

INSPECTION REPORT

BURNSIDE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

Wallsend

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108640

Headteacher: Mr D Loveday

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver
20224

Dates of inspection: 12th - 15th March 2001

Inspection number: 186337

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	13 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Boyd Road Wallsend Tyne and Wear
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Mitchell
Date of previous inspection:	13 th - 17 th November 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Burnside Community High School is comprehensive and about the same size as most secondary schools. It provides education for 920 girls and boys aged 13 to 18 years. Girls slightly outnumber boys in all year groups. The school is to admit students at age 11 from September 2002, following a local reorganisation of secondary education. It is currently working with the middle schools involved to bring about this change. The sixth form comprises 155 students. The percentage of students identified by the school as having special educational needs is below the national average. The proportion of these students with statements of special need is close to the national average. A few students speak English as an additional language or have minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Some students come from deprived backgrounds. Students' attainment when they enter the school at age 13 spans the full range of ability but is below average overall. Students are admitted to advanced courses in the sixth form on the basis of their earlier attainment at GCSE. The school takes advantage of many national and local opportunities. For example, it has gained recognition as an Investor in People and it has achieved the Sportsmark, awarded by Sport England. It is involved in several national and local initiatives to improve the quality of education it provides for its students.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is principled, thoughtful and very effective, ensuring that good standards of teaching and learning are maintained. Teaching is good, with many very good features, enabling students to achieve their best standards of work. Relationships between students and staff and among students themselves are very good. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good leadership ensures that good standards of teaching and learning are achieved and maintained.
- Teaching is of good quality and has many very good features, enabling students to achieve their best.
- Relationships are very good. Students have very good attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Students of all abilities and talents are given a very wide range of learning opportunities to meet their needs.
- Provision for the arts is very good. Very good teaching makes learning stimulating, especially in art, and helps students to achieve very good standards of work.
- The care and support which students receive are effective in enabling them to achieve their best standards of work.

What could be improved

- Accommodation.
- Links with parents.
- Students' skills of literacy and numeracy in all subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has achieved good improvement since its last inspection in 1995. Standards of teaching and learning have continued to improve and are good overall. Students' attainments compare highly with those of schools of similar type. Planning is well organised and effective for the school to provide for 11-to-18-year-old students from September 2002. Good progress has been made on the issues of the last inspection. Students' use of information and communication technology is now good. New equipment, more opportunity to use it and higher standards have been achieved. Close monitoring of students' work and of teaching and learning has taken place and good standards have been maintained. Assemblies are of good quality and a 'thought for the day' is a valuable development, but every student does not get the opportunity of a daily act of worship each day. Students are now expected to learn more for themselves where appropriate, for example when using computers, in vocational courses and by use of the learning resource centre. Attendance has improved, and is now average. The school is vigilant in checking and rigorous in recording absences and intends to raise levels of attendance further. Overall, the school has good capacity to improve even further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16- and 18-year-olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools*
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	D	C	D	A
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	C	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

**Reference to similar schools is to those schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils who claim eligibility for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with pupils of similar backgrounds. Reference to all schools indicates all secondary schools across the country. There is no comparison with similar schools at A-level.*

When students enter the school at age 13 their attainment is below average. They have attained average standards in national tests at the end of Year 9, their first year in the school, over the last three years. Their results in English were above average in 2000, and ahead of the ones that they got in mathematics and science. During the last five years, the upward trend in standards attained in the tests has risen in line with that attained nationally. In comparison with similar schools, standards are well above average. Overall, students achieve well and make good progress in Year 9.

At age 16, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C has been typical of the average of all schools during the last three years. The proportion of those getting five or more grades A* to G was below average in 2000, and those getting one or more GCSE grades was well below average. However, some students were transferred to be educated elsewhere in 2000 and their GCSE results were not credited to the school, reducing students' overall GCSE point score. Others are regularly entered by the school for

examinations other than GCSE and GNVQ, because they are more suited to these types of assessment, but these results are not taken into account. Students attain standards well above the average of similar+ schools. During the last five years, the upward trend in standards attained at GCSE has risen in line with the rising national trend. Students make satisfactory progress during Years 10 and 11 to achieve standards in line with what might be expected from their earlier achievement in Year 9 national tests. The school sets challenging targets for students to achieve at GCSE. In 2000, students achieved particularly well in GCSE examinations in art, drama, English, information technology, mathematics, physical education and science. They achieved lower standards in sociology, geography, history, French and German.

In the sixth form at A-level, students have regularly attained average standards. Results have been in line with what could reasonably be expected from their earlier attainment at GCSE. Their standards in GNVQ courses have been above average, overall.

In work seen during the inspection, students of wide-ranging abilities achieve well. For example in English, they read a good range of literature competently and their listening skills are very good. Although some students speak fluently and have a wide vocabulary, many do not. Some students require a lot of help to write at length. In mathematics, students of all abilities achieve well and they progress especially well with mathematical investigations in Years 10 and 11. However, their competence in mental arithmetic is not developed enough. In science, students' analysis and evaluation of results, arising from their investigations, are not as good as their work in planning and observation. They have an above average knowledge of science. Overall, students achieve standards above what might be expected for their levels of ability.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students listen and concentrate well. Sixth-form students are generally mature and hard working.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Students behave well in lessons, and generally well around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are very good among students and between students and teachers.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Very good

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons. It was good or better in 75 per cent, and very good or better in 38 per cent. A few lessons were of excellent quality. The teaching of English, mathematics and science in Years 9 to 11 is good, and very good in the sixth form.

The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall but students do not consistently get good opportunities for speaking and writing in all subjects. Inaccuracies in spelling are not corrected enough in some subjects. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory in mathematics, but students do not get enough practice in use of number in other subjects. A high proportion of very good teaching was seen in art, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and music. The teaching of all subjects meets students' needs well and helps them to learn effectively. The needs of those who can learn quickly and those who need to learn more slowly, including some with special educational needs, are equally well met. A particular strength of teaching is that teachers manage students very well because relationships are very good. Students respect their teachers, listen to them and learn with them successfully. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are usually high, enabling them to extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject very well. Students make good progress in gaining and developing subject skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Students of all abilities have a very wide range of courses from which to choose. Vocational options and the arts give particularly good choice. Statutory requirements are met. Students cannot study two foreign languages within the timetable in Years 10 and 11, but some extra-curricular support for a second language is given to GCSE; more timetabled provision for two foreign languages is needed and planned for these years.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students with special educational needs are well taught and receive good support to make progress in line with others.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Provision for the few students for whom English is an additional language enables them to meet the requirements of the curriculum well.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. Provision for their moral and social development is central to the school's aims and is very good. Cultural provision is good and successful in extending students' experience well, especially in the arts. Provision for students to experience different cultures is satisfactory but not equally well provided in all subjects.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good. Students are well supported to achieve their best. Assessment data on students achievements is used effectively to record their progress and help them to improve their work. The process of regular checking that all aspects of buildings and equipment are safe is currently in progress, following a change of responsibility within the school.

The school could further extend its links with parents. Overall, parents have confidence in the school and think that their children make progress and are confident to talk over problems. Some want a closer partnership with the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Leadership is principled, thoughtful and very effective, and ensures that good standards of teaching and learning are achieved and maintained. Planning for change and use of national initiatives are very well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are strongly committed to the school. They make themselves well informed about its work and plan effectively for the future. They have yet to ensure that there is an opportunity for every student to participate in an act of collective worship each day and they need to bring risk assessment up to date.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Thorough monitoring and evaluation of performance take place, but more are needed in literacy and numeracy. Management of staff to help them to work to a high standard has been very well developed to raise even further the standards of teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school makes effective use of funding. Additional resources gained for national initiatives are used well.

Accommodation is used well, but it is old, worn and much is shabby, despite the efforts of the school to improve appearances. New buildings are planned and urgently needed to provide staff and students with a quality of accommodation to match the very good standards that they achieve. The school applies the principles of best value very well. Its results compare very well with those of similar schools and it provides its students with a very good range of learning opportunities. Consultation with students and staff is regular, but parents could be involved more. It gets good value for the services it buys.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. • Their children are being helped to become mature and responsible. • Teaching is good. • They feel happy about approaching the school with problems. • Their children make good progress at school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school working more closely with them. • More information about their children's progress. • Homework.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. Of the other matters, information on progress through reports and parents' meetings is helpful to parents, although not all choose to attend these meetings. Parents' views on homework differ considerably. During the inspection, homework was set as the school intends and it was usually challenging and helpful to students' progress with their learning. Some parents want the school to work more closely with them and inspectors agree that more could be done to involve parents. The

recent introduction of a telephone help line for parents, ensuring that they receive a response to their enquiries within 24 hours, is a good response to parental concerns. Many parents are unaware of the range of extra-curricular activities available.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Very good leadership ensures that good standards of teaching and learning are achieved and maintained.

1. Leadership by the headteacher is principled, thoughtful and very effective. He and the leadership group work very well together and form an effective and enthusiastic team, eager to develop the school further. They effectively share with all staff a clear vision of what students should gain from their education, helping them to become independent, responsible people who make the most of their opportunities for learning and who respect the rights of others to the same. Teachers and other staff respond well to the lead they receive and morale is high. They work hard, with enthusiasm and strong commitment, identifying and meeting the needs of all students who are helped and encouraged to make the most of their abilities and talents. Leadership ensures that each student's personal and academic achievements are enthusiastically prized and rewarded. Students respond well, appreciating that they are regarded as individuals, encouraged to achieve their best.
2. The headteacher, governors and staff plan effectively for change. Governors provide good support. They make themselves well informed about the work of the school. They scrutinise developments closely, give their professional expertise freely and plan effectively with the headteacher for the future. The headteacher, governors and senior staff give thoughtful consideration to deciding priorities for development. The headteacher and leadership group involve curriculum managers and all staff in how to manage change well. Decisions are shared in partnership across the school. Students are increasingly involved and helped to appreciate how to contribute to managing their own lives within the school, through a students' council, for example. When, after much consideration and consultation, a course of action is chosen, the headteacher has the quiet confidence to support staff and students to stay on course to achieve agreed purposes.
3. The change for the school to provide for students from age 11 from September 2002 is being well managed. Planning with partner middle schools is good. Analysis and close consideration of the curriculum are taking place to ensure that continuity in students' learning - from what will become the new primaries to the high school – effectively supports their progress. Work is well in hand to identify accurately students' standards and personal needs at point of transfer when the new school system is in place and transfer is at age 11.
4. Leadership monitors and evaluates the work of the school and of the staff closely. There is no complacency in this school, although it achieves very well in comparison with schools of similar type. The quality of teaching and learning and the standards achieved by students are monitored closely by observation of teaching and of students' work. When careful analysis of students' performance in tests and examinations indicates that their achievement is below what might reasonably be expected, the headteacher and senior staff have tackled the problem in a forthright manner. Where necessary, targets for improvement and higher expectations are established with subject departments and outcomes closely monitored and evaluated. Well-directed support is provided to enable teachers and support staff to be effective in helping students to achieve their best. Management of staff to help them to work to a high standard is very well developed to raise further the standards of teaching and learning. Monitoring the performance of staff was introduced in advance of current

national requirements, building on the good practice that gained the school recognition as an Investor in People.

5. Appointments to the leadership group and reorganisation of responsibilities for management of the subject curriculum, reducing those responsible from nine to four, have improved communication well. Curricular management and lines of communication throughout the school have become more effective, ensuring that good practice is rapidly disseminated. Good teamwork is apparent within the leadership group and within curricular areas.
6. The staff development group is effective in guiding the planning, management and evaluation of training throughout the school. Support staff have gained from the opportunities provided for their professional development as well as teaching staff. The school's process of planning for staff training and development effectively analyses and evaluates the training needs of staff and supports them to extend their skills. Newly qualified teachers are effectively supported to develop their skills and appreciate the help they receive. The high quality of personnel management enables staff to achieve good standards of teaching and support for students.
7. Leadership very successfully provides for the needs of all students. It works hard to make sure that all students are included in the range of worthwhile experience provided. The school makes very good use of national educational initiatives to extend the range of worthwhile opportunities for learning for students. It is active and successful in bidding for additional funds to extend students' opportunities for learning. Additional funds are very well linked to supporting the school's aims and the targets for improvement that are agreed within the school. For example, a new course is providing additional worthwhile learning opportunities for some Year 11 students, who might otherwise have difficulty in learning on other courses or, in some cases, in attending school at all. The students involved were actively working to improve the school environment in lessons during the inspection. All have the opportunity of achieving qualifications and accreditation for their work. Another successful bid by the school has increased the range of activities available to extend students' learning and experience on vocational courses. For example, some Year 10 students following a course in leisure and tourism have had the opportunity to work on a project linked to the impressive, local Segedunum Museum. Many opportunities are well co-ordinated and provided for talented students to achieve highly, for example in summer schools and master classes at university at weekends, in many subjects. A substantial extension of these opportunities is planned.
8. Although the school has won some additional funding from successful bids to participate in national initiatives to benefit students, overall its level of funding is no more than average. However, funds are well managed and used very effectively to ensure that the school's planned targets for development are achieved. The headteacher and appropriate staff, with scrutiny by governors, ensure that funds are well controlled and used effectively to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning are maintained as the highest priorities. As a result, despite working in a school building which is old and in need of replacement, morale is high among staff and students achieve well.

Teaching is of good quality and has many very good features, enabling students to achieve their best.

9. Teaching is a great strength of the school. It is overwhelmingly good to students of all ages, and has many very good features. No lessons seen during the inspection were unsatisfactory, and 75 per cent of lessons were of good or better quality. Many lessons were very good and some were excellent. Teaching of sixth-form lessons was especially strong and very good overall. The needs of students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are well met by teachers. Students of all abilities learn successfully what teachers intend.
10. Teaching is particularly effective in enabling students of all ages and abilities to achieve their best standard of work because teachers manage their classes very well and relationships are very good. Students respect their teachers and most want to learn with them. In a Year 9 lesson on netball, the teacher provided a very good example for the students through her own lively and enthusiastic participation in activities. The very good relationships between teacher and students helped to enthuse them and enabled them to make good progress in developing their skills. Similarly, very good relationships apparent during a Year 11 lesson on algebra, enabled the students to manage the difficult topic well, because they were confident to seek advice from the teacher when it was needed, and to explain their work to the teacher and the full class. As a result, students of average ability attained above-average standards in this lesson.
11. Teachers use a good range of effective methods to extend students' learning. They question students well, helping them to clarify their understanding of what they are trying to learn. For example, the teacher of a Year 9 French lesson questioned the students fluently and well in the foreign language and gained a good response from them, before extending their learning from a very good range of other activities. When, in a Year 9 lesson on electricity and magnetism in science, good response to questions was not, at first, forthcoming, the teacher continued to question and waited until responses came. The result was very successful learning, with everyone thinking and involved. In many lessons, teachers summarise what has been learned in a lesson very well at the end, helping students to retain their learning effectively. For example, near to the end of a very good Year 12 lesson on engineering, the teacher helped the students to consolidate their learning by requiring them to explain the tests they had carried out and to evaluate the merits of the techniques they had used. As a result, the experiences of the class were effectively shared by all and every student gained from others' experiences and learning.
12. Teachers share their good subject knowledge and understanding well with students. This enables students to extend their own knowledge and skills well, and deepen their understanding of the subject. For example, in a very good Year 9 lesson on light and sound in science with use of computers, the teacher's very good subject knowledge in making best use of the information and communication technology available enabled the students to make very good progress. All attained above-average standards in the lesson.
13. Lessons are usually challenging experiences for students, extending their learning and worthwhile experience very well. Very challenging work is presented to Year 13 students in art where life-drawing of human figures is an impressive feature of students' A-level work. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are very high. Students are taught skills and techniques in art very well, helping them to produce work of high quality, often on a large scale, providing highly impressive

display throughout the school. In a challenging Year 13 business studies lesson, students presented their findings arising from a survey of business practice in a company they had previously visited to other students in the class and to two visiting representatives of the company who questioned and criticised their analyses. The students had an excellent opportunity of gaining knowledge and testing theories of the organisation of business and industrial practice at first hand, enabling them to extend their experience and develop their confidence well.

14. Effective teaching ensures that lessons run at a good pace and time is not wasted. As a result, students learn to work quickly and achieve work of good quality in the time available. A Year 13 geography lesson on industrial locations was conducted at a very brisk pace, making students appreciative of the rate of learning that the teacher enabled them to achieve in these lessons. In a Year 11 physical education lesson, for example, time was used very well, enabling students to make good progress in learning a sequence of skills in badminton, trampolining and netball in the limited time available. Students are kept busy on the work in hand for all the minutes of the lesson. Effective conclusions to lessons enable teachers to leave students with the key points of learning in mind, in anticipation of their next lesson in that subject. Homework is usually set regularly in good time in lessons; it is usually challenging and extends students' learning well.
15. Teachers use support staff and resources very well to extend students' learning. For example, in a Year 11 music lesson, the teacher used a peripatetic teacher of keyboard skills in the subject very effectively to extend students' skills and help them to prepare for their practical examination. Other Year 11 students in history had an excellent opportunity of learning from visiting senior citizens' personal experiences as civilians in the Second World War, helping the students to extend their own knowledge very well from the evidence of eye-witnesses. Teachers co-ordinate the work of support staff for students with special educational needs well in lessons, enabling all to learn effectively and make good progress.
16. An outcome of teaching which is regularly good and often very good is that students achieve what their teachers intend and take their learning forward very well. The outcomes are shown in the standards that students achieve. Overall, at all ages, students of very different academic potential achieve at least in line, and often above, what could reasonably be expected for their levels of ability. When students enter the school at age 13, their attainment is below average overall. However, they make good progress and after two terms in the school, they attain typical national standards in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9. During the last five years, the upward trend in standards attained in the tests has risen in line with that attained nationally. In comparison with schools of similar type, students attain well-above average standards. At age 16, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C has been typical of the average of all schools during the last three years. Students attain standards well above the average of schools of similar type. During the last five years, the upward trend in standards attained at GCSE has risen in line with the rising national trend. Students make satisfactory progress during Years 10 and 11 to achieve standards in line with what might be expected from their earlier achievement in Year 9 national tests. In 2000, students achieved particularly well in GCSE examinations in drama, art, physical education, science, information technology, English and mathematics. In the sixth form at A-level, students have regularly attained average standards. Results have been in line with what could reasonably be expected from their earlier attainment at GCSE. Their standards in GNVQ courses have been above average. Overall, across all subjects and at all ages, students achieve well, and often very well, because teaching is good, and much

of it is very good or excellent. The quality of teaching and commitment of staff to their learning are greatly appreciated by most students.

Relationships are very good. Students have very good attitudes to learning and behave well.

17. Relationships among students and between students and staff are very good. Students have confidence in their teachers and respond very well in most lessons. They respect them, listen to them, concentrate well on their work and learn successfully. Very good relationships enable teachers to maintain good discipline and manage students well. For many students, the school provides their only substantial opportunity for learning or for gaining worthwhile cultural experience. The trust which students have in their teachers and the very good relationships between them disposes the vast majority of students to make the most of the opportunities provided by the school through their teachers. Sixth-form students are generally mature and hard working and most greatly appreciate the efforts and commitment of teachers to helping them to achieve the standards of which they are capable. They contribute well to the community of the school, for example by helping younger students with reading. They also participate in fund-raising and community service for the community outside the school, for example, in the Christmas party that they provide for senior citizens.
18. Very good relationships partly arise from very good provision for students' moral and social development. A code of acceptable behaviour is clear and consistently applied, creating a secure school situation in which students can learn confidently and successfully and achieve personal well-being. Well-selected themes are presented in assemblies and in 'thoughts for the day' in the time when they are with tutors in the morning, enabling students to think about moral and religious issues of great importance to their futures.
19. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. They behave well in lessons and generally around the school. They concentrate on their work and listen to their teachers and to each other in discussion in class. Most enjoy the challenge that their work provides and many work hard without direct supervision from teachers, as in work on keyboards in music. Students who need to learn slowly and who follow vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 use computers responsibly and individually with little direct help needed from teachers, and usually make good progress. Many students take advantage of the computers in the learning resource centre to make progress with their studies out of lessons. Very good relationships with staff who are not teachers here and throughout the school, and the commitment of these staff to students' learning and well being enable them to make good progress.

Students of all abilities and talents are given a very wide range of learning opportunities to meet their needs.

20. The provision of a very good range of learning opportunities for students of wide-ranging abilities meets their needs very well. In Year 9, the range of subjects provided extends beyond that required by the National Curriculum and religious education, with the provision of drama, a second modern foreign language and personal and social education. In Years 10 and 11, opportunities for learning are further extended. The school has actively taken up the opportunity to exempt some students from some National Curriculum subjects. A vocational course in leisure and tourism and a Youth Award scheme for some students who find GCSE unsuited to their needs are providing very good opportunities to which students are responding very well. These

additional opportunities are funded by the school's successful bid to participate in the national initiative of 'Excellence in Cities'. The school has made substantial progress in providing students with necessary skills and knowledge in information and communication technology since the last inspection. For example, all requirements of the National Curriculum in information and communication technology are well provided for all students in Years 10 and 11.

21. The range of learning opportunities for the sixth form is impressive. A good choice of AS-and A-level subjects is provided, and extended by a wide range of vocational GNVQ and NVQ courses at intermediate and advanced levels. Results attained in advanced vocational courses are above average. Students' experience is extended further by a course of key skills, physical recreation, work experience, community service and personal and social education. The Agreed Syllabus in religious education is well provided through regular conferences with challenging themes, such as the one which required students to consider, 'Is sport the new religion?', observed during the inspection. Other optional opportunities include: first aid training, a qualification in using a foreign language, health and hygiene and sports leadership courses. This impressive and extensive range of learning opportunities is almost wholly cost-effective, within the provision of funding which the school receives for sixth-form students.
22. The range of extra-curricular provision is very good, although some parents are not aware of all that is available. Sport is very well provided, and the school has achieved the Sportsmark, awarded by Sport England. Good links exist with local sports clubs, like the Newcastle Falcons, whose players attend school assemblies – even on days immediately before important matches! Music, drama, art and dance provide good extra-curricular opportunities.

Provision for the arts is very good. Very good teaching makes learning stimulating, especially in art, and helps students to achieve very good standards of work.

23. Many students' experience of the arts is wholly dependent upon what the school provides. Provision for students' cultural experience overall is good, and it is especially strong in the arts, through art, drama, dance, English literature and music. Some work, especially in art for example, enables students to appreciate and value cultural differences. The curriculum provides well for the arts, and in addition to the required National Curriculum subjects and religious education, all students participate in drama and dance in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, in addition to the required study of English literature, students have the opportunity to study art, drama and music. The arts are well represented among the courses provided in the sixth form, and a recent addition is a performing arts double AS-level course. Students' cultural experience is extended by extra-curricular opportunities. Dance and drama productions are performed regularly. 'The Importance of Being Earnest' has been performed in school, for example. The arts, particularly drama and music, are the focus of work done in co-operation with a local special school, students from which make regular extended visits and work with classes at the school. This excellent opportunity helps students of widely differing abilities and needs to gain worthwhile experience together. The arts provide the opportunity to share ideas, to broaden students' experience and culture through thinking, reading and performance and the school provides students with valuable opportunities to do so effectively.
24. Teaching of the arts is very good in extending students' experience. Some students have limited opportunities, beyond what they have in school, to acquire worthwhile experience or extend their knowledge of their own or other cultures. Teaching of the

arts helps to challenge their thinking about relationships and cultural traditions. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on themes from poetry dealing with the changing role of women and gender stereotyping, the teacher challenged the students to explore critically their acceptance of traditional social and cultural relationships, extending their understanding very well. Although some students were reluctant to engage freely in discussion, all gained much from the lesson. The teaching of art is very good and challenges students to observe their personal, social and material world closely and to think creatively about how they might express their views of it. Students' experience is much enlarged by the thought and reflection that their teachers require of them. The outcomes of students' studies are displayed throughout the school, and their painting and three-dimensional work is impressive in scale and quality. It represents, for the school as a whole, the sharp contrast between the stimulating and valuable experience gained by students with the help of teachers and other staff, and the worn and shabby buildings in which all have to work.

25. Students achieve high standards in examinations in the arts, particularly in GCSE art and drama, and in art at A-level. Many A-level students who study art continue their studies of the subject in higher education when they leave school.

The care and support which students receive are effective in enabling them to achieve their best standards of work.

26. The care and support provided for students are strengths of the school. Students have confidence in their tutors and teachers and are well supported by them. Good behaviour and attendance are expected and closely monitored. The school requires explanation from the first day that a student is absent, and it has encouraged students to attend regularly by publicly celebrating this in giving them rewards for good records of attendance. Expectations of good behaviour are well supported by very good relationships between students and staff. Lessons in personal and social education provide good guidance in healthy living, sex education and drugs prevention. The school listens to students' views formally through the students' council, and improvements to facilities in the school have been made because of the concerns expressed by students.
27. A particular strength of the school's care for students is the effective collection of data on their performance and its use to help them raise achievement. The use of data for setting targets for students to achieve is well established in the school. Analysis of data from performance in tests and examinations is very detailed and is very effective in enabling teachers to judge students' potential. However, it is not yet easily accessible on computer, although this is planned so that each student's progress can be more easily tracked and recorded. The available data covers students' progress from their middle schools onwards and includes their attainment in National Curriculum tests in Year 9, data from an effective national system to show attainment and likely potential, and GCSE performance. GCSE attainment and data from a well-established system to assess students' potential and likely performance in A-level examinations are used to record students' progress and provide a basis for target grades and a focus for support and guidance to enable sixth form students to achieve their potential. All students are scheduled for regular discussion with tutors throughout all years so that they understand the standard at which they are working, and have targets to aim for in order to raise their attainment further. The systems in use are effective in helping students of wide-ranging abilities, talents and needs to achieve what they can.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Accommodation

28. The school makes the best use possible of unsatisfactory accommodation. The good quality of teaching and learning and the well above average standards achieved in comparison with schools of similar type are not matched by the quality of accommodation. The stimulating display of students' work, particularly in art, is of a high standard and adds much to the quality of students' experience. However, school buildings are old, worn and many are shabby despite the efforts of the school and staff to improve appearances. The annex retains the appearance of a building of early twentieth century style, but many classes there are held in old wooden huts, which are cold in winter and hot in summer. Rooms throughout the school have been used to capacity and, in some cases, adapted for subject use, but many require substantial improvement and, in some cases, repair. There are holes in some walls and plaster hangs from some ceilings as a result of water seeping through flat roofs where there are many signs of damp. The size of some rooms throughout the school is small for the size of classes who must use them. The gymnasium in the annex is small and changing rooms require substantial improvement. No drama studio is available, although the subject is strong in the school; classes use the hall in the annex for drama, for example. The need for students to use both the main school buildings and those in the annex results in time being allowed for students to travel between buildings. Although students generally move between the two school sites sensibly and responsibly, there is loss of time for lessons because they cannot always be punctual when travelling the greatest distances required between sites and time for learning is sometimes a little reduced.
29. Risk assessment to ensure the health and safety of students and staff is in progress but not completed. The site manager has only recently been appointed and trained. Governors are aware of the need to complete risk assessment and to act where there are concerns arising from the ageing structure of buildings. There has been one structural failure on the site in recent years. Health and safety checks on portable electrical equipment are also incomplete. However, risk assessment within subject departments has been thoroughly done, for example in science, design and technology and physical education.
30. The school, with the support of government and the local authority, is scheduled to have a new building. This should provide, in due course, much improved accommodation on one site for the reorganised school which is to provide for students aged 11 to 18 from September 2002.

Links with parents

31. In most respects, parents are pleased with the school. For example, they consider that it helps their children to gain in maturity and responsibility, and that it expects them to work hard and achieve their best – so that they make good progress. Parents recognise, rightly, that the quality of teaching is good. They are confident to approach the school with problems concerning their children. However, some parents think that the school could further extend its links with them and work more closely with them. Some want a closer partnership with the school. Inspectors agree that more could be done to involve parents. The recent introduction of a telephone help-line dedicated exclusively to parents' use, ensuring that they receive a response to their enquiries, at the latest, within 24 hours, is a good response to parental concerns. Many parents seem unaware of the very good range of extra-curricular activities available. The school has not yet explored the range of skills which parents have and that they might contribute to extend students' learning, during or outside the school day. However, it recognises the importance of extending links with parents and, for example, increasing their attendance at open evenings and providing them with a room in school where they can be properly received.

Students' skills of literacy and numeracy in all subjects

32. The school has been very successful in developing students' confidence and skills in use of information and communication technology since the previous inspection in 1995. However, it should develop further students' skills in numeracy and literacy in all subjects. Students are not admitted to the school until age 13, and none so far admitted has, therefore, participated in work in primary or middle schools now expected by the national strategies to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. Year 9 subject schemes of work do not yet recognise the work done in literacy and numeracy in primary and middle schools.
33. However, much has already been done to develop students' skills in literacy. The curriculum manager has considerable expertise and has been active in helping subject departments to understand the importance of their practice in the teaching and learning of skills in literacy. In 1999, for example, the school analysed its practice with regard to literacy. Development of skills for teachers and monitoring of subject practice were made priorities. The findings of this inspection are that the teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall. However, students do not consistently get good opportunities for speaking and writing in all subjects. Inaccuracies in spelling are not corrected enough in some subjects.
34. Subject leaders are responsible for monitoring standards and practice in the teaching of literacy in their own subjects. The curriculum manager and senior staff have a wider responsibility for monitoring standards across all subjects. However, insufficient time is given, overall, to monitor practice across the curriculum to ensure that it is consistently good. As a result, the practice of teaching and learning of literacy varies too much across different subjects. For example, key words are emphasised well in science, but too much use is made of worksheets requiring only a few words in response. This restricts students' practice of extended writing which, for many students, contains weak expression and handwriting. In modern foreign languages, for example, it is students' skills in speaking which are the least developed. Although some students develop very good skills in speaking in a foreign language, many lack confidence and enough oral practice. In many subjects, students listen very well but their oral response is often in short, underdeveloped answers.

35. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory in mathematics, although students have insufficient practice in use of mental arithmetic. They do not get enough opportunity to practise the use of number in other subjects. The school recognises that much needs to be done to extend good practice in teaching and learning of numeracy in all subjects. Responsibilities have been given to staff to co-ordinate developments, and some good planning and practice from the development of literacy is to be applied to that planned for numeracy. A clear school policy has been agreed and all subject departments are to analyse how they can contribute to students' learning of numeracy. Much remains to be done, and practice needs to be closely monitored and evaluated.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36. In order for the school to improve its standards even further, governors and management should:
- Improve accommodation as planned and complete risk assessment of all buildings and equipment, taking any action necessary to ensure the health and safety of students and staff revealed by this assessment. (*paragraphs 26 to 28*)
 - Further develop links with parents, by extending the opportunities for them to contribute to students' learning and to participate in the life of the school. (*paragraph 29*)
 - Ensure that a whole-school approach to teaching and learning of numeracy is developed, and extend further the work of all subjects in literacy. Agree whole-school practice, provide good opportunities to monitor this closely, and evaluate progress in the use of these skills in all subjects. (*paragraphs 30 to 33*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	71
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	35	37	25	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	765	155
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	204	0

Special educational needs	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	100	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	90.9	School data	1.5
National comparative data	91.1	National comparative data	1.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	118	132	250

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	81	70	71
	Girls	106	69	73
	Total	187	139	144
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (60)	56 (65)	58 (57)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (17)	30 (36)	23 (25)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	74	68
	Girls	80	85	81
	Total	133	159	149
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (67)	64 (72)	60 (69)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (31)	35 (38)	28 (28)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	116	114	230

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	40	100	106
	Girls	55	102	105
	Total	95	202	211
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	41 (41)	88 (91)	92 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35 (37)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	32	34	66

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.7	14.1	15.7 (15.9)	2.2	3.7	2.8 (2.9)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	76.2
	National	73.2

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	10
White	907
Other minority ethnic groups	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	31	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	59.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	301

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.6
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	20

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,312,102
Total expenditure	2,334,018
Expenditure per pupil	2,568
Balance brought forward from previous year	81,035
Balance carried forward to next year	59,119

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	920
Number of questionnaires returned	247

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	49	10	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	45	45	6	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	44	7	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	45	14	7	5
The teaching is good.	43	48	2	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	47	18	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	46	5	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	33	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	26	47	19	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	42	41	4	1	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	48	2	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	41	13	2	19

Figures do not necessarily total 100, because of rounding.

Other issues raised by parents

Parents generally consider that the school is providing their children with a good quality of education. Some would like the school to work more closely with them, and say that they would like the opportunity to contribute more to the school.