

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **NEWCASTLE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**

Newcastle

Staffordshire

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124413

Headteacher: Mr Nicholas J M Hooper

Reporting inspector: Anthony Byrne  
2561

Dates of inspection: 4 – 7 December 2000

Inspection number: 185959

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: Ostend Place  
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Staffordshire

Postcode: ST5 2QY

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Stephen N Clifford

Date of previous inspection: December 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Lionel Farraday 8002	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
Jennifer Martin 23498	Team inspector	Science	
Renee Robinson 10941	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
Leslie Schubeler 19404	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
David Pink 20877	Team inspector	History	
Christine Humphreys 15606	Team inspector	Art	
David Griffith 1517	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs Religious education	
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Inspection Quality Division  
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Newcastle Community High School is on the edge of the town of Newcastle under Lyme. It is situated on an estate of modern, private housing but draws its pupils mainly from areas to the north and east where there is a large proportion of local authority housing and former mining village housing. The school is building up numbers on roll, following a period of decline, and has grown from 562 in January 1999 to 627 at the time of inspection. The school is small in comparison with the usual size of secondary schools. The distribution of boys and girls in the school is even, with a maximum difference of 10 in any year. Three per cent of pupils are of ethnic minority origin, which is just a little higher than average; 18 pupils have English as an additional language, 7 of whom are at an early stage of acquisition of English. Twenty five per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is higher than average, and the school believes this under-represents the level of need. Seventeen per cent of pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs, just below the national average, and seven and a half per cent of pupils, above the national average, have a statement. These figures represent an increase following an overhaul of systems for accurately identifying needs. Much of the area served by the school qualifies for grant aid from the Single Regeneration Budget for social improvement, several wards have indicators of socio-economic disadvantage, and research by the school shows that more than fifty per cent of pupils come from two areas with the highest levels of deprivation. The school was placed in Special Measures in December 1995, following an inspection that took place just as the present Head took up his post. Special Measures were removed by a member of HMI, following improvements, in December 1997. A change of name for the school (formerly Sneyd High) by governors, following consultation, reflected their belief that a new ethos of "aiming high together" has been established alongside a new partnership with the community. The school has won a number of awards for its work with the community and is participating in the national Key Stage 3 pilot initiative.

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

Newcastle Community High is an improving school. There are many very good features and some areas that the school knows need improvement. Standards are mainly satisfactory: although test and examination results are below average, there is a healthy trend of improvement. Teaching is a strength in the school; there is a high incidence of teaching of very high quality and it is almost always at least satisfactory. The leadership of the Head and governors is a strength of the school. Given the improvement in results and the extent to which there has been improvement since the previous inspection, the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils' attitudes to the school are very positive, behaviour is good and attendance has improved.
- Teaching is regularly of high quality and almost always satisfactory.
- The school supports pupils' personal development well, especially through opportunities to work for the community.
- There is strong support for pupils to improve their academic achievement through target setting and revision strategies.
- Parents value the school's caring approach based on very good knowledge of pupils' needs.
- Effective leadership has improved the school's achievements, ethos and reputation. Managers are fully involved in planning improvements.
- Pupils are particularly motivated to achieve well in music and physical education.

### What could be improved

- Pupils' standards of literacy.
- Achievement at higher levels in GCSE (A\*-C grades).
- Boys' achievement.
- Standards in English, particularly supported by improvement of the schemes of work and systems of assessment.
- The quality and range of work in information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- Progress in modern foreign languages, building on good work already done to improve the department.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous full inspection of the school was in October 1995. It was judged to require Special Measures to improve the quality of education. The new leadership in the school was required to put standards of achievement at the heart of everything in the school. That has been a continuous commitment and as a result extensive improvements have taken place in all the areas specified for action, except that subjects' use of ICT does not cover the required range. Work to improve modern foreign languages is of recent date and needs to continue in order to have full effect. In English, standards have fallen further since the inspection and that subject requires urgent attention.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year-olds and 16 year-olds based on average point scores in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	All schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Key Stage 3 tests	D	E	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	E	E	D	C	

In tests and examinations, standards are well below average. Pass rates are improving at GCSE from 72 per cent gaining 5 or more passes (A\*- G) in 1996 to 87per cent in 2000. The proportion gaining at least one pass went up to 96 per cent in 2000 from 85 per cent in 1997. The proportion gaining 5 or more A\*-C grades has remained at about 30 per cent for the past four years. In Key Stage 3 results there have been improvements in mathematics (10 per cent improvement from 1999 to 2000) and science (close to average for similar schools in 1999 and a further improvement in 2000), but the average points score is severely reduced by the English results, which have been poor; only a third of the pupils reached national expectations in the English tests in 2000. However standards of work seen in the school are satisfactory in both key stages for most subjects. Standards are above the national average at times in physical education in both key stages and in Key Stage 4 in design and technology and music. There were excellent results in art in 2000. Standards are improving in history but remain below average in Key Stage 3. Standards are below average in English, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages. Girls' achievements are better than boys, especially in higher grade GCSE passes. Pupils with special educational needs make progress that is satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Governors have set realistic but ambitious targets for improvement.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES



Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and show enthusiasm for learning in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are very well behaved in lessons and around the school. They are friendly towards each other and enjoy good relationships with staff, responding well to the care and interest shown by staff.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond well to the range of personal development opportunities provided by activities in school and in the community. The consequent success enhances their self-esteem and this fosters positive relationships with each other and with adults.
Attendance	Attendance has greatly improved, supported by a judicious mixture of encouragement and supervision. Pupils are motivated to attend by the positive education provided.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	N/A

*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 is almost always satisfactory; 97 per cent of lessons are at least satisfactory. Teaching that is good or better occurs in two out of three lessons. Excellent or very good teaching occurs in over 20 per cent of lessons. The strength of the teaching is the consistency of teachers' approach. They make clear what pupils will learn, teach with enthusiasm and pace and engage pupils' interest. They recap on what has been learned. Lessons have a sense of purpose and achievement. In English, teaching is mainly satisfactory but teachers' good subject knowledge is not supported by clear central planning. In mathematics teaching is sound with good features, particularly feedback to pupils based on detailed assessment. Teaching is good and sometimes very good in science with full use of time and resources. In other subjects teaching is satisfactory with many good features, and it is often very good or excellent in physical education and outstandingly strong in music. One of the few weaknesses is that teachers over-compensate for pupils whose literacy skills are poor by providing notes rather than challenging pupils to learn independently. The teaching of literacy requires improvement. Skills of numeracy are not emphasised in teaching other than in mathematics and the school is developing a policy to broaden its approach to this skill. Teaching supports pupils with special educational needs well. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. Gifted and talented pupils are not specifically identified by the school, although good work is praised. Pupils concentrate and work well in lessons, but their written work is brief and often over-dependent on the support of the teacher.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The arrangements are good and meet statutory requirements in all respects except for the application across subjects of information and communication technology. There are exceptionally good opportunities for learning through links with the community and extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Support for pupils is good, needs being met through specialist teaching and in-class support. Teachers are well informed about progress and targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils' needs and progress are assessed with the help of a visiting specialist. A member of staff specialising in this work provides support in some lessons and pupils work to develop language skills through a software programme. Progress is generally satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is very good. Through activities in lessons and beyond, the school places clear emphasis on aims and values that assist pupils to be confident individuals who are hard working and caring.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a major strength of the school. Staff know the pupils well and support their welfare and personal development. Procedures for managing behaviour and supporting attendance are very strong. Regular assessment keeps pupils aware of their progress and targets they need to meet.

The school works well with parents. The school provides a range of good quality information about general developments and the progress of individual pupils. Regular reports and formal consultation evenings are supplemented by an open door policy that ensures parents are welcomed into the school. They are listened to and their views are treated with respect. The school is keen to gain their full participation in the education of pupils. Home visits are made on appropriate occasions.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is an outstanding strength. He is loyally supported by his senior team who carry out their assignments effectively. Heads of department and heads of year are fully involved in strategies to secure improvement, so policies are implemented with great consistency.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors cover their statutory duties through well-run committees and meetings. They have a very good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide sound strategic advice. They monitor developments carefully and provide a forum of accountability for teachers with management responsibilities.

The school's evaluation of its performance	The quality of teaching, the performance of pupils and the management of departments and year groups are carefully monitored. The criteria from the school action plan are applied in reviewing progress. The school and governors have made themselves aware of areas where improvement is not satisfactory. The commitment to continuous improvement, based on data about pupil performance used for internal and external comparisons, demonstrates that the school sets itself to achieve best value.
The strategic use of resources	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. Resources are used well. Developments are carefully costed and appropriately resourced within the limits of the budget. External grants have been used to improve facilities or staffing in order to support pupils' learning. The income from community lettings supports developments in school.

### 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>• The gains pupils make in self-esteem from "aiming high together".</li> <li>• The strong and reliable leadership of the headteacher.</li> <li>• Teachers' enthusiasm and willingness to help.</li> <li>• Clear targets for pupils based on the teachers' knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>• Pupils' pride in the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity about homework required.</li> <li>• Information about progress.</li> <li>• Challenge for the more able.</li> </ul>

25 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and 71 questionnaires were returned. Parents' views were very positive. There were strong expressions of how pleased they are with the school and they believe that their children are well supported. The inspectors found evidence to support all of the positive points made by parents. There has been a lack of definite information about homework, but steps have been taken to clarify matters. The information supplied about progress is good. Whilst all pupils are encouraged to do well, the school does not provide sufficient opportunities for more able pupils to learn independently.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards in the work inspected are satisfactory overall in both key stages. In mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, music, physical education and religious education standards are in line with national expectations in both key stages. Achievement is above national expectations at times in physical education in both key stages and in design and technology and music in Key Stage 4.
2. Standards in history are below expectations in Key Stage 3 and in results at the end of Key Stage 4, but standards in Key Stage 4 are now reaching the level expected nationally.
3. Standards in English and modern foreign languages are below national expectations. The standard of work in information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is below average.
4. There has been a steady trend of improvement since the previous inspection and more effective teaching methods and curriculum arrangements are having a positive impact on pupils' work and results in tests and examinations at the end of the key stages. Action is being taken to improve standards in modern foreign languages and the school is aware of the need for further action to improve English and ICT.
5. In 1999 results in tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below average. English test results were well below average in comparison with similar schools and there was further decline in 2000. However, whilst results in mathematics were well below average for similar schools in 1999, there has been a 10 per cent improvement in 2000. Science results were close to average for similar schools in 1999 and there has been further improvement in 2000. Considering the results of girls and boys separately from 1996-1999, boys' achievement is further behind the national average for boys. Increased attention to standards in English in particular and to the achievement of boys is required.
6. There has been improvement at the end of Key Stage 4. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes in GCSE has increased from 72 per cent in 1996 to 87 per cent in 2000, but this remains close to the 86 per cent pass rate of 1999, which was well below the national average. The proportion gaining at least one GCSE pass grade (A\*-G) rose to 96 per cent in 2000 from 85 per cent in 1997. The rate of passes at higher grades in GCSE (A\*-C) in five or more subjects remained at 31 per cent in 2000, having been close to 30 per cent for the previous four years. The proportion gaining this level is closer to the national average, though below it.
7. In comparison with similar schools, performance in all indicators in GCSE is close to average. Girls were below the national average at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, but boys were well below average. The tendency for girls to out-perform boys stands out in the category of five or more passes at A\*-C where the proportion of girls who were successful at this level was 30 per cent higher than the proportion of boys in 1999 and 25 per cent higher in 2000.
8. The school enters all pupils for standardised tests in order to gather comparative data. Analysis demonstrates that pass rates at GCSE have been improved or maintained even though successive year groups recorded lower scores on their initial standardised

tests, representing value being added. There is further corroborative evidence that recent results in both key stages have been obtained by year groups entering the school following the unfavourable inspection report in 1996 when numbers and the proportion of more able pupils fell. The poor performance of boys and the static level of achievement of higher grade passes are the issues that stand out for attention in Key Stage 4.

9. English is the weakest of the core subjects. Standards are unsatisfactory in both key stages. At the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion obtaining the expected level was well below average in 1999 and fell further in 2000. Whilst GCSE passes at the end of Key Stage 4 were in line with national averages in English and English Literature the trend of passes at A\*-C has declined for the past four years and was well below the national average in 1999. Boys make particularly poor progress. Inspection evidence shows that speaking and listening skills are insufficiently developed. Poor development of reading strategies in Key Stage 3 leaves many pupils in Key Stage 4 ill-equipped to go beyond the functional reading of GCSE texts to engage with the layers of meaning in novels, poems and plays. Pupils produce a suitable range of writing in Key Stage 3, but work by pupils at all levels of ability is marred by inaccuracies. Lack of basic knowledge and skills and poor organisation of coursework to provide opportunities for independent writing at Key Stage 4 restrict achievement. At the time of the inspection the school lacked a strategic plan to improve standards in English.
10. Results in mathematics are well below average in relation to national standards in both key stages. However, the number of pupils reaching the expected level at the end of Key Stage 3 improved by 10 per cent in 2000. At the end of Key Stage 4 GCSE results are significantly below the national average. Girls' performance is better than boys in Key Stage 3 tests and very much better in A\*-C passes in GCSE. During the inspection the work seen was satisfactory. The application of the principles of the Numeracy Strategy in lessons is engaging pupils' interest and providing opportunities for progress and success. The policy of placing pupils in ability sets is having a positive effect.
11. In science, results were below the national average in the 1999 Key Stage 3 tests, but in line with results for pupils in similar schools and there was further improvement in 2000, particularly with regard to pupils obtaining Levels 6 and 7. Standards achieved by boys are closer to those achieved by girls than in other core subjects and boys performed better than girls in Key Stage 3 tests in 2000. All pupils enter for double award science at the end of Key Stage 4 and girls achieve passes at A\*-C in line with national standards. Setting individual targets in Key Stage 3 and careful preparation for the appropriate tier of examination at the end of Key Stage 4 help pupils to improve their standard of achievement.
12. Standards in ICT are variable but overall are unsatisfactory because across the curriculum the quality, range and quantity of work are not sufficient to meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. In the GCSE examination taken by some pupils, results have exceeded the national average for the past two years. Work seen in specialist lessons in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Provision of regular lessons in both key stages and of opportunities for access to computers at lunchtime and after school is having positive effects.
13. Standards in religious education are in line with expectations of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, and in GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 pupils match national achievement in grades A\*-G, but fall below national levels in the achievement of grades A\*-C.
14. In art standards are satisfactory in both key stages. Since 1998 there has been a very good rate of improvement in GCSE grades A\*-G and the proportion gaining grades A - C

was very high in 2000. Standards are satisfactory in design and technology. The aggregated results were above the national average in 1999, with a slight decline in 2000. Pupils' work across the Key Stage 3 areas reflects the national average. In geography standards are satisfactory in both Key Stages. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection. Action has been taken more recently to improve standards in history, but as yet they are below what is expected of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3. The small numbers entered for the subject at GCSE makes comparison unreliable, but the high proportion of pupils not entered, even though they have started the course, indicates unsatisfactory standards. As a result of the more positive approach being adopted numbers have more than doubled in Key Stage 4 and there are signs that standards are improving. In modern foreign languages standards are well below national expectations in Key Stage 3, where pupils' oral skills are underdeveloped. Achievement in GCSE is well below national average, though there is a trend of improvement and the decision to reorganise the curriculum to reflect the expertise of current staff is having a positive effect on standards in lessons. In music standards are above average. Pupils perform and compose well in Key Stage 3 and achieve good standards of listening and understanding. The number of pupils in Key Stage 4 is small but increasing and the standards of work are good. Standards in extra curricular work in music are well above average. Standards in physical education for all pupils are in line with national expectations and above average in the GCSE course.

15. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in all subjects in both key stages. They make particularly good progress in Key Stage 3 in English, science, design and technology, art, religious education and history. In Key Stage 4 they make good progress in art, design and technology, personal and social development lessons and physical education. The standards they achieve improve when they receive individual support.
16. Pupils who have English as an additional language make appropriate progress for the stage of English that they have reached. Records of response to computer-based programmes and reports from visiting specialist teachers indicate that most make satisfactory progress.
17. Standards of literacy are unsatisfactory in both key stages. There has been a significant improvement this year in the percentage of pupils entering Year 7 with literacy at the national average. For all other year groups, the majority of pupils entered the school with literacy levels below the national expectation. Pupils do not discuss ideas at length in preparation for writing. Reading skills remain weak as pupils progress through the school. When pupils write they make many basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
18. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory, enabling pupils to cope with what is required in most subject areas. For example pupils are able to use measurement and timing in athletics and swimming, to record and analyse data obtained from an urban survey in geography, and to use ratio and scale effectively in art. Areas of weakness exist in science where, for example, some pupils have difficulty in producing a line of best fit for their results, although other graphical skills are satisfactory. In technology, pupils are generally competent in measuring length but not in weighing out ingredients for a recipe. In mathematics lessons pupils' numeracy skills are improving.
19. The school does not have a policy for making special provision for gifted and talented pupils. In some lessons lack of opportunity for independent learning means that there is not enough challenge for pupils of higher ability. However, in music and physical education high achieving pupils do particularly well.

20. Targets set by the school are ambitious and are carefully related to data available about pupils on entry and derived from standardised tests taken in school. Governors have set targets for 2002 of 40 per cent of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE passes at A\*-C, 50 per cent of pupils to reach Level 5 in mathematics and science in Key Stage 3 tests and 45 per cent to reach Level 5 in English. All these represent an increase of approximately 10 per cent. The lower target for English is realistic in that the subject needs to rebuild following a decline in standards.

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

21. Pupils' attitudes to the school and their behaviour are very good. Relationships are of a very high standard and personal development is very well encouraged with a wide range of opportunities being available. Attendance is improving to almost the national average and is satisfactory.
22. The pupils really enjoy coming to the school and taking part in the many and varied activities. They make the most of the opportunities provided. The level of enthusiasm and support shown, for example, at life saving and badminton at lunchtimes during the inspection are good examples of this. They enjoy learning and are eager for knowledge. They are friendly, self-assured and courteous and make visitors to the school feel welcome. They socialise very well and work co-operatively in groups. Their attitudes, behaviour and relationships are a credit to the school.
23. In lessons, attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. The pupils expect to work hard, show lots of enthusiasm in lessons and respond very well to the teachers. Between lessons, the pupils are well behaved. They move in an orderly fashion around the school, sometimes across an extensive site, and at lunch times and break times behave very well with the minimum of supervision. For example one supervisor watches over all pupils dining and no incidents disrupt arrangements. The air of enthusiasm and enjoyment is always present in whatever they are doing. Exclusions have reduced considerably over the last four years. Permanent exclusions are rare, none having occurred since January 2000, although some temporary ones have been imposed as a measure for managing behaviour.
24. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility. One of the school's aims is "to promote pupils' outside experience" and they do this in a wide variety of ways. Pupils are proud to represent the school and regard themselves as ambassadors, for instance in school teams, as part of their many ventures into the community with the drum band, with old age pensioners at tea parties and when they are doing work experience. The school has received many significant local and national awards over the last four years for the work of pupils in the community. This includes looking after old people's gardens, making a video about the dangers of alcohol and performing in dramatic and musical productions. In school, there is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities and extra revision sessions. These are all very well attended and supported.
25. Within year groups, pupils are given responsibilities and there is a Student Council, which is very active. There are prefects with duties and responsibilities. They were selected through written applications and interviews. These structures develop pupils' sense of citizenship and participation. Relationships within the school are very good. Pupils form constructive relationships with each other and these are particularly evident during lunch times and break times. Older pupils are helpful towards younger ones, which was evident from discussion with pupils and could be seen in the way younger

pupils participated in playground games of football. Relationships with staff are particularly good and the team spirit displayed by staff is a very good example for the pupils. The staff provide very good role models for them. These relationships contribute to a very good learning environment. Opportunities are given in assemblies and in lessons for pupils to consider the effect of their actions on others and it is evident that they have respect for other people's views and feelings and for property. No oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection and there is a great feeling of harmony within the school.

26. Attendance has improved impressively during the last two years. It has been maintained at over 90 per cent for a substantial period and is moving towards the national average this year. Unauthorised absences are in line with the national average. Registration is taken very efficiently at the start of the day and in every lesson, using an electronic system that enables a rapid and continuous check, and the procedures comply with statutory requirements. There is very close liaison with the Educational Welfare Officer. There is very little lateness.

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

27. Teaching is almost always at least satisfactory; it is often of good, very good or excellent quality. Teaching that is good or better occurs in two out of three lessons. Teaching that is excellent or very good occurs in over 20 per cent of lessons.
28. The strength of the teaching is the consistency of the teachers' approach. Teachers make clear what pupils are expected to learn and how to engage with the task. Their enthusiasm and knowledge creates a sense that the lesson will be worthwhile. Planning is based on well set out schemes of work; lessons build on what has been previously covered, complete a worthwhile task and link with future activity. Teachers' expectations of how pupils will work and behave are appropriate, though sometimes they do not challenge pupils, especially those of high ability, to work independently. Teaching methods are varied and engage pupils' interest. The management of pupils is very good; teachers obtain a good response because their care for the pupils and desire for them to succeed is very evident. The lesson time is fully used, with a brisk start and sustained pace to ensure all the work is covered. When support staff are involved they are well briefed on what to prepare or how to assist pupils with special needs. Teachers use a good range of resources to support learning. Regular assessment of pupils through tests, marking books and questioning in class enables teachers to set appropriate targets. Homework is used well to extend the learning beyond the lesson. A particular strength is the consistency with which teachers write objectives on the board and draw attention to what will be learned in the lesson. Sometimes pupils are reminded about key points in the course of the lesson and almost always teachers make sure that pupils reflect on what they have learned at the end of the lesson. This routine contributes to a sense of purpose and achievement and re-enforces the learning.
29. Excellent teaching was exemplified in drama when the teacher led the class in developing a spoken story in the style of a legend: the seriousness of purpose meant every pupil focused on every detail of the unfolding tale. In music the teacher is very adept in capturing pupils' enthusiasm, for example obtaining high levels of concentration from Year 8 pupils mastering complex rhythms on African drums. In geography the teacher's knowledge, energy and understanding of pupils' needs, including a pupil for whom English is an additional language, enabled every pupil to receive guidance on how to respond to exam questions. In physical education different levels of challenge led to a sense of achievement for all pupils practising football skills.



30. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons that occur there is lack of clarity about what is expected of pupils, or the lesson is dominated by the teacher with too little scope for contributions by pupils.
31. In art and in design and technology teaching is good and teachers' subject expertise leads to pupils experiencing a wide range of techniques. Very good planning, management of activities and positive relationships with classes characterise the teaching of geography. In history teaching is good and well planned courses are conducted at a brisk pace. Teaching in specialist IT lessons is good. In mathematics teaching is sound with some good features, including careful recording of pupils' progress. Teaching in modern foreign languages is satisfactory and pupils in KS4 receive good feedback on how to progress. In physical education there is clear guidance and time to reflect on what has been learned; pupils are challenged and inspired to deepen their knowledge. The teaching of religious education is satisfactory in both Key Stages with some good features. Teaching is good and sometimes very good in science with careful planning that fully utilises time and resources
32. Teaching in music is outstandingly strong and stimulates a high level of participation and achievement.
33. Teachers in English have good subject knowledge but while teaching is mainly satisfactory its impact over time is undermined by lack of clear central planning to guide the work of individuals.
34. One of the few weaknesses in teaching in all subjects is that pupils have generally weak literacy skills, but are not challenged often enough to read or write independently. Teachers over-compensate by working hard for the pupils, preparing notes and reading them through. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to learn by discussing ideas and researching and writing independently. The development and re-enforcement of these skills is particularly weak in Key Stage 3. A start is being made to address this problem. A wide range of initiatives is being followed, including participation in the national pilot scheme for Key Stage 3. The school has a literacy policy and has led professional development for all staff. Summer schools have been held to boost levels of literacy on entry to the school. Most subjects produce word banks to support technical vocabulary and some subjects make effective use of drafting written work. However, there is as yet no co-ordinated approach to developing reading and writing in the school.
35. There is a focus on the National Numeracy Strategy in mathematics. English, religious education, design and technology and geography have policies for numeracy. There are plans to develop a whole school initiative to improve pupils' numeracy for which all teachers will receive in-service training.
36. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good in English, being both supportive and challenging. In other lessons good use is made of learning support assistants when they are available. In some lessons, when support is not available, the learning is not broken down into appropriately small steps, but on the whole, pupils make good progress. Pupils who are withdrawn from lessons are given a variety of tasks, including self-correcting ones to encourage independent learning. Good and excellent practice was observed. The systematic approach to providing support in literacy is very effective. Information technology is used and withdrawals include pupils using "SuccessMaker" with specialist support in the library. These arrangements are having a positive, measurable impact on pupils' progress. Recording of pupils' progress and learning needs is thorough, from classroom assistants' informal records through to

education plans, and enhances the quality and appropriateness of the work provided. Relationships with pupils are very good. All teaching staff are aware of the pupils with special educational needs in the school, the stage they are at, and the range of their needs. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

37. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported by visiting specialists and a designated member of staff. The extent to which they are enabled to participate in all lessons varies, but is usually satisfactory.
38. The consistently effective teaching results in pupils making satisfactory progress in skills, knowledge and understanding. The effort made by pupils in response to the teaching is good. In lessons they work at a productive pace but outcomes in terms of written work are too brief. Pupils concentrate well, but are very dependent on structures provided by the teacher for writing and in this respect their independent work is weak. Teachers ensure pupils know how well they have achieved and pupils understand what they need to do to improve.

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

39. The school curriculum, severely criticised in the previous report, has been the subject of an almost complete transformation in quality and range of provision. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements except in the application of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. The school has the organisation and intention to meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship that is mainly Christian in character, but occasionally falls short of the requirement.
40. The curriculum is broad and well balanced. Pupils study the full range of National Curriculum subjects in both key stages. In Key Stage 3, religious education meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus, and personal and social education and drama are taught. In Key Stage 4, all the subjects taught in Key Stage 3 are offered, with the exception of drama. In addition, pupils may choose to study GCSE statistics, and for the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) in French, leisure and tourism and history. Some pupils attend a local further education college to study courses in hairdressing and catering. These pupils spend up to two days a week on these subjects and undertake some work experience.
41. The organisation of the curriculum provides equality of opportunity for all pupils. The introduction of a two-week timetable has improved the balance of time allocated to subjects. There is now sufficient time for teaching history and geography and one modern foreign language in Key Stage 3 and religious education in Key Stage 4. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language is good in both key stages. The changes have produced a curriculum that matches the needs of pupils and what the school can provide. For example, there is additional time for English and mathematics in Year 7, resources have been rationalized to focus on one modern foreign language rather than stretching them over two, and the GNVQs and further education courses in Key Stage 4 have extended pupils' choice.
42. The curriculum has other strengths. The personal, social and education programme (PSE) has been revised. It provides a systematic and progressive programme of personal development. It includes sex education and a drugs and alcohol awareness programme. It raises appropriate social and health issues and provides pupils with effective careers guidance. In Years 9 to 11, pupils follow the ASDAN Youth Award

Scheme that supports the development of the National Record of Achievement. The school has prepared and developed a comprehensive and cohesive careers education, elements of which are in the PSE programme from Years 7 to 11. From Year 7, pupils are introduced to the Careers Adviser and to the new Careers Library. The school is piloting a project with Staffordshire Careers Education and Guidance to make pupils aware of the vast range of careers available and the routes to them. In Year 10, a very good programme of Work Experience is undertaken with which one of the governors is very closely involved. A drama workshop in the Spring Term outlines the choices available Post-16. Strong links exist with the local colleges and the Training Enterprise Council and a training exhibition is held and visits are received. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 9,10 and 11 receive enhanced support from the Careers Adviser.

43. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school provides clear aims and values that enable pupils to become self confident, hard working, caring and considerate. There is a highly effective social and learning environment within which pupils can successfully develop their individual personalities.
44. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. There are weekly assembly themes that provide pupils with opportunities for reflection. Teachers encourage the sharing of ideas and experiences as they arise, for example in English through literature, in music through a wide range of music making and in science and religious education through the exploration of new concepts. The school gives pupils freedom to explore spiritual development in accessible ways, as is particularly well illustrated in a display in which pupils describe what God means to them and is further expressed in pupils' creative and charitable work.
45. The school places a high priority on developing a strong moral code: its efforts in this area have a very positive effect on the pupils' attitudes to each other and towards the wider community. Opportunities to develop moral values underpin most subjects; for example pupils exercise decisions in their creative work in drama and music, discuss issues such as genetic engineering in science and the morality of the Holocaust in history. This is well supported by the example shown by adults in the school who value and respect the views and achievements of everyone. Pupils know right from wrong because the emphasis within the school is on the promotion of a caring community.
46. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development based on a comprehensive behaviour policy. There are opportunities for all pupils to take responsibility and demonstrate initiative both within the school and in the wider community. For example, many pupils participate in extra-curricular subject activities and charitable projects and support the school's local community initiatives. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility within the school, as a representative on the school council, as a prefect or as a library monitor.
47. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a good range of cultural activities. Many subject areas, particularly English, drama, art and music make a strong contribution to this aspect of pupils' development. There are colourful and inspiring displays of art and craft around the school and pupils attend plays and concerts and perform in their own music and drama productions. There is a focus on the local history of the area and a study of other religions in religious education.
48. Extra-curricular activities are a strength of the school, particularly the wide range of sporting, musical and drama activities. There are local visits that support the curriculum in history and geography and trips abroad which support the teaching of French. There

are additional revision classes for year 11 pupils and regular homework clubs for all pupils. The school supports a number of local and national charities and is involved in a wide range of environmental and community projects.

49. The school appointed a community education officer in 1995, and more recently governors have funded a post for a community development officer to assist with the extensive community links developed over the past five years. The school has won a series of awards over the past four years for outstanding community service. These include the 'Help the Aged Tunstall Golden Caring Award in 1996, and the Diana, Princess of Wales, Memorial Award for Young People in 1999. The school was a finalist for the Philip Lawrence Award in 1997. This year the school won the Schools Curriculum Award, 2000. The award is for a school 'at the heart of its community' and the award recognises the time pupils have given to support a wide range of activities for senior citizens.
  
50. The school has developed an extensive range of local links and encourages visitors from a wide range of local services and businesses. The wide range of visitors to the school, for example artists, authors and theatre companies, provides pupils with a wealth of experiences that complement the mainstream school curriculum. The school has established effective and creative links with primary schools and the local further education college. For example there are subject links with primary schools in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, music and games.

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

51. The school provides very good pastoral support for the pupils and has very good arrangements to ensure their welfare, health and safety, including child protection.
52. The school provides a safe and secure environment for the pupils. Regular inspections are made of the school and grounds and risk assessments have been undertaken. Pupils are well known by the staff and are well looked after at all times including lunchtimes. The school nurse attends regularly and provides good support for the school. Apart from the usual health checks, she also helps the school with sex education. The educational and personal support and guidance is very good.
53. The school has a comprehensive behaviour management system, which is very consistently and effectively implemented by all of the staff. This system is responsible for the significant improvement in behaviour since the last inspection and the school can be proud of achievements in this area. Similarly, the procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very successful. A computerised attendance procedure has been introduced by the school, to address the poor attendance, which has been of great concern in the past. This enables a highly motivated team of staff to monitor attendance not only on a daily basis but also to identify absences of pupils within the day. The team comprises a First Day Contact Officer and a Home/School Liaison Officer. They work closely together with the Educational Welfare Officer and with Heads of Year. As a result of this system attendance has improved considerably and is continuing to improve.
54. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good overall. The school has a comprehensive assessment, marking, recording and reporting policy. Within this, departments have their own assessment policies, which reflect the guidelines. Generally, they are good and are used to identify pupils' knowledge and skills from which targets can be identified and pupils can be placed into appropriate sets and bands. However, there are weaknesses in the organisation and application of assessment in English. When pupils arrive from the primary schools, the school initiates its own tests to set alongside Key Stage 2 results. From then on, the school issues three types of reports. Interim Reports are used in the Autumn Term to set targets for improvement. Academic Reports follow on from examinations and provide a description of the course, the examination mark and specific subject comments, which include targets for improvement. There is a Key Stage 3 Report, which is computer generated and gives the result of the tests and the teacher assessment. Pupils in Year 11 complete a Record of Achievement.
55. Assessment of pupils with special educational needs is good and individual education plans work well. Procedures comply with the Code of Practice and are implemented consistently. Pupils who have learning difficulties that are identified after they have entered the school are referred by class teachers to an assigned member of staff who consults on progress in core subjects. This leads to accurate and appropriate assessment for pupils who go on to Stage 1 and encourages subject teachers to find ways of meeting pupils' needs. Further reviews take place involving a decision whether to move them on to Stage 2. All pupils on Stage 2 and above have individual education plans which are up to date and show the Code of Practice is being followed, effectively using available assessment data, regular reviews, and involving pupil and parent. Targets being included in pupil planners help the link between school and home. All pupils on Stage 3 are supported by specialist staff from the LEA special educational needs services who provide very effective support, and the educational psychologist provides guidance for some. Pupils' targets are reviewed every six months. Learning

support assistants ensure the needs of pupils with statements on Stage 5 are properly met in classrooms and annual reviews contribute to ensuring appropriate provision. Updates to the special educational needs register are regularly issued, and staff amend their own records.

56. Tutors and Heads of Year know the pupils well and monitor and support personal development well.

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

57. Parents have very positive views of the school and a good partnership is developing with them. Parents' involvement with the work of the school is satisfactory and their contribution towards their children's learning is good. They are regularly provided with good quality information about the school and their children.
58. The parents are very supportive of the school. At the pre-inspection parents' meeting, they said that their children responded to the school's philosophy of "aiming high" and to the enthusiasm of the teachers. They felt that the teachers knew about their children's strengths and weaknesses and had a detailed knowledge of them. The teachers are very approachable and will make time for parents to see them. They treat their children with respect. They feel that the Head Teacher is doing a good job and they are pleased they sent their children to the school. The questionnaires endorse these views and are very supportive, although a few parents are concerned about the amount of homework set and how well they are informed about progress. The inspectors found that the amount of homework is usually appropriate. The school, in its Autumn Newsletter, has sent out recent guidance that is helpful in clarifying the matter. Reports are of good quality, providing useful information about the children's progress.
59. The school provides parents with an excellent, well-presented school prospectus and the annual governors' report to parents is very informative. Termly newsletters keep parents in touch with school events and a regular supply of letters keeps them well informed. Annual pupil reports are informative, explaining to parents and pupils about areas to be improved and setting clear individual pupil targets.
60. The school has strong and improving links with parents. The Head Teacher encourages them to come to the school and operates an "Open Door" policy. Their involvement is also encouraged through the many community activities and projects which are available and lots of them support the Holiday Club in the summer which looks after and provides a wide range of activities for the children. The Parent Teacher and Friends Association is a very active and flourishing organisation. They arrange an event each month with the main events being a Summer and Christmas Fayre. These raise considerable funds for the school and encourage further support from the community and parents.
61. The efforts the school is making to develop its relationships with parents are commendable and encourage parents' involvement in their children's learning.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. The leadership of the headteacher is an outstanding strength of the school. He is loyally supported by his senior management team who carry out their duties effectively.
63. The leadership of the school has focused on improving the achievement, ethos and reputation of the school. Some aspects of performance have improved and strategies to secure further improvement are being keenly pursued with great consistency throughout the school. Approaches to improving literacy through the literacy policy, the Key Stage 3 pilot project, summer schools and computer-based learning are fundamental to further improvement. The working party on boys' underachievement typifies the school's professional approach of identifying priorities, researching solutions and providing staff development. The "Stepping Up" programme focused on improving performance at GCSE is an effective support framework for target setting, mentoring and participation in extra revision sessions. The ethos of the school, which commands strong support from pupils and parents, is founded on care for pupils within a framework of high expectations about behaviour and learning. The school has won the respect of the community for the care it provides and the many positive activities of pupils. These features demonstrate that a very clear direction has been established to improve the quality of education provided by the school.
64. The school's key value of "aiming high together" is fully reflected in the daily life and work of the school. The ethos of care and respect for each other and of improving teaching and learning permeates the school day and beyond. This aim influences policy and decision-making. Staff and pupils know what is expected of them and respond to the consistent challenge and support provided by the headteacher and senior colleagues.
65. Heads of department and heads of year are fully involved in interpreting whole school priorities into the planning and practice of their own areas. Heads of department analyse performance data for themselves and compare notes with the headteacher rather than simply receiving printouts of statistics, thus ensuring informed discussion. They are responsible for negotiating challenging targets and support strategies for achieving them. They are accountable through reporting directly to governors, as well as to senior management, when there is urgent need for improvement. Heads of Year are required to produce annual action plans linking the particular needs of their group to school priorities. The special educational needs provision is well organised, with a coordinator in overall charge, who delegates responsibilities for Stages 1 and 2, and Stage 5, and this works well. The register of special educational needs provides evidence that there is movement of pupils between stages following effective intervention that leads to pupils being given appropriate levels of support.
66. Governors effectively discharge their statutory duties. Efficiently run committees deal with all business and report back to regular meetings of the whole governing body. They contribute to the direction of the school by providing a forum for the school to be accountable in detail for policies, strategies and resources linked to raising standards of achievement. They have a very good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through their constant and detailed monitoring of the action plan, supported by a thorough grasp of the implications of performance data.
67. Senior staff monitor teaching regularly and the impact of this can be judged by the significant and radical improvement that has taken place in teaching since the previous inspection. Teachers follow school policy consistently and aim for and usually achieve high quality in their work. Appraisal of staff is supported by detailed analysis of pupils'

progress as well as observation of teaching. A new Performance Management policy is in place to comply with the recent statutory requirements.

68. The school's priorities for development are appropriate and have been pursued vigorously, resulting in considerable improvement in behaviour, attendance and teaching, though there is still some way to go in improving standards, particularly in literacy, the use of ICT and performance in tests and examinations.
69. Action to meet targets is vigorous and well supported by monitoring and professional development. Targets are challenging and improvement is occurring. There is a shared commitment to improve. The capacity of the school to do so is demonstrated in areas of considerable success such as developing positive attitudes in the pupils. Plans and structures to raise achievement are appropriate, but need further development.
70. Arrangements for the induction of new staff, particularly NQTs, are thorough and the school has good partnership arrangements with Higher Education providers of Initial Teacher Training: associate teachers on placement in the school make a useful contribution to pupils' learning.
71. Financial planning is linked to educational priorities through the carefully costed strategies contained in the school's action plan. The most recent auditor's report indicates that financial management is sound. Specific grants are spent effectively on items that improve resources or support for pupils' learning: for example, the SRB grant has improved the library and the Social Inclusion grant has enabled the school to employ staff to telephone pupils' homes on the first day of absence, which has had a positive effect. Income from community lettings is generated at a good rate and used to support improvements in the school.
72. The school makes good use of new technology for management purposes, such as recording data about achievement. The system of electronic registration is used efficiently to check attendance throughout the day. Teachers' expertise is well matched to the curriculum and support staff are used effectively, though provision of technician support in science is not sufficient. Accommodation is adequate and there is a plan for improvement that is being steadily implemented. Resources for learning are adequate with the exception that limited use is made by departments of the central ICT facilities.
73. The school's results are improving, and, though they are still well below average, the standard of work in most subjects is satisfactory. The school has a very positive impact on the academic and personal development of pupils, many of whom have low prior attainment and a background of disadvantage. A good range of opportunities is offered to pupils within a well-managed budget supplemented by income from the school's role in the community. Great improvements have been made since the previous inspection. The school is achieving satisfactory value for money.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Newcastle Community High School has improved greatly since the previous inspection. Governors and staff should continue to pursue the policies and strategies that have developed pupils' positive attitudes and pride in their school. To further improve, the following issues should be addressed.

- (1) Build on the work already begun to improve literacy:
  - Follow up the literacy policy by providing more opportunities and support for reading and writing.
  - Develop strategies to incorporate more reading in lessons.
  - Support pupils in drafting and re-drafting their writing to achieve good presentation and correct use of English.
  - Follow up the good work done to introduce new pupils to the library by checking that pupils are reading widely.
  - Collate and analyse data to set targets for pupils as appropriate, and inform staff of pupils who need support.(See paragraphs numbers 17, 34, 38, 79, 80, 81.)
  
- (2) Increase the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades at GCSE (A\*-C):
  - Extend the “stepping up” programme of target setting, mentoring and support to include more able pupils capable of the highest grades, as well as continuing to support those with predicted grades at the borderline of this category.
  - Achieve the target set by governors of 40 per cent passes at this level(See paragraphs numbers 6, 8, 9, 10, 20, 78, 81, 96, 115, 155, 175.)
  
- (3) Improve the achievement of boys:
  - Make sure that recommendations arising from the working party's research on this issue are incorporated appropriately into departmental planning.
  - Agree annual improvement targets specifically related to boys' achievement.(See paragraphs numbers 5, 7, 8, 10, 75, 76, 78, 85, 95, 118, 129, 136, 155, 175.)
  
- (4) Develop a strategic plan to improve the English department. This should:
  - Continue with the process of appointing a permanent head of department.
  - Develop a cohesive scheme of work to ensure continuity and progression.
  - Develop a system of assessment that clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses in the knowledge and skills of individuals and groups, and that guides planning.
  - Set and achieve ambitious annual improvements at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.(See paragraphs numbers 3, 5, 9, 88, 90, 91, 93.)
  
- (5) Ensure that the range and quality of pupils' work with information and communication technology in the curriculum fully meets statutory requirements.  
(See paragraphs numbers 3, 12, 39, 88, 145, 149.)

- (6) Continue with the work that has begun in managing modern foreign languages effectively, including monitoring and improving standards achieved.  
(See paragraphs numbers 3, 14, 155, 156, 157, 159.)

**Other issues for the school to consider**

- The impact that high numbers of pupils in higher ability sets is having on more able pupils with regard to challenge and support for independent learning.
- Upgrading accommodation for science and providing more technician support.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	156
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7%	16%	39%	33%	3%	0	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	2000 – 2001	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	627	
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	153	

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	47	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	109	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	18

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	59
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	9.2	School data	0.8
National comparative data	7.9	National comparative data	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	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	55	46	101

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	16	21	20
	Girls	29	19	23
	Total	45	40	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	45	40	43
	National	53	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16	20	10
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	21	24	26
	Girls	28	20	27
	Total	49	44	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	49	44	53
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14	23	20
	National	31	37	28

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

Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	59	73	132

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	8	50	56
	Girls	32	63	71
	Total	40	113	27
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	30	86	96
	National	46.6	90.9	95.8

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31.8
	National	38

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	9

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	18	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)	35.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	328

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.7
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	24.2
Key Stage 4	20.6

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	1637856
Total expenditure	1618724
Expenditure per pupil	2777
Balance brought forward from previous year	24330
Balance carried forward to next year	43462

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	627
Number of questionnaires returned	71

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	47	1	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	40	5	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	61	3	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	37	10	4	1
The teaching is good.	53	47	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	41	13	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	28	3	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	30	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	43	7	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	65	35	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	44	3	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	51	1	0	4

### Other issues raised by parents

At the meeting some parents were concerned about support for the progress of more able pupils. There was some evidence that they could be challenged more to write independently in Key Stage 3 and to achieve more passes at high grades in GCSE.

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

### **ENGLISH**

74. There is an improvement this year in the percentage of pupils entering Year 7 who have standards of literacy in line with the national average. For other year groups, the majority of pupils entered the school with literacy levels below the national expectation.
75. In the end of Key Stage 3 tests for 14-year-old pupils in 1999, the proportion achieving Level 5 in English was well below the national average and that of similar schools. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 6 was below the national average. There has been a fall in the percentage of pupils achieving Levels 5 and 6 over the past four years. The attainment of girls is better than that of boys. Inspection evidence reflects these results, attainment is below the national expectation by the end of the key stage.
76. The progress of pupils through Key Stage 3 is variable. For example, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress and achieve standards commensurate with their ability. The principal reason for this is thorough specialist teaching. The attainment and progress of higher achieving pupils is often unsatisfactory because teachers do not provide activities which sufficiently challenge them. A reason for the continuing poor progress of boys in many classes is a teaching style that allows them to become passive observers rather than active participants in classroom learning.
77. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in drama is in line with national expectations. Pupils make sound progress, working well together to improvise their own drama. Most pupils are able to sustain a role and develop simple characterisation by the end of the key stage. A strength is their developing ability to evaluate their own work and that of others. Stage presence and communication with an audience are less developed skills.
78. In the 1999 GCSE English language and literature examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving A\* to C grade passes was well below the national average. There has been a decline in the proportion of pupils achieving these grades over the past four years. The results of girls in these examinations are better than those of boys. Inspection evidence reflects these examination results, with attainment and progress well below the national expectation by the end of the key stage. Reasons for this are the poor basic writing skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling, particularly amongst the boys, and more generally pupils' poor recall of previous work.
79. By the end of both key stages, speaking and listening skills are below national expectations for all but the higher achieving pupils. Standards have fallen since the previous report. Most pupils answer teachers' questions clearly and confidently, but responses are often single word or brief phrases expressed colloquially. Pupils have insufficient opportunity for extended talk, for discussion and debate, during which they can practise developing and organising their speech and listening to others. Opportunities are not clearly identified in the units of work. Assessment was a weakness noted in the previous report and this is still the case.
80. Attainment in reading is below the national expectation by the end of both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs make the most progress. Pupils of all abilities are disadvantaged by the lack of an effective reading strategy. Pupils in Key Stage 3 do not have regular reading lessons and most do not possess a book or a reading record.



Because reading is not being effectively developed in Key Stage 3, most pupils are ill prepared to read GCSE texts with sufficient understanding.

81. By the end of both key stages, writing is below the national expectation. Attainment is highest in Year 7, where the majority of pupils are making satisfactory progress and attainment is in line with national expectations. Although there is a good range of written work from the higher and average attaining pupils, across the whole key stage, the quality of writing is affected by weak basic skills. Some lower attaining pupils have very poor writing skills, with little independent continuous writing in their exercise books this year. A consequence of the unsatisfactory development of basic skills in Key Stage 3 is that the writing skills of the majority of pupils are insufficiently developed by the end of Key Stage 4 to enable them to attain the higher grades in the GCSE examinations. Although standards in writing have fallen since the last report there is an improvement in pupils' presentation of their work. Pupils of all abilities generally write neatly and take a pride in the presentation of their work. There are some good examples of pupils using information technology to present GCSE course work.
82. The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent in both key stages. Almost three quarters of teaching is at least satisfactory and a third is good, but just over a quarter of teaching is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is better in Key Stage 3, particularly in the mixed ability Year 7 classes, where work is more clearly planned.
83. Consistent strengths of the teaching across both key stages are good organisation of lessons to address stated learning objectives. This enables pupils to put their learning in context as the lesson proceeds. Lessons end with a review of the degree to which objectives have been met and this contributes to pupils evaluating their own learning. Most teachers establish positive and constructive relationships in the classroom and have a good command of the subject. This enhances pupils' learning, builds pupils' confidence and enables them to try out ideas in group work and whole class discussion.
84. In the best lessons, teachers provide a range of appropriate, challenging and stimulating activities for pupils. Teachers build on pupils' previous experience, assess and evaluate progress as lessons proceed and consolidate and extend class work with relevant homework. For example, in a year 7 class, pupils learned to use prefixes through a series of group activities matching prefixes to root words. A second learning point of the lesson explored how culture is reflected in story writing, using 'Little Red Riding Hood' as an example. Pupils explored variations of the story, noting their cultural differences. Group work was to produce an up-to-date version. These were read at the end of the lesson and the custom and language of the present time was discussed. Homework was to reflect upon the class experience through pupils' own writing. The inter-active approach and the enthusiasm generated by the teaching were reflected in the enjoyment, concentration and positive responses from the pupils. A good feature of teaching is the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers use a wide range of appropriate strategies to support the learning of these pupils. In many lessons very effective additional learning support is provided and this enables many pupils to keep up with mainstream teaching.

85. Not all lessons are as successful, particularly in classes with predominantly higher achieving pupils. In these classes, in both key stages, a weakness is a failure by teachers to ensure that the activities provided and the content of lessons match the capabilities of all pupils. For example, in some classes, teachers focus on the most able and articulate pupils and groups to the detriment of the more average attaining pupils, usually groups of boys. Conversely, in others, expectations are not sufficiently high and time is wasted. More generally, there is little evidence of teaching specifically designed to motivate and stimulates boys' interest, for example, research projects and opportunities for independent learning. An area for development, particularly in Key Stage 3, is a closer examination of the most effective and efficient use of one-hour lessons. The quality of marking is inconsistent across the department and does not always enhance pupils' learning. A good feature of marking is target setting, but this is not always followed up. Pupils are not asked to complete corrections. An area for further development is marking to criteria agreed with pupils in advance, using, for example, the skills outlined in the National Curriculum level descriptors.
86. In drama, the quality of teaching is at least good. Pupils make a lively response to the situations created and teachers can intervene to point out good work, or suggest improvement without disrupting the sense of involvement. There is some very good and some excellent teaching. Planning, clearly set learning objectives and class management are all good. This enables teachers to focus on the development of skills and provides pupils with the confidence to take risks in a safe and secure learning environment. A good feature of teaching is the systematic and rigorous assessment of progress in each lesson, which enables pupils to evaluate their own learning. At the moment, drama is often taught in classrooms and this limits learning.
87. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good in both English and drama. In only one lesson was behaviour unsatisfactory. Relationships with teachers are good and pupils work cooperatively. For the most part, pupils work hard, try hard and sustain good levels of concentration and their positive attitudes enhance learning. There is some drifting in and out of concentration. This is sometimes due to teachers not using the one-hour lessons efficiently and effectively. For example, spending the whole hour on a single topic and without a varied range of activities leads to restlessness.
88. The curriculum meets statutory requirements with the exception of the integration of information and communications technology. The breadth of the curriculum and its balance are affected in Key Stage 3 by the lack of an adequate reading strategy, and in both key stages by a scheme of work that fails to provide adequate continuity and progression of learning. The skills and knowledge to be learned, year by year, have not been clearly identified. The current discrete units of work do not make a cohesive whole. This particularly affects the development of basic skills in Key Stage 3 and is a major reason for the unsatisfactory test results and the poor GCSE examination results at the end of Key Stage 4. A strength, within the English curriculum, is teachers' participation in the Literacy Pilot Programme. This is improving teaching and learning styles but has yet to be fully absorbed into the department's scheme of work.
89. The breadth and balance of the drama curriculum is good. There is adequate teaching time for both English and drama. The curriculum provides equality of opportunity for all pupils in both subjects and extra-curricular provision complements and extends the mainstream curriculum. For example, there are annual school productions, visits to the theatre and a travelling theatre company has visited the school. The department organises extra revision classes and a homework club. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good in both English and drama. Pupils

explore poetry, discuss themes such as anger and violence in novels, work creatively together in drama groups and discuss aspects of other cultures.

90. Assessment in English is only partially effective. The school has developed a central assessment procedure that supports general target setting and the tracking of pupils' progress through the school. Teachers make use of the comprehensive assessment pack provided, but there is no common system of assessment to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and groups. A more systematic approach will enable teachers to set targets more accurately, use assessment to plan lessons more appropriately and report to parents more securely. Teachers keep records of pupils' progress and attainment in a general form, but without a more detailed assessment system, teachers do not have sufficient basic information about pupils' capabilities to plan lessons to meet specific needs.
91. The management and leadership of drama is good but staffing difficulties have hindered the continued development of English. Currently, there is an acting head of English, who is the sole responsibility post holder for English and drama. Other experienced and permanent members of the department hold senior responsibilities elsewhere in the school. Strategic planning within the department needs to be developed, and to accomplish this the leadership and management of the department is an issue requiring urgent resolution. There are sufficient resources and accommodation is adequate.
92. Although there have been improvements in some areas since the last inspection, overall improvement is unsatisfactory. The principal feature is the decline in test results at the end of Key Stage 3 and in examination results at the end of Key Stage 4.
93. The department requires a strategic plan to:
  - Continue with the process of appointing a permanent head of department.
  - Develop a cohesive scheme of work to ensure continuity and progression.
  - Develop a system of assessment that clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses in the knowledge and skills of individuals and groups and guides planning.
  - Set and achieve ambitious annual improvements at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

## **MATHEMATICS**

94. Standards in mathematics are satisfactory. Although pupils' performance in tests and examinations is well below national expectations and below that of similar schools, the work seen during the inspection was better than this.
95. In 1999, pupils' performance was well below the national average in the Key Stage 3 tests with the girls achieving better than boys. However, results in 2000 show a definite improvement with half the pupils reaching at least Level 5.
96. One third of the pupils achieved grades A\* - C in GCSE in 1999, well below the national average, the results for girls being much better than those for boys. No pupils achieved the highest grade. There is no significant trend over the last three years. The results in 2000 were disappointing but the department has identified factors contributing to the fall in both the number of pupils achieving grades A\* - C and in average points, and has taken steps to ensure future improvement.
97. The standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly in line with national expectations in both key stages and contains some very good features. For example,

Year 7 pupils can simplify algebraic expressions, calculate a fraction of a quantity and work out the perimeter and area of rectangles, triangles and parallelograms. Year 9 pupils can find the rule of a quadratic sequence and express it algebraically, and can use Pythagoras's theorem to calculate the length of a side in a right-angled triangle. In Key Stage 4, pupils can solve simultaneous equations graphically and calculate the gradient of a straight line in Year 10. Year 11 pupils can work with numbers expressed in Standard Form and calculate the volumes of prisms and pyramids; they also use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills effectively in coursework tasks.

98. In a small minority of lessons, standards were less than satisfactory. However all these lessons involved the lowest set in the year and pupils were working hard to improve their levels of knowledge, skills and understanding.
99. Throughout the school the quality of teaching is sound with some good features. All teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics, plan their lessons carefully, and use a variety of methods to suit both the topic and their pupils' needs. Time is used well, and resources such as textbooks, computer software and practical apparatus are used appropriately to assist pupils in their learning. Regular homework is set, and the marking of pupils' books includes praise for effort and helpful comments. Teachers' records enable them to monitor pupils' progress and good communication between teachers and support staff ensures support for pupils with special needs.
100. In lessons where pupils learn best, teachers share the lesson objectives with pupils and review the objectives again at the end of the lesson. The teacher's lesson plan makes use of prior assessment and provides the pupils with challenging but attainable tasks. Effective questioning is used to check understanding and regular prompting helps pupils to work productively. The lesson moves at a good pace but also allows pupils time to think.
101. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making steady progress in their learning of mathematics. Many pupils' results show an increase of at least one level from entry to the end of Key Stage 3 and a small proportion an increase of two levels. However for some pupils there was no change and since on average there should be an increase of at least one level over three years, this is below expectations. A comparison of results at the beginning and end of Key Stage 4 shows that satisfactory progress is being made in Years 10 and 11.
102. In approximately half of the lessons seen during the inspection pupils made good progress, while in the rest progress was satisfactory. In one Year 7 lesson, pupils sharpened their skills of doubling and halving and learned how to apply these skills to large numbers. Older pupils improved the accuracy of their mathematical drawings in different contexts; for example pupils in Year 8 learned how to enlarge a polygon from a given centre and Year 10 pupils learned to construct loci. All Year 11 pupils were making satisfactory progress with their coursework tasks. Challenging work, coupled with good planning and appropriate teacher intervention when pupils were doing their work, were features of lessons in which pupils made the best progress in their learning.
103. This is a well-organised department with a team all committed to the school aim of "Aiming High Together". The department's scheme of work covers all aspects of the new National Curriculum, and for each topic there are learning objectives and suggestions for resources such as the use of computer software. The development of pupils' skills of numeracy, and of using and applying mathematics, is included; the department is part of the pilot scheme of the Key Stage 3 Framework for Mathematics. Collectively, teachers provide homework and revision classes, maths challenges and

GCSE statistics in lunchtime classes. They make good use of assessment data for planning lessons, for grouping pupils into sets and for making decisions on tiers of entry to tests and examinations. Mathematics teaching is making a positive contribution to improving pupils' numeracy skills with mental warm-ups in many lessons and an insistence on accuracy in all areas of work. Participation in the Key Stage 3 Pilot is clearly effective.

104. Monitoring of pupils' progress is now securely established, principally based upon data in teachers' records. However there is little use of the data to monitor, for example, the progress throughout Key Stage 3, or to make predictions of results in GCSE examinations. In order to raise the level of attainment, evaluation of results needs to be more detailed. For example, errors in tests during Key Stages 3 and 4 could be analysed to determine those that may be attributable to a lack of knowledge or understanding of mathematics, and those arising from an inability to read or interpret the question correctly. Similar scrutiny could help the department to develop strategies to improve the boys' results.
105. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved with teachers adopting a wide range of methods to maximise the opportunities for pupils' learning, which is now satisfactory or better in all lessons. Attainment in lessons is now broadly satisfactory in both key stages although standards in GCSE have not improved, especially at the higher grades. Pupils' performance in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3, although still well below the national average, has shown improvement over the last two years. There is no evidence that pupils are under achieving and their knowledge, skills and understanding extend over the whole range of the mathematics curriculum; they are given the opportunity to tackle a wide range of learning activities.
106. The department has already identified areas for improvement in its development plan which will help it to continue to raise standards in Key Stage 3 and to improve GCSE results especially at grades A\* - C and A\*. In addition, efforts should be made to improve the attainment of boys in both key stages.

## **SCIENCE**

107. In 1999 the results of the national testing at the end of Key Stage 3 were below the national average. The number of pupils reaching Level 5 and above was below the national average and the number reaching Level 6 and above was well below. Results in 2000 showed an improvement with double the number of pupils reaching Level 6 and above and two pupils having gained Level 7, but the overall number reaching the required standard remained below national expectation. There was no discernible trend over the period 1997-1999. Standards reached in this school are broadly in line with those reached by pupils in similar schools. Pupils' standards in science are higher than those in English and mathematics. In 1999 girls outperformed boys in science, but in 2000 this trend was reversed.
108. At the end of Key Stage 4 almost all pupils are entered for the double award in science at GCSE. In 1999 the results were below the national average overall, but the number of girls gaining grades A\*-C was in line with the national average. All pupils entered gained a grade thereby exceeding national expectation. Results improved slightly in 2000, but the number of pupils gaining the higher grades remains below the national expectation. Pupils achieved better grades in science than in the other core subjects.

Pupils' results show that in the last two years their standards in the investigative component of the examination are much higher than their theoretical knowledge of chemistry, physics and biology. A few pupils are entered for the Certificate of Achievement in science and over the period 1998-2000 half of the pupils entered gained distinction.

109. For many pupils, prior attainment in science and basic skills is poor on entry to the school. Some pupils have limited experience of practical work and low levels of literacy and numeracy. This makes it difficult for them to grasp fundamental ideas in science and time must be spent on remedying these problems. At the end of Key Stage 3 all pupils are making satisfactory progress and the work seen was of an average standard. Pupils gain knowledge of a wide range of scientific ideas and their basic skills, especially those relating to practical work, have improved. High attaining pupils have good understanding of balanced and unbalanced forces and can discuss ideas about the effect of streamlining on falling objects. However, a similar task set for a group of low attainers was less effective because pupils' practical skills did not enable them to work with sufficient accuracy to gain valid results, and they were further hampered by poor numeracy skills. A class of pupils with middle ability could clearly explain the historical importance of the discovery of the smallpox vaccine and the steps leading up to its discovery. Classroom tasks are matched to pupils' abilities and enable them to make progress. Individual targets are agreed so that pupils know what they need to do to improve. Care is exercised in determining the appropriate tier of examination for each pupil. All these strategies have led to improved standards at the end of Key Stage 3.
110. Work seen in Key Stage 4 during the inspection was of a satisfactory standard. All pupils have gained knowledge of the science involved in living systems, materials and physical processes. They can plan experiments, predict outcomes and analyse results. High attainers successfully investigated the factors that affect the strength of an electromagnet, and some pupils have presented interesting research on the variety of habitats in a local stream as part of their coursework. A group of low attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs showed good understanding of the factors affecting the rate of a chemical reaction and could explain these using ideas from the particle theory. At both key stages a minority of pupils have difficulty in understanding instructions, presenting data clearly in graphical form and performing some tasks involving dexterity. Support staff and science teachers are on hand to help all pupils with special needs and those who have problems with reading.
111. The quality of teaching in science is good in both key stages, and in one fifth of lessons observed it was very good. Teaching is effective because lessons are carefully planned and very good use is made of the time available. In both key stages learning outcomes are clearly explained at the beginning of each lesson and their achievement is checked at the end by careful questioning. This is having a positive impact on learning. Teachers explain their ideas clearly and confidently and use demonstrations, video clips, role-play and short practical tasks to illustrate them. The investigative approach is used wherever possible and is enabling pupils overall to score well in the coursework component of the GCSE examination. Analytical and evaluative skills are also being taught to higher attainers. Opportunities are limited for pupils to express their own ideas orally, especially in Years 7 and 8, but the introduction of research projects at the end of the key stage is providing an opportunity for extended writing. Homework tasks, such as promoting the planets as holiday locations, are providing challenge to which pupils respond well. Pupils are put into groups according to their prior attainment at the end of Year 7 and this enables teachers to match pupils' needs and the level of work set. However, in a minority of lessons, inappropriately high level work led to loss of interest by a few pupils. Teachers give individual attention to enable low attainers and those

with special needs to make progress in line with other pupils in the class. Although there are some very large classes in science, class management is good and pupils act safely and sensibly in the laboratory. Homework is regularly set and marked in sufficient detail to enable pupils to improve their standard. Pupils are also set targets, for example to correct spelling or review misconceptions. In themselves, these targets are useful, but the level of challenge could be increased, particularly for high attainers. In all lessons observed pupils were actively involved in learning, but pupils achieved more when they were left to make some decisions for themselves.

112. The science department is well led and effectively managed. There is clear understanding of the need to raise standards at both key stages and strategies are in place to do this. There has been a recent review of teaching styles and changes required by the national curriculum are now in place. Opportunities to make wider use of information and communication technology have also been incorporated. Improved assessment procedures are being used to predict pupils' progress and to set targets, which have been achieved in the last two years. This was in response to weaknesses identified in the last inspection. The quality of teaching is now being monitored and evaluated both within the department and as part of a whole school programme. This has led to some sharing of successful methods and a consequent improvement in pupils' learning.
113. The time allocated to science at both key stages is barely adequate and the technical support, which is essential to the smooth running of the department, is inadequate. Although there are enough laboratories to teach science effectively, they are shabby, and access to some of them through very narrow corridors causes some problems at change of lesson.
114. Since the last inspection standards in science have improved, although they remain below the national expectation. Pupils develop good practical skills at both key stages, and opportunities to incorporate data logging and other information and communication skills are in place. Behaviour in science lessons is satisfactory and pupils are interested in their work. The quality of teaching has improved, and pupils with special educational needs are provided with suitable tasks in lessons. The introduction of the Certificate of Achievement in science has also had a positive impact on the learning of the pupils involved. Assessment strategies and the use of the data to measure pupils' progress and to set targets are leading to improved standards.

## ART

115. Standards of achievement in art are satisfactory overall. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection when standards were poor. In Key Stage 3, pupils achieve standards that are satisfactory in relation to their age and their ability. In Key Stage 4 standards have shown remarkable improvement. All thirty-three pupils entered passed the 2000 GCSE examinations; 88 per cent passed at A\*-C, which is well above the national average. In the 1999 examinations 26.7 per cent of pupils entered gained grades A\*-C, significantly below the national average but the results for grades A\*-G were in line with the national average. From 1998 results for grades A\*-C have steadily improved with a significant improvement seen in the 2000 results.
116. In Key Stage 4, pupils are developing their ideas using original Indonesian shadow puppets as subject material. They are very selective in choosing and recording from first hand their observations which focus on shape. As they draw they extend their knowledge of drawing, their control of tools and use of techniques. They are experimenting, merging observations to develop their ideas for their final compositions. In folders there is evidence of satisfactory progress by pupils of all abilities across a broad range of contexts.
117. In Key Stage 3, using Japanese kimonos as a starting point, pupils use different texture papers, including tissue paper, discriminately to produce their own fabric designs. They make carefully considered choices about colour combination to complement or contrast the size and shape of patterns and the use of specific colours to give shape to the finished work. All pupils make satisfactory progress across the key stage and in Year 7 they make good progress. When classes are very large pupils make satisfactory progress but the rate of progress is slowed and the standards pupils achieve are affected.
118. Pupils enjoy art and their attitudes to learning are good in both key stages. Some Year 9 boys find concentration for a length of time very difficult even when they are well taught and provided with very stimulating materials with which to work. Year 11 pupils are very attentive and show a great deal of respect for the teacher's knowledge and skills. One boy was mesmerized and the puppets fascinated many pupils as they carefully studied them to draw. Year 7 pupils show good attitudes to learning and are ready to pay attention and appreciate the colour, detail and patterns on the Cuban masks they are studying.
119. The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 is good. In three of the eleven lessons seen teaching was very good and in one lesson, with a very large class, the teaching was satisfactory. Teaching benefits from effective planning. The procedures for assessment are very good and the use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress and for planning future lessons is good. High expectations are set and standards required both in their work and behaviour are made very clear to pupils. Very good questioning techniques are used to find out what pupils know and to ensure understanding. The objectives are made clear at the start of every lesson and the range of resources to support learning is very good. When teaching groups are very large it is difficult for teachers to reach pupils to support them individually and to monitor their progress.



120. The curriculum for art is now very good. It offers a very good range of very well planned learning opportunities that ensures the statutory curriculum is in place. The planned provision at Key Stage 4 builds on the breadth of study offered at Key Stage 3. The rooms are well maintained and contain colourful and attractive objects to stimulate pupils. Pupils' own work on display illustrates the range and quality of their work. The working atmosphere is relaxed but purposeful. Art makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The planned provision for literacy, numeracy and for those pupils with special educational needs is good. Homework is used to build on and extend pupils' learning.
121. The department is led very effectively by a very good subject specialist. She has clear aims for developing the subject and for raising standards of achievement for all pupils. The staff work very hard to provide stimulating learning environments in which all pupils' work is valued and celebrated. The level of resources is still an issue with the majority of them being supplied by the staff themselves. When groups are very large there is not enough furniture and resources have to be borrowed. Pupils' work is displayed throughout the school and appreciated by pupils, staff and visitors. Since the last inspection there has been a very good improvement in art.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

122. The 1999 GCSE results for the subjects within the design and technology department show overall attainment to be above the national average for A\*-C grades. The results are above the national average for A\*-G grades. The 1999 results show pupils performing better in design and technology than they do in their other subjects. 1999 results were an improvement on 1998 results. There has been a steady rise in examination results over the past four years. Girls' achievement is higher than that of boys, as is the case nationally. However, results show boys achieving above the national average for boys on A\*-C grades. Also, a number of boys who come into the school with low levels of attainment are leaving the school with a GCSE Grade in Design and Technology. From low prior attainment girl pupils are achieving well in GCSE Child Development. Stereotyped choices at the age of fourteen have been counteracted, with girls choosing resistant materials and boys choosing food. In 2000, the quality of results was maintained.
123. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, there has been improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard, as well as in the proportion reaching the higher levels. The picture overall is different from that observed at the last inspection where standards of achievement were described as unsatisfactory. Now standards at both key stages are satisfactory and rising.
124. The standard of attainment in lessons, at Key Stage 3, is in line with national expectations. There is a marked improvement in standards as pupils move through the key stage. By Year 9 pupils understand that designing and making are linked and all can follow and produce a design brief. Folio work reflects an understanding of the design process. Pupils' making skills are generally good, encouraged by regular teacher demonstrations. Practical skills are well used to produce a range of products, such as shortbread and a holder for kitchen roll in Year 9. Graphic skills are overall average and are developed through designing and making activities. Pupils manage their individual tasks well using a variety of materials such as food, wood, metal, textiles and acrylic. These tasks provide a firm foundation for later work. Pupils demonstrate very good practice in relation to health and safety, using equipment responsibly. Higher attaining pupils produce well-presented folios that show good graphic skills with research and thoughtful evaluation. Adult help ensures that lower attaining pupils and

pupils with special educational needs produce individual ideas and practical work with a good standard of finish. For most pupils writing skills are satisfactory. Teacher encouragement ensures that standards of presentation of work are satisfactory and sometimes good.

125. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment in lessons is in line with national expectations; sometimes it is above. Pupils employ correct methods of investigation, research and evaluation. Project work in graphics shows good use of sketching techniques to develop ideas. Higher attainers have carried out some excellent research to support their chosen designs in graphics, and in food technology to support their evaluation of meals for special diets. In the GCSE resistant materials course lower ability pupils are appropriately encouraged to develop their own ideas and undertake challenging practical work. A wide range of projects is worked up successfully, for example a dovecote, a bread bin, bird boxes, clocks and a cabinet. Pupils of all abilities become increasingly able to organise their own work as they move through the key stage. Higher attaining pupils show a high level of independence. Information and communication technology is insufficiently used in pupils' projects. All pupils, including those with special needs, make good progress.
126. The quality of teaching is good with some very good teaching seen at both key stages. This is an improvement on the previous inspection where teaching was described as generally sound. Teachers know their subject well and use this knowledge effectively to develop pupils' interests, for example, when showing Year 8 pupils how to mark out, measure and shape a totem pole in wood. The good personal interaction in lessons increases pupils' self-esteem and confidence and enables them to make steady progress. This was particularly noticeable when pupils were working on individual coursework projects in a Year 11 resistant materials lesson. The quality of learning in lessons is usually good and pupils work productively. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in lessons. Lessons are well planned and objectives shared with the pupils. These lessons are skilfully managed, with very good levels of supervision. Teachers know the pupils well, giving appropriate attention and advice to all pupils and sensitively helping pupils with special needs. There is a satisfactory assessment scheme in operation, which relates to National Curriculum level descriptors. To assist pupils' literacy, key words in the technology vocabulary appear in teaching rooms and pupils make use of these. Marking is regularly carried out across the department. Oral feedback was observed in lessons.
127. The majority of pupils have very positive attitudes towards design and technology and enjoy the subject. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils often help each other and their relationships with teachers are very good. These high quality relationships help to promote positive attitudes to learning.
128. Leadership of the department is thoughtful, strong and forward thinking. There is a clear sense of direction for the subject and a focus on achieving high standards, with good evaluation of examination results to help attain this. A good team spirit has been created which underpins a commitment to raising standards. Staff have worked diligently to develop a range of appropriate policies, which provide good guidelines. The technician makes a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the department. Opportunities for display are used to good effect to stimulate pupils' ideas during lessons. Curriculum planning meets statutory requirements, although information and communication technology is underdeveloped. The issues from the last report have been very well addressed.

## GEOGRAPHY

129. Results in geography at Key Stage 4 are below average compared to national expectations. GCSE results have fluctuated over the past four years but show an upward trend in the number of students as well as the percentage achieving grades A\* to C. There are no significant ethnic differences but a significant difference is that boys achieve much less well than boys.
130. The standard of work seen, for pupils at the age of 14, is satisfactory. Pupils know that maps are an essential tool of geography and can give grid references for a specific location. They understand the complex forces at work in shaping the environment when they study the causes of flooding, and they understand the socio-economic factors involved. They appreciate the importance of flood controls and how such matters relate to their own lives following recent local flooding. Pupils benefit from the contribution of a Japanese visitor during their study of volcanic eruptions in Kyushu. They empathise with the inhabitants of the Amazon region when they study the destruction of the rainforest and discuss the consequences for global warming. At the age of 16 pupils demonstrate their understanding of the factors which influence economic development in the Mezzogiorno region of Southern Italy and make detailed case studies of selected industries. They apply relevant skills to investigate the location of modern industry in the Potteries, compared with location during the eighteenth century. Pupils show an awareness of the interplay of physical and human factors and make cost benefit analyses which influence decision-making during their study of the Kielder Basin water management project on the river Tyne. However, pupils find it difficult to express their thoughts clearly, to produce a sufficient quantity of work and to interpret and give precise answers to questions under examination conditions.
131. Most pupils make satisfactory progress from below average attainment at entry. Pupils with special educational needs are sometimes withdrawn from geography lessons and this does interrupt the continuity of their learning in geography. In the work seen there is no significant difference in the rate of progress between boys and girls. Nevertheless boys perform less well in public examinations.
132. The quality of teaching overall is good, with some examples of very good and excellent teaching. Where teaching is good or better the work is meticulously planned which enables the students to proceed logically step by step. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge so that pupils and students receive accurate information, obtain clear understanding of the principles involved and acquire new skills in dealing with geographical studies. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory and students recognise the need for accurate use of scales, a key and other features of map work. For example, they disassemble relief models and use them to draw the corresponding contour lines thus gaining an understanding of the depiction of relief on ordnance survey maps. They understand how to interpret landscape features by analysing contour lines. Good teaching is also characterised by enthusiastic delivery which stimulates the interest of the students and motivates them to make efforts to solve problems. However, there are occasions when opportunities are missed to challenge pupils to think for themselves. The management of students is a strength of the department and the relationship between staff and pupils is very good. This is conducive to effective learning and pupils and students generally work at a good pace and do not waste time. They have a very positive attitude to the subject and are co-operative and well behaved during lessons. Homework is well used in the department to reinforce learning.
133. Leadership and management in the department are very good and there is a shared commitment to raising standards. The newly appointed co-ordinator has done a

remarkable job in putting systems in place to raise standards and these are already having a positive impact. Relationships in the department are very good and this is a strength. The department plans are in full accord with the school development plans and mirror a common purpose. The staff have a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject and this contributes to a good learning environment for the subject, enhanced by colourful displays reflecting the range of topics studied. The department now offers a certificate of achievement course for pupils who would otherwise not participate in public examinations. Resources are overall satisfactory with good provision of textbooks, maps, topical worksheets and audio-visual aids. Monitoring of the work of the department takes place in the form of shared planning and discussions between staff. Lesson observations by the senior management team provide detailed recorded feedback on the quality of teaching. Accommodation is generally satisfactory but where banding takes place classrooms are sometimes cramped for the number of students in lessons and this has a negative impact on their work.

134. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. GCSE results have risen from 19.2 per cent gaining grades A-C pass rate in 1995 to 32.1 per cent in 2000. Value added has increased and the number of pupils taking geography to examination level has increased considerably. Teaching styles are varied, assessment strategies are in place, the quality of teaching is now good overall and sometimes excellent, schemes of work have been updated and pupils are well behaved and enthusiastic about the subject. However there are areas for improvement remaining: raising the standards of literacy, including speaking skills; higher expectations of pupils and students, especially middle and higher attainers, with more opportunities for independent learning; increased volume of work and higher quality in the presentation of work; an increase of the amount of learning support in the classroom; inclusion of more field work, visits and visitors to widen provision; demonstration of teaching in order to share the very good practice existing in the department; and provision for the systematic use of information technology by students to enhance their learning.

## **HISTORY**

135. The standards of attainment of pupils' by the age of 16, as judged by the results in the General Certificate of Education (GCSE) examinations in 1999, were below national averages, at the higher levels, for pupils at all schools. Attainment is in line with national averages for pupils gaining grades A\*-G. The GCSE results for 2000 indicate a similar pattern of achievement. However, only a small number of pupils were entered for examinations each year between 1997 and 2000. More girls than boys achieve the higher grades although it is unsafe to make comparisons at the age of sixteen because of the imbalance of boys and girls in the groups. One year consists of mainly boys, whilst another had a majority of girls. Each year between 1997 and 2000 a significant number of pupils were not entered for GCSE examinations although they began the course. The trend over the past three years indicates a fluctuation in standards but with the small number of pupils involved (9 in 1998, 17 in 2000) it would be unsafe to draw reliable conclusions. The current Year 10 is double the size of last year's Year 10 because of improvements made within the last year.
136. The attainment of pupils by the age of 14, as indicated by teachers' assessment, is below that expected of pupils of a similar age. Attainment has improved over the past three years. However, more girls still reach higher standards than boys.
137. Standards observed during the inspection are in line with expectations of pupils of a similar age at 16. Pupils achieve according to their abilities. In Year 11 pupils study evidence about the reactions of people in Germany to the Peace Treaty in 1919. They

understand the importance of placing the evidence in context to try to see events from differing points of view at the time. In Year 10 pupils understand that Apartheid in South Africa was built up gradually with a number of different laws. They know that people in South Africa interpreted the Apartheid laws in different ways and can recognise the weakness of black political power in the light of those laws. The improvement in standards is due to the introduction of an appropriate course for lower attaining pupils, as well as improvements in the organisation and teaching of this group of pupils.

138. By the age of fourteen, pupils are achieving at a level just below national expectations. This is largely due to weaknesses associated with literacy and presentation of work. However, there is clear progression in pupils' understanding of history. In Year 9 pupils understand that there are different interpretations of the Holocaust. They begin to recognise the complex emotions created by reactions to the events and can recognise how some interpreters use film and cartoon to explain these. In Year 8 pupils begin to understand how events in Irish history have been used to justify differing points of view. They know that different interpretations of events have been used to justify the Nationalist and Unionist causes in Northern Ireland. They can identify these references in contemporary evidence. They use this to understand the positions of people as they entered into the Good Friday Agreement in 1999. In Year 7 pupils understand that the Bayeux Tapestry was made to be sympathetic to William I. They know that as the victor William was anxious to secure his position on the throne of England. Pupils can identify places in the Tapestry where the defeated Harold is shown in an unsympathetic light.
139. Improvement since the last inspection is good. A new, innovative and challenging syllabus was introduced in September 2000 which takes account of the broader needs of the pupils as well as challenging them to develop historical skills. Literacy skills are developed so that pupils are able to handle the level of language required. Guidance is provided to help pupils in their written responses and there are many opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. There is a consistent standard of teaching across all classes and teachers' marking is informative and helps to raise standards. These changes are very promising but need more time to make an impact on the standards pupils achieve.
140. Teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and occasionally it is very good. Teachers share a consistent and enthusiastic approach and are committed to obtaining the best from their pupils. They use their good subject knowledge to provide challenge for pupils and often complex and emotional ideas and subjects are tackled in a sensitive and rigorous manner. The pace of lessons is brisk and activities are changed to stimulate and improve the standards of pupils' attainment. Teachers create good positive relationships with their pupils and this enables pupils to feel secure in their learning. There are high expectations of both for behaviour and achievement and pupils respond well to these. Marking is informative and pupils are encouraged to assess their own work. Teachers are beginning to use their evaluation of pupils' work to raise standards of pupils' achievement, but pupils in Key Stage 3 are not given enough guidance on how to improve. The marking scheme for pupils in Year 10 and 11 allows pupils to identify their own standard of work and to understand how they can improve upon it. The correct use of English is emphasised and expected so that pupils are beginning to raise the standards of their written and oral work. A course leading to a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) has been introduced into Year 10. This has an emphasis on local history, whilst building general study skills. It is appropriate for those pupils who choose to follow the course.

141. Because of this teaching, the behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are interested in their lessons. Pupils listen attentively and are responding well to measures to extend their speaking skills. Their work is well presented in workbooks, with headings underlined and writing clear. Pupils are beginning to develop longer pieces of writing, because of the expectations of the teachers. Pupils make good progress in their learning, because of the carefully planned and interesting presentation of topics by teachers. Those pupils with English as a second language in Years 7,8 and 9 are well served by the concentration on oral work. Also, pupils with special educational needs make good progress with challenging work presented in a way that meets their individual learning needs.
142. There is insufficient depth in the coverage of the National Curriculum 2000 Unit "Britain 1500-1750" and, as taught, it does not give pupils a sufficient breadth of knowledge and experience of this period. Although teachers' marking in Years 7,8 and 9 is informative, pupils do not always know what standards they are at and how to improve upon these. This is particularly so among the larger higher attaining sets of pupils. Also, in the lower attaining sets pupils are not given sufficiently short term goals and targets upon which they can build their learning. The support for pupils' reading is underdeveloped as yet. There are too few texts available for pupils to read and research independently and to develop those skills associated with gathering information although the new syllabus presents opportunities to address these needs. Likewise, the use and evaluation of information from CD-ROMs and the Internet are underdeveloped. The strategy for developing numerical skills is limited to the use of chronological sequencing and adding and subtraction.
143. The overall management of the subject is good. Effective planning supports consistent teaching and there is a strong intention to use literacy to support pupils in their learning. Monitoring of teaching is effective in raising standards. Good use is made of visits to places of historical interest especially for pupils in Year 8 and Year 9. In Year 10 good use is made of local business to support pupils' learning in their GNVQ course. The head of department shares and communicates the school's aim to raise standards. The head of department has a very clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and has clearly identified the means to overcome these.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

144. Standards of attainment are below the national expectation at both key stages.
145. The teacher assessments made for information and communication technology at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 and similarly in 2000, indicate standards to be in the areas of Levels 4,5,6 with a small number of pupils at Level 7. Observation showed that while many pupils are attaining satisfactorily in lessons, their work overall indicates a great variability in attainment. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is below what would be expected nationally. However, there has been an improvement in standards of attainment in so far as they are not so far below national expectations as was indicated at the last inspection.
146. Standards of attainment in the 1999 Information Technology GCSE were well above national expectations for A-C grades. One hundred per cent A-G grades was also above national average on this course in 1999. These were a significant improvement on the 1998 and 1997 results, which had been below national average. The results for 2000 have followed this rising trend and are above national average for A-C grades.
147. Pupils arrive at the school with a wide range of attainment and experience of ICT. Key Stage 3 pupils show competence in basic operations, using keyboard, mouse and printing off work. While a few are slower initially at finding the software the majority become competent at using it. Higher attainers can enter data both quickly and accurately. In Year 7 special educational needs pupils produce work that fulfils the class targets set for them. These pupils work on producing a slide presentation about the school for younger pupils and the drafting and planning carried out demonstrates the thinking behind the finished product. With help from the teacher they are able to find the photographs of the school that they took with the digital camera and insert them in the required place. In Year 8, pupils enter spreadsheet formulae and find the greatest volume for boxes of different sizes. Listening skills are developing well in ICT formal classes. Higher attaining pupils are able to progress more quickly through the work, pay attention to detail and use the technical language associated with the subject such as cells, log on and formatting of text, all this encouraged by good teaching. While the Keybytes software programme is used with a satisfactory level of competence in Year 9, lower attaining pupils need a lot of adult support to progress.
148. In Years 10 and 11, higher attaining pupils make satisfactory and good progress; their attainment is in line with national expectations. The examples of other pupils' work indicate that most do not demonstrate a high enough level of independent competence in the different aspects of the subject. In some pupils' files there is insufficient quantity and quality of work on the different aspects of information and communication technology. In Year 11 the majority of pupils seen can satisfactorily use a number of software packages, such as PowerPoint, CD-Rom and Internet, simultaneously to design and produce a slide show about the Solar System. Higher attaining pupils' work is original in design. These higher attaining pupils acquire new knowledge speedily and are able to plan in detail how they will carry out a task. The pupils undertaking GCSE are able to use ICT skills to problem-solve in detail and are well versed at following the criteria needed for the examination work. These pupils understand the essentials of databases and how to create and search for specific complex information, for example in car dealerships and health food businesses. They evaluate their work and understand how to improve it. Higher attainers present their work very well. The folders of lower attainers are less well organised and include less work.

149. In addition to being taught how to use computers, pupils are required to develop the use of this capability within the subjects of the curriculum. Information and communications technology is being used in some subjects, but generally not enough is being done to satisfy National Curriculum requirements. A number of departments do make good use of available computer rooms to teach their subject with ICT. However, departments have been hampered by the lack of computers within departments. While departments have ICT included in schemes of work, many departments have yet to put this into practice. ICT is well used in Year 9 science using the Internet to research drugs and work on planets. Year 10 lower attaining pupils carry out data logging work. In mathematics, pupils use spreadsheets and logo. In English, word processing skills are used for coursework across the ability range. Pupils in art access web sites for research. In design and technology Year 9 pupils use a spreadsheet package to analyse the nutritional content of the recipes they have made. ICT is used well in Year 11 for coursework in food technology and child development. The Success Maker software is well used by special educational needs pupils to improve language and number. No evidence of pupils' work on control was seen in files, although it is planned for in the design and technology scheme of work. However, there are too few opportunities in many subjects for pupils to apply the skills they have learnt in ICT to increase their knowledge and understanding in these subjects.
150. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are positive about the subject in all years and work with interest and enthusiasm. Pupils co-operate well when working two to a computer in a large class. Higher attaining pupils show the ability to work independently. The majority of pupils concentrate well. They openly enjoy the good teaching they receive and in all lessons there is a good working atmosphere. Higher attaining pupils are able to work with a minimum of teacher intervention.
151. The quality of teaching in information and communications technology lessons is good and on occasion very good. This is a great improvement on the last inspection report where quality of teaching was described as unsatisfactory in both key stages. Teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to give clear explanations to pupils. There are good detailed plans for lessons, challenging work and objectives that are shared with pupils. A good pace is usually maintained throughout lessons. Most lessons are very well structured with a suitable balance of time for instruction and for pupils to work independently. Teachers are active in helping pupils on an individual basis. Class teaching methods are used efficiently, for example when Year 8 pupils were developing the use of formulae in a spreadsheet. Teachers manage pupils well and maintain good behaviour in almost all lessons, ensuring effective learning is taking place. A few classes contain some boy pupils who are easily distracted and their learning is not satisfactory. The needs of special educational need pupils are well known to teachers and clear targets are set for them to reach in a short space of time, which encourages good work rates from the majority of pupils in the lessons. Good technical help supports the pupils' learning. Staff to deliver ICT are in place. Much needed useful teacher INSET has taken place and more is planned for the near future.
152. There is good leadership and management of the department, with well-prepared documentation and good assessment schemes. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is generally well considered. The taught ICT course in all years is of benefit in developing pupils' knowledge and skills in the subject. However, pupils are not able to make full use of these skills as they are not at present all undertaking a course for an external qualification at Key Stage 4. The whole school cross-curricular management of the subject, however, is not satisfactory.



153. There have been good improvements since the last inspection, particularly in the provision and management of new ICT facilities. From unsatisfactory at the last inspection, teaching is now good in formal ICT lessons. Further training is required to enable staff to incorporate ICT across the curriculum. Learning is good in both key stages as opposed to unsatisfactory at the last report. However, the weakness in the provision of ICT across all subjects persists. The school is in a very strong position to move forward and attain good standards overall in a relatively short time.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

154. Standards in French at Key Stage 3 were well below the national average in 2000, but were an improvement on the previous year. Less than one half of all pupils reached the expected level and only one fifth exceeded it.

155. In 1999, the percentage of candidates who gained A\*-C grades in GCSE German was well below the national average. Girls performed significantly better than boys. The percentage of pupils who gained A\*-G grades was close to the national average. Results in 2000 indicate the continuation of a trend of gradually improving standards over the last four years.

156. Standards of work seen in Key Stage 3 lessons are below national expectations. Most pupils are able to take part in simple, structured conversations on well-rehearsed topics. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to use their knowledge of grammar to adapt language models to suit their own individual needs. Overall, however, pupils have a limited range of vocabulary, and little confidence in speaking. During the lessons observed, there was no evidence of independent use of the foreign language for real, communicative purposes. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and can take part in highly structured role-plays on well-rehearsed topics. They copy words and short phrases correctly.

157. In Key Stage 4 lessons, attainment is below national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils develop the ability to write some extended passages and use tenses other than the present, but for most pupils vocabulary is limited to a basic level. Conversation is hesitant and pupils do not use the foreign language to carry out routine transactions in the classroom. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They can take part in carefully controlled, short exchanges with one another using cues or prompts to help them.

158. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and represents an improvement on that observed at the previous inspection. Unsatisfactory teaching was observed in only one lesson, where the tasks set for the pupils did not match their needs. In the majority of lessons teaching is satisfactory, and in almost one third of them it is good. The planning of lessons is good. Clear objectives are explained to pupils at the beginning of each lesson and reviewed at the end. Teachers provide a variety of appropriate activities to enable learners to develop their skills. There is a lively pace to most lessons, which contributes to the enthusiastic response of pupils, especially in Key Stage 3, and sustains their interest. Frequent use of the foreign language by the teacher sets an appropriate challenge to listening skills and Key Stage 3 higher-attaining pupils in particular rise to it well. Not enough insistence is made on making pupils use the foreign language for real purposes, and this has a negative impact upon the standards reached. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar in different contexts. The progress of pupils is consequently impeded.

159. The management of the department is good. The recently appointed head of department has developed with her colleagues a clear focus on, and a shared commitment to, the raising of achievement. A new emphasis on sharing good practice has made a positive contribution to the quality of teaching and is steadily improving standards. Documentation is good. Schemes of work are detailed, but greater emphasis on the contribution that ICT could make to higher standards. The procedures for monitoring and reviewing pupils' achievement in Key Stage 4 are effective in encouraging pupils to raise their standards and in making pupils aware of what they need to do in order to improve. The development in Key Stage 3 of procedures that set clear targets for individual pupils would have a beneficial impact upon standards. Particular analysis needs to be made of the achievements of boys, which are holding back the rate of improvement.

## **MUSIC**

160. Since the previous inspection, music has been completely revitalised. Pupils are enthusiastic about their music making, and a significant proportion of the school is regularly involved in an exciting range of extra-curricular musical activities. Music is now fulfilling an important ambassadorial role in enhancing the convivial quality of life of the school and its wider community as well as that of all the pupils involved.

161. The numbers of pupils taking GCSE examinations have increased over the last three years and results have consistently been well above the national subject averages for A\*-C grades. Pupils achieve very good standards in composing. Their work is musically expressive and well structured, reflecting a degree of creative independence. For example, one composition in the style of a samba was constructed on a computer. A significant number of pupils compose effectively for the instruments they play and some develop very accomplished performing skills.

162. The attainment of pupils aged 14 years is average compared to the expectations of the National Curriculum. They develop a good understanding of basic musical elements and notation. Their performing skills are, however, slightly above average compared to what is found in schools with a similar background. They use a variety of percussion instruments and keyboards to compose and perform pieces of various lengths and degrees of complexity. Many of their exotically colourful drumming activities are rhythmically demanding and exhilarating. Standards of singing have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils sing well in tune with good diction and alert vocal quality. Their enjoyment extends to providing vibrant chorus work in school shows and bright choral singing in school concerts.

163. The qualities of teaching and learning are outstanding. Lessons are made enjoyable and practical. Music is chosen and devised that is stimulating and appealing to young people. Pupils are actively involved in creating music that demands a lot of concentration. This was particularly evident in Year 8 classes developing African drumming techniques where pupils had to mix and change rhythmic patterns quickly. Many lessons like these are creatively experimental. Younger pupils, in particular, are frequently helped to understand the elements of music through the effective use of physical games. For example, a Year 7 class enjoyed creating body patterns in teams to represent simple rhythmic shapes that demonstrated their understanding of note values. Discipline is excellent in all lessons. The teacher is particularly adept at generating and controlling high levels of enthusiasm that result in exciting musical ensembles. Pupils are expected to keep up a rigorous pace of improvising and achieve

accurate and expressive results. Practical work is constantly assessed as pupils rehearse so that they each know how well they are doing, and develop a clear understanding of what they are aiming to achieve. This was effective, for example, in keyboard lessons in Year 9, in which pupils worked independently, and at their own pace, to improve their reading of music and performance of short tunes. More formal procedures for marking pupils' work in Years 7-9, however, now need to be related to the levels of attainment outlined in the new National Curriculum.

164. Pupils' attitudes to music are excellent and have improved steadily since the previous inspection. They take an active interest in making music and look forward with pleasure to their music lessons. Their behaviour is excellent. They are particularly careful when using instruments in the confined space available in the music room. Pupils collaborate willingly and enjoy strongly productive relationships with each other and with their teacher. For example, during the inspection, frequent opportunities emerged in lessons for individual pupils to act as conductors, and take responsibility for making musical decisions. Pupils' enthusiasm for music generally is reflected in a number of ways. As well as the increasing interest in GCSE courses, at least 50 pupils take advantage of the full range of extra instrumental lessons provided free by the county music service. The response to the wide variety of other extra-curricular musical activities available is very good. Over 20 per cent of the whole school is involved each year in an impressive range of concerts, shows and other events, many of which combine aspects of the expressive arts effectively for the benefit of both the school and the wider community. In particular, the school has developed a good reputation as an area centre for African Dance and Drumming. In order to maintain a wide range of other vocal and instrumental activities, it has been necessary to run them for only a limited series of weeks each year. The progress made by these groups would be enhanced if ways could be found to run one or more, for example a choir or band, permanently throughout the year.
165. The leadership of this busy department is dynamic and purposeful. Over the last four years music has been completely and successfully overhauled with the effect that it is now one of the most valued subjects in the school. It has very good resources and is taught in a music room that is filled with exotic instruments, audio equipment and artefacts, all of which provide an attractive working atmosphere. This, however, does reduce the space available for performing, particularly for the significant number of very large classes. In these circumstances, the progress of some pupils is adversely affected because they have limited access to keyboards. The two practice rooms are sited too far away from the main teaching room to be of sufficient use in class teaching.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

166. Physical Education has made good, steady improvement since the last inspection. Careful planning of the schemes of work ensures that all activities meet the requirements of the curriculum.
167. Both at the age of 14 and at the age of 16, pupils attain standards in games that are in line with or above national expectations. Pupils of all abilities show good levels of achievement in swimming, netball and basketball. By the age of 14, nearly all pupils use their skills in ball games with increasing precision. Careful explanation and supportive feedback help pupils to improve their performance. Year 8 pupils in basketball are successful in the use of the "lay-up" shot and pupils in Year 7 show increasing confidence in water-based activities. Life saving is a particular strength of the department. Pupils studying for GCSE are able to plan games lessons and evaluate their outcomes.
168. Performance at GCSE has varied over the last four years and mostly reflects the ability of the group involved. For example attainment at grades A\*-C was above national average by 5 per cent in 1999, but below by 16 per cent in 2000. In both years 100 per cent of pupils passed in the range A\*-G. The work seen from the current Year 10 and 11 groups is encouraging. There is not as much difference between the attainment of boys and girls as in other subjects.
169. In all lessons pupils respond positively. They are prompt and have appropriate kit for each activity, with few non-participants. They show interest in their work, sustain concentration and apply themselves to given tasks. They confidently answer questions and can work well individually, in pairs or in small groups. Pupils understand the need to practise in order to develop and improve skills. They are also able to evaluate what is needed to improve their own and others' performances. Very good relationships are a feature of all lessons, with pupils showing good social and co-operative skills. Attainment and progress benefit from this positive attitude to the subject. In some lessons, however, the size of the class is too large for good progress to be made, especially by the more able pupils.
170. Teaching is always good or better, with some lessons being very good or excellent. Teachers plan their lessons well for the needs of pupils of all levels of ability. They show excellent knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. High expectations and appropriately challenging tasks extend and motivate the pupils. With lessons continuing at a good pace and in well-considered stages there is plenty of opportunity for pupils to achieve success. Good explanations and questions ensure understanding and this creates a learning situation where pupils' contributions are valued.
171. The curriculum has breadth and balance. Through careful planning it meets the needs of all pupils and most are able to achieve end of key stage expectations. Schemes of work are well developed for all activities and provide a good basis for individual lesson planning. The department offers a range of extra-curricular activities, which benefit pupils of all abilities, although the short lunchtime limits the scope of activities. The introduction of a house system and swimming gala has increased opportunities for pupils to become involved in competitive events. Assessment policies are well developed and pupils are aware of their progress in the activities; there is an on-going commitment to further improvement in this area.

172. The department is well organised and effectively managed, with staff sharing a strong sense of purpose. This has a positive impact on the standards achieved. Specialist staff are ably assisted by several non-specialists in games and swimming. Teaching strategies are carefully considered and pupils benefit from this thorough approach. Every effort is made to provide pupils with opportunities to improve their standards. Games fixtures with other schools occur regularly and a number of pupils participate in sport at regional level. The department makes a contribution to sport in the community through its links with local sports clubs. These offer opportunities for more able pupils to develop their skills further.
173. In 1999 the department gained the Sportsmark Award in recognition of the quality of provision of its physical education and school sport. The growing number of pupils in the school puts pressure on the department in its endeavour to continue to provide the range of physical activities.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

174. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are in line with what is expected of the age group. They know about key practices in the religions they study, and some are able to explain their significance in the life of religious communities today. They show evidence of a high level of respect for people with religious motivation and beliefs, by the seriousness with which they treat role-play about adult religious ceremonies and by their attitude to visitors from religious communities in the local area. This is based on their evident insight into the intensity of original events that still inspire belief. Attention to detail in the work of the lower attainers demonstrates the seriousness with which pupils approach the subject.
175. In 2000, for the first time, all but a few Year 11 pupils of all abilities were entered in the GCSE short course studying Christian perspectives on social, moral and world issues, and also studying Judaism. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was significantly lower than the national average and the performance of the boys was significantly lower than the girls. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-G was in line with the picture nationally. For a few pupils their grade in religious studies was their highest grade and for most it was similar to their performance in other subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades A\*-A was lower than the national average, and only girls gained these grades. Up to 1999 results year on year showed a steady improvement since the last inspection, including results in 1997 which were significantly above the national average.
176. Pupils enter the school with a good background in the four areas of attainment required by the locally agreed syllabus. They understand there can be different ways of interpreting events and that there are important differences between stories and what really happens. They are keen to explore issues which involve spiritual, moral and social values and are ready to think and reflect about personal beliefs and values. By the end of Key Stage 3 all pupils have a strong awareness of the similarities between religious ceremonies and symbols and pupils with special educational needs are making better progress than expected. This is not yet balanced by attention to the skill of developing an overview of what makes each religion distinctive, while also understanding the range of opinion and practice within each religion. In the work seen during the inspection pupils collect detailed information about what happens in different religious ceremonies. Pupils make good notes independently and show an interest in using technical words correctly. Pupils do not talk about what they are learning in sufficient depth. Boys do not write in as much detail as the girls, and are not developing the skills they need to organise the increasing number of facts they are learning, or to highlight the issues for which they

require the information. Where pupils are asking questions about people's choices they are too directed and not encouraged enough to explain and analyse reasons. They also make unsatisfactory progress in analysing and balancing different viewpoints and their consequences, and in identifying the issues which are common both to religions and the choices everybody makes.

177. At Key Stage 4, all pupils study Christianity and Judaism and most pupils will be entered for the short course GCSE. The timetable allows some pupils time to complete the full GCSE course, while others will be entered for the easier Certificate of Achievement. Pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of religions, producing full and accurate notes on what they learn. The work seen is average for pupils of their age and pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress. Structured work for low attainers helps them to complete tasks. Pupils answer questions enthusiastically, but they are not asked to reflect on the deeper implications of the religion studied. There is insufficient extended writing and independent research supported by use of information technology.
178. Overall, the quality of teaching is often good in Key Stage 3 and always satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 teaching is satisfactory with good features and some weaknesses. In both key stages, good teaching uses questions well to reinforce pupils' knowledge, to build on pupils' understanding and then extend it, and to summarise learning. Where teaching reverts to closed questions, pupils' interest flags. In Key Stage 4 it is unsatisfactory when the teacher accepts simple answers on complex issues, and accepts or rejects answers without letting pupils explain their reasons. In both key stages, where pupils are allowed to take an active part, lessons improve. There are sometimes too few activities in lessons for pupils to develop their skills of working on their responses to religious teachings in groups, to share investigations and to collaborate and argue the merits of different points of view through debate, oral discussion, feedback, plenaries and extended writing. The provision of well-prepared resources and support materials, including videos, provides authentic examples of religious practice. Their potential is not exploited sufficiently with pupils being invited to explore what is in pictures and poems, or to handle artefacts, before teacher direction takes over. Where there are clear tasks, pupils supply good examples from their own experience, and their work supports and reinforces learning and allows pupils to demonstrate what they know and understand. Pupils in Year 7 need to begin to use artefacts and local case studies earlier when traditions are studied, rather than looking at ideas from the past. This would help pupils to understand better what these mean to different religions today and satisfy the requirement in religious education for pupils to look at Christianity, Islam and Hinduism through the eyes of their members in Great Britain today. Pupils need more help with making connections between issues which bring out people's values (AT3) and their learning about religions (AT2, 3) and their own real life situations (AT4), in order to raise standards. At Key Stage 4 better guidance is required to encourage answers which develop the skills of understanding and evaluation and provide more challenge for high achievers.
179. The department is well led. Since the last inspection the subject has been given support by the school to meet statutory requirements. Time is sufficient and schemes of work are in place. Pupils learning benefits greatly from visits in Year 8 to see religions as they are practised today. Aims are shared at the start of lessons but would be more useful if they were linked to pupils' gains in skills and attainment. The department is in the process of implementing new assessment procedures, but these are not yet sufficiently linked to evidence of attainment to provide adequate guidance for future improvement. Teachers evaluate GCSE results data well, and have introduced a range of courses to meet pupils' needs and this will need monitoring. Teachers provide good role models,

establish good relationships with pupils in all bands, and provide good display. The department is making a substantial contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils.

180. The department has made good progress and should build on this by giving attention to the following matters: at Key Stage 3 plan to include more activities in lessons for pupils to develop their skills of working in groups on their responses to religious teachings, to share investigations and to collaborate and argue the merits of different points of view through debate, oral discussion, feedback, plenaries and extended writing; at Key Stage 4 throughout the course, make pupils more responsible for their learning by giving better guidance on answers required for GCSE which demonstrate skills of understanding and evaluation, and provide more challenge for high achievers.