

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**St Antony's R.C High School**  
Manchester

LEA area: Trafford

Inspection Number: 186293  
Unique Reference Number: 106372

Headteacher: Mr P.H. Doyle

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Reporting inspector: Mr Edward Wheatley

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> September

Under OFSTED contract number: 707989

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Modern
Type of control:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bradfield Road Urmston Manchester M41 9PD
Telephone number:	0161 748 4571
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father J Carter
Date of previous inspection:	27 <sup>th</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup> November 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

<b>Team members</b>	<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
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Mrs D Granville-Hastings		Equal opportunities; Support, guidance and pupils' welfare; Attendance; Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; Partnership with parents and the community; Accommodation.
Mrs V Jenkins	English; Drama.	
Mr R Portsmouth	Mathematics.	
Mr D Tracey	Science.	
Mr G Preston	Design and technology; Information technology; GNVQ; Business studies.	
Mrs R Fox	Modern foreign languages.	
Mrs S Matthews	History.	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development.
Mrs L Dunsmore	Geography; Special educational needs.	
Mr P Harle	Art .	
Mr D Wigley	Music.	Curriculum and assessment; Staffing and resources.
Mr J Challands	Physical education.	The efficiency of the school.

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## **MAIN FINDINGS**

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

- The most able pupils in the school make good progress.
- There is much good teaching, and a small amount that is outstanding.
- The ethos for learning is good, and pupils are proud to attend the school.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good and relationships are strong.
- The school provides good support and guidance for its pupils, especially in the way in which it promotes behaviour, and pays high attention to providing a safe and secure learning environment.
- The provision for moral and social development is good.
- Financial control and administration are good.

### **Where the school has weaknesses**

- I. Pupils' literacy skills are underdeveloped.
- II. Statutory requirements are not met for the teaching of information technology as a separate subject or for the applications of information technology in some other subjects.
- III. The curriculum is not efficiently organised, and so the needs of some pupils are not fully met.
- IV. There is insufficient classroom support for pupils with special educational needs.
- V. There is a shortage of resources, particularly in information technology, the library and music.
- VI. Financial planning is not linked closely enough to the needs of the curriculum.
- VII. The attendance of pupils falls below the national average.
- VIII. The governors' annual report does not give details of access or provision for disabled pupils, or a full financial statement, or details about examination results.

**The school has more strengths than weaknesses, and the leadership of the school has a positive effect on helping raise attainment. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be dealt with, and the plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils in the school.**

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

The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection. The improvement in the pastoral system has been significant, and there is now a clearly structured system, which involves all staff in providing a good level of support and guidance for pupils. The quality of homework and the consistency with which it is set have improved. The roles of the senior management team are now clearly defined and match the needs of the school. The school development planning process has improved satisfactorily overall, and all staff are now effectively involved. However, targets for development are not specific enough, and it is therefore not possible for the school to effectively monitor and evaluate its improvement. There has been insufficient progress in revising curriculum arrangements. Some changes were made after the last inspection, but the process of review and development has not kept pace with the changes taking place in the school. The Code of Practice for special education has not been fully implemented. Pupils with special needs now have individual education plans, but these are too general and do not provide specific targets in all subjects. All health and safety issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed.



• **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Grade	Key
			<i>well above average</i>	A
			<i>above average</i>	B
			<i>average</i>	C
			<i>below average</i>	D
			<i>well below average</i>	E
Key Stage 3 Test	E	D		
GCSE Examinations	E	E		

Unconfirmed results of the 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 3 show that attainment is below that in 1998. While the percentage of pupils obtaining Level 5 (the national average) changed very little, the proportion obtaining Level 6 or higher was much reduced. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations in 1999 was significantly better than in 1998.

• **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Art, some English and French lessons	
Years 10-11	Good	Art, design and technology	A small proportion of English and French lessons
English	Satisfactory		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

Ninety seven per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better and about one eighth is very good or excellent. The best teaching shows challenge and high expectations resulting in the noticeable improvement in standards. The small proportion of teaching that is unsatisfactory or worse is associated with lack of challenge and occasionally poor management of pupils' behaviour.

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

**Other aspects of the school**

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Pupils generally behave well and the school has a clear behaviour policy, which is understood by all pupils.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory overall, and the result of persistent absence by a number of pupils. The school has recently introduced improved procedures to monitor and promote good attendance.
Ethos*	There is good, purposeful working atmosphere and the great majority of pupils are proud to attend the school.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory overall. The headteacher, senior management and governors provide clear direction for raising standards and this is having a positive effect. Governors are increasingly involved in decision making. However, the school development plan does not have clearly stated targets and this has led to some inefficient use of resources, particularly teachers.
Curriculum	The curriculum is unsatisfactory. Information technology is not used sufficiently in many subjects, particularly design and technology. The timetable is inflexible, leading to some very small teaching groups. There has been insufficient reorganisation of classes and the timetable to take account of changes in pupil numbers and the learning needs of all pupils.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision is unsatisfactory overall. Some of the specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. However, there is insufficient support in other lessons and pupils' individual education plans do not identify their learning needs for all subjects.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The moral and social provision of the school is good; provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory overall. The school has successfully supported non-specialist teachers so that they are effective in the subjects they teach. Resources are broadly adequate although there is not enough information technology equipment. Accommodation is adequate although some rooms in design and technology are too small.
Value for money	Satisfactory overall when taking into account the improving standards at GCSE.

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

## **The parents' views of the school**

### **What most parents like about the school      What some parents are not happy about**

- IX. The school is very supportive when there are problems and staff do their best to help.
- X. They are well informed about their children's progress.
- XI. High standards of work are encouraged.
- XII. Children enjoy coming to school.
- XIII. A wide range of out-of-school activities is provided.
- XIV. The school encourages positive values and attitudes.
- XV. A small number of parents feel that

Sixteen parents attended the meeting with the Registered Inspector before the meeting. They were pleased with the work of the school and all felt that pupils are given considerable help to reach high standards. Some parents expressed concern at the age and small number of computers available. Inspectors are in agreement with the strengths recognised by parents and with their concern at the state of computer equipment. Evidence gathered during the inspection showed that generally the quantity and quality of homework is good.

## · **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

The headteacher, staff and governing body must now:

- **Improve literacy skills by:**

*(Paragraphs: 18, 85, 72, 81, 99)*

- \*.providing a wide range of challenging reading material;
- \*.providing more up-to-date materials in the library;
- \*.sharing more widely the good practice of developing speaking and writing skills seen in some lessons.

- **Meet statutory requirements for information technology by:**

*(Paragraphs: 40, 75, 84, 125, 126, 129)*

- \*.ensuring all pupils at Key Stage 4 experience the subject;
- \*.providing opportunities in all subjects for pupils to develop their information technology skill;
- \*.improving the quality and quantity of computer resources.

- **Establish a regular curriculum review procedure so that:**

*(Paragraphs: 41, 71, 77, 86, 87)*

- \*.anticipated curriculum changes can be taken into account in the school development planning process;
- \*.the timetable is reorganised to allow for the changing numbers of pupils;
- \*.there are fewer small teaching groups;
- \*.staffing needs are planned in advance and better use is made of available staff.

- **Improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs by:**

*(Paragraphs: 38, 41, 48, 49, 63, 74, 80)*

- \*.involving subject teachers in setting specific targets for pupils which support the general targets in individual education plans;
- \*.providing more support for pupils within lessons;
- \*.ensuring that pupils withdrawn from lessons to develop basic skills are not disadvantaged in the subjects they miss;
- \*.providing more time for the effective management of special educational needs.

- **Improve the school development planning process by producing detailed targets for development so that:**

*(Paragraphs: 76, 77, 86)*

- \*.the school can evaluate its improvement effectively;

\*.financial plans can be linked accurately to future curriculum planning.  
The school must also:

\*.Develop the roles of heads of department, especially in monitoring teaching, in order to raise the quality of subject provision by sharing the very good teaching skills identified during the inspection,  
*(Paragraphs: 72, 81)*

\*.Make effective use of available assessment information to provide clear targets for pupils, so that they know what they have to do to improve their work,  
*(Paragraphs: 36, 46)*

\*.Ensure that reports to parents consistently comment on pupils' attainment and progress in the attainment targets for each subject, and provide targets for improving work,  
*(Paragraph: 64)*

\*.Monitor the Governors annual report to make sure it meets statutory requirements to provide:

\*.details about access and provision for disabled pupils,

\*.a full annual financial statement, and,

\*.details of examination results.

*(Paragraphs: 64, 75)*

\* **INTRODUCTION**

\* **Characteristics of the school**

1. St Antony's Roman Catholic is an 11-16 modern school in Urmston, about two miles from the middle of Manchester. The school stands in its own large grounds, bordered on one side by a motorway and on other sides by small businesses and private and local authority housing.

The school was formed from three small secondary schools in 1990, at the time of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford's reorganisation, with the co-operation of the local education authority. The local authority and Catholic schools operate a selection procedure at the end of primary schooling, so that pupils then go on to Catholic or authority grammar and modern schools. A little over 40 per cent of pupils in Catholic primary schools go to grammar schools.

2. There are 443 pupils in the school, which is below average for this type of school, and numbers are falling from year to year. The school draws from a wide area and several primary schools. Pupils come from private homes and local authority or privately rented accommodation, and a significant number come from homes with social difficulties. The great majority of pupils come from homes where English is the first language. The majority come from homes with a Roman Catholic heritage, although this is decreasing as the number of Catholic children entering primary school decreases. Just under three per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs, which is higher than the national average, and almost a quarter of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, which is above average. About a third of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is above average. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below the national average, and there are very few pupils with higher attainment.

3. The school's aims are headed by the school's commitment to "live out Christ's message by raising the awareness of the individual to the teachings of the Church in their life and environment". They also include: providing an atmosphere in which pupils perceive their own worth; promoting links with the church, family and wider community; promoting a desire for academic excellence; developing self-discipline and self-confidence, and developing responsible attitudes to citizenship and social justice.

4. The governing body has set academic targets for the school up to the year 2000, and raising attainment is the main aim of the school development plan. This central aim is supported by others, which include developing the curriculum to include vocational work in Key Stage 4, developing work to meet the learning needs of all pupils, developing a policy to improve pupils' literacy skills and reviewing assessment and reporting procedures.

## 5. Key indicators

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
for latest reporting year:	1998	61	39	100

5. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	37	28	18
	Girls	21	18	7
	Total	58	46	25
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	59(46)	47(50)	26(45)
	National	65(56)	60(60)	56(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	16(12)	15(20)	6(14)
	National	35(23)	36(37)	27(29)

5. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	41	29	21
	Girls	22	19	14
	Total	63	48	35
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	64(50)	49(50)	36(33)
	National	62(59)	64(63)	62(61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	20(20)	20(24)	4(13)
	National	31(28)	37(37)	31(29)

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

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

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	48	42	90

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	10	41	42
	Girls	5	33	38
	Total	15	74	80
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	17(21)	82(72)	89(n/a)
	National	44.6(43.3)	89.8(88.5)	95.2(n/a)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	13	69.0
National		n/a

<sup>2</sup>Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year



## Attendance

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

		%
Authorised	School	9.8
Absence	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised	School	1.0
Absence	National comparative data	0.4

5.

## 5. Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	28
Permanent	5

## 5. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	13
Satisfactory or better	97
Less than satisfactory	3

5. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

5. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

5. **Attainment and progress**

5. Attainment on entry to the school is below average and has fallen over recent years. The school is in a local authority where there is selection at age of eleven. A significant proportion of pupils from the feeder primary schools, including almost all higher attaining pupils, go to Roman Catholic and local authority grammar schools and also to comprehensive schools in neighbouring authorities.

6. In the 1998 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests, attainment was below the national average overall. In the English end of Key Stage 3 national tests, the proportion of pupils obtaining the expected levels was average, in mathematics it was below average and in science it was well below average. In English, mathematics and science, the proportions of pupils obtaining the higher levels was well below average. Compared with other secondary modern schools, attainment was below average in English, average in mathematics and well below average in science.

7. Over the three years 1996 to 1998, the performance of pupils was well below average, although in English and mathematics there has been a rise in standards. In science, standards rose between 1996 and 1997, but fell again in 1998. Girls performed better than girls in English and boys did better than girls in mathematics and science over the same period, which was similar to differences found nationally. In the unconfirmed results of the National Curriculum tests in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils reaching the national average (Level 5) was broadly the same as in 1998. However, the proportion obtaining higher levels in English and mathematics was lower than previous years, and no pupils obtained the higher level in science.

8. In the 1998 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades was well below the national average and well below the average for schools of a similar type. Results were a little worse than in 1997, but better than in 1996. The proportion obtaining five or more A\*-G grades in 1998 was well below average, but an overall improvement since 1996. Based on the average points scored by pupils taking GCSEs, the overall trend is one of improvement, although at a slower rate than that seen nationally. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, just over a third of pupils obtained five or more A\*-C grades, which is a considerable improvement on the school's 1998 results.

9. Attainment in English is below average by the end of Key Stage 3 and inspection evidence broadly confirms the results of National Curriculum tests. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are below average. Their listening skills are good, but they lack confidence in speaking, often answering briefly and not in complete sentences. In particular, lower attaining pupils do not receive sufficient support in some lessons to help them develop adequate speaking skills. Pupils' reading skills are below average overall by the end of Key Stage 3. However, standards are improving because pupils are reading more than previously,

although their choices of books are not always suitably challenging. Writing skills are below average by the end of Key Stage 3. Handwriting is neat and spelling and punctuation are reasonably accurate, but pupils have too little experience of drafting. Library provision is poor and pupils have insufficient access to computers, with the result that they have below average research and information retrieval skills.

10. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is close to the national average. The speaking, listening and reading skills of the highest attaining pupils are broadly average. In their extended writing, pupils use drafting and word processing more competently and frequently than at Key Stage 3. In a few instances poor class management impedes learning.

11. Progress in most English lessons is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, but unsatisfactory overall because of gaps in provision and the slower progress of lower attaining pupils. Pupils enter the school with low attainment especially in reading, but by the end of the key stage a small proportion reach higher levels. Progress is good where teachers have high expectations, for example when they focus on developing speaking skills through group discussion and provide a brisk pace which keeps pupils engrossed in their tasks.

12. Progress is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 4. When teachers use the GCSE syllabus carefully and provide pupils with a clear view of what they need to do to succeed progress accelerates. However, progress of some lower attaining pupils is unsatisfactory because of the limited time provided to meet their special needs.

13. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in mathematics is below average. A small number of higher attaining pupils calculate competently, solve equations and construct simple formulae, as is expected for pupils of their age. However, attainment is still below average overall by the end of Key Stage 4. Higher attaining pupils solve equations competently and draw graphs. They use known speeds, times and distances to carry out a number of different calculations, in line with expectations of pupils of their age. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall at both key stages in developing their mathematical skills. Careful planning of work results in sound progression for many pupils. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress because they are in groups matching their level of attainment and work for them is carefully presented.

14. Attainment in science by the end of Key Stage 3 is below average, and not as good as the same pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. Pupils generally gain some knowledge in the main areas of science, but at a slower pace than normally seen. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment remains below average overall. However, some higher attaining pupils know about what is produced when common fuels burn. Lower attaining pupils successfully carry out experiments requiring measurements and simple calculations. Progress is unsatisfactory overall at Key Stage 3. Nevertheless, satisfactory progress was seen in some classes during the inspection, an indication that standards are starting to rise and that changes in teaching staff are beginning to take effect. At Key Stage 4, pupils make satisfactory progress in learning about key scientific concepts and processes. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as a result of the support they receive from teachers within the subject.

15. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in art, French, music and physical education is broadly average. However, it is below average in drama, design and technology, geography, history and information technology. In art, pupils make good progress. Individual support by teachers and, for example, reference to the work of artists, have a positive effect on helping pupils develop their drawing skills. In French progress is good because carefully planned activities make a good contribution to the development of pupils' language skills. Progress in design and technology is good. Pupils enter the school with low levels of knowledge and skill, and an early introduction to good working practice and understanding of the design process helps them make good progress. They make satisfactory progress in geography, history, music and physical education. In geography and history, teachers' high expectations and effective use of resources have a positive effect on progress. In music, the subject expertise and enthusiasm of the teacher are contributory factors to sound progress. In physical education, the teaching of basic skills and an emphasis on improvement helps pupils make satisfactory progress.

16. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in art is above average. In design and technology, drama, history, modern foreign languages and physical education attainment is average. However, it is below average in geography, information technology, music and business education. Progress is good in art, history, business education, drama and physical education. Teachers' good subject knowledge, careful use of resources and individual support and advice to pupils are significant in helping pupils to make good progress. In information technology, lack of provision for many pupils and shortages of equipment result in unsatisfactory progress overall, but where pupils are taught information technology, progress is generally good. Progress is unsatisfactory in music. Nevertheless, progress is often good in lessons, but the newly appointed teacher has not been in post for long enough to have had an impact on progress over time.

17.

18. Pupils' language skills are unsatisfactory and they lack confidence when speaking. Although they listen well to their teachers, they respond to questions only briefly, not always in full sentences and sometimes inaudibly. In art and some mathematics and science lessons, pupils learn to observe, analyse, share and discuss. However, in most subjects they rarely build on others' ideas, ask probing questions or think aloud. They have too few opportunities to give presentations, engage in role play and use a range of registers, including the formal. Pupils speak confidently in French. Teachers rarely require pupils to rephrase responses to improve communication. Handwriting is neat and pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. They mainly use reporting and narrative modes, but some good imaginative writing was seen in history on life in the trenches. At Key Stage 3, pupils do too little extended writing, and opportunities for persuasive and argumentative writing are few. Pupils redraft work at Key Stage 4 in English, history and science, but this is less common at Key Stage 3. Note taking, the use of writing frames and research techniques are not taught. Most pupils read adequately and understand what they read. However, provision for the least able readers is unsatisfactory, and as a result their skills of reading aloud are weak. The library is an inadequate resource and does not support pupils' research and retrieval skills through the use of books and information technology.

17. Standards of numeracy throughout the school are sound. There has been some cross-curricular work undertaken on a common approach to graphs and charts work, and this is leading to a whole school approach to numeracy being developed. Pupils' numerical skills and

their mental arithmetic skills are regularly practised in mathematics lessons. Appropriate graphical skills, both algebraic and statistical, are evident in science, history, geography and French at both key stages. Work in business studies and science shows confident use of formulae, and spatial awareness is very evident in art. There is some good spreadsheet work in business studies, coupled with appropriate graphs. Pupils make sound progress in using these skills in all subjects through the school.

18. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in art. Pupils who attend the Corrective Reading Programme make good or very good progress, and thereby gain greater access to the mainstream curriculum. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress in modern foreign language at Key Stage 4. This because pupils who have been removed from French in Key Stage 3 are returned to the subject in Key Stage 4, but the strategies required to bring these pupils up to an acceptable standard reduce the progress of the rest of the class. Pupils with special needs make unsatisfactory progress at both key stages in English. Because there is a lack of attention to their individual learning plans and teaching does not meet their needs. All pupils on the school's register of special needs have individual learning plans and these have general learning targets. However, their plans are rarely used in subject teaching because, with the exception of art, plans do not identify appropriate individual targets for specific subjects. There is very little extra support for pupils with special educational needs in lessons, which restricts their progress.

## **20. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

19. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. The majority of pupils are interested and enjoy their time in school, responding well in lessons and participating in class work with enthusiasm. Most pupils undertake and persevere with challenging tasks. When the opportunity is presented to them, they are eager to take responsibility for their own learning and that of others by engaging in group research tasks and helping others who are less able. Pupils work hard at assignments, there are some good examples of course work in GCSE classes. The majority of pupils are conscientious about homework tasks and take a real pride in the presentation of their work. A few pupils have a poor attendance record, but the large majority are proud of their school and really value the opportunities it provides for them.

20. Behaviour in and around the school is good. This makes a substantial contribution to pupils' attainment and progress and to the harmonious and purposeful atmosphere of the school. Pupils are courteous and friendly, being happy to talk about what they are doing and to show their work to visitors. Pupils speak well of the school, show respect for the property of others, and the school environment is free from graffiti. There is a litter problem, but pupils are helping to improve the situation. The majority of parents feel that the school promotes positive attitudes and that behaviour is generally good. Pupils are well aware of the behaviour code and respond to it. Behaviour is particularly good in the dining hall and in the often very crowded corridors. Pupils feel that the school council has a very real role in discussion and decision making about issues such as school uniform. Pupils understand that school is a place for work, and this has a positive impact on standards. Behaviour in class is generally good, and only deteriorates if the task or activity fails to interest and stimulate pupils. There is little inappropriate behaviour or evidence of bullying in the school. Any incidents that do occur are taken seriously and dealt with promptly and effectively. The number of fixed period

exclusions in the school is low due to the effective systems and the time and effort put in by staff to support and retain pupils within the school.

21. Relationships within the school are good, both between pupils and between staff and pupils. In many classes, there is an obvious rapport between teachers and pupils based on mutual respect. There are some good examples of effective co-operative and collaborative work, for example in drama and in physical education, which are promoting improved levels of attainment. Opportunities are provided for pupils to share their values and beliefs, and to consider and talk about important issues. Most pupils respond to this well by reflecting and on a wide range of issues immediately relevant to their lives. The school is a caring and happy community.

22. The personal development of pupils is sound. They take responsibility for important tasks around the school, for example in the school council and prefect system. Individuals help with clubs, act as library monitors or contribute by reading in assembly. In undertaking these tasks, they make a real contribution to the day-to-day management of the school. Pupils are involved in mini-enterprises and in raising money for charity, for example by selling books during the lunch hour. The school's success in promoting the personal development of individual pupils makes a vital contribution to the maintenance of this orderly community and to the continual raising of standards both of behaviour and attainment. The last inspection report noted the good standards of behaviour, and the school has been able to maintain and improve on the standard set then.

#### **24. Attendance**

23. Attendance at the school is unsatisfactory. The attendance rate for 1998/99 was just over 89 per cent, which was below the national average of 91 per cent. Attendance is below 90 per cent in all years except Year 7. Authorised absence, at almost 10 per cent, was greater than the national average, but unauthorised absence was very slightly below the national average. There is little difference between the attendance of boys and girls, but 41 per cent of pupils have an attendance rate of less than 90 per cent, which has a detrimental effect on their attainment and progress.

24. The school uses a computerised registration system, which provides detailed information. Close monitoring of attendance data by senior staff identifies problems quickly. The school encourages good attendance and punctuality through giving it a high profile in the personal and social education programme in the lower school. A number of strategies aimed at improving attendance have been implemented over the last year, and attendance has improved by 2.5 per cent as a result.

25. Registers are taken at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions by tutors, and at the beginning of every lesson by subject teachers. Education welfare officers meet with the deputy head weekly and work with pupils identified as having problems. They would like more direct contact with heads of year, who have an in-depth knowledge of individual pupils. Registration periods are usually handled efficiently. Notices are read and administrative matters dealt with, and these times create a purposeful start to the day when handled well.

26. Punctuality is satisfactory overall. Most pupils arrive on time and lessons begin promptly. Pupils know what to do if they arrive late, and monitor their own attendance and punctuality weekly in their homework diaries.

27. The attendance rate has fallen since the last inspection and is currently unsatisfactory, though it has begun to improve.

## 29. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

### 29. Teaching

28. Teaching is good overall and about one in eight lessons have very good or occasionally excellent teaching. Ninety-seven per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better, an improvement on the position at the last inspection. The teaching in history has improved considerably since the last inspection. Very good teaching was seen in most subjects, and was seen to be particularly effective in art, English and some French lessons at Key Stage 3, and in art and design and technology at Key Stage 4.

29. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and this is used to enthuse and involve pupils, for example, in history and music. The last report criticised the lack of subject expertise of some teachers. This has been addressed, and standards are now satisfactory because staff have been given suitable training to help them teach away from their specialist area. Expectations are generally high, especially at Key Stage 4 and this is beginning to lead to rising standards. Teachers' careful planning is having a noticeable effect on helping the higher attaining pupils recognise what they need to do to be successful in public examinations. Learning objectives and examination syllabus criteria are often shared effectively with pupils.

30. In the best lessons, teachers use a wide range of teaching methods, which enable pupils to discuss ideas and procedures so helping their understanding. In a Year 11 science lesson, for example, the level of discussion about experimental procedure to investigate rates of cooling contributed effectively to pupils' understanding of what is involved in animals keeping warm in the wild and to their ability to express their own ideas. However, this is not a frequent part of lessons and in otherwise good or satisfactory lessons, pupils are not encouraged to discuss or debate the work they do. The teaching styles in these instances often limit pupils' involvement. There has been insufficient improvement in this area since the last inspection. In art, the individual support provided for pupils has a positive effect on their progress.

31. Overall, teachers make satisfactory use of resources to illustrate and explain knowledge. In mathematics, science, geography and history, teachers use resources well to promote understanding. Clear explanations and challenging work well matched to the demands of examinations syllabuses contribute to the progress pupils make. Information technology is not used enough to support individual subjects, mostly because there is insufficient equipment.

32. Discipline is good in the great majority of lessons, and teachers build on the well established relationships and respect teachers and pupils have for each other. High expectations and challenging work play an important part in the maintenance of a good working atmosphere in most lessons.

33. Teaching is unsatisfactory in only a very small proportion of lessons. This is usually as a result of low expectations, and in a very small proportion of lessons because discipline is



ineffective and pupils have poor respect for the teacher. Teaching in science has recently improved because teachers now have more secure subject knowledge.

34. Day-to-day marking is generally sound. Teachers' marking provides useful feedback to pupils to help them improve. Parents appreciate the help and guidance teachers give pupils. However, the use of information from standardised assessments is not sufficiently well developed to help provide targets for pupils, although an increasing amount of data is becoming available.

35. Homework has improved since the last inspection and is now set regularly and with consistent quality. Homework is used well in all subjects to support pupils' learning. There is an effective policy, and work sent home generally consolidates classwork. It is carefully planned, and pupils are given clear guidelines. Parents are informed effectively through student planners.

36. Teachers are effective in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs when they can ensure that their lesson strategies allow individual attention to be given. In art, mathematics and modern foreign languages, pupils are effectively taught when work is suitable to their needs. However, where there is a lack of suitable work, as in English and history the needs of these pupils are not met. Teaching is successful where pupils are placed in sets according to ability, as in mathematics and in English where there is some very effective specialist teaching of these pupils. The teaching of the corrective reading programme is very good because it is very well planned and delivered. In subjects across the curriculum, however, planning of teaching and the assessment of the work of these pupils does not meet their needs fully because their individual learning plans are not used effectively.

### **38. The curriculum and assessment**

37. The last inspection highlighted a number of significant issues concerning the curriculum. The school has worked hard, and, in many cases successfully, to address them. The whole school curriculum has been reviewed, and curriculum policies are now in place. In order to keep curriculum review in high profile, there are regular departmental, heads of department and senior management meetings at which curriculum items feature prominently on the agenda. Nevertheless, some curriculum problems remain, and overall curriculum provision is unsatisfactory.

38. The curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4 does not meet statutory requirements for information technology because most subjects, with the exception of science and learning support, do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use information technology. In addition, all pupils do not receive a discrete information technology course at Key Stage 4. Consequently there has been no improvement in this aspect of the school's work since the last inspection. Statutory requirements for design and technology are not met at Key Stage 3 because the systems and control aspects of the subject are not taught in full. Although efforts have been made to introduce a second foreign language, the school does not have the appropriately qualified staff necessary to teach it. The school meets the requirements of the syllabus, approved by the Roman Catholic bishop of Salford, for religious education.

39.The organisation of the curriculum is not responsive to changing demands. These include falling pupil numbers, educational initiatives such as the corrective reading programme, and the need to support pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils withdrawn for specific help in basic skills miss work in the subjects they are withdrawn from, for example French. When they rejoin those classes, they cannot catch up with the work missed without disruption to the rest of the class. There are also too many small teaching groups, which makes it difficult to provide enough special educational needs support in classes.

40.There is a comprehensive programme of personal and social education in all three years, with all classes receiving a discrete period each week. Components of the course include aspects of family and community life, the law, work and leisure and health education, including sex education, hygiene, drug misuse and healthy eating.

41.At Key Stage 4, the curriculum has been improved since the last inspection with a range of additional opportunities. Planning to ensure a smooth transfer from work at Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 is sound. At Key Stage 4, pupils study a core of English, mathematics, science, design and technology, physical education, religious education and a modern foreign language. They can choose from an options list comprising history, geography, art and music. In addition, it is possible to take GCSE business studies, a Salford Diocese Certificate in Religious Studies, certificates of achievement in English and mathematics, an RSA certificate in Core Text Processing Skills and a two-year General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) business course. Disaffected pupils can undertake a course through which they can work in local industry or commerce for a day a week, for two years, and gain a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ).

42.The provision of careers education across the school is good. The school works with Trafford Business Education Partnership to offer a range of work-related activities including work experience, NVQ schemes, Young Enterprise and other activities. The school has effective support from the local careers service, and there is a programme of visiting speakers to provide further advice.

43.At the last inspection, there had been a decline in the range of out-of-school activities. Although the provision is still narrow, it is satisfactory for the size of school and for the number of staff available to take on such initiatives, over and above their teaching commitments. However, some opportunities are missed to make best use of the cultural and educational facilities in the locality in order to widen pupils' experiences.

44.Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall. However, information obtained from end of key stage assessments and other sources is not used well enough to help pupils identify where they need to improve. Assessment procedures are used well in design and technology, mathematics, English and modern foreign languages. The school has started to collect examples of pupils' assessed work so that they grade work to a common standard. Much work has been done to produce a whole school assessment policy, and this is continually

reviewed and monitored by senior management. The policy sets out assessment procedures, criteria for grades and systems of self-assessment for pupils, ensuring that pupils are fully informed about how assessment is carried out. Informative data from cognitive ability tests and National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 is now used to plan the curriculum and future teaching. The success of this is most noticeable in the smooth transfer from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 work. However, this is in the early stages, and is not used effectively to target particular pupils in order to raise levels of attainment.

45. There is comprehensive recording of work through mark books, evidence folders, checklists, best work books and the National Record of Achievement. The recording system includes both teachers' records of curriculum planning and delivery and information on individual performance. Documentation details the purposes of recording and who is involved. There is a common marking policy across departments. Interim reports are provided for parents prior to the parents' evenings in the Spring Term, and full reports at the end of each academic year.

46. In most areas of the curriculum, the requirements for pupils with special educational needs are met. In English, however, the teaching of specific reading skills is neglected. The corrective reading programme is very effective in raising the reading age of those pupils who enter the school with very low reading ability. Pupils are withdrawn from the mainstream curriculum for four one-hour lessons each week to attend this programme. However as a consequence of timetable commitments of the specialist teachers involved, the timing of this lesson each day is inflexible. This creates issues of access to some National Curriculum subjects for the pupils involved. It is particularly serious in geography, information technology, drama and literacy, where pupils miss the only lesson timetabled in the subject.

47. Pupils who have statements of special need receive effective support in the curriculum for one or two hours each week from specialist teachers provided by the local education authority. The English department comprehensively tests reading, spelling and writing ability very early in Year 7 in order to place pupils in appropriate teaching groups, but does not use the information to aid planning of teaching or planning of curriculum provision.

#### **49. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

48. Overall, the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Although there is no formal whole school policy, the school's endeavour to provide an environment in which everyone can develop spiritually, individually, socially and educationally permeates each and every day.

49. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Prayer plays an important part in the school day, with many lessons beginning and ending with joint prayers. Pupils attend either a year group or class assembly every day. Large group assemblies are taken by senior staff, and cover a range of subjects often linked to the religious calendar. Visiting priests are invited to lead assemblies, and the school joins its local primary schools in celebrations at Christmas and Easter. There is a Mass of Welcome for Year 7 pupils, their parents and teachers from their primary schools, and there is a leavers' service for Year 11

pupils. Class assemblies allow time for the theme of the week to be introduced. Suggestions for discussion and prayers are given to staff, but the use of this time depends entirely on the individual tutor, and its effectiveness is inconsistent across the school. In some groups it is a joint spiritual experience focusing pupils' minds, whilst in others it is a time to complete daily administrative routines, finishing with a prayer. The school is planning to turn an unused room into a chapel for pupils and staff to use for periods of quiet reflection.

50. Few subjects contribute directly to spiritual development. Religious education lessons do have a strong spiritual content, offering periods of reflection and quite intensive and emotional opportunities for pupils to explore feelings. In art, pupils are encouraged to learn about themselves through their artistic expressions, to value their own work and that of others, and to develop a sense of identity in other times. Their batik work and clay sculptures show a strong sense of spiritual development. In music, plans are in hand to form a liturgical choir, which will contribute to assemblies and a Christmas concert. There are few examples from other subjects, and English is a particularly neglected area. Little poetry or literature centred on emotions or feelings is studied.

51. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school has developed a framework of values which regulates behaviour. Parents agree that the school's attitudes and values have a positive effect on their children, and behaviour is good as a result. The code of conduct is clearly displayed around the school. Pupils and parents sign the home-school agreement to accept their responsibility for the attitudes and behaviour expected. The relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils show respect and work hard. Pupils are involved in many fund-raising events for charity throughout the year. These are often promoted through the school council, but individual pupils' initiatives are acted upon whenever possible. Pupils are quick to respond to the plight of others, and have been closely involved with local charities such as the Rainbow Trust. Personal and social education makes a valuable contribution to the moral development of pupils. They study topics such as truancy, bullying, decision-making, positive and negative attitudes to life and to others, and respond to the lessons well. Opportunities to explore moral stances occur in some lessons. For example, fox hunting was discussed in English. In history, pupils consider the fate of the North American Indians, and the moral issues relating to war and witchcraft. In physical education, there is a strong emphasis on the appreciation of rules and fair play. In art, pupils assess and value their own and each other's work. In religious education, there is a strong moral emphasis. In one lesson, pupils discussed personal priorities and, in another, their beliefs and commitment. In science, pupils are aware of laboratory procedures, which enable them to work in a safe environment.

52. The social development of pupils is also good. Relationships throughout the school are generally good, both between pupils and staff and between pupils. Movement around the school is good-natured, and pupils are friendly and courteous towards visitors. The school council offers pupils the chance to take on responsibility and contribute to the day-to-day running of the school. Pupils feel that their opinion is listened to, and that they can make an effective contribution to school life. Personal and social education promotes responsible attitudes to and good awareness of the problems associated with growing up and life in general. Careers guidance and work experience placements give pupils the chance to consider their own future and encourage them to look beyond their immediate neighbourhood. Year 11 prefects are assigned to Year 7 tutor groups, and act as friends and mentors of younger pupils. Pupils act as lunchtime helpers, librarians, and run the stationery and bookshops. They help

at parents' evenings and events, and Year 7 pupils work alongside Year 6 pupils during their induction day. There is provision in most lessons for pupils to work in a variety of social groupings, particularly in physical education, science and French. In history, pupils consider aspects of today's society, such as the role of parliament, propaganda in newspapers and the causes of the French revolution. The quality of the provision for moral and social education is at the heart of the school's success in helping pupils to become responsible young people.

53. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. However, there are relatively few opportunities, within and outside the curriculum, for them to learn about multi-cultural issues or the customs and traditions of people from other countries and cultures. Most departments include some visits and trips to support their studies (for example, opera workshops, Whitworth art gallery and theatre trips to London), but not as many as usually found in a school of this type. Food technology students have toured a food manufacturer. In physical education, experts and coaches have been invited to work alongside pupils. Pupils have been involved in the Project 2000 performing arts concert. In art, pupils are encouraged to use the subject as an expression of cultural identity, and to link art with historical and social events (for example, Picasso, Guernica, war, cruelty, and fascism). Pupils study artefacts from a wide range of cultures, countries and periods of history. In music, pupils study elements of Indian and Central American music. There are missed opportunities in English, where there is little study of classical literature or pre-20<sup>th</sup> century authors other than Shakespeare.

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

54. The school provides a good level of support and guidance for its pupils, which is appreciated by pupils and parents. It is an aspect that has improved greatly since the last inspection, and is now a strength of the school.

55. Since the last inspection, the school has reviewed its pastoral arrangements. Heads of year have been appointed for all years, and pupils clearly identify with their tutor and year co-ordinator. Tutors have a better understanding of their role, and relationships between staff and pupils in lessons and around school are good. Staff are accessible and responsive to pupils' needs, and give them good quality support. This generally means that most pupils are confident, happy and able to cope effectively with everyday school life. They enjoy being at school.

56. Pupils' academic progress is satisfactorily monitored by subject staff, who feed the information back to form tutors. Tutors build up a profile of each pupil, which includes behaviour and attendance information. Pupils have an interim report at the end of each term, which gives a grade for attainment and effort for each subject. For Year 11 pupils, there are extra revision workshops on the approach to GCSE examinations to help them assess their own progress.

57. There are good measures to promote discipline and good behaviour, based on a climate of honesty and fairness, showing tolerance toward others, high expectations and accepting responsibility for one's self. Pupils understand and accept the school rules and code of conduct, and consider them to be fair and reasonable. As a result, behaviour is good and pupils are generally polite, friendly and respectful. Anti-bullying education is given within personal and social education and assemblies. Pupils say there is little bullying, and it is dealt with effectively by staff when it does occur.

58. The school has established strategies over the last year to monitor and promote good attendance. These are good and, although recently introduced, are beginning to have a positive effect in raising attendance rates. The school now make more use of the data available through the computerised registration system to identify those pupils with attendance problems. Tutors and heads of year work closely with individual pupils, and the deputy head keeps an overview of the whole school. Part of the personal and social education programme for Years 7, 8 and 9 concentrates on the importance of good attendance and punctuality. There is a breakfast club to encourage pupils to arrive at school early. Pupils record their own attendance and punctuality in their homework diaries, and there are rewards for good attendance. Attendance is beginning to improve through the use of such schemes.

59. There is an effective child protection policy. The designated child protection liaison officer attends regular training, and provides good information and support for the rest of the staff. The provision of a counsellor is a new initiative, which shows the commitment the school has towards providing the best care and support it can. The school nurse visits weekly and advises pupils on health and hygiene issues. The personal and social education programme is effective, and raises pupils' awareness of topics relating to health, drugs, sex, safety, responsibility and growing up. Lessons are skilfully handled by experienced staff, and pupils respond well to the topics covered. There is a successful induction programme for prospective Year 7 pupils, and as a result they settle into their new surroundings quickly. Work experience placements and careers guidance successfully prepare Year 10 and 11 pupils for life outside school. The school works in conjunction with the Trafford Business in Education Partnership to offer some pupils the chance to learn in the work place through the M-Power scheme. The scheme has been successful in motivating some pupils who have found a more academic programme hard to cope with.

60. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are good. First aid supplies are plentiful, and accidents and sickness are dealt with efficiently. Fire drills take place regularly and emergency systems and equipment are regularly checked. The general condition of the school premises and site is good, and provides a safe, clean environment for pupils.

61. Pupils with special educational needs have some support. They have access to the learning support base at lunchtimes and are able to use computer equipment. There are literacy and numeracy packages available. There is a homework club where pupils can have extra help with homework or a suitable place to complete it. Pupils are not well supported in the classroom. There is no in-class support available for these pupils in any area of the curriculum, with the exception of science where support is available for one period.

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

62. Overall the partnership with parents and the community is satisfactory. Parents receive information from the school via the prospectus, letters home and newsletters. The annual report from governors is brief, and it does not comply with legal requirements in that it does not give information on access or provision for disabled pupils, or include a full financial statement, or provide detailed information about examination results. Parents receive an interim report on their child's progress at the end of each term, giving a grade for attainment and effort. They receive a formal written report during the summer term. These reports are positive and encouraging, but they rarely detail what pupils can do or how they can improve. Parents are informed of results of tests at the end of each key stage. Parents' evenings are held twice a year for Years 7 and 11, and once a year for other years. These are usually attended by 60 per cent of parents, and the school contacts those parents who do not attend and tries to accommodate them at alternative times.

63. The last inspection reported that parental contribution to school life was weak. This is now satisfactory because the school has tried to involve parents more through a number of different ways. For example, there is a home-school agreement which parents and pupils sign to say they understand what the school expects of them and what they can expect of the school. Parents receive a regular newsletter which is informative and informal, giving them an insight into school life. Homework diaries keep parents aware of homework that has been set and act as a means of communication between some teachers and parents. The school has run workshops on such issues as sex education, drugs awareness and use of homework. These keep parents up-to-date with the school's approach and philosophy. The parent-teacher association organises some social events, but attendance at these is often low. Of the questionnaires returned, 92 per cent of parents felt the school kept them informed as to what was being taught, and 96 per cent felt well informed about their child's progress.

64. Community links have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. Some pupils have been involved in community projects such as painting a mural in a children's club. Local amateur dramatic groups, football teams and the Trafford music centre use the school's facilities. In physical education, pupils have had the benefit of visiting coaches in cricket. The Manchester Giants basketball team regularly visit the school, and school teams compete in a variety of competitions and matches. The links with the primary schools in the area are good on a formal and informal basis. Contact with prospective pupils and parents begins early in Year 6, the induction programme is well planned, and pupils generally feel well prepared for life in secondary school.

65. Links with commerce and business were reported as few in the last inspection and these links are still limited. In food technology, pupils have the opportunity to visit food manufacturers. Governors' links with business have resulted in the donation of computers to the school. Work experience placements cover a number of employers in the area, but few employers visit the school or take part in lessons. The careers guidance programme works closely with the careers service, the Trafford Business in Education Partnership and training providers. These provide valuable support for pupils.

66. The personal and social education programme makes effective use of people from the local community who are often invited into lessons. For example, guests from the medical, police and fire services take part throughout the year. Pupils are involved in fund-raising activities for charities throughout the year. They have identified five local charities with which they are directly involved, and can appreciate the need for their support and the effect of it. For example, the school has very close links with the Rainbow Trust (a children's hospice). Pupils visit the hospice, talk to children and parents, and share that experience with the rest of the school through special assemblies. In this way, pupils develop a realistic awareness and understanding of the enormous problems other people may suffer.

67. Parents of pupils with statements of special educational need are involved in the annual review of their child's progress. They are consulted if a pupil is to be moved from stage 3 to stage 4 of the Code of Practice. They are not involved in reviews of their child's progress at stage 2 of the Code of Practice, and their opinion on the child's progress is not sought. Parents are, however, encouraged to assist with the homework tasks set for pupils on the corrective reading programme.

69.

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

### **69. Leadership and management**

68. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the headteacher has provided a clear view of how attainment can be raised, and this view is shared by the senior management, staff and governing body. The chair of the governing body provides strong support for the headteacher's aims to improve attainment, and the GCSE results in 1999 were a reflection of the impact of the drive to raise standards.

69. The management structure of the school is now well defined, and this was an issue for improvement at the last inspection. The senior management team have clearly stated responsibilities. The rotation of the heads of major departments in senior management meetings is effective in ensuring staff involvement in planning and decision making. However, the senior management has not effectively reviewed the curriculum and timetable, in order to provide an appropriate curriculum for all pupils and make best use of the school's available staff. For example, teaching groups have decreased in size in some subjects as numbers of pupils have fallen, but the timetable has not been modified sufficiently to allow for this. The introduction of the corrective reading programme has involved withdrawal of pupils from English, geography, drama, information technology and French with the consequent loss of experience in these subjects and there are inadequate procedures to help pupils catch up on missed work.



70.The support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development is satisfactory overall and still developing. The programme of teacher observation carried out by the senior management team and local authority advisers has provided useful targets for subject department development. Heads of department have contributed effectively to the process by reviewing teachers' marking, planning and the work of their pupils. They also negotiate targets for individual teachers' development. However, heads of department are not monitoring and evaluating the teaching of colleagues and this inhibits the effectiveness of sharing good teaching practice.

71.The implementation of policies is broadly sound. Since the last inspection, a consistent homework policy has been introduced. The pastoral system was unsatisfactory at the last inspection. It is now satisfactory because it has been reorganised and is now strengthened by effective policies for behaviour, sex education and drugs awareness. There are policy statements for all subjects and an appropriate review process to revise policies as necessary. The school has reviewed its equal opportunities policy since the last inspection, and it now effectively promotes principles of equality and justice in a Christian environment.

72.The Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs is not fully implemented, and this was a key issue at the last inspection. Pupils now have general individual education plans, which is an improvement on the last inspection, and these are reviewed with parental involvement. However, teachers do not write subject specific learning targets for pupils' individual learning, with the exception of art, and nor do teachers have ready access to individual learning plans. The lack of progress in this issue is because teachers believe they lack the necessary expertise to set appropriate targets, the special educational needs co-ordinator does not have sufficient time to fulfil the role and because there is poor communication between the learning support department and other departments. Consequently, teachers do not have sufficient information to be secure in judging at which stage of the Code of Practice a pupil should be placed.

73.Statutory requirements are not met for information technology because, with the exception of science and learning support, subjects do not include opportunities for pupils to use information technology skills in their lessons. At Key Stage 3, the requirements for design and technology are not met because there are insufficient resources for the teaching of systems and control elements of the curriculum. At Key Stage 4, only those pupils following the discrete information technology course receive their statutory entitlement. The governors' annual report to parents does not comment on access or provision for disabled pupils, or give a full financial statement, or provide detailed information about examination results. The governors' report also fails to provide enough information about how the school manages all aspects of special educational needs.

74.Development planning is satisfactory, and has improved since the last inspection. The school development plan is now a working document that involves all staff through subject departments and pastoral organisation. There is an effective annual planning procedure in which continuing school and departmental priorities are discussed and contributions to continuing developments are planned. Senior management monitors departmental

development planning to ensure consistency of approach and full involvement. However, priorities and targets at all levels of planning are not sufficiently detailed so that, for example, a target to “improve standards” does not state specifically what the expectation for improved standards is. Similarly, the means to bring about improvements are not sufficiently detailed and the means to measure success are therefore vague.

75. Governors are increasingly well informed and involved in the decision making and development processes. The chair of the governing body is aware of the need to keep colleague governors informed, and has introduced effective procedures to ensure this happens. The governors are supportive of the school and closely involved in both short and long term planning. Strategic planning does not, however fully recognise the importance of long term curriculum planning, and the implications this will have for staffing and subsequently financial planning.

76. The ethos of the school is good. Pupils enjoy learning in almost all lessons throughout the school. They are well behaved and responsive to the high expectations placed on them. A significant number of pupils expressed their pride in attending the school.

78.

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

77. The school generally has sufficient staff, accommodation and learning resources. There are sufficient qualified and experienced staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. The school has above the average number of teachers for schools of this type. The last inspection highlighted the fact that many teachers were limited in experience, and that there was a poor match between qualifications, experience and responsibility. This situation has improved because the school has effectively supported those teachers with limited subject expertise. There was a high level of staff absence at the last inspection and this is still the case. Although there has been some improvement, there is still disruption of teaching in some subjects. Most of the absences are the result of illnesses and beyond the school's control.

78. There are insufficient support staff to meet the needs of the school. In particular, there are not enough education support staff to help those pupils with learning difficulties. The school is well supported by a bursar, administrative assistants and technicians. A full-time caretaker and a small number of caretaking staff work hard to keep the school in a good state of cleanliness and repair. The school cannot afford a librarian, and this means that the library is underused.

79. Arrangements for professional development of staff are satisfactory overall. The school now has "Investors in People" status, and staff development has improved since the last inspection. All subject teachers are observed teaching a Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 class within one week, twice a year, by a member of the senior management team and a local authority adviser. Teachers are given valuable verbal and written feedback. Departmental monitoring of performance focuses on teachers' planning and marking and is used to produce annual targets for individual teacher development. There are plans for heads of department to observe teaching in their subjects as part of subject monitoring and evaluation. The school has developed close links with a wide range of local training providers, and many members of staff have benefited from them. However, there has been insufficient training for staff in information technology skills. There has been a good level of staff development in skills to

improve the pastoral system. Most teachers have undertaken some staff development in their specialist subject, although there has been little training in drama and physical education. The role of head of department has not been developed sufficiently, particularly to develop strategies to monitor and evaluate performance and raise standards. Nevertheless, there is some good practice already in the school. Support for newly qualified teachers is good, and this is valued by the teachers concerned. Induction for new, experienced teachers and supply teachers is variable.

80. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory and is sufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum. The accommodation for science is good. There are five laboratories and a preparation room, and storage is of good quality. The English facilities are also good; they are well organised and have attractive displays, which enhance the learning environment. The new technology block provides specialist rooms for information technology and design and technology. Unfortunately, the food technology areas provide insufficient space and cooking facilities for large numbers, so pupils have to be taught in split groups. The gym is used during examination periods, which limits space available for physical education. Accommodation for music is satisfactory overall, although rooms for visiting instrumental specialists adjacent to the main teaching room are not adequately soundproofed.

81. The school still has problems with litter, despite extra bins provided. Seating has been provided for pupils to relax in groups at lunchtime and breaks. There is a wildlife area that is regularly used by the science department. All entrances have ramps, and the school has plans to install lifts to the main hall and English and mathematics rooms, which would make the whole school accessible for wheelchairs. Internally, the condition of the school is clean and safe. There are many good, attractive displays of pupils' work and activities. Some corridors are particularly narrow and become congested between lesson changes. These areas are usually supervised by senior staff to ensure smooth and safe movement of pupils.

82. Resources are generally adequate, though there are serious deficiencies in information technology and music. The ratio of computers to pupils is very low and includes some very old equipment, but the school has acquired some second-hand machines which will run most modern software. Facilities are focused on two specialist rooms, and demands on these from Key Stage 3, GCSE and GNVQ courses in information technology limit access to other pupils. Many subject departments have no information technology facilities at all. Insufficient electronic keyboards, out-dated computer equipment, limited books and music and the lack of orchestral or band instruments means that the music department cannot properly deliver the requirements of the National Curriculum or provide out-of-school ensembles. The English department has too many old texts and few twentieth century works to study. There are not enough textbooks for pupils to take home in the modern foreign languages department.

83. The provision of books in the library has improved since the last inspection. However, there are still insufficient reference books and information technology resources to support pupils' own research and has subsequently lead to under-use of the library.

## **The efficiency of the school**

84. The school does not run efficiently and financial planning is unsatisfactory. Although there has recently been a reduction in staffing, which has resulted in several staff teaching outside their preferred curriculum areas, expenditure on teaching staff is still high. There is inefficient deployment of staff and there is a high proportion of very small teaching groups. This has severely restricted the ability of the school to allocate appropriate funding for other essential resources, such as equipment for information technology and support for pupils with special educational needs.

85. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in development planning. The present plan is well devised and addresses issues that have been appropriately identified to raise standards in school. However, targets are not always clearly stated, which makes it difficult to evaluate success. Curriculum and timetable planning drag behind falling numbers and new initiatives for which the school should be planning. Consequently, planning the use of financial resources, particularly on teachers, is not done efficiently.

86. The standard of financial control and school administration is good. Expenditure is carefully monitored. The governing body, through its finance committee, maintains close oversight of the school's budget and the deployment of resources and expenditure. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and administrative officer are responsible for day-to-day oversight. The finance committee receives regular financial reports. Since the last inspection, the methods and procedures for allocating funds have been changed, and a bidding system which recognises priorities identified in the school development plan, effectively involves heads of department and is closely monitored. Additional funding from the local education authority for pupils with special educational needs is not appropriately targeted.

87. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The administrative officer is very efficient, and, together with senior staff, plays an effective role in monitoring expenditure. Financial controls and procedures are clear and are implemented efficiently. A recent audit report considered the administration of the financial records to be of a very high standard.

88. With the exception of staffing the school makes good use of available resources to support the curriculum, and accommodation is used effectively. There are no managed arrangements to generate income.

91. In view of the satisfactory progress of pupils and improving standards at GCSE, the good quality of teaching, the contribution made to pupils' personal development through the school's support and guidance procedures, in the context of above average funding, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## **91. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **91. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **91. English**

89. Attainment has improved since the last inspection, particularly at GCSE where it now matches that in similar schools and is closer to national expectations.

90. Between 1996 and 1998, pupils' performance in end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests improved slightly, but was well below national averages. In 1998 it was also below the performance of pupils in similar schools. The attainment of girls and boys was similar over this period, although girls attain higher levels nationally. The performance of boys was lower in 1999. The proportion of pupils gaining the expected level (Level 5) matches national figures, but fewer achieve higher levels. This means that performance overall is below the national average and that of similar schools. Teacher assessment has been closer to test scores until this year when the weaker performance of boys in the tests was unexpected.

91. GCSE language results have improved steadily since 1996. All pupils are now also entered for literature, and results improved significantly this year although they remain below national figures. Girls' results are well below the national average.

92. Inspection findings confirm the results of external tests. Attainment is below average in lessons and in pupils' past work at the end of Key Stage 3. Not all aspects of the National Curriculum are covered, and pupils' oral skills are weak. The current teaching arrangements disadvantage lower attaining pupils, who receive little help with literacy and no in-class support. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment overall is close to national expectations, helped by the demands of the GCSE syllabus.

93. Pupils listen well to their teachers, but they are not confident speakers. They respond briefly to questions, often in incomplete sentences and inaudibly. Opportunities for extended formal talk are rare. They read aloud infrequently and then with limited expression. Links with drama are weak. Boys are less articulate than girls. Standards are below average overall.

94. Most pupils can read sufficiently well to cope with the curriculum, and standards are improving. Reading is taken seriously at Key Stage 3, and pupils are required to read ten books each year. Most do so conscientiously, but their choices are often undemanding. The book review format lacks challenge for abler pupils. Class readers tend to be undemanding, and coverage includes little literature from earlier centuries, modern classics, writing from other cultures, drama, poetry or non-fiction. Poor library provision and lack of access to information systems limit pupils' research and retrieval skills. Reading is below average at the end of Key Stage 3. The GCSE syllabus includes a wider range of literature, but pupils still have limited knowledge of their literary heritage. However, their detailed work on their set books and media studies raises attainment close to national levels.

95. Pupils write neatly and with reasonable spelling and punctuation. However, they do not write and edit on screen as required by the National Curriculum. Pupils write a little poetry, but read little atmospheric or imaginative literature and, as a result, their work lacks flair and creativity. They also write few argumentative or persuasive pieces. Standards of writing remain below average at the end of Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 there is more extended writing, much of good quality, and standards overall are sound. Drafting and word processing are more common. Higher attaining pupils achieve at an appropriate level, but others receive too little help with the use of appropriate language and the structuring of essays.

96. Pupils' literacy skills are generally unsatisfactory. Listening skills are broadly average but speaking skills are underdeveloped and pupils do not speak confidently or always in complete sentences. Written work is neat and carefully produced although there are too few opportunities for pupils to produce extended writing. In science, English and history pupils develop drafting skills. Reading skills are average overall although the range of books pupils read is limited.

97. Pupils make satisfactory progress in most lessons. Some Year 7 classes made good progress because of the tightly timed activities and purposeful group discussion. Slow progress in some bottom sets results from poor class management. Most pupils completed a solid body of work last year and made some progress by the end of Key Stage 3, but because of the gaps in provision it was unsatisfactory overall. At Key Stage 4, progress is sound, aided by explicit GCSE criteria, and structured teaching of well-prepared units of work, some of real quality. Nevertheless, the extensive use of Shakespeare study guides inhibits independence. Pupils with special educational needs cover the same work at both key stages. However, lack of precise individual education plans and insufficient time to help individual pupils means that progress is unsatisfactory overall.

98. Attitudes to work are good. Pupils are courteous, respectful and diligent. Relationships with teachers were excellent in all but one group. When required to collaborate pupils usually do so well. With the exception of some pupils in the lower attaining groups, concentration is good. Pupils take great pride in writing neatly and carefully.

99. Teaching was good in almost half of all lessons seen and sound in the remainder, except for one very poor lesson. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and high expectations. Lesson aims are made explicit at the start, often following a calm period of silent reading. Appropriate homework is set. The most effective lessons involved well-chosen materials, a brisk pace, lively exposition and a sense of fun. In such lessons, pupils did most of the work. Year 8 lessons on the origins of language, including Pidgin and slang, led to lively debate. The informative newspaper unit in Year 9 engaged pupils' interest, and open-ended questions aided their understanding of emotive language. The literacy hour in Year 7 has been introduced with insufficient planning. In some Key Stage 4 classes, teachers talked too much.

100. The assessment policy is sound and practice effective. Pupils receive clear indications of their attainment, supplemented by the study of marked scripts at Key Stage 4. Internal GCSE standardisation is accurate. Marking is becoming more consistent, although some comments fail to tell pupils how to improve their work. Portfolios of marked work lack explanations for the grades awarded, and internal oracy records are not used to plan improvement. Attainment data determine setting but are not used to plan lessons. There has been little analysis of results

by teacher, set or gender, and no planned intervention for pupils on the boundaries of key grades. More precise analysis is planned. Reports are unhelpful, concentrating on effort and attitude rather than attainment. In some cases, they are far too brief.

101. Management is satisfactory. The head of department gives strong leadership and is well organised and efficient. The handbook is out-of-date and the development plan lacks clear quantifiable targets. There is no monitoring of teaching and little time in which monitoring could take place. Curriculum development, particularly to address weaknesses in reading and literacy issues, is difficult as only two teachers teach the subject full-time. Accommodation is spacious, well managed and attractive. There are interesting displays of pupils' work. Much of the book stock is old, with few novels of quality and little poetry, drama and non-fiction. However, new library stock is providing interesting book boxes for class use. The library fails to provide adequate resources to support learning.

#### 104. **Mathematics**

102. In the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1998, attainment was below the national average, but broadly in line with the results of similar schools. The teacher assessments were close to the test results. The proportion of pupils obtaining GCSE A\*-C grades was slightly below those of similar schools but well below the national average. These results are improving over time at a rate that is better than the national rate. Contrary to national expectations, boys are achieving higher grades than girls. There is no evidence as to any gender bias in either teaching or the scheme of work to indicate reasons for this, and entry data of pupils only confirms that boys are slightly better than girls and that there are only a few higher attaining pupils.

103. Inspection evidence indicates that the overall attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils substitute values in equations, form and solve linear equations and construct simple formulae. Lower attaining pupils make accurate measurements and use these to calculate the areas of plane shapes. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils' algebra skills are further developed, and they solve simultaneous equations by drawing appropriate graphs and by algebraic manipulation. They also use the relationship between distance, average speed and time to solve a range of problems. There are only a limited number of higher attaining pupils, but they achieve levels above national expectations for their age across all attainment targets. Attainment in many lessons is close to the national expectations for this stage of the year, but scrutiny of work shows that attainment overall is below national expectations.

104. Progress through both key stages is satisfactory and in line with pupils' abilities. Graphical skills are developed in Year 7 and include simple statistical graphs. By the end of Year 9, these have advanced to include the drawing of straight-line graphs. These skills are further extended so that, by Year 11, pupils can solve simultaneous equations graphically and

draw curved graphs. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the setting structure, which enables pupils to be taught at levels that best suit their ability. The grouping of pupils by attainment enables pupils to progress in line with their ability and pupils with special educational needs make good progress within this structure.

105. Attitudes are good. Pupils arrive at lessons willing and ready to work. They settle quickly and are attentive to their teachers. Their levels of concentration and effort are high, and they are prepared to ask questions to confirm or reinforce their knowledge. This attitude enables good progress to be made in many lessons. Pupils with special educational needs have a positive attitude towards mathematics, and the confidence gained by acquiring good numerical skills encourages them to persevere and progress.

106. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in about half of the lessons seen. There were no instances of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have a good command of their subject and this is conveyed to their pupils. The relationship between teachers and pupils is good. A mutual respect exists between them, and this encourages the pupils to ask for help when needed. Standards of discipline are firm but friendly. The most effective lessons have a clear focus and proceed at a brisk pace. These lessons include material that pupils grasp the purpose of, and a wide range of activities that stimulate them to learn and participate. Work is well marked, but teachers do not provide guidance on how to improve. Teachers set homework regularly. Homework generally reinforces or extends the lesson topic, but there are also occasional short investigations and review exercises. The teaching is supported and directed by an effective scheme of work. This is referenced to the National Curriculum, has timings and includes assessment opportunities. Assessment is used to provide oral and written feedback to pupils and to modify teaching if necessary. Assessment of coursework at Key Stage 4 is very accurate and conforms to examination guidelines.

107. There have been many changes since the last inspection. The current head of department was appointed after that time and has successfully addressed the issues raised. Departmental leadership is now strong, and there is a department handbook that details the scheme of work and other policies. This is a dynamic document that is subject to continual review by the whole department. The development plan is aligned with the school development plan, and has a clear focus on raising standards. The introduction of ability setting has also enabled standards to improve. Teaching is now satisfactory or better, and examination results are rising. There is now a textbook for each pupil and ample worksheets to provide supplementary exercises as required, but there is still a lack of computers.

## 110. Science

108. On entry to the school, the attainment of the majority of pupils is below the national average. Results of the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1998 show that pupils' attainment is well below average for their age. Boys perform better than girls. Pupils' performance in the science tests was well below that of pupils in similar schools. Pupils in the school do less well in science than in both mathematics and English. Over the past three years, results have fluctuated, but they showed a marked decline in 1999, indicating a fall in standards over this key stage.



109. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1998, the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE examination was well below the national average for all schools and also similar schools. Over the last three years, results have been variable, but they are not directly comparable between years because the syllabus has changed. Results for 1999 showed a marked improvement over 1998 in terms of pupils gaining both grades A\*-C and A\*-G grades.

110. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is below average for their age. Over time, these pupils make unsatisfactory progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. They acquire knowledge and understanding of the different sciences at a slower rate than average for children of their age. However, progress as observed in lessons during the course of the inspection was at least satisfactory and sometimes good, indicating some improvement in standards in the present cohort. For example, lower attaining pupils carry out an experiment to investigate the factors that determine which types of environment maggots prefer, indicating good progress when compared with work they produced earlier. Pupils of average ability know that the sun is the ultimate source of the earth's energy, whilst higher attaining pupils understand the relationship between vibration and the propagation of sound.

111. By the end of Key Stage 4, lesson observation and work scrutiny indicates that pupils' attainment is also below average for their age. However, these pupils make satisfactory progress over this key stage in consolidating their knowledge and understanding of important scientific concepts and processes. For example, lower attaining pupils perform an experiment to measure the speed of sound and successfully complete the calculations involved. Pupils of average ability have a sound understanding of the factors that influence the adaptation of animals to their environment. Higher attaining pupils are able to name the products of the combustion of common fuels. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in their science lessons.

112. Overall, pupils' attitudes are good. Throughout the school, pupils are interested in their work and sustain concentration well. They are generally courteous to adults and are well behaved in class. They show pride in the presentation of their work, which is evident from the quality of work displayed in the department. Good relationships aid their progress. When the direction of the lesson is strong, they respond well to the challenge given. However, their scientific curiosity is underdeveloped and they lack confidence in their scientific ability.

113. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In each key stage, examples of good teaching were observed, with one instance of very good teaching. Lessons are well planned and use time and resources effectively. Teachers have good expectations of pupils in terms of their behaviour and capabilities. They have a good command and knowledge of the subjects they teach, and are becoming more experienced at delivering the science curriculum. However, time was wasted at the beginning of some lessons, there was a lack of focus on aims and objectives, and the expected outcomes were not stressed to the pupils. As the inspection progressed, the teaching observed improved, addressing the main concerns observed earlier.

114. The science curriculum is broad, balanced and well planned to meet statutory guidelines. There is equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are now entered for Double Award Science (Modular) which is more appropriate to their needs. The schemes of work developed for Key Stages 3 and 4 are an improvement on those used previously. However, the school do not consistently provide pupils at Key Stage 3 with reference points as to which level they are working at or the increments required for them to progress. The subject makes a good contribution to the provision of information communication technology, despite problems with old and dated equipment.

115. Pupils' work is assessed regularly as they progress through the key stages. However, there is a weakness in the use of this assessment data at the end of Key Stage 3. The procedures used are satisfactory, but interpretation of the data leads to an overestimation of pupils' capabilities. Day-to-day assessment through the marking of pupils' files is adequate, but does not generally serve to highlight pupil's strengths and weaknesses or show them how to improve.

116. Accommodation and learning resources are sufficient for the delivery of the science curriculum. The good displays of pupils' work in the department are helping to promote interest in the subject. The laboratory technicians work hard and efficiently in order to ensure the smooth running of the department.

117. There are ongoing problems with staffing within the department. Long-term absences due to ill health and the associated discontinuity in teaching the subject have resulted in unsatisfactory teaching within the department, which the school acknowledges. This has led to falling standards. However, recent appointments have given the department more stability that is pointing to an improvement in the standards of science teaching.

118. The department is well managed. The relatively inexperienced members of the department are given considerable support and encouragement from the head of department. Teachers function well as a team. The department has introduced some monitoring of the science curriculum by direct observation, and this now needs to be extended in order to share the good practice present in the department. Since the last inspection, the department has introduced a range of policies and curriculum developments that are helping to improve standards.

## 121. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### 121. Information technology

119. In the 1998 end of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments, pupils' attainment was well above national expectations. However, inspection evidence does not confirm that pupils reach the higher levels of knowledge and skills. In the 1998 GCSE examinations about one fifth of pupils gained A\*-C grades compared with half of those entered nationally. Standards have not changed significantly in recent years and have not improved since the last inspection. In the school, pupils on average, achieve less well in information technology than in other subjects.

120. Attainment in lessons by the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations because there is little opportunity for pupils to practise and develop information technology skills in other subject areas. Pupils know how to use specific applications such as word processing, spreadsheets and databases, but they have limited knowledge of ways in which information technology can be used in everyday life and within their own study areas. Even so, within the taught information technology lessons, pupils successfully complete the learning units. For example, Year 8 pupils were able to produce a news-sheet by combining text and graphics, while in a Year 9 lesson, pupils were able to interrogate a car database.

121. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in GCSE lessons is better than recent results suggest. Evidence of this is found in the course work of Year 11 pupils, where they effectively design and produce logo designs. Even so, those pupils show a limited awareness of the range of information technology applications and are less able to evaluate their choice of software. Furthermore, many lower attaining pupils need considerable support to make progress.

122. Progress in lessons at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, but the lack of opportunity in other subjects means that progress is unsatisfactory overall. In information technology lessons, pupils benefit from a range of activities and are able to record their gains in the different applications. The programme is planned so that pupils revisit those uses at a higher level in later units of work. However, they have difficulty in retaining those skills. For example, pupils in a Year 9 class revisiting databases had little awareness of their uses and had to relearn the basic skills. This is because they lack practice in other subjects and because the school system is different to most computers pupils have at home.

123. Overall progress in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory because over half of pupils have little or no planned information technology and there is limited use in most GCSE work in other subjects. However, progress is satisfactory in those Key Stage 4 lessons where pupils take information technology as a GCSE subject or as a part of business studies. In the GCSE information technology course, pupils develop an appropriate range of skills. Those in business studies courses use computers regularly to handle and communicate information, using word processing and spreadsheet applications.

124. Attitudes are good. Pupils like using computers, and they mostly concentrate well and are absorbed by the practical work. Occasionally, they are less attentive in whole class written and oral work. In both key stages, pupils show less capacity to work on their own, and often seek teacher support.

125. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and good in over one third of lessons. Most of the specialist teaching is provided by the co-ordinator and is based on considerable experience of the school computer system. This experience has been well used to devise a structured Key Stage 3 programme. Whole class teaching is sound, with effective use of the white board, though there are fewer opportunities for pupils to discuss and share ideas. The good teaching is often where the teacher provides individual support when he is able to share his personal enthusiasm for the subject. Class management is firm and ensures that most pupils make sufficient progress. The unit assessments provide a clear record and enable pupils to be involved in recording their own progress. However, they provide a less secure way of judging attainment against National Curriculum criteria. In Key Stage 4, the lack of a clear understanding of the examination criteria has, until recently, contributed to difficulties in preparing pupils for GCSE.

126. Despite the work in the taught programme, there is a lack of opportunity for pupils to use information technology in other subject areas, with the exception of the science and the learning support departments. This represents a serious decline in a provision that was already considered unsatisfactory in the last inspection. The lack of wider curriculum use diminishes the quality of the curriculum and contributes to the lack of progress and attainment in information technology, even though there is a specific course that covers the Key Stage 3 programme of study. Most subjects have no coherent delivery of information technology within their schemes of work in both key stages and are therefore not meeting statutory requirements. In the absence of this wider access at GCSE level, the school is also not providing pupils with sufficient opportunities to cover the Key Stage 4 programme of study. Nevertheless, pupils who opt for information technology or one of the business studies courses have a worthwhile experience.

127. There are serious and continuing resource problems that have discouraged attempts to improve the whole school information technology curriculum. There has been a small amount of spending to extend the limited resources in the library and a few subject areas. Nevertheless, the level of provision is little different from that described in the last report, being limited to one information technology room and an adjoining business studies room. Therefore the problems still remain that were identified in the previous report, namely of a lack of computer access and limited staff capability. There is no co-ordination of development of the information technology curriculum or of staff expertise. The school is aware of the problem and has tried to acquire additional resources on a piecemeal basis, but there has been no development planning to address the problems.

### 130. **Art**

128. In the 1998 National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment met expectations. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades was well above the national average, and this success was maintained in 1999. Between 40 and 50 per cent of pupils take art at Key Stage 4. Examination results have been consistently improving over recent years. The work by pupils in the current Years 10 and 11 groups is at a similar standard.

129. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is broadly average, and it is above average by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils with special needs attain appropriately, and in some cases very well. Good quality observed drawing lies at the root of the good quality work. The 1999 GCSE exhibition of work on display in the hall and entrance hall shows high quality work in ceramics and clay modelling, as well as painting, drawing, mosaic, pastel and charcoal work. There is also some very good textile work on display.

130. Progress is good at both key stages for all pupils, including those with special needs. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, and pupils develop growing self-confidence. Pupils always produce high quality work at their own levels, with teacher feedback encouraging maximum individual development. For example, a Year 10 girl made sudden and rapid progress as a result of well-timed guidance from the teacher. She went on to produce exciting work.

131. Pupils' responses are very good at all levels. Attitudes are open and positive, and pupils work well individually and collaboratively. Behaviour is very good in an excellent working ethos. Pupils value their own work and that of others.

132. Teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is very good, and excellence was seen at both key stages. The teacher is secure in both subject and methodology, and teaches appropriately for both pupil and curriculum need. Planning is good at all levels, and time, space and resources are efficiently used. The work of established artists and examples of pupils' work are used effectively to help pupils develop their own ideas. An exciting learning and working environment is provided. Pupils respond well to the skill, commitment and enthusiasm of the teacher, who gives individual guidance with a high level of subject knowledge and professional skill.

133. The curriculum is broad and balanced, in spite of there being only one art teacher. There is a balance between curriculum continuity and progression, and the re-visiting of core skills. The limited use made of information technology is a weakness, but resources are now in place to improve provision. The assessment scheme is still under development at Key Stage 3, but is proving appropriate and effective, with a strong component of pupil self-assessment. The extensive display in the art department and around the school both celebrates pupil success and inspires others. Art makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

#### 136. **Business Studies**

134. Business studies courses include GCSE, courses combining RSA qualifications with enterprise activities, and recently introduced General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ).

135. In GCSE business studies, attainment is well below national averages, with only one in seven pupils gaining a good grade compared with over half nationally. In contrast, current attainment in lessons and course work is significantly better and just below national average. Year 11 pupils show a sound understanding of key business ideas in well presented course work folders. In this work, the higher attaining use information technology effectively to handle and present information in break-even analysis. Almost all enterprise group pupils gain RSA qualifications, while many have significant success in acquiring effective personal and social skills through mini-enterprise activity.

136. Progress in most lessons is good. It is often very good in the GCSE courses, where pupils have gained considerably from the improved teaching. GNVQ classes have made a good start in developing initial research skills. One of the Year 11 enterprise groups has made only modest gains in personal and information technology skills. However, this contrasts sharply with a parallel group that has made significant gains in personal skills and business knowledge, reflected in their participation in the local Young Enterprise initiative.

137. Most pupils like business studies. They value the opportunities to use information technology and be involved in wider range of learning activities, including business links. Behaviour in lessons is good, and GCSE pupils in particular show care in their course work.

138. Three quarters of teaching is good overall, and it is sometimes very good and never less than satisfactory. The subject leader has good specialist knowledge in teaching and assessing both GCSE and GNVQ, and has developed a growing range of outside contacts to enhance provision. The better teaching is based on well planned schemes of work, in which the emphasis is on pupils being actively involved in their learning through group work, mini-enterprise and personal research, including the use of computers. There is a strong emphasis on raising attainment, which is reflected in high expectations about homework. Teaching is sensitive to the different needs and capabilities of pupils, with effective use of wall displays to reinforce learning.

139. The relatively new leadership of the subject has helped re-establish and build on the strengths recognised in the last report. The GNVQ business course provides further enhancement of the school curriculum, though the school has yet to complete the teaching block for those new courses.

142.

### **Design and technology**

140. The 1998 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show that under half of pupils reach above average levels of attainment. GCSE results have improved over the last three years and in 1998 were in line with national averages for similar modern schools though a little below results for all schools.

141. At the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of pupils in Year 9 broadly reflects the school's own assessments, with just over half of pupils reaching the national expectation. Most pupils have a sound understanding of a design and make process. This is reflected, for example, in work on design specifications and prototypes in a Year 9 lesson on resistant

materials. Design ideas are often well presented. Pupils with higher attainment have good graphical skills, though those ideas are less well informed by an understanding of materials and processes. Pupils have limited knowledge of different systems and control mechanisms. Practical making skills are mostly sound, though lower attaining pupils show less accuracy in measuring, cutting and shaping.

142. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in GCSE lessons is in line with recent examination results. Well presented work is a feature of the course areas of food, resistant materials and graphic products. Folders show sound initial investigation and product evaluation, though this is less well developed in textiles technology. Good making skills are evident in food technology, for example in a jam-making project that also involved industrial links. Higher attaining pupils in graphic products use information technology well to enhance presentation. However, the making skills of most pupils are generally more limited, as is evident in the standard of the models they make.

143. Pupils come to the school with limited knowledge and skills in the subject. They make good progress in the way they generate and present design ideas and acquire a wider repertoire of making skills, using materials such as food, timber and plastics. Pupils begin to develop a better understanding of industrial processes, illustrated in a Year 7 lesson on packaging production. Making skills develop more slowly, and this is reflected in the limited accuracy and quality of finish in project work.

144. Pupils' attitudes are good. The good work habits and sound understanding established in Key Stage 3 ensure pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 4 in most GCSE courses. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, show increasing independence in developing design specifications and making plans. The higher attaining are more aware of wider design considerations, such as ergonomics, as illustrated in a toothbrush modelling project in Year 10. Pupils concentrate well, particularly when given opportunities for discussion and group work as well as practical activities. Behaviour in lessons is mostly good, and pupils show care in the presentation of their folder work.

145. Teaching is good overall, often very good and never less than satisfactory. The main strengths of almost all teaching include good planning of lessons, clear expectations about the quality and level of pupil effort, and confident and positive class management. The best teaching captures the enthusiasm of the pupils through well chosen and varied activities, and by drawing on pupils' own knowledge to develop understanding. Satisfactory though less effective teaching provides less positive and informed support and progress is monitored less rigorously. Teachers involve pupils in the assessment process in both key stages and use it effectively to encourage effort. A good example of this was seen in a class evaluation of previous GCSE work, where pupils were guided to a better understanding of the standards required. However, at Key Stage 3 there is limited reference to the specific knowledge and skills that pupils need to help them improve their work.

146. Since the last inspection, the school has overcome its staffing deficiencies and has three permanent specialists. The subject leader has been effective in establishing a capable and cohesive team, which has successfully raised standards in the three areas of graphics, food and resistant materials. However, resources and accommodation continue to be a problem.

The lack of equipment and information technology facilities results in pupils having a very limited experience of systems and control. As a result, the school is not covering the Key Stage 3 requirement. A further problem is the limited space and facilities in food technology, which often limit whole class practical work.

#### 149. **Drama**

147. Since the last inspection GCSE results have fluctuated, varying from well above to well below national averages. Numbers choosing the subject have also varied, with only five pupils in the current Year 10. There have been variations in the attainment of pupils choosing the subjects between years, but there has been little analysis of the results and the reasons for the high proportion of candidates gaining D grades in 1996 and 1998 remain unclear.

148. Pupils join the school with little experience of drama as a school subject or of theatre as a leisure activity. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average because pupils are not taught specific and progressively more demanding drama skills. These are not identified in the scheme of work nor are they assessed regularly. As a result, in Year 9 pupils do not use their voices well or speak in a variety of registers. Some pupils remain inaudible. Movement is often clumsy and some pupils are self-conscious when performing, finding it difficult to sustain a rôle. Pupils also lack an understanding of basic theatrical conventions, including a sense of audience. However, work of a far higher standard was seen in Year 8.

149. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is close to national averages helped by the demands of the GCSE syllabus. Pupils study voice, gesture and script and are given a clearer view of their attainment. Their reading, however, still shows little sense of audience and is insufficiently expressive. Practical work at this stage is above average and some good improvisation of children playing was seen. Written work is of sound quality but there is no analysis of live or filmed drama.

150. Progress is unsatisfactory at the end of Key Stage 3, marred by the limited range of skills taught but is sound at Key Stage 4. Some of the warm up exercises are inappropriate and reinforce the idea of drama as a game or as play rather than a subject with skills which can be taught, practised and perfected. Working in separate gender friendship groups also impedes progress in both personal and dramatic development. Year 8 pupils worked very well in teacher directed mixed groups and attained much higher standards. Little homework or written work is set in Key Stage 3 although pupils do evaluate their progress and by the end of the key stage are beginning to be more analytical. In contrast, Key Stage 4 pupils make sound progress as seen in work on gesture with strong teacher intervention and detailed observation of young children by Year 11 pupils.

151. Pupils' attitudes are generally good. Pupils clearly enjoy drama and have excellent relationships with their teacher. Behaviour is usually good and pupils respect the room and its equipment. Some Year 7 boys lack concentration and the too ready access to props led some Year 9 pupils to use them almost for play rather than concentrating on planning a performance.



152. Teaching is satisfactory in most lessons and was good in one. The teacher has sound subject knowledge but has not benefited from much recent professional development. Class management is effective. The scheme of work lacks detail at Key Stage 3. Assessment is not used to refine work and pupils are given few opportunities to improve on first attempts. A limited range of techniques is used other than in a very successful Year 8 lesson. Some units such as newspapers and theatre history would be enhanced by closer links with the English department. Close attention to the GCSE syllabus supports teaching at Key Stage 4.

153. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is unsatisfactory with too little emphasis on performance skills or cultural differences in dramatic traditions. There are no references to plays to be studied, or myths and legends to develop the imagination. There are no links with other subjects. Pupils are not encouraged to examine motivation and characterisation in sufficient depth. The drama club provides an excellent opportunity for pupils to develop practical drama skills at greater length and turn these into occasional public performances. Pupils know the criteria for judging performance but these are imprecise and self-assessment proves too difficult. The assessment criteria used at GCSE would benefit younger pupils. Pupils with special needs cope well in a subject, which requires little written work at Key Stage 3. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is better but there is limited study of scripted drama or theatre visits.

154. The drama room is pleasant, has lighting and curtains but is rather small for full classes. The budget is adequate although it does not allow purchase of enough play scripts.

155. Progress since the last inspection is difficult to judge, as there was little said in the report at that time.

## **Geography**

156. The results of teachers' assessments for the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that attainment was below national averages in 1998. Over the last three years, GCSE examination results have fluctuated slightly, but remain below national averages. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Standards of attainment have been good when compared to other subjects in the school and in line with those found in other modern schools.

157. By the end of both key stages, the attainment of pupils is below average in relation to national averages. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils are able to give explanations for a range of human and physical processes, for example why life expectancy is greater in the developed world, and how tourism affects the Cairngorms. Lower attaining pupils are able to recognise and describe these processes, for example in work on the hydrological cycle. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils use geographical terms accurately throughout a piece of extended writing, and draw detailed conclusions from a range of data. Lower attaining pupils present data and give simple explanations using a limited range of techniques, such as bar charts, choropleth maps and pie charts.

158. Pupils make satisfactory progress over both key stages. This is assisted by pupils' positive approach to learning and enthusiasm for the subject. At Key Stage 3, pupils extend their knowledge of the local environment and how it interacts with the wider world. Lack of time at Key Stage 3 restricts opportunities in using enquiry-based learning. Insufficient opportunity to use enquiry-based learning limits the development of skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to achieve the higher GCSE grades. However, pupils' development of skills in data handling and presentation throughout Key Stage 4 enable them to meet the demands of the GCSE course. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress when the teacher is able to give them some individual attention, but the lack of in-class support and work suitable to children's needs are barriers to progress.

159. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They listen attentively and take a pride in their work, which is well presented throughout all year groups. Pupils' oral contributions are limited but usually accurate. There can be occasional off-task behaviour when moving between activities. However, it is dealt with swiftly by the teacher.

160. Teaching is always satisfactory and a small amount is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use it to particularly good effect in work on the local area. They give clear guidance on expectations of acceptable behaviour, standards of work and homework. Work is well monitored throughout a lesson and immediate feedback given to pupils. The range of resources used in the lessons observed was limited, but effective use was made of textbooks, worksheets and maps in developing pupils' understanding and skills. Teacher talk is over-used as a teaching strategy, though pupils' oral contributions are adequately developed beyond mostly single word responses. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunity for collaborative work. There is insufficient awareness of the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Marking of pupils' work is consistent with departmental policy. Marking is thorough, but lacks explanatory comments and therefore fails to give advice for improvement. Homework is regularly set and effectively used to develop knowledge and understanding.

161. The department is effectively led and managed. The curriculum is well planned and meets all statutory requirements. The time available in Key Stage 3 is only just sufficient to deliver the national curriculum programme of study. There is insufficient opportunity to use information technology. CD ROMs are used to good effect to add illustration to the study of places, but no evidence was seen of its use in data analysis or presentation. There is a lack of fieldwork opportunities. The failure to develop techniques in data collection at Key Stage 3 affects pupils' ability to develop skills essential for GCSE work.

162. There have been improvements made to weaknesses raised at the time of the last inspection. Resources were considered to be barely adequate then, but they are now satisfactory, with a good supply of recently purchased textbooks. Communication within the humanities faculty has also improved. However, the amount of fieldwork activity in the curriculum is still insufficient. Pupils still lack confidence in, and opportunity to experience, oral work. Their contributions are still mostly limited to one-word answers in teacher-led activities. There is insufficient opportunity for pupils to take part in debate on geographical issues in order to attain higher levels of knowledge and understanding.

## 165. History

163. In end of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessment in 1998, pupils' attainment was below average. Only a few pupils were entered for the GCSE examinations in 1998, and one of them obtained a grade 'C'. Because of the low number of entrants, it is not possible to make a valid comparison with national standards or with those in similar schools. Over recent years, where there have been larger numbers of examination entrants, standards have been below the national average and below those of other similar schools. However, individual pupils achieve good results in GCSE history; for instance four pupils out of the seventeen entered in 1999 achieved an 'A' grade. There was a marked improvement in 1999 and the pass rate was 65 per cent. In 1997 of the 17 pupils entered four achieved grade A\*-C, which is an improvement on the results of the previous year when only one pupil reached level C. Numbers of pupils taking the subject fluctuate from year to year, but the trend in GCSE overall is an increase in numbers. There has been a noticeable improvement in the number of higher grades

164. Inspection evidence confirms end of key stage assessments, and indicates that pupils' attainment is below average by the end of Key Stage 3. Most pupils can talk competently about the topics that they study, and they have a sound understanding of the major conflicts of the twentieth century, although their knowledge of key people and events is less secure. Few pupils have the ability to use and evaluate source material. In class they show sound awareness of the importance of key developments in the nineteenth century, such as the growth of population and the possible reasons for it. Their written work is well presented. More able pupils are able to fit their studies into a wider context and to show how events link together. Year 7 pupils show an understanding of concepts such as chronology, and samples of work show the development of skills in organising and using information. However there is little evidence of an ability to use and evaluate source material. Year 7 pupils understand the complex events of the Norman conquest of this country, and produce posters illustrating the claims of people involved in the struggle for control of England in 1066. Year 8 pupils talk about the differences between life today and life in 1500, their current topic of study. Work on topics such as the French Revolution shows that pupils have developed an awareness of political issues as shown in their poems explaining the meaning of liberty. Their understanding of the impact of war is revealed in letters home in the role of young men enduring life in the trenches. By the end the key stage, pupils have the basic skills of historical research. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, understand about change over time and the ways in which we can find out about the past.

165. By the end of Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils have a secure knowledge of key developments in the twentieth century. They are competent in the use of documents and extracts, and most produce course work of an appropriate standard. Year 10 use extracts to produce course work on the events of 1914. Pupils in Year 11 speak with confidence about the causes of the Wall Street crash in the USA, and higher attainers link this with Japanese policy toward China and the failure of the League of Nations. However, many are held back by lack of in-depth knowledge about events and developments in this very complex period of history. Their written work is often good, and most pupils are skilled in answering questions based on extracts or using statistics and illustrations, but again there are some real weaknesses in knowledge and understanding at the higher level.

166. Progress for the majority of pupils in the school is satisfactory. Pupils make sound progress in their understanding of life in the past by considering and comparing aspects of life in England during the Middle Ages. Sound progress continues with the study of aspects of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, the events and impact of the French Revolution and the major events of the twentieth century. In the process, the majority of pupils develop an understanding of chronology and the impact of change over time. At the beginning of Key Stage 3, pupils study concepts such as chronology and the development of relatively simple societies. The work of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 shows that they have learned to use a range of sources to find out about the past, and understand the complexities of modern industrial societies. A variety of tasks are set for homework, and pupils complete them by using information on photocopied sheets. There is less emphasis on the use of the library or computers to find information, and this impedes progress. At the end of the key stage, there is little evidence that pupils are confident in using information technology for research purposes or to improve the presentation of their work, and progress is unsatisfactory in this respect.

167. Pupils at Key Stage 4 following the GCSE course make good progress in the development of the skills that help them to answer complex source-based questions. Pupils at both key stages make the best progress when given structured activities at the appropriate level. In all classes, the highest attaining pupils are given challenging tasks. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but lower attaining pupils are too often given resources and tasks that are too difficult for them. Homework is used to help most pupils make progress, but the same homework is set for all pupils, whatever their level of attainment.

168. Attitudes are good. Pupils concentrate on their work and behaviour is good in class. Most pupils hand in work on time and complete tasks as well as they can. Written work at all levels is often well presented because many pupils take real pride in their work. The history room is used effectively for displays of pupils' work, including models and posters they have produced, and selections of poetry on the French Revolution. The majority of pupils enjoy their work in history and say how much they enjoy practical activities, such as making models of castles. More pupils are now choosing to take history at GCSE. Boys and girls respond to the subject equally well, and there is no evidence of the underachievement of boys.

169. History in the school makes a major contribution to the establishment of skills in all aspects of literacy by encouraging reading comprehension and allowing pupils to write in a variety of formats. The subject makes a useful contribution to their moral, social, cultural awareness. Pupils are given the opportunity to find about the way people have chosen to express their spiritual or political feelings in the past. They study the way of life of Native Americans who lived in close harmony with the natural world. They also consider moral issues related to war and international relations.

170. The quality of teaching observed was satisfactory overall and sometimes good at Key Stage 3. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and are able to help pupils to progress. However, their strategies rarely include group work, role play, drama or the use of information technology. All teaching at Key Stage 4 is generally good. Lessons are well planned, managed and resourced. The best lessons have clear objectives that focus on what examination candidates should know by the end of the lesson. Work at both key stages is marked frequently, and assessment information is used effectively. Good use is made of available resources, although insufficient books are available for the examination course, and

some books used lower down the school are available only for work in class. Limited use is made of materials to help pupils meet their individual learning needs, and all pupils attempt the same tasks using the same resources. However, teacher support for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is sound. The classrooms are spacious, but full use is not made of this for the development of drama or group work.

171.The management of the subject is effective. There are useful, detailed schemes of work and the humanities department has a clear and useful departmental handbook. The teacher in charge of history has recently left and has not been replaced. Long term absence and changes of staff have created new challenges, but careful planning has ensured that the effective teaching of history has not been compromised.

172.There has been improvement since the last inspection in examination results, the quality of resources and the way in which the subject is managed within the humanities department. This has included an increase in teaching time. Teaching has improved, and staff are now particularly good at supporting pupils in Key Stage 4. However, the last inspection expressed concern that tasks and resources were not always well matched to the level of attainment of all pupils and that teaching methods were insufficiently varied. This is still unsatisfactory; the library is still inadequate to support the subject, and the use of information technology is not sufficiently developed.

#### **175. Modern foreign Languages**

173.In the end of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments in 1998 attainment was below national averages. In 1998, GCSE results at grades A\*-C in French were above national expectations and the results were well above those of similar schools. Contrary to national trends, boys achieved better results than girls, and gained almost twice the national average for boys of passes at grades A\*- C. Over the past three years, attainment has improved considerably at GCSE. During the same period, numbers entered have increased from a third of the cohort to almost two thirds.

174.The attainment of current Year 9 and Year 11 pupils studying for GCSE, is in line with national averages. Speaking and listening skills are well developed. By the end of Key Stage 3, the highest attaining pupils write fluently in the past tense; they express opinions about school and write extended descriptions of themselves and their homes using a variety of adjectives. Lower attaining pupils experience problems with basic English such as full stops and capital letters but are beginning to use the past tense in French. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils use past, present and future verbs to describe activities in the summer holidays. Boys are particularly confident when speaking. Pupils of all abilities substitute vocabulary and extend sentences with additional information. Lower attaining pupils, such as those pupils studying for the Certificate of Achievement in Spanish, achieve levels which are well below national averages. They read basic questions and work out how to answer them using support sheets, but cannot use the language for themselves.

175. Progress overall is good, both in lessons and over time. Pupils make a good start to learning French in Year 7 and some make particularly good progress as they move through the key stage. At Key Stage 4, the progress of those pupils studying for GCSE is good, whilst the progress of pupils studying for the Certificate of Achievement, in both French and Spanish, is poor. They increase their speaking and listening skills through regular practice on the language laboratory. Those pupils with special educational needs, who are included in French lessons at Key Stage 3, make good progress. There are, however, a significant number of pupils who are withdrawn from French over the key stage, and this has a detrimental effect, not only on their own progress, but also on the progress of others in the group at Key Stage 4.

176. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good in the majority of lessons. Pupils show interest in their language learning. Their work is well organised and neatly presented and they often refer to support material such as vocabulary books, to support their learning. In a lesson where pupils' responses were very good, they worked well individually and in pairs and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to play a matching words and pictures game. In the Key Stage 4 Certificate of Achievement groups, many pupils are bored and disinterested because of the slow pace of lessons.

177. The quality of teaching is good overall with a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 4. Most teachers are competent and confident. Most plan effectively and meet the needs of lower attaining pupils by intervening to ensure they have fully understood the lesson. They use a wide variety of resources, many of them home-made. Expectations both of behaviour and of performance are high. Teaching methods are stimulating with competitive games engaging the interests of boys in particular. Some of the activities introduced to Key Stage 3 are drawn from the GCSE syllabus and enable pupils to become familiar with those types of activity well in advance of the examination. Strengths of the teaching were seen in a Year 8 lesson where constant review of previous learning and gradual introduction of new vocabulary to describe the home, enabled pupils to increase their knowledge and skills in listening, speaking and writing. In a less effective lesson, a lack of understanding of the needs of a particular group, resulted in an inappropriate activity, which did not engage the interests or enthusiasm of the pupils.

178. The provision for modern foreign languages does not meet statutory requirements with respect to equality of access and opportunity for all pupils and information technology. Not all pupils are receiving their full entitlement to a Foreign Language at Key Stage 3 and although some opportunities are provided for pupils to use computers, access is severely limited with no guarantee that every pupil can use them. The time allocated to languages at Key Stage 4 is lower than average, although the small class sizes, particularly for lower attaining pupils, compensates to some extent for this. The curriculum is enhanced by extra curricular visits to France. There are effective systems for assessing pupils' attainment. The head of department gives very clear educational direction and has established a good ethos for learning. The lack of support assistants, particularly in classes where the language laboratory is used, is restricting the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Display is excellent and is well used, both to support the learning and to celebrate pupils' achievements.

179. Since the last inspection, all pupils now study a language at Key Stage 4 and an increasing number of students are being entered for GCSE. Speaking and listening skills remain the strongest skills with improvement in reading and writing. Curriculum time has been cut since 1996 to below the minimum recommended time allowance at Key Stage 4.

## **Music**

180. In the end of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments in 1998, pupils' results overall were below the national average. Small numbers of pupils took the GCSE examination in 1998, and two gained grades in the A\*-C band. In the preceding years, since the last inspection, no candidates were prepared or entered for GCSE examinations.

181. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are broadly average. Pupils are familiar with notes of the treble clef, and the majority can quickly identify them. Many understand elements of tempo and pitch, and some recognise the difference between major and minor scales. Most understand how graphic notation works when it is used to demonstrate melodic shape. The quality of singing is most pleasant, particularly in Year 7, with clear diction, sweet tone and accurate intonation. Boys and girls are equally enthusiastic when singing. Pupils demonstrate quite perceptive analysis skills when comparing and contrasting music. They do not use technical vocabulary as much as they might, but they do accurately recognise instrumentation and form.

182. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have standards of practical performance which are significantly lower than the national average. All have a limited knowledge of style, instrumentation, form or history, as demonstrated when they are analysing music. Nevertheless, their aural perception is quite well developed and accurate. Their awareness of modes, major and minor scale formation and even the most elementary harmony is limited. Year 11 pupils have no compositions stored from Year 10 as part of their course work.

183. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3, but unsatisfactory progress, particularly over time, at Key Stage 4. Year 11 pupils are notably behind in the work they have to cover by early next year. At Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in some elements of music making. They learn songs taught to them by rote very quickly, and their phrasing improves when they concentrate on good breathing. Most appear to learn and utilise concepts of musical literacy thoroughly and quickly within lessons. Below average and pupils with special needs usually understand this information, but work at a slower speed of development. At Key Stage 4, pupils make poor progress because they have not, until now, recorded or annotated what they have covered, and they subsequently do not remember facts from lesson to lesson. Pupils make satisfactory progress within lessons. For example, a Year 11 group had a clear understanding of the differences between homophony and polyphony by the end of one lesson observed.

184. Pupils have good attitudes to music at Key Stage 3 and in Year 10 at Key Stage 4, but a significant number of pupils have negative attitudes to their studies in Year 11. At Key Stage 3, pupils concentrate well, particularly when covering new material. They are enthusiastic and take pride in singing correctly. They listen closely when the teacher gives

demonstrations, and ask relevant questions. At Key Stage 4, some pupils demonstrate exemplary attitudes while others find concentration difficult. Study skills at this key stage are poorly developed, and they have not been trained to undertake independent research. Pupils across the school appear to be developing a respect for the new music teacher.

185. The quality of teaching across both key stages is good. Teaching shows good subject expertise and use of a wide range of approaches to ensure coverage of all the elements of the National Curriculum for music. Planning is exemplary, although at this stage the teacher is still finding out what the pupils know, and her lessons occasionally lack variety of teaching style. Classes are managed well and discipline problems are dealt with effectively. Expectations of what pupils should be able to do are high, including making sure that they make up work that they have missed. Day-to-day assessment is thorough. At present, homework is not being given, but it is appreciated that this needs to be a priority, particularly at Key Stage 4.

186. A rapid turnover of staff in recent years has resulted in a run-down department operating on an out-dated curriculum and currently with no out-of-school provision. There are insufficient electronic keyboards, information technology facilities are old fashioned, there are too few pitched percussion instruments, too few books and little music. All of these deficiencies make delivery of the National Curriculum very difficult. There are no band or orchestral instruments on which more musically-able pupils might receive tuition, and, during the week of the inspection, no visiting instrumental teachers to provide tuition. The curriculum has not been reviewed recently and departmental policies are not in place. The newly appointed music teacher displays considerable enthusiasm. She is aware of the inherited problems, and the need to address issues raised in the last inspection, and which have not been attended to.

### 189. **Physical Education**

187. By the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of the majority of pupils conforms to the national standard in most areas of the physical education curriculum. Results in the GCSE examination for 1999 for grades A\* - C represent a significant improvement on results from the previous year. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils are able to apply the techniques, skills and competition rules to several aspects of the physical education curriculum, including football and basket ball. Basic skills are sound and provide a platform for future development. In football, average ability has been successfully converted into expertise in many aspects of the game, including close control skills and good tactical awareness. Many basic skills have been developed in basketball, but fundamental principles and tactical awareness of the game situation are not so well understood. A developing ability to plan and evaluate is apparent in several activities, but is most apparent in those pupils studying for the GCSE course at Key Stage 4. The role of exercise in establishing and maintaining health is emphasised in most lessons, particularly through a good range of warm up routines. Apart from GCSE pupils though, the reasons for this are not clearly understood by most pupils. They have not developed the skills necessary to devise and evaluate an appropriate exercise programme for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils demonstrate confidence in all aspects of physical education. They are learning to plan their work and to observe and evaluate what they and others achieve.



188. Pupils make good progress in most lessons at Key Stage 3 and progress is never less than satisfactory. They are encouraged to develop not only skills, but also a good understanding of the techniques and rules. An example of good progress was observed in a Key Stage 3 football lesson where pupils consolidated basic control skills and techniques taught in the previous year. They were able to refine and develop these skills into fairly complex control manoeuvres against opposition, as well as observing and evaluating their own performance and the performance of others in the group. Although progress is often good for pupils of all attainment levels, those with special educational needs are not always identified. There are occasions where extension activities are not included, and higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. At Key Stage 4, progress in lessons is usually good, with the emphasis on both the consolidation of previous skills and on refining techniques and improving performance, particularly in GCSE lessons. In the theory lesson, pupils are able to apply and develop their basic knowledge of reasons for participation in physical education. They then relate this to the importance of exercise and the development of a healthy lifestyle. In a practical lesson, they developed skills in many aspects of table-tennis while at the same time developing already established ability in the evaluation of their own performance and the performance of others in the group. Evaluation of individual performance by pupils and staff was used to significantly improve standards in some lessons, though not the majority. A good range of out-of-school activities and fixtures with other schools provides opportunities for both boys and girls to extend and develop their skills.

189. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are attentive and have a good capacity to sustain concentration. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. There are many opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively, though not many opportunities for them to take responsibility or to undertake different roles, such as coach or official.

190. The quality of teaching is good in most lessons at both key stages and is never less than satisfactory. A secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance and good teacher-directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning is a feature of most lessons, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning. Planning for quality and improvement at both key stages is also a feature of most lessons. However, the absence of extension activities in some lessons restricts the progress of the most able, and the absence of information on those pupils with special educational needs is a limiting factor. Discipline and class management are very good. Day-to-day assessment of performance during lessons is regularly used to enhance teaching and learning. Nevertheless, recording of assessment and the involvement of pupils in this assessment are not consistently used to guide progression or to inform and further motivate pupils. Appropriate diagnostic assessment is not used in GCSE theory lessons.

191. The curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages, although the time allocated to Key Stage 4 is barely adequate to cover National Curriculum requirements. The range of activities at Key Stage 4 is not extensive enough to provide a good preparation for post 16 leisure activities. Schemes of work reflect the National Curriculum requirements and support what is being taught, though they do not include enough detail to support the most effective development of higher attaining pupils or those pupils with special educational needs. Reporting procedures are satisfactory.

192. The department is well led, and a good working relationship exists between members of the department, ensuring good day to day communication. However, the head of department does not regularly monitor teaching, and departmental meetings are not effectively minuted, nor do they focus sufficiently on the department's development needs. Development planning is being refined, but it lacks the necessary detail relating to costing, staff development and specific action planning which would identify a framework for evaluation and individual responsibilities. Staff give generously of their time and provide very good role models for the pupils. Schemes of work are developing, but do not include extension activities for the most able and they are not yet detailed enough to be effective working documents. Accommodation both indoor and outdoor activities is satisfactory, although lack of space indoors does restrict progress in some activities at Key Stage 4.

193. There were no issues for improvement from the last inspection report.

## **196. PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **196. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

194. The team consisted of 12 inspectors, including a lay inspector, who were in school for a total of 43 inspection days. During the week, 134 lessons or parts of lessons, including tutor periods, were inspected. The total time spent observing lessons was 113 hours 25 minutes. In addition, inspectors attended registration sessions and assemblies. Teachers were observed teaching a variety of subjects, and observations of pupils were made at break times, lunch times, before and after school. Inspectors talked to pupils formally about their views of the school, and to individuals and groups in lessons and around school. There were discussions with teachers, heads of departments, heads of year, members of the senior management team, the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, other governors, support staff and parents. Discussions also took place with administrative, site management and caretaking staff. Pupils' attendance records and reports and the school's budget figures were examined. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books, folders, displayed work around the school and photographic evidence of previous work.

195. Documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection. The Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 16 parents before the inspection, and the team considered 56 responses from parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire.

199. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

199. **Pupil data**

	<b>Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)</b>	<b>Number of pupils with statements of SEN</b>	<b>Number of pupils on school's register of SEN</b>	<b>Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals</b>
<b>Y7 – Y11</b>	443	9	122	151

199. **Teachers and classes**

199. **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	31
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	14.14

199. **Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of education support staff:	2
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	54.2

Secondary schools

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	75.5
Average teaching group size:	KS3 19
	KS4 19

199. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/1999
	£
Total Income	1 165 530.00
Total Expenditure	1 152 410.00
Expenditure per pupil	2 462.41
Balance brought forward from previous year	38 138.00
Balance carried forward to next year	51 258.00

199. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 468  
 Number of questionnaires returned: 56

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	27	68	5	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	48	52	0	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	31	51	16	2	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	27	65	4	4	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	49	47	2	2	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	43	57	0	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	39	54	5	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	29	60	2	2	7
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	34	61	4	2	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	35	44	15	4	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	43	48	2	4	4

199. **Other issues raised by parents**

Parents were pleased with the work of the school, and all felt that pupils are given considerable help to reach high standards. Some parents expressed concern at the age and small number of computers available for the school to use. Inspectors were in agreement with the strengths recognised by parents and with their concern at the state of computer equipment.