are vague, but are restricted by the school not knowing until very late in the summer term how many pupils will be entering the school the following September. The library stock has improved significantly, and subject departments now use the library more regularly. The school still does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship, but the governors' annual report and the school prospectus now meet statutory requirements.



## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average, and by the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is below average. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in English in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving average levels or higher was below average and the proportion obtaining the higher levels was close to average. In mathematics and science, results were below average. Overall, the performance of pupils was similar to the performance of pupils in similar schools. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades was well below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. This year group of pupils performed lower than expected, considering their results in the end of Key Stage 3 national tests taken in 1997. However, a significant proportion of pupils moved into or left the school between 1997 and 1999. When the GCSE results of pupils who remained in the school were examined, they were found to have performed in line with their performance in the 1997 end of Key Stage 3 national tests. The school did not achieve its target for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C GCSE grades in 1999, but it exceeded its target for pupils achieving one or more GCSE A\*-G grades.

The standard of work seen is generally below average. In English at Key Stage 3, standards are broadly average, a results of the work in raising the standards of pupils' literacy skills. Standards are broadly average in science, design and technology, information technology and religious education, and above average in music. Standards are below average in mathematics, art, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are below average overall, although in art, information technology, and music levels of attainment are broadly average. Very few pupils take modern foreign languages through to GCSE, and standards are well below average. Nevertheless, achievements are generally satisfactory. The introduction of a whole school policy in literacy is starting to have a positive effect on pupils' achievements. Achievement in geography, modern foreign languages and physical education at both key stages, and in drama at Key Stage 4, is unsatisfactory.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are generally good. The majority of pupils show a high level of interest in school life and become involved in the range of activities the school provides.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good in the majority of lessons and around school. In some lessons a small minority of pupils are disruptive.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. Personal development is satisfactory overall and pupils respond well to the opportunities provided.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory overall. However, the majority of pupils attend regularly and are punctual to school; a small but significant proportion of pupils are absent regularly.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory

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

Teaching in 92 per cent of lessons is satisfactory or better, and in 56 per cent of lessons it is good or better. Teaching in about one in eight lessons is very good, with a small proportion excellent. Teaching is unsatisfactory in one in twelve lessons and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 4 remains high at 10 per cent. However, teaching has improved since the last inspection.

In the best teaching, which was seen in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and music, high expectations, opportunities for independent work and a wide range of teaching methods have a positive impact on how well pupils learn. Good knowledge on the part of the teacher, and in particular the teaching of literacy skills, helps pupils achieve well. In general, higher attaining pupils are suitably challenged, and the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are taught well, with good quality support. On occasion, average attaining pupils are not suitably challenged and are given work that is trivial, and examples of this were seen in English, geography, history, modern foreign languages and religious education. In modern foreign languages, there is often too little demand made of pupils to remember previous work or to work independently, and consequently pupils learn too little.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall, because statutory requirements for modern foreign languages at both key stages and for physical education at Key Stage 4 are not met. In modern foreign languages at Key Stages 3, lower attaining pupils receive less time than other pupils, and in Year 11 less than one tenth of pupils follows a modern foreign language course leading to GCSE. A significant number of pupils do not complete a physical education course at Key Stage 4 and do not cover National Curriculum requirements fully. In geography the scheme of work does not provide a balanced experience for pupils in all aspects of the subject, including the use of information technology at Key Stage 3.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. The quality of classroom support is very good, and small teaching groups make a significant contribution to the achievements of pupils with special educational needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for moral and social development is good. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is unsatisfactory, because opportunities are not planned into schemes of work and the school has not monitored or evaluated provision. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall, although there are too few opportunities for pupils to become aware of the diversity of other cultures in Britain today.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a good level of care for its pupils. The academic and personal development of pupils are monitored well. The school makes good use of assessment information provided by the local authority and other assessment data. However, insufficient use is made of national information to aid curriculum planning and teaching.

The school has effective links with parents through form tutor links and the quality of information sent home.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the school is good and provides a clear direction for raising standards. The senior staff, heads of departments and heads of year generally carry out their responsibilities well. The school has already taken effective measures to improve teaching and plans are advanced to continue this improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Overall, governors carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily. Their financial planning and management skills are very good and have had a significant impact on the quality of accommodation. However, they have not ensured that all statutory curriculum requirements are met, their annual report does not have GCSE targets, and health and safety risk assessment procedures are not secure.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school does not evaluate its own performance effectively. While most departments review and evaluate their performance well, others do not, and senior management has not established rigorous evaluation procedures to improve the situation and raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Accommodation is good and is well used. Staff are generally deployed well, but there are shortages of suitably experienced teachers in geography and religious education, and to a lesser extent in English and history. Learning resources are used well. Purchases of resources are planned well and the school makes good use of the financial resources at its disposal.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children make good progress at school.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• Parents find the school approachable when there are problems.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations of pupils.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school provides an interesting range of extra-curricular activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant proportion of parents thinks that there is too little or too much homework.</li> <li>• A small proportion of parents thinks that the school does not keep them sufficiently well informed about their children's progress.</li> <li>• A small proportion of parents thinks that the school does not work closely enough with parents.</li> </ul>

Inspectors are generally in agreement with what parents like most about the school, although a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Expectations are sound for the highest and lowest attaining pupils, but for some average pupils expectations are not always high enough. Inspectors judged that the amount of homework is appropriate to the needs of pupils. Reports on pupils' progress are good and provide considerable detail on how well pupils are performing in school. The school sends home newsletters regularly and has established good levels of contact and communication with parents and carers.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is well below average, and many pupils have poor literacy skills. Many higher attaining pupils in the local primary schools go to the local grammar school. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is broadly below average, but represents an improvement on levels of attainment from the point at which pupils enter the school. Over recent years, attainment has been below average in end of Key Stage 3 national tests, but the trends in performance have been in line with those seen nationally. Girls have performed consistently better than boys over recent years.

2. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in English in 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving the average Level 5 or higher was below average, but close to the average of the results of pupils in similar schools. The proportion of pupils obtaining the higher levels was close to average, and above the average of pupils in similar schools. In mathematics the proportion of pupils obtaining the average Level 5 or higher was below the national average but above the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils obtaining the higher levels was average when compared with pupils in similar schools. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in science, the proportion of pupils obtaining Level 5 or higher was below average, and the proportion obtaining the higher levels was well below average. Compared with pupils in similar schools, the proportion of pupils obtaining Level 5 or higher was above average, but the proportion obtaining the higher levels was below average.

3. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades was well below the national average, and in comparison with pupils from similar schools it was also well below average. However, a significant proportion of pupils moved into or left the school between 1997 and 1999 and this has had a significant effect on the school's overall results. The results of pupils who remained in the school were broadly as expected on the basis of the results they achieved in the 1997 end of Key Stage 3 national tests. The school did not achieve its target for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C GCSE grades in 1999, but it exceeded its target for pupils achieving one or more GCSE A\*-G grades.

4. The standard of work seen is generally below average. In English at Key Stage 3, standards are broadly average, a result of the work to improve pupils' literacy skills, and this is starting to have an impact on achievement in other subjects. Standards are below average in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 3. Standards are broadly average in science, but although lower attaining pupils have sound practical skills, their levels of understanding are below average. Standards are broadly average in design and technology, information technology and religious education, and above average in music. Pupils often show good practical skills, but levels of understanding and knowledge are below average overall. Standards are below average in art, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. Information technology skills are broadly average, and skills are reinforced by work done in most subjects.

5. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are below average overall in English, mathematics and science. However, standards are improving. In English, the small proportion of higher attaining pupils express themselves well and have sound analytical skills. The focus on improving literacy skills is starting to have a positive impact, and standards in Years 10 and 11 are closer to the national average. In mathematics the highest attaining pupils are on course to achieve A\*-C grades at GCSE, and other pupils have average skills in using statistics, solving simple equations and finding areas of rectangles. In science, attainment is below average overall, but is rising. Pupils have sound understanding of biological, chemical and physical properties, and often good investigation skills. In art, information technology and music, levels of attainment are broadly average. Pupils' information technology skills are broadly average and develop well through their work in mathematics, design and technology and drama in particular. Standards in geography, history, religious education and physical education are below average. Very few pupils take modern foreign languages through to GCSE, and standards are well below average.

6. The introduction of a whole school policy in literacy is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' achievements. At Key Stages 3 and 4 achievement is generally satisfactory, and for the highest and lowest attaining pupils it is often good. Small teaching groups throughout the school, and challenging work for the highest and lowest attaining pupils, have a positive impact on achievement. On occasion, in several subjects, the average attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged, and there are too few opportunities for pupils to learn independently, and this is noticeable particularly in geography. While the focus on raising the achievements of boys is generally successful, occasionally, the behaviour of some boys disrupts the learning of other pupils, for example in some English lessons. Achievement in modern foreign languages and physical education at both key stages, and in drama at Key Stage 4, is unsatisfactory. In modern foreign languages, a significant number of Year 11 pupils are not following a language course leading to GCSE, although this has been rectified in Year 10. In physical education, pupils do not study the subject to sufficient depth to make sound progress, and in drama a lack of specialist teaching, recently rectified, was impeding pupils' progress.

7. Literacy skills are generally satisfactory and are now evident in most subjects as a result of the successful implementation of a whole school literacy policy. In most lessons pupils are encouraged to speak about the subject, and the use of guidelines to aid pupils' writing skills are increasingly used successfully. In science, for example, writing frames are used effectively to help pupils produce accurate written practical reports, using technical vocabulary accurately. The development of numeracy skills is underdeveloped, although within mathematics there is sound development. There is no whole school numeracy policy. Nevertheless, there is satisfactory use and development of numeracy skills in science and design and technology.

8. Standards have changed little since the time of the previous inspection, and the pupils' overall attainment remains below average. The highest attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 are on track to gain higher GCSE results than previously.

9. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are good. Most pupils are working at their level of ability, particularly with respect to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Where pupils are withdrawn for specific literacy and numeracy lessons they make good progress. Progress is also good in mainstream lessons, where pupils are

supported very effectively by special support assistants and work is usually closely matched to pupils' levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs are not making appropriate progress in modern foreign languages, where withdrawal from these lessons to provide special needs support is restricting the time they receive for the subject.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. Most pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to their work. In lessons they settle down quickly and concentrate on their work, but there are instances of unruly behaviour by some pupils, particularly in Year 8, which occasionally disrupts the work of other members of the class. The behaviour of most pupils is generally good in lessons and around the school, but some pupils do indulge in inappropriate behaviour. In extreme cases this leads to exclusions, but only after the school has explored all avenues. In the past year there have been 33 exclusions, three of which were permanent. The governing body is fully involved in all exclusion cases. The majority of pupils get along with each other very well, and isolated instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and firmly by staff.

11. Pupils' personal development is good, and they form good relationships among themselves and with their teachers and support staff. Many pupils say that being with friends is the thing they really enjoy about school. Pupils develop maturity and an understanding of themselves in the world through their attitudes to learning. A Year 9 girl for, example, busily sanding a wooden frame she had made in a design and technology lesson, remarked that "some people think this sort of work is only for men but women can do it just as well". Pupils develop a respect for others and are capable of seeing other points of view. For example, a girl in a personal and social education lesson shared her thoughts with the class on how she had spoken unkindly to her grandmother and now regretted it. The class listened to her with patience and understanding. Pupils are helpful to one another, as for example in a design and technology lesson where a Year 9 boy offered to help anyone because he was waiting for the varnish to dry on his work. Teachers and other adults in the school provide good rôle models for pupils to emulate. Where they are given opportunities, pupils accept responsibility, an example being pupils' enthusiasm for raising funds for charity. Several charities have benefited well through pupils' initiatives and hard work.

12. Although many pupils attend school regularly, a poor attendance by significant number of pupils makes the overall attendance rate unsatisfactory. There has been a very slight improvement in attendance since the last inspection but it remains a serious problem. Some pupils also have a problem with punctuality. Many pupils regularly arrive at school in good time for registration, but a significant number are consistently late. Problems of irregular attendance and lateness are seen in all years but are much worse in the Years 10 and 11. The school is well aware of the problems of unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality, and with support from educational welfare officers it is making determined efforts to overcome them. The unsatisfactory attendance of some students has an adverse effect on their learning, and this is particularly so in Year 11.

13. Pupils behave well in lessons. Most pupils with special educational needs are confident that they will succeed because they have appropriate support in class, or because they are taught with other pupils of similar levels of attainment. Their attitude to work is enthusiastic and they have good relationships with other pupils and with their teachers. Pupils with statements of special educational needs sometimes become dependent on support staff, but the school is aware of this and makes appropriate arrangements to encourage independence.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

14. Teaching is satisfactory overall and better than at the last inspection. Ninety-two per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better, and in 56 per cent of lessons it is good or better. Teaching in about one in eight lessons is very good, with a small proportion excellent. Teaching is better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Teaching in about one in twelve lessons is unsatisfactory, and most of this is at Key Stage 4.

15. At Key Stage 3, teaching is very good in music; it is good in English, science, control and design and technology and history, and is satisfactory in all other subjects except modern foreign languages, where it is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4, teaching is very good in music and is good in science. It is satisfactory in all other subjects except modern foreign languages. In half of the lessons observed in modern foreign language, teaching was unsatisfactory. This leads to unsatisfactory learning in French, although learning in Spanish is satisfactory. Teaching observed in geography during the inspection was satisfactory. Over time, however, the subject contains some unchallenging teaching, because attainment is below average at both key stages, and under-attainment by average or slightly below average pupils is widespread.

16. In some subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is unsatisfactory, and this is particularly evident in geography, religious education and, to a lesser extent, English and history, and this restricts pupils' learning. This has arisen because the school has a timetabling system where a large number of classes in a year group are taught the same subject at the same time and there are not enough specialist teachers to meet the needs of all classes. Plans to reduce this problem from September 2000 are well in hand.

17. The subject knowledge and understanding of teachers in other subjects is generally good at both key stages, and in design and technology and in music are very good.

18. Teachers' expectations of pupils and pupils' expectations of themselves are satisfactory in most subjects at both key stages. However, they are unsatisfactory in modern foreign language and geography at both key stages. In modern foreign language, for example, pupils are not involved in their learning because they are not expected to remember their work; there is very little individual work and independent learning through the use of dictionaries, for example. In geography, tasks such as colouring fill time rather than put it to productive use, and in many classes the pace of learning for those of average levels of attainment is too slow. However, expectations of higher attaining pupils, and usually of lower attaining pupils and of pupils with special educational needs, are good overall, and consequently the learning and achievements of both groups are good. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, some pupils with special educational needs made good progress in carrying out an experiment to measure the diameter and circumference of a circle and



work out the value of pi. In another lesson, in art, they made good progress whilst making three-dimensional papier-mâché models. In geography, a Year 11 class of higher attaining pupils carried out a decision-making exercise efficiently and to high standards. Expectations of the majority of pupils whose prior attainment is average or slightly below average are sometimes unsatisfactory.

19. Teachers' planning is generally secure. Work to meet the needs of individual pupils is largely managed through the setting procedures, but in some subjects, for example science, provision of individual work within classes is effective in helping pupils learn well. The organisation of classrooms and use of time and resources are good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. In science a good range of methods is used at both key stages, and the strategy of explaining the aims of lessons is effective in giving pupils targets for what they have to do and why. Good, well planned blackboard summaries consolidate scientific knowledge effectively. In some subjects teachers depend on a limited range of styles which are effective. For example, lengthy explanations and discussions are effective for higher attaining pupils because these pupils take part in discussions readily and express their knowledge and understanding clearly in good, extended speech.

20. However, for pupils with average levels of attainment, particularly at Key Stage 4, the same style is not effective and pupils do not discuss ideas readily, they lose interest and produce little work of value. Some teachers are dependent on the completion of too many work sheets, for example in history, and in geography where there is a shortage of up-to-date textbooks at Key Stage 4. On occasion, pupils copy too much and produce little work independently, and this limits their opportunities to analyse different sources of information, to answer questions, and to solve problems that give access to higher level work at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. In geography and modern foreign language there is too little use of video and of other audio-visual aids to stimulate pupils' interest.

21. The management of pupils in class is good. The great majority of lessons start with calling the register, and this is effective in establishing pupils' attention and a calm, working environment. However, where there is too little opportunity for independent work, and where teaching styles are restricted, pupils' attention and efforts are not maintained. In the best lessons, for example in science and design and technology, skilful, challenging questioning and opportunities for independent work and problem-solving are effective in maintaining pupils' attention and concentration. In many lessons, and notably in mathematics and music lessons, good relationships make a significant contribution to the good behaviour of pupils.

22. Teachers manage the teaching of literacy skills well because they have embraced the whole school literacy policy with enthusiasm. Recognition of the effectiveness of the literacy hour in primary schools, and building on this through all subjects in Key Stage 3, and in particular the quality of teaching for those with special educational needs, ensures that literacy standards are developing well.

23. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory overall, but there is no co-ordinated whole school policy. In science and in design and technology, numeracy skills develop well as a result of the policies of these departments. The teaching of information technology across the curriculum is generally sound at Key Stage 3, and better at Key Stage 4 where information technology is planned into the curriculum.

24. The use of day-to-day assessment to raise standards is satisfactory overall but is in the early stages of development. There is good practice in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and history, where careful marking and constructive feedback to pupils play an important part in enabling pupils see what they have to do to improve their work or achieve more. Homework is set regularly, and homework diaries are used effectively to ensure parents know when homework is given. This is generally effective in ensuring that pupils complete homework on time.

25. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, particularly when pupils are withdrawn for specialist literacy and numeracy lessons, and in Key Stage 4 where curriculum enrichment is provided through general studies lessons. Where support is provided in lessons by special support assistants, for example in mathematics, English and science, the support is of good quality and enhances pupils' progress. Good use is made of pupils' individual education plans to aid teachers' planning and to monitor pupils' progress. However, identification of subject-specific needs and the setting of related targets is inconsistent across departments. Most teachers plan for the needs of special educational needs pupils and work closely with the learning support staff. All staff have a very good knowledge of individual pupils and their specific difficulties, and an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources is used. Support staff are very well deployed, and the withdrawal of pupils from mainstream classes is well planned and effective.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

26. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection, and there is now a wider choice of subjects at Key Stage 4, with the introduction of an art (textiles), in addition to art and business studies. Two foreign languages are offered, although timetable inflexibility makes it difficult for any pupil to learn both languages, and higher attaining pupils have the opportunity to study nine subjects to GCSE. Pre-vocational courses have been introduced and pupils have a choice from four different technology programmes. National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses in carpentry and joinery, and in health and care, are on offer through a nearby college. Continuity problems in religious education from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 have been partly addressed. History schemes of work have been totally reviewed and are now regarded locally as models of good practice. The teaching of information technology through all subjects is developing well, and effective links with local business and primary schools have been established by the information technology department.

27. However, the overall provision of the curriculum across the school remains unsatisfactory, although it is better at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. Timetable organisation has an adverse effect on geography and religious education in particular, where appropriately qualified and experienced staff are not always available to teach the subjects. Statutory requirements for the provision of modern foreign languages across both key stages are not met. At Key Stage 3, some lower attaining pupils are withdrawn from modern foreign language lessons, and this reduces the time they experience the subject. In Key Stage 4, a large number of pupils in Year 11 do not follow a foreign language course through to GCSE, although in Year 10 the great majority of pupils are following a foreign modern language

course. The collapsing of the timetable for some pupils in the middle term of Year 11 means that those pupils do not have access to core physical education, which is a statutory requirement. Corporate acts of worship, whilst often of a strong moral or social nature, also do not consistently meet requirements. The time spent in the daily tutorial period at the end of the day is sometimes not used effectively; where the time is used well, good support for the personal and social education course is provided.

28. The priority which the school gives to improving literacy is having a positive effect on raising standards in English, and in most other subjects. Mathematics teachers give appropriate emphasis in lessons to developing basic numeracy skills, and this is reinforced in some tutor periods, as well as in science and design and technology. The school does not have a whole school numeracy policy.

29. Extra-curricular activities illustrate the focus which the school places on raising attainment. For example, extra lessons are provided after school in almost all subjects, and during holidays in those subjects which involve a heavy load of coursework, and a revision weekend for GCSE pupils was held at a Lancashire outdoor centre. The latter was especially successful because it also provided a valuable social experience. Other extra-curricular activities run predominantly through physical education and the arts faculty. The physical education department is targeting pupils to get more of them involved, and the performing arts faculty is looking towards extending the breadth of opportunities it provides. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities such as theatre trips, skiing holidays and expeditions, which all contribute to pupils' learning and social development.

30. The school has a wide range of equal opportunities policies covering gender and multicultural issues, mostly produced since the last inspection. Gender policies relate to the curriculum, teaching and learning styles, materials and resources, records of achievement, assessment, and to staff recruitment. They relate also to selection and development, and the policies have had a significant impact on provision in the school. The school has, for example, successfully trialled single-sex classes in English, science and humanities. Multicultural policies reflect the positive views of the governors and staff on the plural nature of British society. However, they have not had a real impact on ensuring that schemes of work, for example, reflect the multicultural nature of Britain today.

31. There is no policy concerning spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the school, and although provision is broadly satisfactory there has been no monitoring to evaluate its quality. Provision is variable between departments. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory overall, although there are examples of good practice. For example, in English, there is a strong spiritual dimension to the study of reflective poetry and through the discovery of new words. Critical studies in art, such as the one concerning the Taj Mahal, are challenging and exciting. Computer education is often used in a creative and imaginative way. In history, Year 8 pupils undertook an interesting study of the life of the plains Indians. A range of spiritual matters is covered in music and drama. However, corporate acts of worship, though always well prepared and very interesting, do not specifically have a spiritual emphasis and do not consistently provide the required daily act of collective worship.

32. Moral issues are dealt with in great detail through the personal and social education programme, and pupils have a good understanding of what is right and wrong in society and in their school. Moral and social aspects are reinforced through assemblies. The science department considers a wide range of matters effectively, such as, inherited disease, noise pollution, alternative technology and the use of chemicals, and humans' responsibilities to these issues. Civil rights in the United States and other countries are dealt with well through English. In religious education there are effective moral considerations of matters such as abortion, euthanasia, and the Holocaust.

33. Social development is good in the school, as demonstrated through effective group work in a number of subjects, and through good behaviour around the school. Collaborative work is particularly good in English, music and drama. The science department covers a range of social matters comprehensively, for example anti-smoking policies, the greenhouse effect, family planning, and many technological, economic factors. Members of staff present good role models for the pupils in terms of social interaction.

34. Aspects of world cultures are successfully dealt with through a few subjects, and particularly through art and music. The influences of Asian and African arts are clearly evident through the fabric and papier-mâché work and art, and through composition work in music. In English, multicultural texts are studied, visits to theatres are made, and outside theatre companies are invited in to take workshops. There have also been visiting music groups to take music workshops. In information technology teachers raise awareness of local culture through community and business links. Generally, across the school, however, there are too few planned opportunities to raise multicultural awareness.

35. Personal and social education is taught across the school as a discrete subject by form tutors once a week. There is a good, regularly reviewed programme of study covering a comprehensive range of topics, including community matters, citizenship, health, gender, diseases, bullying, drugs, sex education, charity work, local government and environmental issues. Aspects relating specifically to school life, such as study skills, careers, time management, note-taking and the use of the library are fully covered, and are valued by the pupils. The teaching of the course is mostly good.

36. Pupils are given very good guidance on vocational matters. In collaboration with external agencies such as the Training and Enterprise Council, as well as many local businesses, the school gives pupils opportunities to take part in various programmes which enable them to decide on future careers. The work experience programme, for example, gives pupils a chance to gain confidence in the work situation by spending a two weeks period in business or industry during the school term. The school runs several other programmes that enable pupils to gain an insight into possible careers. Careers information evenings are also held for parents of Year 10 students, so that they can assist their children to plan their careers.

37. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs except in modern foreign languages, where pupils are not receiving their curriculum entitlement. With this one exception, pupils have access to all subjects and to end of course examinations. Provision at Key Stage 4 is particularly good, where work experience and general curriculum enrichment are provided through local colleges and training providers, and through a general studies course at school.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

38. The school shows a high level of care for its pupils. Child protection procedures are good, and a designated person is responsible for all child protection matters. All staff have received some training in child protection and are kept well informed on appropriate procedures. Good working relationships have been established with external agencies. Health and safety matters are well managed, except for the carrying out of health and safety risk assessments. Assessments of fire risk in the new Sports and Leisure Centre are carried out but there is no record of health and safety risk assessments being conducted throughout the rest of the school. There is also no record of governor involvement in the setting up of health and safety procedures.

39. The school has a well-equipped medical room for medical examinations or cases of sickness, and in emergencies the school is well covered by a good number of qualified first-aid staff. A record of accidents is carefully maintained.

40. There are good procedures set out in the staff handbook for promoting and managing behaviour, and these are implemented effectively throughout the school. The school has a graded system for rewarding good behaviour, and in assemblies the opportunity is taken to recognise and celebrate the efforts of pupils by the giving of certificates for good behaviour. Pupils' success in academic work is also celebrated. For example, they receive certificates, such as, the 'Socrates', 'Fleming' or 'Einstein' awards for achievements in science.

41. Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with through a system of sanctions, and the school is very aware of the need to deal quickly and firmly with any signs of bullying or other oppressive behaviour. In extreme cases pupil aggression can lead to exclusions.

42. The school's arrangements for monitoring the academic and personal development of its pupils through the tutoring system are good. The same tutors remain with pupils from Year 7 to Year 11, and they get to know pupils very well over this period of time and establish effective links with homes. The good tutoring system is at the heart of the school's concern for its pupils. Students in Year 11 spoke of the confidence they had in their tutors to help them deal with personal problems.

43. Procedures to promote attendance are good, and the school, together with educational welfare officers, makes strenuous efforts to improve both attendance and punctuality. The governing body is also effectively involved in the promoting and monitoring process. Registers are completed promptly at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions, and further checks are made at the start of each lesson. The school uses electronic systems effectively to monitor and record absences, and all cases of absence are carefully investigated. The school is well aware that the persistent absence of a small but significant proportion of pupils has a detrimental effect on the achievements of these pupils.

44. Good relationships are maintained with the main feeder primary schools in order to ease the transfer of pupils. Incoming pupils have the opportunity to visit the school before they start, and when they do start older students help them to become familiar with school life.

45. Assessment procedures are broadly good, and there are examples of good practice, notably in English, science and information technology. A comprehensive marking policy has been produced and is effectively used across the school. Pupils have copies of the criteria for marking pasted inside all of their exercise books, and they understand the scheme well. Reports provide clear details of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, and parents find them informative. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvement in assessment procedures, with a shift of emphasis from individual subject systems towards a whole-school approach, and development is continually evaluated. The school has recently started carrying out detailed analyses of test and examination scores to help plan teaching based on the identified needs of pupils. However, the use of individual targets to help pupils improve their work is not fully implemented.

46. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of all pupils with special educational needs are good, and they meet the requirements of the code of practice. Procedures for identifying pupils with learning difficulties are in place and are very thorough and effective. Primary school liaison is good and forms the foundation for initial assessment, which is developed through extensive testing of pupils on entry to the school to enable pupils to receive suitable support. Procedures for evaluating and reviewing progress at both key stages are good. Although the use of subject-specific targets on individual education plans is still developing, support staff assess progress during lessons, liaise with subject staff effectively, and provide relevant information to inform curriculum planning.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

47. The school's links with parents are good, and parents are generally appreciative of the education provided. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are particularly pleased with their children's progress and the manner in which they are supported. The quality of the information given to parents is good. The school prospectus is well presented, and together with an annual insert it fulfils all statutory requirements. The governors' annual report to parents is very informative and clearly set out, but it does not fulfil statutory requirements because GCSE examination targets are omitted. There are two annual reports on pupils' progress; a full and comprehensive report and a short progress report, which together fully meet statutory requirements. Parents' evenings are held annually and are usually well attended. Careers information evenings are also held for parents of Year 10 pupils and are effective in enabling parents to assist their children with career planning.

48. The school makes good attempts to involve parents in their children's learning. For example, the new literacy project has strengthened the school's partnership with parents because some parents come into school to listen to pupils read. In 1999, with the support of parents, the school arranged a 'Literacy Summer School' for Year 6 pupils about to join the school. Friendly and informative newsletters are sent frequently to parents. The newsletters often contain important information, for example what the school is doing to help pupils prepare for GCSE examinations and how parents can support their children. All parents have received a home-school agreement, and the majority of these have been signed and returned. Through the agreement, parents and school work together to contribute to their children's learning in school and at home. There is also a place in the agreement for pupils to agree to various conditions to aid their learning. The school works hard to maintain good liaison with homes, in particular to improve attendance of pupils who are persistently absent.

49. Replies to the questionnaire which was sent out before the inspection indicated that a significant number of parents were dissatisfied with the information given to them by the school on their children's progress. During the inspection, however, it was found that the quality of information provided for parents on pupils' progress is good. Other areas of dissatisfaction to some parents concerned the amounts of homework children are being asked to do, and the school's links with parents. The inspection findings were that the amount of homework given to pupils is about right and that there is evidence to show that the school is working closely with parents.

50. The school's Friends Association is very active and enables parents and friends of the school to make substantial contributions to the school. Recently, for example, the association has purchased books for the science department, a freezer for the food technology department, and a digital camera and equipment for the technology department. The events held by the Friends Association are supported by staff as well as parents, and they provide opportunities for the school and the community to meet socially. In this way they help to foster good relations between parents and school.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

51. The headteacher and senior staff, well supported by the governing body, provide clear direction for the school to raise standards. They have established a number of approaches to help pupils achieve their best. For example, there are revision classes in most subjects, and the school has arranged revision weekends and works hard to reduce absence. Targets for GCSE results are set for each subject and departments generally work effectively to meet these targets. The exceptions are modern foreign languages and geography, where there is no clear focus on methods to raise standards. The school is committed to providing a good learning environment. Responsibilities are effectively delegated and mostly well carried out at senior, departmental, and head of year levels, and they reflect the needs of the school. A significant amount of work has been done to improve teaching, and plans for the September 2000 timetable to reduce the amount of non-specialist teaching and to ensure that the great majority of pupils follow a foreign modern language course to GCSE, are advanced.

52. Special educational needs support is very well managed by the learning support co-ordinator and by all other teaching staff with specific responsibilities in the department. The policy is very clear, and all staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and are effectively deployed. There is good support from outside agencies, and communication within the department and with all those who work with special educational needs pupils in the school is very good. A mutually supportive, very well informed team of teaching and support staff is a special feature of learning support and a critical factor in the effective support that is provided. The governing body provide good support and the governor responsible for liaison with the department is well informed.

53. Since the last inspection report, progress on the issues identified has been good. There has been a planned review of the arrangements for the management of provision for pupils with special educational needs. This now ensures effective use of funding and resources, and makes appropriate provision for all pupils with special educational needs. The quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs is now good.

54. Observation and evaluation of teaching are not firmly established as means to identify and share good practice, or to identify poor practice. Although there is good practice in several departments, for example in mathematics, design and technology, information technology and drama, this is not common. Senior staff do not always evaluate the work of departments rigorously, and this is significant in modern foreign languages. However, plans are well developed to produce an effective performance management system, and most departments are effective in evaluating their own performance.

55. Development planning is generally sound, and the school's priorities for development are good. Most subject departments, and special educational needs, have realistic development plans, reflecting school priorities and also contributing to the school's own priorities. Plans are costed, with clear criteria for measuring success, though long-term plans are not detailed or in a form which make them easy for staff to discuss. However, the school is limited in how far it can plan ahead. This is because the standard entry number of pupils for the school is set too high, which means that the number of pupils for the autumn term is not known until very late in the summer, with the result that the school does not know its budget until very late. Nevertheless, development planning has improved since the last inspection, with a significantly increased involvement by departments, generally clear priorities for development, costed plans, and identified success criteria.

56. Governors play an important rôle in the development planning process, working closely with senior staff and monitoring the expenditure of departments as well as the school as a whole. Governors have a sound awareness of the strengths of the school, but have not been fully aware of their responsibilities to ensure that statutory requirements for modern foreign languages and physical education are fully met, and to ensure that procedures for health and safety are fully secure. In addition, the governors' annual report for parents does not provide GCSE targets for the year ahead. Statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship are not met.

57. There are not enough appropriately qualified and experienced teachers to teach all subjects within the curriculum as it was organised at the time of the inspection. There are deficiencies in religious education at both key stages, and at Key Stage 3 in geography and to a lesser extent in English and history. However, the school is reorganising the timetable to make better use of available staff. Newly appointed staff are very well supported, with a programme of training and development tailored to individual needs in line with development plans. The school follows the principles of Investors In People well. Accommodation is good overall, and has improved since the last inspection, especially in the case of the library. Space for support work is restricted. The quality of resources is satisfactory overall and is good in the library, where there has been an extensive programme to replace and renew books.

58. The school makes good use of its resources. Expenditure is carefully planned to obtain the best value for available funds, and matched to development plans. Governors play an important, effective rôle in helping the school to plan its expenditure. The administrative staff support the school very well and are particularly effective in their use of computers and modern technology in helping the school to run efficiently. Funding for special educational needs is well managed and put to effective use. Resources are good and used effectively to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs, although the well organised and welcoming accommodation, cannot be used effectively because it is too small.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. The school has made sound progress since its last inspection. The present senior management team is moving quickly to developing whole school evaluation skills to help departments become more aware of ways to improve teaching and to raise standards. The positive impact of literacy work has raised awareness of how achievement can be improved, and there is a clear commitment to continue with this work. The school now needs to:

- Raise attainment by:  
(Paragraphs: 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 18, 23)
  - \* building on the steps already taken to improve literacy;
  - \* establishing and implementing a whole policy on numeracy;
  - \* raising teachers' expectations of what average attaining pupils can achieve;
  - \* providing opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills and to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:  
(Paragraphs: 45, 54)
  - \* establishing systematic observation and evaluation of teaching, so that the good practice seen in many lessons is shared among staff;
  - \* using the school's assessment information to provide precise targets for pupils, so that they have a better understanding of what they need to do to make further progress.
- Ensure that the strategies for evaluating the performance of departments are rigorously applied and that effective action is taken to address issues arising.  
(Paragraph: 54)
- Comply with statutory National Curriculum requirements by:  
(Paragraphs: 6, 27, 119, 120, 122 141, 158)
  - \* ensuring that all pupils have appropriate time at Key Stage 3 to study a modern foreign language;
  - \* ensuring that all pupils follow a modern foreign language course throughout Key Stage 4;
  - \* ensuring that all pupils follow a physical education course throughout Key Stage 4;
  - \* ensuring that the geography scheme of work provides a balanced experience of all the aspects of the subject, and that there are opportunities for the use of information technology within the subject at Key Stage 3.
- Provide planned opportunities for spiritual development throughout the curriculum.  
(Paragraph: 31)
- Use the tutorial time at the end of the day effectively to complement the good work done in the taught programme of personal and social education.  
(Paragraph: 27)

- Explore ways to reduce the school's standard entry number so that the school can make more realistic long term plans for its development.  
(*Paragraph: 55*)
- Ensure that statutory requirements to:  
(*Paragraphs: 31, 38, 47, 56*)
  - \* publish GCSE targets in the governors' annual report to parents are met;
  - \* carry out and record health and safety risk assessments are met;
  - \* provide a daily act of collective worship are met.

60. The school should also:

- Continue with its efforts to improve attendance and punctuality.  
(*Paragraphs: 43, 48*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	179
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	57

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	12	43	35	7	1	0

*The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	937
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	203

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	56
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	180

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	67
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	67

### *Attendance*

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.5
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.2
National comparative data	1.1

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3*

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	1999	94	87	181

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	44	53	44
	Girls	55	46	37
	Total	99	99	81
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	55 (63)	55 (45)	45 (38)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	19 (29)	24 (22)	10 (13)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	55	55	44
	Girls	66	50	48
	Total	121	105	92
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	67 (39)	58 (56)	51 (37)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	41 (22)	24 (24)	12 (13)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4*

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	1999	78	90	168

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>5 or more grades A* to C</b>	<b>5 or more grades A*-G</b>	<b>1 or more grades A*-G</b>
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	15	66	74
	Girls	21	85	88
	Total	36	151	162
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	21 (22)	90 (82)	96 (92)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (N/A)

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>GCSE point score</b>
Average point score per pupil	School	26.1 (24.7)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

*Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/A
	National	N/A	82.5

*Exclusions in the last school year*

*Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils		Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	Indian	0	0
Pakistani	3	Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	1	Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	1	Chinese	0	0
White	929	White	45	3
Any other minority ethnic group	2	Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes:****Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	57.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Education support staff:****Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	9.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	336

**Deployment of teachers:****Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.9
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**Average teaching group size:****Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	22.5
Key Stage 4	21.9

**Financial information**

Financial year	<b>1998/1999</b>
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	<b>£</b>
Total income	2 251 604.00
Total expenditure	2 338 76.004
Expenditure per pupil	2 571.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	239 559.00
Balance carried forward to next year	152 399.00

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out  
Number of questionnaires returned

937
403

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	28	60	7	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	37	54	4	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	54	10	3	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	50	17	5	2
The teaching is good.	30	59	6	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	52	13	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	37	6	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	38	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	30	50	13	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	39	49	6	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	54	7	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	43	3	2	6

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH**

61. The results of the 1999 national end of Key Stage 3 tests in English showed that the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above was close to the national average, although the results were above the average for similar schools nationally.

62. The school's own teacher assessments judged standards to be in line with, or better than, national averages, but these assessments were overgenerous. The trend for the last three years has been for standards at Key Stage 3 to be close to national expectations, with girls attaining at a level higher than boys. This trend has continued. The rise in standards since the last report has been due mainly to the school's recent emphasis on promoting literacy.

63. Standards of attainment in English at Key Stage 4 are below national expectations in speaking, listening, reading and writing. The GCSE examination results for 1999 showed that the percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C grades was well below the national average in language and literature. Results in 1997 and 1998 were much closer to the national average; and the school's projections for the forthcoming examinations are for a considerable improvement on the 1999 results. The standard of attainment judged during the inspection shows an improvement in standards since the 1999 results, which represented a decline from earlier years, mainly due to problems with staffing. However, standards are still below national expectations. Girls continue to achieve at a higher level than boys, although the school continues to work hard at promoting methods to support boys' learning.

64. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment in English below national expectations, and for a significant number of pupils well below. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards of attainment are in line with national expectations in the key areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing, with a significant minority of pupils below the expectations. A significant proportion of higher attaining and average attaining pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. They speak with confidence, as when pupils studying a text on the civil rights movement in America discussed the meanings of words they had not encountered before, and when Year 9 pupils 'interrogated' characters from Romeo and Juliet. Lower attaining pupils have a much more limited vocabulary and have difficulty in talking confidently about their work or sustaining their opinions.

65. By the end of Year 9 most pupils learn to listen well to each other and adhere to the conventions of speaking appropriately in class. Higher attaining pupils, who make up approximately one quarter of the total number of pupils in Key Stage 3, are able to discuss the range of imagery, similes and metaphors which are used to dramatic effect in a poem like Keats' 'Ode to Autumn'; whereas lower attaining pupils, who form a significant minority of the total number of pupils at Key Stage 3, find such discussion difficult. Higher attaining pupils develop the skill of reading fluently and with expression; but average and lower attaining pupils make less progress in reading, and have limited strategies for decoding unfamiliar words.



66. By the end of Key Stage 3 all pupils have learned to write in an increasing range of genres. For example, they write in narrative and descriptive styles. Higher attaining pupils write detailed analyses of works such as Oscar Wilde's 'Ballad of Reading Gaol', whilst their work on 'Romeo and Juliet' shows a developing understanding of the range of language, and of the manner in which stylistic devices are used to create effects upon the reader. These pupils write with increasing grammatical accuracy, punctuate and spell correctly, and use an increasingly wide vocabulary. The quality of their presentation is good. Average and lower attaining pupils do not spell high frequency words consistently and they make basic mistakes in grammar and punctuation, and this reduces their standard of attainment, although the range of their writing increases.

67. Pupils in Key Stage 3 with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in developing their basic skills in English, and sometimes make good progress when they have specialist support.

68. By the end of Key Stage 4 higher attaining pupils, who form a relatively small minority of the total numbers in the Year 10 and 11 year groups, learn to express themselves in a wide range of genres. They extend their ability to make a detailed critical analysis of a range of texts: for example they study a range of metaphysical, romantic and classical poetry, in addition to twentieth century texts by authors such as Heaney, Auden and Owen. They make challenging comparisons between works such as William Blake's 'London' and Wordsworth's 'Westminster Bridge'. Pupils also write perceptive studies of work from other cultures, for example poetry by Chinua Achebe and Alice Walker. Average and lower attaining pupils, who form the majority at Key Stage 4, are stronger on comprehension and description than pertinent analysis of plot, imagery or character; and their written work is still marked by deficiencies in the basic skills of writing.

69. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils read with confidence. Their speaking skills are also well developed; they speak with confidence and back up their opinions with reasoned analysis, as when comparing the poetry of Marvell and Shakespeare. Average and lower attaining pupils are less confident in debate and in reading. Many have a limited vocabulary and limited command of standard English.

70. Pupils at Key Stage 4 with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in extending their knowledge and understanding, and in their command of basic skills appropriate to their abilities, although they receive less support than at Key Stage 3.

71. Since the last inspection standards of attainment in English have improved, as a greater proportion of pupils is meeting national expectations. Standards at Key Stage 4 have been maintained overall.

72. The overall quality of teaching in English at Key Stage 3 is good, and produces good learning. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and is good or very good in seven out of ten lessons. The overall quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, and produces satisfactory learning. Teaching is satisfactory or better in five out of six lessons at Key Stage 4 and is good in one out of two. It is unsatisfactory in one out of six lessons. Where teaching is good, at both key stages, it is characterised by several features which produce good learning. Teachers set out the objectives of lessons clearly and review progress towards achieving them before the end of lessons, so that pupils, particularly lower attaining ones, have a clear idea of what they have accomplished. This was evident, for example, in a

Year 9 lesson in which pupils were practising for their standardised tests, and when Year 8 pupils were analysing Keats's poetry. In many lessons teachers question pupils effectively both to reinforce and to extend pupils' learning, and pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3, respond well to this questioning. This was seen, for example, when Year 7 pupils were discussing the ways to solve personal problems, and when pupils in the same year group were questioned about the witches' language in Macbeth. Pupils enjoy reporting back to the class on work they have done. Teachers often use a variety of activities and resources in a relatively short space of time to motivate pupils, keep their concentration, and thereby improve their learning. This was evident when Year 9 pupils 'questioned' characters in Romeo and Juliet and when Year 7 pupils did a memory test to help prepare them for a descriptive writing exercise. Teachers emphasise the importance of drafting and redrafting work in order for pupils to improve their presentation and to take pride in their work. Appropriate homework is set, extending the work done in lessons and giving pupils a due appreciation of its importance, for example when they are expected to share research findings with their parents. Pupils are encouraged to develop their initiative and research skills, for example by using dictionaries, and they enjoy this activity. They also enjoy opportunities to evaluate each other's work. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give clear explanations, as when analysing Shakespeare's language, and this extends pupils' understanding and interest. Classroom assistants are used effectively to improve pupils' learning when supporting those with special educational needs. As a result of the good teaching, attitudes and behaviour overall in lessons are good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4.

73. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, or aspects of teaching are less than satisfactory, teachers occasionally have low expectations of behaviour or the pace at which pupils can learn. Ineffectual discipline occasionally restricts progress, whilst higher attaining pupils are sometimes not extended. Boys are sometimes allowed to dominate lessons to the extent that girls become passive learners.

74. An important factor in raising standards in English has been the priority given to developing literacy skills. The head of English, who is also the literacy co-ordinator, has provided effective leadership of this process. Classes in Years 7 and 8 have silent reading in most lessons, to improve their standards. The English department has successfully adapted the structure of the literacy hour, as practised in primary schools, to give pupils continuity of experience. There has been a drive to improve the literacy of boys, and this is beginning to be successful. The policy of promoting literacy across the curriculum is also beginning to have a positive effect upon raising standards in several subject areas. For example, writing frames are used in some subjects, such as history, to improve the quality of extended writing. In some subjects, for example science, there is an increasing emphasis upon extending pupils' specialist vocabulary. The summer school literacy programme has been effective in raising the motivation and attainment of several pupils.

75. The English curriculum has been supplemented by a range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy these, and the theatre visits in particular have improved pupils' understanding of texts they have studied.

76. The subject is generally well managed. Teachers in English are assisted in their preparation by extensive policies and schemes of work. More assessment data is being collected, and is being used to influence planning and groupings, though its use in target setting for pupils is still relatively undeveloped. Although the English department monitors the standards of work produced by pupils, formal evaluation of teaching within the department is undeveloped, and therefore there are limitations to the sharing of good practice. Nevertheless, there has been some work to improve teaching.

## **MATHEMATICS**

77. Pupils' attainment is below average, with the most recent GCSE results little changed from those at the time of the previous inspection. The attainment of pupils entering the school in Year 7 is well below average. The 1999 results from the corresponding tests at the end of Year 9 indicate that, while a quarter of the pupils are attaining above average, the overall attainment is below average. The proportion gaining at the average Level 5 compares favourably with that of similar schools, while the percentage reaching Level 6 is in line with that of similar schools. These most recent results are slightly higher than those previously achieved; this is mainly because the boys have improved more consistently than the girls and there is now little difference between boys and girls. In the 1999 GCSE examination the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-G is in line with the national average, while the percentage gaining the higher grades A\*-C is well below average, with the boys' results slightly below those of the girls. The overall results compare favourably with those gained across all other GCSE subjects, although they lag behind those in English and science.

78. Evidence from the inspection shows that pupils' overall attainment is below average, although it is rather better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. The pupils' learning is satisfactory overall, and in about one quarter of lessons they make good or very good progress. In particular, the higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 make very good progress and are on track to achieve better GCSE results than those of previous years; this is the fruitful outcome of very effective teaching and of higher levels of pupils' motivation. In contrast, the higher attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not progress satisfactorily because they are not being adequately challenged. The teaching at this stage is not taking sufficient account of the previous attainment of these pupils and of their capacity to progress relatively rapidly. This issue was raised in the previous inspection report but has not received sufficient attention. The pupils with special learning needs progress satisfactorily for the most part, especially when additional support is provided in the classroom. However, the school does not identify rigorously the individual needs of these pupils, so classroom support is unable to focus sufficiently on these fundamental needs.

79. Algebra is introduced early, and by the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils can solve simple equations while the abler pupils are familiar with simultaneous equations. By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils have adequate investigative skills and can interpret scatter diagrams, while the ablest pupils' use the sine and cosine formulae. Few examples were seen of high quality algebraic graphs. Almost all pupils have grasped the basic principles of number, and this enables them, for instance, to appreciate which of the four rules need to be applied to solve problems. Beyond the ablest pupils, however, few have a secure grasp of percentages, for example, or can manipulate fractions confidently. All pupils can use calculators confidently but there is sometimes excessive use of these aids, betraying

widespread insecurity with mental arithmetic. The school is aware of this, and though there is not yet a whole-school policy to promote numeracy the basic skills of number are receiving increased emphasis in mathematics lessons. This is already having some impact, although the current approach is concerned mostly with the practising of skills to the neglect of techniques geared to extend the range of skills the pupils possess. Across the wider curriculum there is productive use of the skills of mathematics, and notably so in science and geography.

80. Pupils are well behaved and well motivated. Their responses are at least satisfactory, and in nearly two-thirds of the lessons observed they were good or very good, with little difference across the key stages. Attitudes were unsatisfactory in just one lesson; this occurred when a minority of pupils failed to approach their work responsibly and this adversely affected the learning atmosphere. The positive overall picture owes much to the cordiality of relationships between teachers and pupils. This was exemplified in a lesson where Year 8 pupils were studying a variety of three-dimensional models as part of an investigation that led them to Euler's Theorem.

81. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and is satisfactory or better in all lessons. Teaching is good or very good in nearly half of lessons and is very good in about one in six lessons. The good teaching occurs more frequently at Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Most classes are well managed, though occasionally a teacher's class control is not secure, with the result that the pupils' learning is impeded. The most effective teaching is characterised by a vigorous approach that holds the pupils' interest and establishes a good pace of working, as in a Year 11 lesson on probability, where the brisk pace, well targeted questions, and clear explanations led pupils to a clearer understanding of the use of tree diagrams. In a Year 10 lesson where the pupils' previous performance in an examination paper was reviewed, the teacher's novel approach held the pupils' full attention and led to very productive use of lesson time. All teachers mark pupils' work regularly and often add encouraging or helpful comments; this is an improvement from the time of the previous inspection. The regularity and helpfulness of this marking has fostered the pupils' regard for the subject, and this is reflected in, for example, the care they take in their written work.

82. The work in mathematics is strongly led by new management. There is now a stronger drive towards higher attainment, though this does not yet emerge from the documentary guidance that informs teachers' planning. The school has adequate resources to support the teaching and learning of mathematics in lessons but this does not extend to the loan of textbooks to pupils. Thus, even at the stage when the pupils are making final preparations for the GCSE examination they lack an important resource to encourage and support independent learning. Overall, the school has made a reasonable response to the factors that emerged from the previous inspection. There remains, however, an urgent need to review the provision for the early years to ensure that appropriate challenge is offered to all pupils.

## **SCIENCE**

83. Standards of attainment in science are rising, particularly in Key Stage 3. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, results were below the national average for all schools. However, they were broadly in line with the results obtained by schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Boys and girls achieve broadly similar results at this stage, and results in 1999 showed an improvement over those of 1998, a movement which was against the national

trend. Results in science are below the levels achieved in both English and mathematics. In 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C at GCSE was well below national averages in all science examinations, and the proportion of the year group achieving a graded result was just below the national average. This is a considerable achievement, because a higher than average number of pupils had special educational needs. The performance of boys and girls in GCSE examinations is broadly similar, and in terms of average points score results showed an improvement in 1999 over the 1998 and 1997 results. Underachievement arose mainly through poor attendance of some pupils and extended staff illness.

84. In work seen in class and from the scrutiny of exercise books, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly average, and this represents a rather higher standard in age-related terms than pupils' attainment on entry to the school. The department makes a very good contribution to the school's attainment in basic literacy skills. There is insistence on pupils using correct scientific language in their work. Writing frames are used to good effect in improving standards of recording of practical work, and the use of large exercise books has had a good effect on neatness of pupils' work in the early years. Pupils generally have a sound understanding of the subject. For example, a group of higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 3 know the laws of magnetism. They discover and understand repulsion and attraction and find the strength of a magnet's poles. However, some middle attaining pupils fail to appreciate that the field effect around a magnet is dependent on the strength of the magnetic poles. Lower attaining pupils achieve a basic feeling for magnetic influence by feeling magnets pull together, but cannot describe or accurately detect a field. By the end of Key Stage 4, levels of attainment overall are below nationally expected standards, although current modular test results, predictive tests, and work seen during the inspection indicate that standards are rising.

85. No significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys is found in work in class. Higher attaining pupils have a sound understanding. For example, they grasp the ideas of the molecular collision theory of chemical reactions and apply it usefully in investigating metal/acid reactions. They also use a computer successfully to capture data before analysing it and interpreting their work. They evaluate their work competently and apply what they learned to a new situation. A group of middle attaining pupils are able to interpret time and motion graphs and can calculate velocities, distances travelled, and speeds of moving objects. Lower attaining pupils carry out the practical work for an investigation into objects dropping into sand, which is used as a model of the moon's surface, but they fail to achieve accurate measurements and don't always produce arguments to interpret their investigations. Standards in Key Stage 4 are rising as a result of improved management of assessed practical investigations, and of revision and target setting with pupils. The teaching of basic skills of information and communication technology (ICT) is well developed.

86. Overall progress since the last inspection has been good. There has been a high level of refurbishment of several laboratories. This has given teachers opportunities for to use a wide range of teaching styles and groupings of pupils, and has produced a pleasant working surrounding. Teaching has improved, and there has been a great improvement in provision for special needs teaching. The department has taken successful measures in its attempts to improve results at both key stages. There has been a review of schemes of work and of courses being followed for GCSE examinations, and this has also resulted in pupils being challenged effectively in lessons.

87. Teamwork between teachers has been increased to enable the sharing and adoption of good practice. The school literacy policy has been successfully implemented.

88. Teaching is good overall and is never less than satisfactory. In six out of ten lessons teaching is good or very good and in one in eight lessons at Key Stage 4 teaching is very good. Where teaching is good or better class management seen across the department produces an orderly yet relaxed working climate. Skilful questioning and problem setting lead to increased gains in knowledge. Pupils are encouraged to review and evaluate the quality of their answers in tests and examinations, a practice which helps them to learn how to improve their work. They produce an action plan of self improvement that includes targets and the ways in which these can be achieved.

89. The quality of teachers' blackboard and presentation work is uniformly high. It includes the effective sharing of lesson objectives, so that pupils understand clearly what is required of them. It also sets a good example, with the result that pupils produce written work which is increasingly neat. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and use a wide variety of teaching methods to keep pupils involved with their learning. In a class of lower attaining pupils, for example, the good teaching and management kept up a satisfactory pace of learning. Pupils' work is displayed, forming welcoming displays in laboratories and on corridors, and providing positive encouragement for higher standards of work. In a very small number of lessons, pupils' interest decreases as the teacher's talk goes on too long. Use of the school Intranet is effective, but teachers do not always provide sufficient feedback to pupils to provide further challenge.

90. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall in both key stages and occasionally good. On the rare occasion that achievement is unsatisfactory, work is not sufficiently challenging. In Key Stage 4 pupils make sound progress overall, and sometimes very good progress. However, intermittent absence of some pupils in Key Stage 4 means that progress is limited. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with their individual plans and with the progress of the class as a whole. Very little extra support is available, but teachers provide good quality materials to support pupils' learning needs.

91. The overall response of pupils in both key stages is good. A large number of pupils respond with very good attitudes and behaviour, and a very small number respond in an unsatisfactory manner. In general, pupils are keen to start work. They are tolerant of each other's mistakes and display a high level of trust in their teachers. The good class management produces good behaviour but the very small numbers of pupils who show disaffection are not always dealt with firmly enough.

92. A broad range of learning opportunities is provided, all firmly based on practical investigation, with the result that the pupils enjoy real science that makes a big impact on their learning. There is good equality of access to the curriculum, which meets statutory requirements. A good contribution to pupils' personal development is made by a wide range of work, including the study of cause and effects of heart disease, how it is treated, and how to keep a healthy heart. There are lessons on genetic engineering and its implications for our food supply.

93. Pupils' performance is monitored by module tests in both key stages, and pupils do some good self-evaluation. Academic monitoring is used effectively to guide planning and to place pupils in classes appropriate for their learning needs. Target setting is being used effectively overall although the wide range of academic information available is not used enough to fully investigate the reasons for underachievement by some pupils. Individual education plans are monitored and reviewed regularly, and teachers make good and effective use of yearly and weekly planners. The management of scientific investigations performed by pupils is effective in both key stages, and is leading to higher standards being achieved. There is a high standard of reporting of attainment and progress to parents.

94. The department is well led, with clear educational direction, and teachers and technicians work well together. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is carried out by senior management, and by informal means by the head of department. Good practice is shared informally. Purchase of books and other resources is well linked to the department's planning, in response to new national curriculum demands. There are plenty of high quality textbooks available, and pupils may and do take them home, to beneficial effect.

## **ART**

95. By the end of Key Stage 3 there are wide variations in the attainment of pupils but overall it is below national expectations. Pupils show an understanding of different forms of visual expression and use a range of materials and processes to express creative ideas. In Year 9, pupils working on a pop art printing project used printmaking techniques with accurate registration of repeat images. Higher attaining pupils successfully explore the ideas and feelings expressed in the work of Andy Warhol and describe in appropriate terminology how it has influenced their work, but many pupils are merely descriptive.

96. The understanding of how the work of other artists informs work is underdeveloped. Throughout the key stage, pupils gain experience in the formal elements such as pattern, line, texture and tone. They use them well in design, but a significant number have difficulty in applying them in their visual analysis when working from observation. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve a degree of confidence and competence with techniques that allow them to express their imaginative ideas. This was particularly evident in the three-dimensional work across the key stage.

97. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in lessons is in line with national standards. Pupils interpret whole class themes and select and use materials competently. They work competently in a range of media when producing innovative fantasy shoes and hats, using techniques such as appliqué, batik and sculpture, and they successfully draw upon artists such as Mondrian and Andy Goldsworthy for inspiration. Pupils show the ability to explore, interpret and analyse when researching topics, and produce a variety of individual responses. For example, one pupil, when working on the theme of water, produced paintings on silk using a range of research techniques, based on the principle of water being the source of life. Pupils of average ability had taken photographs and transferred them to acetate before working into them using a range of techniques. There was, however, an over reliance on secondary resources.

98. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Analytical recording from direct observation is now built into schemes of work, but there is still too little emphasis on this at Key Stage 3. Information technology is now an integral part of the curriculum, but research and extension work within the classroom is limited by the poor computer provision. The learning environment is now stimulating, with good displays to support visual investigation. Group sizes have reduced and a wide range of two- and three- dimensional activities is offered across both key stages. Art now has the generous provision of 6.6 per cent time at Key Stage 3, although funding is still on the low side considering the fact that the department supports this allocation and eight examination classes.

99. The quality of teaching at both key stages is predominantly good. Teaching in one quarter of all lessons observed is satisfactory and in three quarters is good. In the best lessons, staff give very clear explanations and successfully encourage pupils by careful support, sound advice and timely prompts. The progress made in the lessons observed was mainly good. Staff work hard and use a variety of techniques to involve pupils and maintain a good pace throughout lessons. For example, in one Year 9 class the teacher demonstrated a technique linked to the previous lesson and encouraged the class to talk her through it and tell her what to do. Through this, all pupils, but particularly the lower attaining ones, made good progress in their understanding and knowledge of the process of lino printing. Specialised vocabulary is built into projects and used in display, and staff positively encourage its use during discussion. Across Key Stage 3, progress over time was satisfactory but not as defined as in lessons. Staff put a lot of emphasis on personal encouragement. There is plenty of dialogue on evaluation during lessons, and clear grade descriptors around the classrooms. However, formal marking is not always consistent across the department and pupils are not always clear about what level they are working at. The work at Key Stage 3 provides a sound foundation for Key Stage 4, where pupils make good progress.

100. A major strength is the emphasis given to independent learning and thought. Pupils take much responsibility for their own work and often gain the confidence to channel their strengths into successful outcomes. For instance, a lower attaining pupil with less developed drawing skills produced sound results when working on a batik wall hanging. The quality of individual attention and knowledgeable advice by teachers plays an important role in raising standards. The attitude and behaviour of pupils across both key stages are good. Pupils at Key Stage 3 are lively and enthusiastic and there is a pleasant working atmosphere in lessons. They respond well to their teachers and most are keen to learn. Equipment is shared well, and pupils show respect for each other's work and the exhibitions of artwork on display. Pupils in Year 7 were particularly supportive of one another when working in small groups to produce three-dimensional relief work. At Key Stage 4, pupils show a good level of commitment and respond well to the challenges of the work. In Year 10, pupils producing a book on landscapes were involved in a range of activities, but worked with a high level of individual concentration whilst engrossed in their studies. A substantial number attend extra-curricular classes. Where sketchbooks are used well they consolidate gains, but their use is not consistent for pupils of all abilities.



101. This is a good department, which is well led, and teachers are dedicated to improving attainment. Documentation gives good guidance to staff. It details structured and progressive schemes of work, teacher assessment, and monitoring procedures, all of which are fully implemented. Timetabling of staff at Key Stage 3 is problematic because three of the seven teachers who teach art are not subject experts. However, they are well supported by the department and in lessons the quality of learning is not affected, but there is evidence in folders that lack of teacher expertise is having a detrimental effect on standards over time.

102. As all lessons at Key Stage 4 are only fifty minutes long, with no double lessons timetabled, valuable teaching time is lost each week due to the necessary time taken for preparation and clearing up for each lesson. The accommodation is satisfactory and the staff make good use of it. The ethos of the subject is promoted by the high profile of the department in the quality display of pupils' work around the building.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

103. The school teaches design and technology as four aspects to the subject: resistant materials, graphics, systems and control, and food.

104. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments the attainment of pupils was below expectations, although a significant proportion reached the expected levels. Standards have been similar over the last three years. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades was well below average, and was a continuation of results obtained in recent years.

105. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards across all aspects of the subject are broadly in line with expectations. Good standards are seen in graphics. In one class, for example, pupils developed their own ideas based on linkages to perform movements, with a high degree of personal decision making. In a travel game project, pupils presented their ideas clearly using third angle projection, produced a working drawing and used various tools competently and safely to construct butt and lap joints. All pupils understand and use a range of technical vocabulary competently. This is very evident in food lessons, for example, where pupils used their technical language well to explain their knowledge of products and applications relating to the food industry. Standards achieved in food lessons are sometimes lower than expected because of the small size of the specialist room and the large groups of pupils, and the defiant attitudes of some pupils.

106. Standards of attainment overall at Key Stage 4 are below average. In systems and control, standards exceed national expectations, and in graphics and resistant materials, the standards are just below national expectations. In food technology the standards are well below national expectations. Pupils explain competently a range of strategies for developing their working models. They make informed decisions about the materials, systems, mechanisms and structures, and manage the conflicting demands on their designs well as they modify and refine the performance of their models. When using food, pupils understand the need for consistency and high standards in food production, and the role played by new technology to meet those standards. In some graphics lessons, when the tasks

are not sufficiently challenging, pupils' making skills are below the level of their designing skills and progress is slower than expected. Standards in both key stages are affected by the low aspirations of some pupils. In all aspects of pupils' work there is evidence of the good use of numeracy skills and information technology to support and inform their learning. In both key stages all pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at the rate expected.

107. Standards of behaviour are generally good. Pupils work hard usually and take pride in what they do. In most lessons pupils co-operate well with teachers, and when there are opportunities for pupils to work on tasks by themselves and to make decisions of their own, they do so with considerable levels of maturity. Poor attendance by some pupils has a detrimental effect on the quality of work produced. However, in one of the groups, when lower attaining pupils attended well, the quality of work produced was good.

108. Since the last inspection results in all four aspects of the subject have improved, especially in systems and control, where the pupils' making skills match their innovative designing skills.

109. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good, with some very good teaching in graphics. At Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some very good teaching in systems and control. The department's strength is the quality of teaching staff and their range of subject and specialist aspect expertise. Good use is made of technical vocabulary which is mirrored in pupils discussions and their written work. Teachers know their pupils well and plan to meet their expectations. Assessments are detailed and accurate, and very good use is made of them to inform planning and to keep pupils informed of their progress. Planning for the progressive development of designing skills is secure but making skills sometimes lack rigour, both in the teaching and in the quality of pupils' ongoing work. There is a good range of teaching and learning styles. In a resistant materials lesson in Year 11 constructive questioning encouraged pupils to give informed answers and the teacher further encouraged them to express their ideas in relation to function, mechanisms, materials and suitability.

110. Overall, there are insufficient opportunities for developing pupils' independent learning skills to encourage them to take responsibility for their own working, especially at Key Stage 4. In a Year 11 systems and control lesson when pupils were presented with very good opportunities to develop high level skills of enquiry, the teacher acted as a facilitator with pupils very much in control of their own work. In the majority of lessons good use is made of time to complete work and to extend pupils' learning. However, in a Year 9 lesson, making a pop-up card, the pace was too slow and the content undemanding even for this lower attaining group. Resources are well used to support and inform pupils' learning, but the range is not wide enough to extend the more able pupils to further develop and broaden their research skills. Teachers' pupil management skills are good, especially of a minority of very challenging Year 8 pupils. Subject leadership is a strength, especially the reviewing of teaching, its impact on learning and the use of assessment procedures to monitor and improve pupils' performance.

## GEOGRAPHY

111. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, estimated by teachers over the last three years, is below the national average; the inspection of lessons and the scrutiny of exercise books confirms the assessments for 1999. The attainment of pupils who have special educational needs is as good as can be expected. The attainment of the small proportion of higher attaining pupils is above average, but the attainment of the great majority of average and below average pupils is below average by the end of Key Stage 3, and many under-attain.

112. In the 1999 GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades was well below average, although the proportion obtaining A\*-G grades was broadly average. The proportion of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades is generally declining over time. When allowance is made for those pupils who enter the school late, there is significant under-attainment, and performance in geography is worse than in the majority of other subjects in the school.

113. Analysis of results in 1999 shows that not only the foundation tier candidates, but also some of the higher tier candidates, score higher and often much higher marks on course work than on their written papers because too much time is spent on course work. This is to the detriment of performance on written papers for those of average and below average prior attainment, and in lessons not enough emphasis is placed on criteria for performing well in their examination. The school is reorganising its scheme of work to address this issue and also reviewing the appropriateness of the GCSE course presently followed.

114. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment observed in class and evident from exercise books is well below average for a substantial majority of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because support is effective and is focused on developing basic geographical skills. For example, pupils have a number of opportunities to learn simple facts about climate. They go outside to sense the changes in the school's micro-climate, taking measurements with a rain gauge and reading temperature from a thermometer, and they keep a homework record of weather observations.

115. In the top sets, in Year 9 for example, pupils think about, discuss, and use information effectively when they record the climate graphs of four sites in Italy, and begin to pick out the fine differences. However, the thinking skills of the average pupils are not developing as quickly as they should, and in many lessons pupils are denied access to higher national Curriculum Levels because the quality of the work they are given does not challenge them. Too much time is spent unproductively in low level tasks, for example in an extended colouring exercise or in copying information from texts books into exercise books.

116. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is well below the national average. The highest attaining pupils reach a high level as they work through a decision-making exercise on the location of industry. They use good mental arithmetic skills to work out the comparative costs of transport and can make a correct choice of location for a steel mill and explain it clearly. However, the majority of pupils are under-attaining, largely because lessons are slow paced and lack challenge. For example, in one lesson on the relocation of industry, some pupils spent so much time colouring a simple sketch map of the Manchester region that they did not finish in time and a task intended for completion in class was set as a finishing homework.

117. Teaching is generally satisfactory. In half of the lessons, teaching is good, and a little is very good. However, in about one in twelve lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory, when the pace of learning is too slow and where expectations of pupils are too low. The effect of teaching over time is unsatisfactory because under-attainment for the majority of pupils of average and slightly below average prior attainment is widespread at both key stages. The subject is taught by a large number of non-specialist teachers, though materials are provided to support staff. Teaching is generally better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. In lessons for higher attaining pupils, extended teacher explanation and description are effective in encouraging debate and building pupils' subject knowledge. However, this method is also often used with middle and lower attaining groups of pupils where it is not effective and frequently leads to loss of attention and interest. Overall there is too little involvement of pupils in their own learning. There are few modern textbooks in the department at Key Stage 4 to give pupils access to the most recent thinking in geography and to up-to-date case studies. Pupils sometimes share books in lessons, and this slows learning; teachers are heavily dependent on photocopied materials as sources, or on out-of-date texts at Key Stage 4. The strength of teaching is in the warm quality of relationships, good humour and mutual liking and trust. The teachers know their pupils well and the quality of care in the classroom is good, though this is not always exploited to enhance pupils' learning. Teachers' control of the classroom is good. Teachers do not use video or other visual aids often enough to gain or maintain enthusiasm. When one teacher uses an over-head projector to link pupils' homework with the day's task, the interest of pupils with special educational needs is stimulated and very good learning results. Teachers' use of pictures in text to illustrate lessons is satisfactory.

118. The use of examination results to inform planning for the future is ineffective because it does not use the full range of the material available. Use of assessed classwork to identify the learning needs of pupils is not sufficiently developed to be useful in providing support for pupils. Marking is thorough but not sufficiently detailed to identify weaknesses so that pupils can see how to improve their work.

119. Learning is good for those of high prior attainment and for those with special educational needs at Key stage 3, and for the higher attainers at Key Stage 4. For the majority, learning remains unsatisfactory at both key stages because pupils are not provided with enough challenging work or opportunities to find out for themselves. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 does not provide a satisfactory preparation for Key Stage 4 because it is unbalanced. Pupils experience insufficient practical work and field work in their studies, though staff have completed a pilot study of field work which they plan to introduce in the summer term. Pupils do not receive their statutory entitlement to have part of their learning of geography through the medium of information technology at Key Stage 3. The situation is much better at Key Stage 4, where information technology is planned into the curriculum and pupils use it to complete course work.

120. Pupils learn literacy skills effectively, but whilst pupils use numeracy quite well within the curriculum, its use is unplanned. There is not enough opportunity for pupils to share their understanding in pairs and groups, though where this is provided, it is effective. Pupils are beginning to develop good enquiry-based learning. There was some lively work on

volcanoes, on sustainable development in the rain forests of Brazil, and on holiday regions of Italy, for example, but such work is not yet fully built into the curriculum. In another lesson, some Key Stage 4 pupils used information technology and a good range of books, with effective support from library staff. This approach is not taking place earlier enough for pupils to establish good learning habits.

121. Many pupils arrive with poor learning habits, such as failing to do homework and setting out work poorly. Teachers' work hard to correct these and are mostly successful, but a number of pupils in Year 11 do not value their education. They attend irregularly and do not complete homework and have to be chased to produce it within months of the GCSE examination of Year 11. Work missed after absence is not always copied up.

122. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory. All the experienced geography teachers have other senior responsibilities within the school. There is no single person in charge to implement the necessary development tasks, or to ensure that the hard work that has already gone into planning is put into effective practice in the classroom. The school is aware of this issue and has plans to remedy the problems.

## **HISTORY**

123. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below average. Teacher assessments show only slightly fluctuating attainment over the last three years. The disparity between the relative attainments of boys and girls in history is slightly higher than it is nationally. In the GCSE examinations in 1999 the proportion of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades was well below average, and although there have been fluctuations in recent years, the results have remained well below average overall.

124. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of selected elements of British history from Roman times up to the late twentieth century. They are able to explain the main features of the campaign for women's suffrage, although only the most able could distinguish between suffragists and suffragettes. The majority takes a pride in the presentation of their work and are able to write accurately and fluently. One pupil with special educational needs was able to explain the satirical nature of the term "Peterloo." Pupils' enquiry skills are sound, and are shown, for example, in work comparing rich and poor Tudor women, and in developing an understanding of bias in newspaper accounts of the execution of Charles I. The work done in developing literacy skills is beginning to result in higher attainment at Key Stage 3, although at present it remains below national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are below average, but work which has begun with a different course of work is starting to show sound results. Work seen in the current Year 11 suggests that progress has been made, although standards are still below average. In word processed, extended essays on the Good Friday Agreement, for example, some very good work was apparent. This included logical, coherent argument, the ability to detect/ explain a lack of objectivity, and reasoned speculation about the prospects of a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. Pupils are able to knowledgeably weave references to plantations, the Act of Union, the Orange Order and sectarian bias into explanations of the current state of the Irish Question. Pupils are on course to produce better GCSE results in the summer 2000 examinations.

125. Since the last inspection much work has gone into improving literacy in general, and that of boys in particular. An important focus has been the creation of assignments and compilation of resources for, the modern world study and local study elements of the new syllabus. There has also been extensive revision of the department's schemes of work, which are now used as exemplars in the local authority's in-service training programme. Pupils' work is carefully marked with close attention paid to the eradication of errors in spelling and grammar and constructive comment about scope for further improvement.

126. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and at Key Stage 3 it is good. In just over half of lessons teaching is good and in the majority of lessons it is satisfactory or better. In one out of eight lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory and this all in Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 teachers manage potentially difficult pupils well. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is secure. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy. Class reading from a set text is a common feature of lessons, accompanied by interjections from teachers to help or correct pronunciation or to test or reinforce learning. Variations in tempo, tone, volume and emphasis assist in attracting and retaining pupils' attention, and relationships between teachers and pupils are marked by mutual respect. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with carefully planned resources and learn effectively, most notably where they have support and are taught in groups of similar ability. Work is comprehensively marked, with regular grades for attainment and effort, and close attention is paid to accurate spelling and grammar. In the lessons seen there was an undue reliance on photocopied resources and teacher-led learning, which gave pupils too few opportunities to develop a degree of independence.

127. The great majority of lessons seen were judged to be good. At Key Stage 4 many of the good features referred to above are also apparent. Lessons are carefully planned, and constructive comment on pupils' work enables them to aspire to higher levels of attainment. There is some danger that the large quantities of photocopied resources with which pupils are faced might result in their being insufficiently critical in their use of such materials. In the best lessons they are challenged to think for themselves and to make judgements, as, for example, on the role played by chance in the history of medicine. Opportunities for independent learning are evident in coursework on the Weavers' Triangle and in essays on the Good Friday Agreement, but are less evident in other areas of the GCSE course. More varied teaching methods, including the use of group and paired work, and the wider use of differentiated materials, would improve access for less able pupils and would be particularly desirable given the very wide ability range in GCSE groups.

128. The subject is well led and managed; co-operation with the English department resulted in a drive to improve boys' literacy, which is already beginning to have beneficial results. Resources produced by the department are extensive, well organised, and economically duplicated, although the previous subject head's legacy in the shape of Key Stage 3 textbooks still has to be addressed. The current post holder regularly monitors pupils' work to ensure consistency of approach, in areas such as the marking of books across all teaching groups.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

129. In 1999, the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 showed the attainment of the majority of pupils to be below the standard expected nationally, but there has been a significant improvement in the results from the previous year. The GCSE results in 1999 for information and communication studies were well below the national average for grades A\*-C, and are similar to the results of the previous year.

130. Evidence from the inspection suggests that attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is now in line with the national expectations. Pupils demonstrate good skills in word processing, and these help them to improve their spelling and the presentation of their work. They understand how to create, alter and combine text and images using desktop publishing, for example in a project about estate agents. Pupils analyse information competently and produce databases, and they can sort, amend, find information from a database, and create their own file and save it to disc. Pupils' knowledge of how to use spreadsheets is sound and, for example, they can use formulae to calculate the number of book sales over a period of time. They compile spreadsheets of monthly sales competently, and import this into a word document to provide a written commentary. Pupils attain good standards of performance in handling information and data. They use computers for control and modelling, writing simple procedures. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment in information technology is broadly average. Pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software. They apply their skills competently to solve more complex problems, mainly in handling information and data. The higher attaining pupils understand and use applications effectively to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce good quality results. For example, a Year 11 group of pupils have produced a calendar as part of a Young Enterprise project, using scanned images, a digital camera and desktop publishing. They also compile computer-generated presentations well as part of their course work.

131. Pupils' achievements are good. They make good progress in their knowledge of information technology and in their application of skills. There are opportunities for pupils to use computers and practise these skills in other subjects, which helps their progress. In both key stages the majority of pupils make good progress through a range of opportunities to develop the higher aspects of information handling, modelling and desktop publishing. Progress is good in computer-aided drawing, measurement, and control systems. Their computer skills are enhanced by having well planned and organised access to the Internet and e-mail.

132. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and behave very well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and, with few exceptions, work hard to master new skills. All lessons include much independent work, which pupils enjoy as their confidence grows. Pupils turn up promptly for lessons and are prepared to use their own time to complete work. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly, and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets, and try to meet them.

133. Teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. In nearly all lessons teaching is good, and in the small proportion of other lessons it is satisfactory. The consistency of teaching contributes significantly to pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. These lessons are planned to a high standard and have suitable challenge. The management of classes is good. Clear targets are set for pupils of similar levels of attainment. This careful matching of work motivates pupils and maintains their interest. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. Relationships are very good and the skilled support given to pupils in their work quickly builds their confidence.

134. The department has responded well to the last inspection, and improvements made include an increased challenge in work set for pupils. The department is well managed and organised, and there are regular meetings to monitor pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils' achievements across the curriculum are now assessed and fully recognised. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use particular applications and access the network. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of information technology are very well planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. Technical support is very good, and subject teachers are confident to use the network. The school's provision meets National Curriculum requirements.

135. There is very good management and co ordination of information technology across the curriculum. This includes monitoring and evaluation of the contribution of other subjects to the use of information technology. There is access at present to the use of the Internet in the library and subject departments, and the school has established its own web site. There is a good development plan which includes information about how information technology will be developed and supported in other subjects. Subject teachers take advantage of the facilities available in the information and communication technology department when planning their lessons. Most subject schemes of work make references to the use of information technology. There are a number of subjects which contribute significantly to the use of computers. In design and technology pupils are taught computer-aided design, and the use of control systems, including electronics and pneumatics. The department has established an intranet site so that pupils can access information about the projects covered in each year group. In science pupils use computers for measurement and control, analysing data. In music lessons they compose and edit their work, using a midi keyboard and computer. Pupils use logo, spreadsheets and graphic calculators well in mathematics lessons. In drama lessons they use computers to control theatre lighting, and in history and geography they use CD-ROM and the Internet to carry out research for their projects. The use of information and communication technology throughout the school is an area which continues to develop well.

136. Business Studies is taught as an option in Key Stage 4. Lessons are well planned and provide sound challenge and pace. The teaching is good and pupils make good progress. The projects chosen are topical and interesting. Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding through interesting and lively discussions. Work is marked regularly with positive comments, and guidance given about how the work can be improved.



## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

137. Standards overall in French are below national averages at both key stages. In Spanish, they are in line with national averages at Key Stage 4. Results in the teachers' assessments for the end of Key Stage 3 show pupils achieving levels that are below national averages for Level 5 and above, but in line with national averages for Level 4 and above. From analysis of the work of pupils currently in Year 10, these results were judged to be over generous. Pupils' results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were in line with national averages in Spanish. There were no entries for GCSE in French. Over the past three years, standards in French have dropped considerably from thirty-seven per cent A\*-C passes in 1997, with about one fifth of the year group entered, to no entries in 1999. In Spanish, although the percentage of passes A\*-C has increased over the same period, numbers entered have dropped from 11 per cent of the total cohort to seven per cent. Girls perform significantly better than boys at both key stages.

138. From analysis of work and observation of lessons, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is below national averages in all four attainment targets. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 understand the perfect tense and how to use it but are not currently using it for themselves in a meaningful way. Average attaining pupils' use 'aller' to convey the future tense but cannot use the phrases taught in whole sentences or paragraphs. Pupils in the lower attaining groups have a poor base of knowledge on which to pin new work. This is because pupils are withdrawn from French to study basic skills. By the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of higher ability pupils is in line with national averages in Spanish but below national averages in French. Pupils studying Spanish in Year 11 write fluent descriptions of the Rossendale area, use future and past tenses accurately, and understand the difference between formal and informal letters. It was not possible to assess the attainment of lower and average attaining pupils in Year 11 French groups, since they were disbanded in February. Higher attaining pupils being entered for the Certificate of Achievement give details, in the present tense, of the lives of personalities such as Jacques Villeneuve. Analysis of the work of Year 10 pupils in the GCSE groups shows them to be attaining levels that are well below national averages for this stage of the course. At both key stages, pupils' listening and speaking skills are restricted in both languages because of the large amount of English used by teachers in the classroom. Pupils seldom use computers in language lessons, and very little work was observed in folders or on display that had been completed with the use of computers. Basic skills, however, are well developed; the majority of teachers promote basic skills well. Pupils at both key stages, including those with special educational needs, are underachieving for their abilities in French. In Spanish they achieve appropriate levels for their abilities at Key Stage 4.

139. Since the last inspection the school has increased curriculum time for the first foreign language at Key Stage 3 for all but the lowest attaining pupils. Every pupil now studies a language at Key Stage 4. Issues relating to teaching and learning have not been addressed. The range of spoken and written tasks on offer continues to be restricted, with few pupils able to use the languages for themselves. Reading provision, particularly reading for pleasure, remains underdeveloped.

140. The quality of teaching in French is unsatisfactory at both key stages. In almost half of lessons seen teaching is unsatisfactory, and in other lessons it is mainly satisfactory and rarely good. Teaching is satisfactory in Spanish at Key Stage 4, where sound examination preparation and positive relationships between the teacher and pupils result in appropriate

learning and progress. Most teachers have high expectations of behaviour in both languages, and are competent in the languages taught. They manage classes effectively, and pupils generally respond well. Where learning is satisfactory, there is clear identification of learning objectives and good use of a variety of activities with established routines, as in a Year 7 middle ability group, where pupils revised the names of animals well and learnt the word for colours effectively. Three quarters of the lessons observed were taught mainly in English, restricting opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of listening and speaking. There were unclear learning objectives, inadequate analysis of the steps required to complete a given activity, and lack of variety in the activities provided to meet the needs of differing abilities within groups. Together, these resulted in lessons where significant numbers of pupils underachieved at both ends of the ability range. Despite this unsatisfactory provision, pupils at the start of their secondary school career behave well and do their best to complete the work set. As they move through the school, however, they become more challenging and confrontational, and by Year 10 the group observed was uninterested, noisy and disrespectful.

141. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for modern foreign languages at either Key Stage 3 or 4. Lower attaining pupils do not receive their full entitlement to a modern foreign language in Key Stage 3. About one in seven pupils are withdrawn from French in Year 7 and have only one lesson per week instead of three lessons. They return to mainstream groups, as and when their basic skills improve, with no allowance made for the work they have missed. Those who remain in basic skills' groups for the whole of the key stage join classes in Year 10 that have had three lessons per week of French for three years. At Key Stage 4, fewer than a tenth of pupils are studying a language to GCSE in Year 11 with a full time allowance of three lessons. A further tenth of pupils has been entered for a certificate of achievement accreditation on one lesson per week. The remaining four fifths of the cohort was taught for one lesson per week for 18 months, with no formal accreditation provided, and was allowed to drop the course in February. This situation has been rectified somewhat in Year 10, with three groups taking a GCSE in either French or Spanish for three lessons per week. The remaining pupils will now be entered for certificate of achievement accreditation on one lesson per week.

142. There are significant weaknesses in the management of the department. The head of department fails to provide sufficient educational direction either to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential in languages or to guarantee improvement in standards. Although monitoring of teaching takes place in an informal way, there is a lack of rigour in evaluating teachers' work to identify strengths and weaknesses. There are similar limitations in the evaluation of pupils' standards. Assessment does not follow National Curriculum levels, and teachers are uncertain about standards in relation to national averages. Morale in the department is low and there is a lack of shared commitment to improvement or to the department's capacity to improve. Although work has been done on the schemes of work for Year 7 French to bring them into line with National Curriculum requirements, schemes of work for Years 8 and 9 continue to follow a textbook that precedes the National Curriculum. In Key Stage 4, there are no schemes of work to support the large numbers of pupils following certificate of achievement courses.

## MUSIC

143. Only a small number of pupils were entered for the GCSE examination in 1999, and just under half of these achieved A\*-C grades.

144. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have gained a wide range of skills which enable them to appraise music, compose, and perform with accuracy and confidence. Composition standards are particularly impressive. Pupils can successfully write balanced melodies in a minimum of keys C, F and G, often using passing notes. To these melodies they can add three major and two minor chords, using root position and first and second inversions. They can use the treble clef accurately and know most of the basic note values. By the end of Year 9, they can effectively use sequence and imitation. All pupils have a thorough understanding of timbre, texture, dynamics and form, and they use this knowledge when analysing music. Their aural perception is finely developed, and as a result they correctly identify orchestration when listening to music. The department makes special provision for pupils of all ability at both key stages, both through specific targets within the curriculum and through homework tasks. This enables less able and special needs pupils, particularly, to gain quite reasonable standards of composition and performance.

145. At Key Stage 4, there is a predominant skew towards low practical musical ability in Year 10, and this affects their all-round progress. In Year 11, at least half of the pupils are on target to gain high results, being competent practical musicians. Two boys, for example, demonstrated their skills effectively by playing, with great skill and with sensitive interpretation, a piano duet by Grieg. In both years, analysis skills are quite well developed when pupils refer to instrumentation, form and context. They can compare and contrast different scores with accuracy.

146. Information technology skills are being developed successfully across both key stages. Schemes of work enable IT programmes to be used very well to provide extension work for the least and most able, and to enhance practical work being done in composition. The department provides a range of different software to enable music literacy skills to be developed, and for composition to be stored. Examples of good practice in both were observed during the inspection.

147. Since the last inspection, a number of significant improvements have been made. Keyboard skills have been developed successfully, through booklets produced for this purpose. A principal aim is for correct fingering to be used which will facilitate quick, smooth playing. More keyboards have been acquired. The accommodation has been redesigned internally and is more manageable. GCSE results have remained at the same level, due to reasons already stated. Historical and cultural trends in music are still relatively underdeveloped at Key Stage 4, but these elements are being targeted.

148. Pupils have very good attitudes to music at Key Stage 3 and good attitudes at Key Stage 4. There is a firm but friendly pupil-teacher relationship and, as a result, pupils are comfortable to ask questions if they are unsure. There is no difference in attitude between boys and girls, and all are equally involved in whole-class and group discussion. They enjoy using keyboards and percussion instruments, and demonstrate much concentration and self-control when playing upon them. They make reasoned and sensitive comments about each other's performances. Written work and manuscript work is neatly presented.

149. Across the department, the quality of teaching is very good, and can be excellent, and this principally accounts for the good quality of learning at both key stages. Lessons are very carefully planned and prepared, often with appropriate worksheets for pupils of different ability. Teachers have high expectations and present very challenging topics for pupils to tackle, as for example the use of inverted chords and cadences in Year 8. Lessons are developed at a fast pace, and a variety of activities successfully dealt with in each one. Teachers are fine musicians themselves, and they have a thorough knowledge of the potential of their pupils. Lessons are well organised and managed. Assessment is usually on-going and instant, and invariably points pupils to the way ahead for further development. The quality of pupils' learning is demonstrated through the practical performances which often bring lessons to a conclusion. The quality of pupils' learning benefits from the way they have been taught, their awareness of teachers' expectations, and the insistent use of headphones with keyboards.

150. The department is very well led, and there is a common vision to take it forward, as revealed through the excellent documentation. The provision of extra-curricular activities could profitably be reviewed, and the possibility might be considered of setting up an on-going budget for the purchase of orchestral and band instruments to support these activities.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

151. In the Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1999 the majority of pupils achieved just below national expectations. Attainment for GCSE pupils was below the national average, and results were slightly below the results expected for pupils of their ability. Attainment for other pupils by the end of Key Stage 4 was also just below national expectations.

152. By the end of Key Stage 3 the attainment of the majority of pupils is slightly below national expectations in most areas of the physical education curriculum. However, many pupils apply the techniques, skills and competition rules successfully to several aspects of the physical education curriculum, including netball, basketball, football and badminton. Basic skills are sound and provide a platform for future development. In badminton, many girls serve accurately using the short serve, and can employ the long serve to good effect. They have also begun to appreciate the importance of court position and of moving appropriately around the court. In addition, many Year 8 boys in badminton are beginning to use the clear shot and to sustain a competitive rally.

153. Higher attaining pupils refine these basic techniques well and are beginning to use both the clear and drop shot. By the end of Year 9, boys have mastered many of the basic skills of basketball but have not yet refined these skills to a standard necessary to successfully compete in a match at a level expected for pupils of this age. In a Year 9 netball lesson, girls of less than average ability were able to pass the ball with speed and accuracy while at the same time developing tactical awareness and an ability to create both time and space. At Key Stage 4, pupils in a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson developed a very good understanding of both aerobic and anaerobic fitness and were able to apply this to develop an understanding of factors affecting performance in sport. The ability to evaluate is apparent in many activities in both key stages, but planning skills are not being developed. While there are some

examples of pupils at both key stages becoming good independent learners, opportunities are limited, and pupils are rarely being given the chance to take responsibility or display initiative in their lessons. The role of exercise in establishing and maintaining health is consistently emphasised and pupils at both key stages are developing an appropriate understanding of the short and long term effects of exercise on the body systems.

154. Pupils learn and make good progress in most lessons at Key Stage 3, and learning was less than satisfactory in only one lesson. Pupils are encouraged to develop not only their skills but also a good understanding of the techniques and rules. In most Key Stage 3 games lessons pupils demonstrated increasing control and levels of accuracy in a range of skills. An example of good progress for pupils was observed in a Year 8 badminton lesson, where boys consolidated basic racquet skills and learnt to serve accurately and sustain a competitive rally. A Year 8 netball lesson on new skills, involving movement off the ball and receiving skills, built on already established ones. The most able pupils in many lessons are often challenged, but this is not the case in all lessons. Progress in observing and evaluating performance is being successfully developed in many lessons.

155. At Key Stage 4, progress and learning is usually satisfactory. Good learning and progress was illustrated particularly well in a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson, where a basic understanding of fitness developed into a very good understanding of fitness applied to a range of sports. Evaluation of individual performance by staff is used to improve standards during many lessons, although target setting for individual pupils is not yet influencing progress at either of the key stages. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools, provide several opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills, although at the moment participation levels are disappointing.

156. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive at both key stages. Most pupils are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are attentive, and their capacity to sustain concentration is often good. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are good. Although there are some opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively at both key stages, there are only limited opportunities for them to take responsibility and to undertake different roles such as coach or official.

157. The quality of teaching is good or better in most lessons at both key stages and is good or better in all lessons for girls. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Very good teaching was seen in a GCSE theory lesson and in two Key Stage 3 badminton lessons. A secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention, and good question and answer sessions directed by the teacher. Thorough planning is a feature of many lessons, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities which involve both individual and collaborative learning. Discipline and class management is usually good. Day-to-day assessment of performance during lessons is regularly used to enhance teaching and learning. However, there has been no development of the recording of assessment, using specific criteria for each activity, and the involvement of pupils in this assessment to help set targets for improvement.

158. The curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages, but the time used at Key Stage 4 is not appropriate and many pupils in Year 11 are not receiving their National Curriculum entitlement. Although there is an increasing range of activities at Key Stage 4 they are not providing a sound enough preparation for post-16 leisure activities. Schemes of work for Key Stage 3 are good working documents, but there are no schemes of work for Key Stage 4 activities except for GCSE lessons.

159. Day-to-day organisation and leadership of the department is good in many respects, and communication within the department is very effective. Staff are good role models, are extremely committed, and give generously of their time. However, the management of the department still requires further development. There is a lack of appropriate focus, and also very little monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department. Development planning for the department clearly articulates priorities but does not identify in enough detail how these priorities will be achieved. Teaching is not monitored by the head of department, and although departmental meetings are becoming an effective means of encouraging development, issues relating to both curriculum and assessment development are not being appropriately addressed.

160. The last inspection report identified as an issue that the health benefits of exercise were not understood by pupils. This has been successfully addressed by the department. The monitoring and evaluation of effective teaching and pupils' learning is still not being achieved.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

161. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the expectations of the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Attainment in the GCSE short course in 1999 of 18.5 per cent A\* to C was well below the national average of A\*-C grades. This was the first year in which all Year 11 pupils entered for this examination, as the school has changed from offering a full course option GCSE to the half course GCSE being taken by all pupils. Therefore, no comparison of examination results over a period can be made. The current work of Year 11 pupils suggests the expectation of higher examination results in 2000, and the work of Year 10 pupils is even better, which indicates that standards are rising steadily. Girls performed significantly better than boys in the 1999 examination.

162. By the end Key Stage 3 pupils have a sound understanding of the life of Jesus, his work, and the main beliefs of Christianity. They can use technical terminology such as 'incarnation' and they also have developed a variety of writing styles to convey their knowledge of the subject. Their knowledge of other world religions is far weaker. Pupils are also less competent in the aspect of learning from religion by developing and giving their own views about belief and faith, although this ability is beginning to be developed in Year 9. At the end of Key Stage 4, discussion skills and the development of views are much better, although the pupils do not always relate how the religious beliefs held by people determine their actions. Pupils are able to show empathy to the situations of others, as seen

when discussing the pros and cons of war, the use of the atomic bomb, and peaceful and violent protests. They understand how emotional involvement may change a person's views; some could also understand the problems facing persons living in a culture that was not sympathetic to their beliefs. Progress can be seen both within lessons and over time with the greater level of discussion and more refined writing. All groups of pupils are progressing equally.

163. Some progress has many made since last inspection. The school has introduced the short GCSE course for all pupils, and this addresses the issue of pace and rigour at Key Stage 4, raised in the last inspection report. The time allocated to religious education has not been altered. At both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 the pupils have slightly less time than that required by the Agreed Syllabus, though the timetabled time is not significantly affecting the achievement of the pupils. There is now a greater continuity of staff, but the situation is still unsatisfactory in that there is little in-service education being provided for the non-specialists.

164. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with teaching in about four in five lessons being at least satisfactory. Teaching in about one in five lessons is good. However, teaching in about one in five lessons is unsatisfactory. Strengths of the good teaching are a lively challenge to the pupils, which enables class and group discussion to take place effectively, well planned lessons, and good management of pupils. Marking is variable. In many cases the work is just ticked or a one word comment is given with the grades, but there are occasions when constructive comments are given and the pupils have clear targets of how they can improve their work. There is a tendency for lessons to be too closely led by the teacher, and this, together with the lack of a pool of resources within the classroom, stifles individual research and extension work. In the lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, the lack of knowledge of the non-specialist staff, has a detrimental effect on learning, especially in the GCSE classes.

165. The attitude of Key Stage 3 pupils towards religious education is good. They take a lively interest in the lessons, take care with the presentation of their work, and discuss delicate issues openly in a sensitive way. At Key Stage 4 some pupils show less interest in the subject, but the good handling of the pupils by staff means that they are not inhibiting the learning of others. IT is an area for development within the teaching of religious education.

166. Management in the department is satisfactory, although since the head of department has the responsibility for two subject areas, time is limited. Good use is made of the second religious education teacher to produce booklets for school use and model answers for the GCSE course. The timetable arrangements mean that in religious education non-specialist teachers teach more than half the lessons. This affects the quality of learning with regard to the knowledge of the subject and the content expectations of the courses, especially at GCSE. The content of the schemes of work at Key Stage 3 has recently been revised, but they do not contain clear assessment criteria and thus the consistency of delivery is more difficult. The range of artefacts possessed by the department is small, and pupils are missing out on the opportunities to learn from handling and viewing these. Currently, visits to places of worship do not take place, and so another opportunity to enhance the learning is missed.

## **VOCATIONAL COURSES**

167. Strong links with a local college enable pupils to be selected to follow foundation courses in health and social care, painting and decorating, and woodworking, in the adult atmosphere of a local college. Pupils are interviewed for the two-year course and some tutors attend parents' evenings in the school to report on progress. Inevitably some pupils drop out and others are withdrawn, but the majority benefit from the courses and tutors praise relationships with the school and the good qualities of their temporary students.

168. Attainment at least matches prior attainment, and the majority of students make good progress. Those following the health and social care course in Year 11 can now begin action planning without input from their tutor, when considering relationships between client and carer from the point of view of the carer. In woodwork, students are practising skills in the design and manufacture of projects for the home; in painting and decorating students design and implement motifs for a hall or landing wall.

169. Students say that they enjoy the course because they are treated as adults and because they can learn at their own level and pace. All have benefited. Some will accept the skills they have learned but go on to work in different jobs; others will follow other courses in the college, and many will follow a more advanced course in the same subject. All have gained a college certificate or NVQ accreditation towards a foundation course at GNVQ, or are ready to present work to this end.

## **DRAMA**

170. Results in the most recent GCSE examinations have been consistently lower than the national average. This has been due to a high turnover of specialist teaching staff which has affected continuity of the subject, and to pupils' attitudes. Standards are now good at Key Stage 3 and are satisfactory at Key Stage 4, with a noticeable difference between Years 10 and 11. Two new specialist teachers have recently been appointed, and they, together with the Manager of Performing Arts, have produced an exciting new syllabus which is already showing signs of raising the profile and standards of drama education in the school. At Key Stage 3, pupils are developing a secure knowledge of how to interpret scripts, to create improvisations, and to correctly present them in a stage environment. Year 10 pupils are successfully taking these concepts to a more advanced level of work. The quality of Year 11 drama is rather elementary, owing to changes of teacher during the course and to the negative attitude and poor motivation of a significant number of course members.

171. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good and has resulted in a satisfactory quality of learning. Learning would be better were it not for the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils in Years 9 and 11. It is very evident already that attitudes are much improved in the lower forms at each key stage. Teachers have in-depth specialist knowledge and high expectations. For example, a specialist lesson on complex stage lighting systems in the arts theatre was professional and very interesting. Teachers use the excellent specialist areas to great effect. Evidence during the inspection suggests that drama provision will be on a steep upward curve, and that standards should be considerably raised over the next few years.