

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**ALMONDBURY HIGH SCHOOL,  
HUDDERSFIELD**

**LEA area: Kirklees**

**Unique Reference Number: 107758**

**Headteacher: Mr M A Nolan**

**Reporting Inspector: Mr G G Jones**

**Dates of inspection: 8 - 12 November 1999**

**Under OFSTED contract number: 708469**

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Community Comprehensive

Type of control: County

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

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Appropriate authority: Kirklees LEA

Name of chair of governors: Councillor J Smithson

Date of previous inspection: 22 – 26 January 1996

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Frank Earle	Religious Studies	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Peter Fletcher	Mathematics	Attainment and progress The efficiency of the school
Peter Harle	Music	
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## **MAIN FINDINGS**

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

The headteacher and governors provide high quality leadership with a clear vision and an agenda for improvement.

The quality of teaching is a strength of the school especially in the planning and conduct of daily lessons and the school has introduced and is developing a system of classroom monitoring.

The school provides added value to the education of most pupils and attainment is at or above that of similar schools at both key stages.

The school establishes a caring, supportive and orderly community for all its pupils.

The behaviour of most pupils is good and they express their views confidently in lessons and to their teachers.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very good.

Teachers show a caring attitude and are well liked by their pupils.

The school provides a broad curriculum enhanced by additional subjects and GNVQs at Key Stage 4.

The school has been very successful in attracting extra revenue and capital funds and deploys them for the benefit of the pupils.

Management has developed strong community and parental links and has improved its buildings and opened them up to the community.

The work related elements in Key Stage 4 are of good quality and highly beneficial to young

adults.

Personal, social and careers education are good and pupils are well supported with an effective anti-bullying policy and good sex and drugs education programmes.

New procedures to improve attendance are working.

In the best lessons marking and diagnosis of pupils' performance and their needs are very good.

The school offers good support for pupils with special educational needs.

Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good.

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

Though at or above levels for similar schools, attainment remains below the national average.

Attainment in writing is not yet matched to the higher standards of speaking and listening.

Development plans do not incorporate costs and are not clearly focused on practical outcomes in the classroom.

A few lessons are affected by the poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils.

Some school policies and practices lack practical outcomes and are carried out inconsistently by staff.

In some subjects insufficient challenge is offered to potentially high achieving pupils.

Information technology is not sufficiently structured in many subjects of the curriculum.

The policies for daily worship are inconsistently applied in those classes not in assembly.

**The strengths of the school outweigh its weaknesses. The governors' action plans will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the school.**

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

3 The school has introduced extensive action plans in response to the last inspection, many of which are only now coming to fruition. Attainment in classes has improved and results in examinations are at or above those of similar schools and above national averages in science and some other subjects. Some pupils achieved very good results in their GCSE examinations setting new school records. There is still concern about the performance of boys and, in keeping with national trends, girls still achieve better results in most subjects. Generally, though, the school has not yet raised standards in English and maths at GCSE as much or as quickly as it would have liked but mathematics has significantly improved at Key Stage 3. It has set targets in line with local education authority (LEA) indicative targets for 2000 and 2001 and predicted scores which, if achieved, will demonstrate rising attainment. The quality of teaching has improved even on the high standards of the last report and there is now no poor teaching. Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are now well supported with a good induction scheme.

4 The school has revised its timetable, altered the time and function of tutor periods and is providing more successful pastoral and personal support for pupils in both key stages. A full course in modern foreign languages is now provided for all pupils in Key Stage 4. The school has made efforts to improve its information and communication technology (ICT) provision which is scheduled for further improvement in the forthcoming national grid for learning scheme. Its Independent Study and Academic Monitoring (ISAM) programme is helping to raise standards through individual targets as well as improving the previously unsatisfactory provision of religious education in Key Stage 4. Further progress has been made in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the school has introduced a High Quality Teaching and Learning policy to help raise attainment. Marking has improved but the use of attainment levels for feedback to pupils and to shape the teaching still needs further development in many lessons. Attendance is now improved to national levels as a result of systems and efforts at improvement. Punctuality at the start of lessons has improved despite the problems of movement around the school with its restricted corridors in the three-storey block. The range and quality of courses taught to less able pupils in Key Stage 4 have been reviewed, some short courses dropped and the remainder improved. Support and guidance for all pupils have much improved and there is good support for those pupils with special educational needs.

5 There is greater awareness of a multi-faith society and the school has made good progress in its implementation of collective worship although not fully complying with statutory requirements. It now has greatly improved accommodation, especially the sports hall and the new arts facilities, although music remains in accommodation which has not improved since the last inspection. The school is at present making major decisions as to

buildings and in particular the need for more corridor and landing area on its upper floors. It has developed its position in the community, opening its buildings and grounds for community use.

### Standards in subjects

6 The following table shows standards achieved by 14, and 16 year olds in national tests, and GCSE examinations in 1998.

Performance in:	Compared with all schools:	Compared with similar schools:	Key	
			<i>High</i>	<i>A*</i>
			<i>Well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>Above average</i>	<i>B</i>
			<i>Average</i>	<i>C</i>
			<i>Below average</i>	<i>D</i>
			<i>Well below average</i>	<i>E</i>
Key Stage 3 tests:	D	B		
GCSE GNVQ examinations:	D	B		

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

Results in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1998 were below national averages in the core subjects. They were close to the average for similar schools in English and science and above the average for similar schools in mathematics. Results show an improvement in 1999.

The percentage of pupils who gained five or more grades A\* to C in GCSE examinations in 1998 was below the national average but above that for similar schools, with girls doing better than boys. The percentage of pupils who gained five or more grades A\* to G was below the national average but around that for similar schools. Overall GCSE results have fluctuated over the last few years. The strongest results in 1998 were in science, drama, physical education, information technology, English literature, business studies and design technology. The lowest were art, child development, German and history.

### 7 Quality of teaching

Overall Quality      Most Effective in:      Least effective in:

Years 7 - 9	Good	Science, drama, physical education, modern foreign languages
Years 10 – 11	Good	Science, drama, history, ICT, media studies
English	Good	
Mathematics	Satisfactory	

Teaching overall was good or better in two-thirds of the lessons with only five in a hundred less than satisfactory. Around a quarter were very good or excellent. Teaching is a strength in both key stages.

## 8 Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Most pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their work and their teachers.
Attendance	The school is vigilant and new systems have resulted in satisfactory attendance.
Ethos*	There is a caring community in the school. Most pupils are keen to work and there are very positive relationships.
Leadership and management	Very good. There is a clear vision for the future and an agenda for improvement and development.
Curriculum	Good overall. It is supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and links with the community.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good support generally in withdrawal groups and mainstream classes.
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Moral, social and cultural development is very good. Spiritual development is satisfactory but there is still room for improvement.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Well-qualified staff and good subject knowledge. Vastly improved accommodation and expanding resources.
Value for money	Good.

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

## 9 The parents views of the school

### What most parents like about the school:

- attitudes and values it promotes;
- determination to improve pupils' attainment;
- information the school provides and the time senior teachers give to this;
- help and guidance is always available for their children;
- the school's systems to deal with poor behaviour;
- no real problems over bullying in school;
- willingness to respond to parents' views and concerns;
- community links and extra-curricular activities.

### What some parents are not happy about:

- the regularity and amount of homework and
- movement between lessons;
- growth of pupil numbers and the effect it has
- some work not challenging enough for most
- children not liking school.

The inspectors' judgements support the parents' general satisfaction with the school as "an exciting, vibrant place", especially in the great strides it has made to become part of the community. The inspectors do not agree that attainment is good and have made this a key issue but they agree that the school is implementing policies for improvement. They agree with the parents that the school maintains good behaviour, improved attendance and good relationships between staff and pupils. They agree in part that there is some lack of challenge to the most able pupils but have evidence that the individual monitoring introduced by the school will make this better. The growth of pupil numbers in recent years has affected the school in several ways and the inspectors agree that movement in parts of the school causes concern. They agree that the school has good information systems and responds well to parents' concerns.

## **Key issues for Action**

### **10 In order to improve further the quality of educational provision and educational standards achieved, the governors, headteacher and staff should:**

focus even more closely on raising levels of attainment in national tests;

ensure a consistent application of some school policies in all classrooms, such as marking, assessment and presentation of work;

raise the standards of literacy across the curriculum by developing the present initiatives in line with the National Literacy Strategy in Key Stage 2 such as Summer Literacy Schools and the related Key Stage 3 intervention programme;

ensure that the school development plan enables judgements about cost effectiveness and its links to raising attainment to be made easier by including costs against each item and putting the means by which each action will be judged effective;

### **In addition to the key issues above, the following actions on less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the plan:**

comply fully with the requirements for collective daily worship;

develop the sharing of good practice within the school so that all staff have the opportunity to learn from other teachers and other departments;

challenge further the higher achieving pupils in some areas as well as the minority of pupils with poor behaviour.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

11 Almondbury High School is an 11-16 school in Almondbury on the outskirts of Huddersfield, in the Metropolitan district of Kirklees. It is situated in a housing estate from which it draws most of its pupils, together with some from neighbouring areas. The areas from which the pupils come display considerable economic diversity; but 56 per cent of the total households within the catchment area are from Council Tax Bands A and B.

12 The school has an admissions limit of 164 pupils but is oversubscribed and takes more pupils than it would like ideally as a result of successful parental appeals. Numbers have risen significantly over recent years and are now at 824, which is around the same as most other secondary schools nationally. The school takes pupils from twelve primary schools.

13 There is a slightly higher than average number of pupils with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than nationally. Similarly the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the average for maintained secondary schools, as is the number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs. Attainment of pupils on entry to the school is representative of the full ability range, with significant numbers of less able pupils.

14 The school is situated on a large and pleasant campus, adjacent to an infant and junior school. There is a comprehensive adult education programme run on the site and a nursery run in a building belonging to the school at the entrance to the site. The school is brightly decorated, with window boxes to the three storey block. It has new science, technology, information technology and sports facilities and refurbished provision for art and drama.

15 The school aims to be in the forefront of secondary education. It states its determination to care for its pupils and support them and it aims to help them achieve highly regardless of their socio-economic circumstances.



- **Key Indicators**

- **16 Attainment at Key Stage 3**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	60	77	137

<b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC level 5 or above	Boys	23	27	25
	Girls	46	43	36
	Total	69	70	61
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	50	50	45
	National	65	60	56
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	26	30	21
	National	35	36	27

<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC level 5 or above	Boys	17	25	25
	Girls	38	51	44
	Total	55	76	69
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	43	55	50
	National	62	64	62
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	16	24	30
	National	31	37	31

**Attainment at Key Stage 4** Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year: \_Year\_ Boys\_ Girls\_ Total\_ 1998\_63\_71\_134\_ **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 students achieving standard specified\_ Boys\_20\_52\_59\_ Girls\_32\_60\_66\_ Total\_52\_112\_125\_ Percentage achieving standard specified \_School\_39\_84\_93\_ National\_47\_90\_95\_

**Attendance** Percentage of half days (sessions)\_%\_ Missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year: \_Authorised Absence\_ School\_8.1\_ National comparative data\_7.9\_ Unauthorised Absence\_ School\_2.0\_ National comparative data\_1.1\_

### **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school \_\_Number\_\_Age) during the previous year: \_Fixed period\_30\_ Permanent\_3\_

### **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is: \_\_%\_\_ Very good or better\_ 26\_ Satisfactory or better\_ 95\_ Less than satisfactory\_ 5\_

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

17 Although the school takes a full range of ability the attainment of the majority of pupils on entry to Year 7 is below average. The school has made extensive use of Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs), which indicate that over the last five years the average score of pupils on entry is around 95, rather than the normal value of 100. The school has analysed the Key Stage 2 test results for the last five years. This indicates that the proportion of pupils entering Year 7 having achieved the expected level 4 in the core subjects of the National Curriculum has been about 10 per cent below the national average.

18 Performance in the 1998 Key Stage 3 tests in English and science was below the national average but around the average for similar schools. In mathematics performance was below the national average but above average for similar schools. In 1999 all three subjects improved. In science and mathematics performance is now well above similar schools, for both level 5 and level 6. In English performance improved at both level 5 and level 6, but was still around that for similar schools.

19 In 1998, teacher assessment was generally lower than the test result in English and in mathematics at level 5, whereas in science and in mathematics at level 6 teacher assessment was higher than the test result.

20 Teacher assessment is also used to determine National Curriculum levels in the foundation subjects of technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography and information technology (IT). In each of these just under half the pupils were judged to have achieved level 5, with just over half in IT.

21 At GCSE the results have fluctuated rather than making steady improvement. The average total points score showed a downward trend from 1994 to 1998 while the national trend was rising but many schools nationally from 1996 - 2000 did not show continuous improvement. The school had the best result for five A\* to C passes in 1995 with 44 per cent. Since then the school has grown considerably and subsequent performance has been somewhat lower. In 1998, 38.8 per cent of the year group gained five grades A\* to C, which is below the national average of 44.6 per cent. However, performance in the school over time is above or well above the average for similar schools and consistent with the predictions of the CAT scores for the year groups.

22 The proportion of pupils obtaining five grade A\* to G passes was well below the national average. Around seven percent of pupils gained no GCSE passes. Both these

indicators are around the average for similar schools.

23 The percentage of pupils obtaining A\* to C in 1998 was below the national average in most subjects, well below in art and geography but it was above the national average in physical education (PE) and drama, well above in science and close to the national average in business studies, design technology, French and home economics.

24 The school has been concerned to improve the performance of boys. In Key Stage 3, over the three years from 1996 to 1998, girls did much better than boys in English while boys did a little better than girls in mathematics, but their performance in relation to the national position for boys and girls was similar. Taking all the core subjects together, for the three years 1996 to 1998 the performance of both boys and girls in the Key Stage 3 tests was close to the national averages. The performance of girls at GCSE continues to be much better than that of boys.

25 Attainment of pupils was judged to be average or higher in two-thirds of lessons. The overall standards are similar in the two key stages. Attainment was particularly good in business studies, drama, history, IT, media studies, PE and science. It was below average in more than half the lessons in English in both key stages, in art in Key Stage 3 and in modern foreign languages, religious education (RE), child care and mathematics in Key Stage 4. Outside these cases, attainment was judged broadly to be at average national level.

26 Attainment in subjects where pupils are allocated to sets, according to their performance in that subject, tends to be well matched with the expectations in that group. Upper sets are achieving at or above the national expectation. Attainment of pupils with special educational needs is at the expected level. In many subjects pupils attain well in lessons, where they show good oral skills and cope well with the work they are given, but many find it difficult to produce equivalent work in examinations at the end of the key stages. This has a clear relevance to attainment in national tests.

27 Literacy standards are significantly below the national average on entry to the school but the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress. Extra literacy lessons in Years 7 and 8 are helping to raise literacy standards across the curriculum, as is the display of key words in most subjects. Writing is identified as a target for improvement across the curriculum.

28 Standards of numeracy are reasonable overall although some pupils have problems in recalling number facts and lack reliable strategies for mental calculation. Numeracy lessons have been introduced in Year 7 to help raise the standards of numeracy.

29 Progress in lessons was judged to be satisfactory or better in nine out of ten lessons. There were no great differences between the two key stages although good

progress was seen more frequently in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Progress was greatest in history, IT and PE and least in child care in Key Stage 4, in RE in Key Stage 4, and in modern foreign languages in Key Stage 4. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is generally satisfactory. Outside these cases progress was judged to be satisfactory and good overall in English.

30 The school has developed measures of progress using teachers' judgements of pupils' performance on a nine-point scale and analysis of CAT scores. The school does not make systematic use of levels within the National Curriculum for this purpose. However, although incomplete, the data for the progress of Year 10 pupils from Key Stage 2 in 1996 to Key Stage 3 in 1999 suggests an average gain of about one and a half levels. This is an appropriate rate of progress through the National Curriculum.

31 The school development plan includes a clear focus on raising attainment. Measures which are already having an impact at Key Stage 3 are the introduction of a 'High Quality Teaching and Learning Policy', action on pupils' behaviour and a focus on the performance of boys. To ensure consistent improvement in Key Stage 4 the school has reviewed the Key Stage 4 curriculum, is setting targets for individual pupils and departments, and is making greater use of the analysis of performance data.

32 The school has set a target of at least 40 per cent of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C next year. There is good evidence to suggest that this will be achieved, on the basis of CAT scores and teachers' assessments. The performance in the best subjects already exceeds the national average, and the school is setting targets within the indicative targets of the local education authority.

· **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

33 As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils have good attitudes to work, generally behave well, form very good relationships with each other and staff and generally show good levels of maturity. These positive attitudes make a good contribution to pupils' education since they help the school to operate as an orderly, predictable community for learning.

34 Most pupils settle quickly at the beginning of lessons and listen to what their teachers have to say. They are quiet and attentive, show interest in their work and follow instructions carefully, although some are reluctant to produce much written work. Pupils collaborate well in pairs and groups, often planning their tasks well and producing work of good quality, especially in more practical lessons such as drama. Most pupils contribute willingly to discussions, listening to and respecting each other's opinions, and they are very helpful towards each other, sharing equipment or explaining how a task should be done. In a lesson on World War I, Year 9 pupils explained rationales for differing interpretations of war, giving confident oral responses. In a Year 10 lesson about the pros

and cons of nuclear energy, pupils paid good attention during the introduction, worked well in small groups to develop an argument from differing points of view, asked sensible questions of the teacher to extend their understanding, and took notes during the presentations to inform their final decisions. Some pupils have difficulty in sustaining their concentration throughout a full lesson, but they generally respond positively when teachers draw their attention back to the task in hand. A few also demonstrate immature attitudes to work, chattering, fiddling with pencils and trying to disrupt others, but the majority know that they are at school to learn, and make the most of the opportunities offered to them.

35 The great majority of pupils behave well in lessons, around school and when they go out into the community. During the inspection, Year 10 pupils studying art behaved outstandingly well when they visited a garden centre, as did others on their visit to help pupils at the neighbouring infant school with their reading. Pupils are trustworthy, for example returning to lessons on time when allowed out to conduct some research, and they show respect for property: there is no graffiti. They cope well with the difficulties of movement around the building, which are created by the narrow corridors and stairwells.

36 The incidence of permanent and fixed period exclusions from the school is around the national average for schools of a similar type and size. The great majority of exclusions, and of referrals to the school's 'on call' room which is used as a means of removing unruly pupils from the classroom, are caused by persistently disruptive behaviour. Many more boys than girls are excluded or removed from lessons. So far this year almost half the referrals to the 'on call' room have been of pupils in Year 10, but less than five per cent of all those involved have been referred on more than one occasion, suggesting that the system is effective.

37 The school operates as a harmonious community in which pupils relate very well to others. Those of different ages, abilities and ethnic groups work and relax together in a good-natured manner. Pupils are keen to express their points of view but will also listen to those of others. They are confident that very little bullying occurs. Pupils take seriously the school's motto 'Together We Achieve' and most make positive contributions to the life of the school and the wider community. Pupils supporting a child with some special educational needs through a 'Befrienders Group' showed understanding and maturity reflecting sensibly on their own as well as the pupil's feelings. Their most recent, highly successful, efforts to raise money for the school minibus required much team effort. Employers who have recently accepted Year 11 pupils on work experience write very positively about their maturity and positive attitudes, while individual pupils have recently received the Mayor's Award, Kirklees Cook of the Year Award, and invitations to attend an international Girl Guide camp. However, this good personal development is not always reflected in the level of independent learning skills in the classroom. Since the last inspection the ISAM programme has started to give pupils more confidence in this area. Pupils achieve good development in cultural awareness fostered by the school in moral

and social aspects of school life and their spiritual development is satisfactory.

· **Attendance**

38 Levels of attendance at the school during the current year are satisfactory. Last year, overall levels of pupils' attendance were below the national average and slightly below ninety per cent. Levels of unauthorised absence were higher than the national average and had increased considerably on the levels of unauthorised absence recorded in previous years. Last year the school improved procedures to promote good attendance; these have been effective in increasing the overall levels but have also highlighted instances of parentally condoned absence which the school is not prepared to authorise; hence the big increase in recorded unauthorised absence. The local education authority's own analysis shows that the school is performing slightly better than expected in terms of attendance, taking into account its size and type.

39 Since September, the attendance of all year groups has been above 91 per cent, and the attendance of most form groups has been above 90 per cent. Almost 60 per cent of pupils have attended for more than 95 per cent of the possible time, and only one pupil in ten has an attendance of less than 80 per cent. Some of this absence is caused by term-time holidays. 11 pupils attend less than half the time. Work in books together with the number of pupils not submitted for GCSE examinations last year due to non-completion of work, shows that the irregular attendance of some individuals inhibits their academic progress. However, for the majority, good attendance contributes positively to the standards of work that they achieve.

40 In the previous report concerns were raised about the poor punctuality of large numbers of pupils. This has improved so that, although there still are some latecomers to school, the great majority of pupils arrive in good time. Despite the difficulties of movement around the building pupils generally arrive at lessons reasonably punctually so that they can start promptly.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

41 The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in the majority of lessons in both key stages, and very good or better in almost one third. In Key Stage 3 the number of lessons which are good or better is slightly higher than in Key Stage 4. Teaching is unsatisfactory only in a small number of lessons, five out of a hundred. This is usually where there is a lack of pace or a few pupils are inattentive or disruptive so that the teachers had to spend time dealing with discipline. This affected the amount of time that could be devoted to effective teaching. There is no poor teaching in any lessons. Lessons are well planned and well managed, with good classroom control in the vast majority of

lessons. Teaching is a strength of the school and the school has maintained and improved the quality of teaching commented upon favourably in the last report.

42 Teachers' specialist knowledge and understanding are good in most subjects, although some teachers are less confident if teaching outside their main area, as, for example in RE or in some English or mathematics lessons. The school has reduced the amount of teaching by non-specialists since the last inspection. The use of ICT in subject teaching needs more cohesion.

43 Expectations are high or very high in the best lessons, but in others more challenge could be offered to all pupils, especially the most able as, for example, when doing some investigative work in science, in modern foreign languages, in some lessons in RE or in the use of sketchbooks in art. In design and technology teaching in the better lessons requires pupils to work out their own answers and expectations are high in PE, drama, science, English and in ICT lessons. Short term planning, for individual lessons, is generally good but more detail is needed in some of the less successful lessons where teachers rely occasionally on experience rather than their planning. Longer term planning is good, with effective, updated schemes of work in most instances and good departmental policies.

44 Classroom teaching methods and organisation are good overall. Teachers demonstrate good variety and range in the conduct of their lessons. In media studies, for example, pupils are allowed to work with growing independence on such projects as devising a new magazine or creating an animated film. The best lessons in science and English use stimulating and coherent activities that engage all pupils but in some maths lessons pupils are not able to use mathematics in context. Throughout the two key stages many teachers are imaginative in their attempts to motivate their pupils and use a variety of approaches such as work in pairs and groups, role play and investigations.

45 Teachers manage pupils very well and for the most part achieve high standards of discipline, in contrast to those lessons where a few disruptive pupils impede the teachers' plans. Relationships with teachers are a strength of the school; pupils gain confidence in expressing themselves in speech and teachers support them in their studies.

46 Overall, time and resources are managed well, even in some rooms not ideally suited to the subject. In English, the problems of managing the effective use of resources across a large number of staff in a number of classrooms across the school are a challenge to the teachers. Teachers manage time and resources particularly well in practical subjects such as drama and design technology and practical science and there are good examples in business studies, media studies, modern foreign languages and geography. Teachers' knowledge of their pupils' strengths weaknesses and attitude is good, and day-to-day assessment as well as use of records and targets, contribute to progress in most subjects. This is an improvement since the last inspection and is a direct result of a school initiative. Target setting for pupil improvement is particularly effective in science and English and



there is good feedback to pupils in music. The school has developed a good marking and assessment policy but its implementation is not consistent, in subjects such as design technology, geography, RE and modern foreign languages where marking in written form is sometimes too brief. In mathematics more oversight of pupils marking their own work is needed. Where there are weaknesses it is almost always where there is insufficient use of level descriptions and attainment criteria.

47 Homework is set regularly in line with the school's policy and most teachers insist on pupils filling the details in their planners. Some pupils expressed concern that sometimes this is not done very well and they are then unclear about their tasks at home. Most parents are satisfied with the homework arrangements. Some practical subjects such as ICT offer extra time after school for pupils for work on the computer instead of written homework.

48 Teaching as part of the school's provision for special educational needs is never less than satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils have individual education plans at appropriate stages of the Code of Practice and summaries of these are provided by the teacher co-ordinating special educational needs work in the school (SENCO) for all teachers. Learning support assistants are deployed to support pupils but the effectiveness varies from subject to subject. Their contribution is especially effective in English. The recently revised programmes of literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 3 are very well taught by the teachers with high expectations, brisk pace, suitable teaching styles and class management skills which take account of individual needs. This is beginning to redress the writing weaknesses of those pupils and teachers are placing extra emphasis on writing tasks.

### **Curriculum and assessment**

49 The curriculum policy is carefully considered, revised and detailed to take account of the last inspection and is based on clear principles and values. The subjects and courses taught constitute a broad and well-balanced curriculum which meets the educational needs of the pupils more successfully than at the last inspection. It complies with the legal requirements for the National Curriculum in both key stages although the time for religious education in Key Stage 4 still fails to meet the syllabus requirements in full. In general, all pupils have equality of access to all parts of the curriculum, with occasional restrictions in Key Stage 4 such as a restriction to single rather than double science for the pupils who opt for child care. The improved structure and content of the curriculum and reduction in the number of short courses offered at the time of the last inspection, are part of the school's efforts to raise standards and are well-judged.

50 Timetabling arrangements are now improved and the school operates a six-period day, with lessons of fifty minutes in length. Although this is not ideal for some practical subjects like design technology and science, it is liked by the majority of staff and pupils

and has given more flexibility. The taught week is twenty-five hours in each key stage and is slightly higher than the recommended times. Each year group is divided into two populations within each of which pupils are setted in certain subjects according to attainment, increasing their rate of progress.

51 The curriculum at Key Stage 3 provides links between subject aspects and carefully judged steps in learning, especially as the school makes use of its close links with feeder primaries. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects it includes drama, dance in PE, ICT, personal and social education, the rolling programme of independent study and academic monitoring and extra skills programmes in literacy and numeracy in Years 7 and 8. The quality of the latter is having a positive impact on the raising of standards. Time allocations for each subject in successive year groups are carefully considered and are for the most part adequate. The time for PE is reduced in this key stage and is barely adequate but there is an effective course for swimming in Year 7. There is no programme of media studies and a unit within English ought to prepare pupils better for the option in Key Stage 4.

52 In Key Stage 4, the curriculum provides options for GCSE, GNVQs in school and at college and ASDAN awards. Pupils study the subjects of the National Curriculum and through the ISAM programme one third of the cohort has RE and ICT. In addition there is a lesson of personal skills. Additional options for GCSE include, drama, media studies, business studies, child care, travel and tourism and PE. The balance of pastoral and academic aspects in both key stages is better than at the last inspection. There is restricted time for non-GCSE PE and those doing the child care course who have the ability to do double sciences can only take single science. Since the last inspection there has been progress in modern foreign languages with the establishment and staffing of a full course for all pupils at Key Stage 4.

53 The extent of use made of IT in other subjects varies between departments and although the IT suite is booked extensively only limited use took place during the inspection. The school is noted for its quality health education for which it has won an award. Teaching about sex education and the use and misuse of drugs is based on good policies, involving also drama and PE lessons. Careers education is well covered in the upper school and Year 11 pupils have mock interviews from members of the business community to prepare them for later life and also carry out two weeks of work experience, organised through the careers service. Another successful feature of the wider curriculum is the arrangement of event days. The next scheduled day will cover citizenship, the global citizen, careers and Key Stage 4 options, economic awareness as well as records of achievement.

54 The curriculum meets the requirements of all pupils on the school's special educational needs register. The school's SENCO produces individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils at the appropriate stages of the Code of Practice and although subject

specific targets to supplement these are not generally provided pupils remain well supported in most subjects. Adapted tasks or materials and support for pupils who need these are provided by withdrawal lessons and additional support for pupils from the learning support assistants (LSAs). Some withdrawal such as that of pupils in modern foreign languages reduces their progress in the subject. The deployment of LSAs varies in its effectiveness from subject to subject and although some of it, such as in English, is good in others there is scope for improvement.

55 Planning of lessons is generally good and the schemes of work provide good links from lesson to lesson, year to year and between key stages. There are effective procedures for transition from primary schools and with further education.

56 In addition to the formal curriculum, there is an extensive and varied range of extra-curricular activities to meet all ages, after school, at weekends and in school holidays. There is a French café, as well as opportunities for participation at all levels in sport and the arts, using the new sports hall and arts accommodation and including regular trips to theatres, field trips in biology, science and geography and visits to local history sites. The school has music activities and drama productions and about four per cent of pupils receive instrumental tuition from the local education authority service. The school has money delegated to provide a full remissions scheme but only a small number are in receipt of such a subsidy. The community links with the school enable students to participate in local sporting events. These activities help to develop the school as a community as well as preparing pupils for adult life.

57 The school has a good homework policy but there is some inconsistency in its application across the curriculum.

58 The school has good policies setting out the requirements for each department in assessment, recording and reporting. Pupils' attainment prior to entry to school is recorded and they are regularly tested in order to predict future performance, to note the rate of progress and to set individual targets. Pupils are not always given an indication of methods for dealing with the identified weaknesses and they do not always have guidelines for assessing their progress and attainment in relation to National Curriculum levels in Key Stage 3. Practice varies from department to department. The main differences occur in using National Curriculum levels to describe pupils' achievements. The school could benefit from study of the best practice in science and English.

59 Assessment provides full information on the attainment of pupils with special educational needs and through data available to all staff assists in the modification of their teaching and learning programmes.

60 The school marking policy is good but its application is inconsistent and not all teachers provide detailed enough guidance on what to do next. Some sketchbooks in art

and some books in modern foreign language have only brief comments. There are good examples of constructive and diagnostic marking, with targets for improvement, in English, science and music.

61 Record keeping is good and well regarded by parents. In its efforts to improve attainment the school makes good use of external assessment and examination data and uses NFER CAT scores to predict pupil attainment and to set targets in the range asked of it by the local education authority. Additionally through the revised independent study and academic monitoring programme, each pupil discusses regularly with a teacher his or her progress and sets targets for improvement, making good use of assessment information.

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

62 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. A careful review of the policy for collective worship has been undertaken since the last inspection. Themes for collective worship are chosen to relate to significant events in the life of the community and to religious festivals as well as more general issues of significance. During the week of the inspection good opportunities were provided for pupils to learn about the significance of Remembrance Day and how to use the two minutes silence which was observed throughout the school. Guidance material is prepared for teachers to use with their forms when pupils are not in assembly. Not all teachers follow this policy in practice, weakening this aspect of the school's provision. The collective worship programme is suspended at times throughout the year for activities such as arrangements for work experience and option choices. Pupils are attentive listeners but rarely have opportunity to participate actively in the presentation of themes. Elsewhere in the curriculum there are thoughtful and sensitive responses by pupils to aspects of human experience through the arts and literature.

63 The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. In the day-to-day life of the school there is clear and consistent commitment to the practical application of the school's values. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong. Very good provision is in place for pupils' understanding of moral issues. Carefully planned programmes for drugs and sex education are taught by teachers who have received good training in association with the local authority. The school has good links with external organisation such as the police service and aid agencies who contribute to this aspect of pupils' development. A range of activities help pupils to develop awareness of moral issues in a broad context. These include links with a local home for the elderly, a 'World Feast Day' and cross-curricular 'Event Days' which have focused on environmental and conservation issues. Pupils have been involved in charitable fund-raising and there are plans to extend this activity in the current academic year. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and consideration for others from their pupils in class. The majority respond positively to this expectation.

64 The provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school has responded positively to the last inspection report . A thorough review of provision for pupils' social development has been undertaken and a newly devised programme is being implemented. The school is aware of the need to keep under review the way in which pupils' are helped to make links and build up increasingly complex understanding systematically in this aspect of their learning. Opportunities are provided throughout the curriculum to enhance pupils' social development through residential courses, links with a local infant school and pupil and staff fund raising events. Pupils have opportunity to exercise some influence on the running of the school and to develop social skills through the lower and upper school Student Councils. Aspects of citizenship education include understanding local government, class discussion on issues such as nuclear power and pupil visits to local government organisations as part of their studies. The school celebrates pupils' involvement in the wider community and individual pupils have been awarded the Mayor's Award for their contribution to local community groups and activities.

65 Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good and there is enthusiastic commitment by many staff to providing pupils with a range of activities which enrich their experience and cultural development. There are opportunities in music to participate in a number of instrumental groups and in the choir. In art pupils have been introduced to a range of cultural styles and periods. The school has been involved in the National Poetry Day, several pupils being prize winners. Monthly visits to the theatre are made. There is a strong commitment to multi-cultural education in several curriculum areas. In English, texts are carefully chosen so that pupils experience writing from a range of cultures. This experience has been extended by contact with Word Hoard, writers and artists in residence at Huddersfield Art Gallery and visits to readings by major contemporary poets from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. In drama pupils experience a range of cultural styles and a multi-cultural theme is built into the work of every year group. Pupils have had the opportunity to learn about African dance through work with an African dance company and plans are being developed for them to work with a touring drama company in the near future on education about the Holocaust. In religious education pupils are introduced to aspects of a number of world religions and in geography imaginative use has been made of pupils' own experience from visits to their families in Kenya and Pakistan.

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

66 The school ensures good provision for the support and guidance of pupils and effectively ensures their welfare. The extended pastoral team of form tutors, year leaders, the pastoral co-ordinator and the SENCO work together effectively in the interests of all pupils. There are good links with other agencies.

67 The school has an effective pastoral system by which form tutors, year leaders, the SENCO and the school's pastoral head work together under the guidance of clear and

agreed policies to ensure that the progress and development of all pupils are recorded and any concerns acted on.

68 There are effective procedures to check on pupils' progress. Termly progress checks are used to grade pupils for homework, attendance and effort. These result in additional monitoring, target setting and parental involvement if pupils are not reaching the standards expected of them. Year 7 pupils are set targets for attendance and behaviour on entry to the school based on primary school records. More comprehensive targets are set later in the autumn term when pupils' needs are better known to the school. All other pupils are set individual targets at the beginning of term. Communication and partnership with feeder schools are good and make a significant contribution to the support offered to pupils on entry to the school and help them to settle into their new school quickly.

69 The system of form tutors is used effectively. Registration periods are used to support and guide pupils with a focus on merits, attendance, punctuality, attitude and effort. Both individual attainments and those of the class as a group are discussed and rewarded appropriately. Independent study and academic monitoring lessons are valuable in further enabling tutors to spend time with their forms to discuss and set individual targets and progress. Subject teachers fill in a form diary after each lesson which enables the tutors to keep track of any pupils who are not behaving or working to their full potential.

70 Attendance has improved as the result of effective systems put in place by the school to check quickly on absences. Punctuality, once an issue, is not now an extensive problem. Pupils who are late have to account for their lateness and all incidents are followed up. A number of pupils still arrive after 08.45 am and therefore should be considered as late. The school policy on attendance and punctuality is effective and consistently applied.

71 Planners are well used and highly valued by most pupils and teachers to guide students and help them organise themselves. They are valuable too in keeping parents involved and informed. The planners of pupils with special educational needs, however, are not usually checked to ensure that they have accurately recorded details of homework. This results in some confusion and uncompleted work. Teachers do not always complete the attendance records in the planners. The system overall enables pupils to be clear about what is required of them and to know how the school feels they are progressing.

72 The merit system used by the school is particularly valued by pupils in Key Stage 3. The merits provide incentives for most pupils to try hard to achieve the targets set for them. Merits are, however, awarded inconsistently in the view of pupils. Some are given for trivial achievements and the number awarded for similar tasks varies significantly

between teachers. The school should consider refining the way merits are awarded to overcome these inconsistencies.

73 Pupils with problems are well supported. They feel able to approach their tutors or year heads but sometimes have difficulty knowing how and when to talk to their subject teachers. The school's pastoral team has a recently developed suite easily accessed by pupils who are encouraged to take advantage of this. The school nurse provides a centre where pupils and staff can visit during two lunch-times each week. The nurse works with the feeder schools and therefore is well known to the pupils and their families. She is not a formally qualified counsellor, but has received training. The school nurse also assists teachers in delivering aspects of the curriculum such as child care and sex education. There is regular contact and involvement from the education social worker attached to the school.

74 The school's positive behaviour management system is effective in supporting most pupils. This was developed after consultation with pupils and parents and contains clear expectations of behaviour. The school sets appropriately high standards for behaviour. The policy is consistently applied by most teachers. Rewards are valued by most pupils. Sanctions provide an effective deterrent for unacceptable behaviour. Pupils who break the rules and fail to respond to in class sanctions are sent to the "on call" room followed by a senior management detention. The school is rightly seeking ways to further develop this system.

75 The upper and lower School Councils meet regularly and enable pupils to comment on the quality of support and guidance they feel they receive and to suggest refinements to the system.

76 The school complies with the guidance of the 'Working Together under the Children Act 1989' and teachers children to be aware of the dangers. Anti-bullying policies are well established and felt to be working well by the majority of pupils and parents. The school complies with statutory health and safety requirements. Potential risks to safety may arise from overcrowding on stairs and landings of the three-storey block. In an emergency that involved the rapid evacuation of the building these stairways could potentially be the cause of considerable problems. Corridors are generally narrow and movement between lessons and at break times is congested. A few younger pupils find this intimidating. The school is aware of this and is monitoring the situation.

77 The school has little control over strangers approaching the building and access to the buildings by intruders is not difficult as unsupervised exterior doors are left unlocked at particular times of the day to allow free movement of pupils. This is a safety issue.

78 Supervision of pupils at break and lunch times is difficult. There is no single recreation area and pupils disperse themselves around the site and in corridors and

classrooms. A large number of pupils go home at lunch time for which they need permission. However, the site is such that exact knowledge of who has left the premises and who remains is difficult although the school makes satisfactory use of a 'pass' system.

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

79 The school has developed a very good partnership with parents and the community, which has increased in strength since the time of the previous inspection and which has some exceptional features. Over the years the school has become a focal point of the estate with many residents making use of its facilities whether or not they have children at the school. The school has made great efforts to inform both parents and the wider of community about its activities, developments and successes with the result that relationships with the community are very positive and enhance the pupils' educational opportunities. Community links are a major strength and the school is referred to as a 'community school'.

80 The written information that the school provides for parents is of good quality and makes clear its priorities and expectations as well as informing them of school events. Staff issue half-termly homework timetables which indicate to parents what topics their child will be studying in the coming weeks. On a termly basis, parents also receive progress checks of their child's effort, behaviour, attendance and attainment, together with the average for the year group. Pupils' annual progress checks indicate their attainment and attitude to work. Pupils' planners encourage two way communication and parents are confident that staff will contact them if there any particular areas for concern or praise.

81 Many parents are unstinting in their praise for the school and for the way in which their opinions and concerns are taken into account. The school organises information meetings or parental surveys when it is considering changes over, for instance, uniform or the behaviour policy, and two parents' meetings are held each year for each year group. The Parent Teacher Association and the governing body's parents sub-committee have been amalgamated to form the Parent Support Forum which acts as a sounding board for opinion and whose members organise fund-raising activities. The summer term sponsored walk raised more than £4,500 towards the cost of a new minibus. Parents also support their children's education through, for example, working in partnership with the school over improving their child's behaviour, or helping with reading and other homework.

82 At the time of the previous inspection the school had managed to improve the provision for technology through working in partnership with outside agencies. Since then, through similar hard work and ingenuity, it has succeeded in greatly improving its sports facilities and the accommodation available for art and drama. This has involved hard work by staff in formulating and submitting the necessary bids. Much of this has been made possible because it welcomes members of the community in to use its facilities. Adult education classes take place in school, as do an on-site crèche and after-school



club. Many members of the community use the sports hall, information technology resources and football pitches out of school hours. The school has also reached agreement with the Lawn Tennis Association for a major improvement of the tennis courts. The improvements in accommodation have helped to attract increased numbers of pupils to the school and are part of the school's efforts to raise attainment.

83 Partnership with the community on a day-to-day basis is also very good. Staff and pupils regularly visit infant and junior schools to teach, take assembly, carry out work experience, research, or help with reading. Primary age children make use of the swimming pool and ICT facilities. There is also liaison between teachers of English, mathematics and science in the different phases, and plans for similar meetings between other subjects, in order to dovetail their teaching so that pupils experience a smooth transition between Key Stages 2 and 3. Pupils from a local special school attend lessons at the high school on a regular basis.

84 Members of the business community have mock interviews with Year 11 pupils to prepare them for later life and these pupils also carry out two weeks work experience at the beginning of the autumn term which is organised through the careers service. Other business people give support and advice in specific subject areas such as business education, child care and design, or provide awards for successful pupils. Pupils following the ASDAN Award scheme make regular use of the area and community whether to visit the courts, carry out research at a local museum, plant wild flowers in a local park or organise games and sports for young people. The work that the school has carried out on its own grounds, is now being rewarded by members of the local community offering plants and advice for its further improvement.

85 Overall, the benefits accruing from the school's partnership with the community are many and varied. They already make a positive contribution towards pupils' personal development and should help to raise their levels of attainment in future years.

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

### **Leadership and management**

86 The quality of the school's leadership is very good. It provides a clear vision for the school, set out in the mission statement and in the four main aims of the school, and shared effectively with staff, parents and pupils. The lines of development are clear, the priorities established and there is a very strong commitment to improvement especially in raising attainment of its pupils in national terms. The headteacher involves himself in all aspects of school life and in the local community. He has been part of the monitoring of standards in lessons, meets staff regularly and has the ability to inspire and enthuse members of staff and parents, from whom there came many expressions of support. He and the governors provide strong positive leadership. The last inspection report stated

that the school's internal communications were good and in many aspects very good. These standards have been maintained.

87 The management and staffing structure is set out with clarity; the head is supported by a deputy and four senior managers and the division of responsibilities is designed also to give the deputy more time to spend on the school's focus of raising student attainment. The staffing structure of the school has present inequalities for historic reasons but the school is moving towards a flat management structure in which heads of departments are line managed by the deputy head and the year leaders are line managed by the pastoral co-ordinator. Since the last inspection, half of the staff have been appointed, nearly one third in the last two years, especially as the school has increased in size. The management has worked hard to ensure continuity and common values. The quality of management at all levels is good, resulting in the maintenance of generally good quality teaching.

88 The school development plan is reflected in all aspects of school life although actions, costs, timescales and success criteria are not clearly defined. After the last inspection a very full action plan was drawn up and this has been complementary to the development plan. The budgetary implications are not included and although known by the managers are not easily understood by others for whom the school development plan is relevant.

89 The school development plan, the annual action plan as well as the post-Ofsted plan after the last inspection are all co-ordinated effectively. The senior management steering committee, pastoral teams and heads of departments meet weekly and set agendas for the year, covering key issues from the action plan. This ensures that the priorities arising from the school development plan are clearly set and that the regular cycle of meetings revolves round this plan.

90 The school introduced an effective system of classroom monitoring of teaching. It made senior managers much more aware of subject needs as they and heads of department were observers in the classroom and helped each teacher to agree future targets for development. It did not involve observation by teachers of good practice in other departments or of other teachers which limits its effect in improving attainment by pupils in classroom. This needs effective management in the future. It is a logical development of the school's well written policy for High Quality Teaching and Learning in which practical advice is given but which is not yet consistent in each classroom. The process is having an impact on improving standards of teaching and the inspection found no poor teaching. This, in turn, will improve pupil attainment and the present predicted scores and the targets set within the range established by the LEA for 2000 and 2001 suggest that the school is working hard to increase attainment in national terms.

91 The school manages well its arrangements for providing good education for those

pupils with special educational needs. There is a need to ensure that school policies are consistently embedded in the classroom and the provision of IT across the subjects needs to be structured better.

92 The governing body fulfils most of its statutory obligations and takes an active part in the leadership and management of the school. Committed governors meet regularly and their meetings include their own agendas as well as those of the LEA. Governors have formed committees which relate to all aspects of school life. They go into school and take an active part in appointments of staff, in staff development, the curriculum and in building a community. They raise extra revenue to provide sports and arts facilities for the school. Members of staff are invited to talk to them about educational matters or to work with them on their specific tasks. Recently it was the governors as a whole who debated and voted on the targets for GCSE attainment to be set for 2001. Apart from the failure to ensure consistent daily collective worship, the school meets statutory requirements, but needs to develop the management of better literacy across the curriculum.

93 The school has a very positive and purposeful ethos, manifested especially in its successful steps to forge links with the community and to open up the premises to joint use. This ethos contributes to school improvement and to the achievement of its aims. There are good relationships between governors, senior management, teaching staff, pupils and parents. Pupils are supported well even in difficult times and helped to improve wherever possible their standards of attainment.

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

94 There is a good match between the number, qualifications and experience of teaching staff and the demands of the curriculum. Subjects taught by teachers who are not specialists are few.

95 The support for pupils with special educational needs has increased recently in line with additional funding. The learning support assistants employed to support pupils with special educational needs are recently appointed and not experienced or specifically qualified in this area. The LSAs provide a satisfactory level of support for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need who are the focus of their work.

96 There is one NQT who has a timetable, induction programme and access to a mentor in line with recent Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) recommendations. The school provides good support for NQTs which is an improvement from the last inspection.

97 There is an induction programme and information pack for new staff who are supported by a mentor. Formal appraisal of teaching staff is suspended awaiting further guidance from the DfEE. There is, however, a system of annual professional development

interviews between teaching staff and departmental managers that result in an analysis of training needs and individual targets. Most staff at the school have satisfactory access to in-service training although the take up varies significantly from department to department.

98 Accommodation at the school makes good provision for pupils' learning. The buildings are pleasant, clean and free of deliberate damage. Buildings are well kept and decoration is generally good. Classrooms, corridors and social areas have good displays of pupils' work and school events. Rules, merit achievements and pertinent information such as subject specific word lists are well displayed. Classrooms generally provide stimulating environments. Pupils respect the buildings and there is no evidence of vandalism. Plants are abundant around the school and soften otherwise austere and institutionalised architecture. Resources are satisfactory overall. They are best in PE, design and technology and geography and least satisfactory in RE, science and history.

99 Facilities are good. There is a new sports hall partly funded by a National Lottery grant. The school and the community have full use of this promoting the community links of which the school is proud and providing extra-curricular sport for the pupils. The art room and drama theatre have been refurbished recently out of money earned by the school by providing a site for a mobile phone transmitter. The lighting equipment in the drama room increases the motivation of pupils in drama, by creating a sense of theatre. There is a swimming pool that is also well used by the local community. An area of the school has been skilfully adapted recently by the school's caretakers to form a pastoral suite of rooms that has significantly enhanced the provision of support for pupils. School staff, including the caretakers, have created an attractive art and display area off the main school corridor and by this means the pupils' cultural appreciation is enhanced. The library is a pleasant area of the school and there has been significant recent investment so that pupils value it and use it for their studies as well as recreational reading. The library still lacks books relevant to some areas of the curriculum but is developing well.

100 All specialist subjects are taught in suitable specialist rooms although the music room cannot be used for a number of weeks each year because of its proximity to the school hall that is used for external examinations. The alternative room used does not provide comparable facilities. Furniture is adequate and in a good state of repair. Classrooms are nearly always tidy and well organised. There are some health and safety issues in the workshops when all the pupils in the largest groups are present.

101 Pupils have access to some good learning resources to support their learning and make effective use of the library for study, the ICT suite for their projects or private research and dictionaries in class. There are insufficient stocks of books in the library for history, business studies and child care. In RE pupils have too few books to support their home study and too little visual aids and other artefacts to illustrate their themes. There is

an inadequate amount of subject specific software in IT and of practical resources in mathematics but in most other subjects resources have a positive effect on pupils' work.

102 Access to the school for pupils with mobility problems is good in comparison with many schools. The ground floor rooms are accessible to wheelchairs and there are ramps and lifts to overcome short flights of steps. This enables the facilities of at least part of the school to be accessed by a group of pupils from a local special school that integrate one day per week. The upper floors of the school are however inaccessible to those with mobility problems. There are steep and narrow stairwells and the school is not one of those designated by the local education authority as needing a lift.

103 Access to the upper floors of the school is poor and presents a potential health and safety problem. Stairways are narrow, steep and congested between lessons. Pupils leaving classrooms on the upper floors frequently meet other classes of pupils moving to these rooms. This creates potentially dangerous congestion of pupils and staff on the stairways. As a result pupils are sometimes late for lessons. The situation at lunch time is difficult for the school to manage. There is nowhere suitable for the pupils to wait to enter the dining room. Packed lunches are eaten in various places around the school, resulting in additional litter. The majority of pupils move around the building safely and sensibly. Staff supervision of corridors, dining room and stairways is evident and effective in maintaining order.

104 Outdoor areas provide sufficient space for curriculum provision and recreation. These areas are fully accessible to the community and there are a number of official and other footpaths through the extensive site. In its successful role as a community facility this ease of access is good and there is unusually high multi-agency and public use of facilities, including adult, social services and nursery provision both in school time and after school. Despite the vulnerability of the buildings there is no evidence of any vandalism.

105 There is some litter around the school site. Some of this may be attributable to the many visitors to the site but much is deposited by pupils. There are few litter bins. Some younger pupils are concerned about this and take it in turns to collect litter.

### **The efficiency of the school**

106 The school has managed its budget carefully and effectively over several years, which has required careful planning for the needs of an expanding school as pupil numbers have risen from four-form entry to seven-form entry. The school has successfully maintained a surplus budget in spite of the considerable burden of necessary improvements to the building. In the current year the surplus is £8793.

107 The school has been particularly effective in obtaining substantial capital grants

and has raised an additional income of nearly £50,000 this year through letting surplus accommodation, community use of the sports facilities and links with industry. In spite of this considerable enhancement to the basic budget, the school has an income of only £2,206 per pupil, which is still below the median value of £2,264 for schools of this type. The available funds are well deployed to the benefit of the pupils.

108 Priorities for development are clear: for example there has been a move to reduce the amount of non-specialist teaching and there have been significant improvements in IT, science, art, drama, and sport. The development planning process is effective in identifying the needs of the school. Departmental reviews are carried out which contribute to annual action plans. However the school development plan does not clearly identify actions, costs, timescales and success criteria in a way which enables judgements about the cost effectiveness of initiatives and their impact on raising standards to be easily made.

109 The school exercises careful control over its expenditure. The governing body is aware of its financial responsibilities and carries them out well. The oversight of the governing body is regular and knowledgeable: a detailed budget is produced every half-term for scrutiny by the finance committee. The school had the benefit of a report from the local auditor in 1997. This identified a significant number of areas where the school needed to tighten up financial procedures. Senior managers have had more training as recommended in the last inspection report. The head and the new bursar have taken more control of routines and are now confident that all the issues requiring improvement are satisfactorily addressed. There is soon to be another audit of the school, which should confirm that this is the case.

110 Deployment of resources is generally appropriate. A strategic and unavoidable decision was taken to devote as much of the budget as possible to improving the facilities for the benefit of pupils and to raise standards as a consequence of an increase in admissions. This has had a consequence that the ratio of pupils to teachers is above average and the expenditure on teachers' salaries is low. On the other hand the proportion of time teachers spend actually with classes as opposed to other duties in school, is below average and the expenditure on supply teachers and support staff is high. This enables the school to offer extra support to teachers, for example through early cover for absence. The provision of support staff for special needs and other purposes is high. The proportion of the budget specifically allocated for special educational needs is appropriately deployed and expenditure on this aspect is supplemented by other funds.

111 The basis for allocation of funds to departments through a formula and bidding process is well understood by heads of departments. Although the unit cost per pupil for this school is below the average, it nevertheless devotes a high proportion of its expenditure to learning resources. However, in some subjects, notably RE, child care, media studies, practical mathematics and English resources are still not adequate to the needs of the curriculum.

112 The socio-economic circumstances of many pupils are unfavourable. Pupils' attainment on entry is below the national average, but results of national tests, while still below the national average, are at or above those of similar schools. The school provides good value for money.

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

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

113 Results in the national tests in English at the end of Key Stage 3 from 1997-99 were below the national average but were comparable with schools with pupils from a similar background. The attainment of present pupils at Key Stage 3 is below the national average, although standards in Year 7 are better than in Years 8 and 9.

114 By the end of Key Stage 3 high attaining pupils read confidently and can discuss their views of characters and themes in books. Many of those able pupils can also comment perceptively on how language is used. They write imaginatively and are developing confidence in writing different types of poetry. In a Year 8 lesson pupils wrote their own ballads based on work done in class. Low attaining pupils can understand texts such as 'Boy', although they need extra support when reading on their own. They can write in sentences and presentation is satisfactory but spelling and punctuation are inaccurate. Some of those pupils find it difficult to express their ideas in writing. Most pupils can communicate their ideas in speech, and many can talk in some detail about the work they are doing. Pupils listen carefully and learn from the teachers and, increasingly, from each other. Boys' attainment is significantly weaker than girls and attainment in writing is weaker than in speaking, listening and reading.

115 Progress at Key Stage 3 is good and is often very good in some lessons. Literacy levels on entry to the school are significantly below the national average but the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3. Pupils develop competence in reading and an increasing number of pupils can use advanced reading skills. The accuracy of written work improves and pupils are prepared to write longer essays. Teachers emphasise the importance of re-drafting and this is having a positive effect on the quality of written work. The quality of work done in school is significantly better than work done at home. Some more able pupils read widely and use the library effectively, but a significant number of pupils do not read at home for pleasure. Pupils of all abilities enjoy oral work and make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in mixed ability groups where they benefit from skilled classroom assistant support and stimulating resources.

116 Results in GCSE in English and English Literature from 1997-99 were below the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is still behind national expectations, but shows steady improvement from the end of Key Stage 3. Writing standards are significantly stronger in Year 11 than Year 10 where students write longer essays with a greater degree of accuracy and control. Pupils in Year 11 re-draft their work and understand how to improve the content and style. Low attaining reach



satisfactory standards in oracy work but writing standards are weaker. The middle range of ability respond well in class to literary texts, but in Year 10 homework often lacks detail and the written vocabulary of these pupils is limited.

117 Progress at Key Stage 4 is good in most lessons particularly in Year 11. Over the two years most pupils make good progress in speaking and listening and satisfactory progress in reading and writing. High attaining pupils develop confidence in expressing their views about texts such as 'Much Ado About Nothing' and write more confidently about new ideas. Boys are more reluctant to express their ideas than girls, but most make satisfactory progress in developing the mechanical accuracy of their work. Pupils of average ability need to read more extensively outside classes and write more substantial pieces of work. The least able pupils make steady progress in improving reading and writing skills and developing their confidence in expressing a point of view.

118 Pupils' attitudes to English are very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 pupils work well in mixed gender groups, share ideas and work co-operatively in English and drama. Behaviour is good in lessons and many pupils are prepared to help those pupils who have learning difficulties. At Key Stage 4 a minority of low attaining pupils lack self-discipline and display immature behaviour but the majority increasingly take responsibility for their own learning. The poor attendance of some pupils at Key Stage 4 has an effect on standards.

119 The quality of teaching is good and often very good. It is rarely less than satisfactory. Teachers are enthusiastic and establish supportive relationships with pupils. Their knowledge of the subject is good and the very detailed schemes of work provide invaluable support to non-specialist staff. Literature is well taught and in the best lessons learning objectives are explained to the pupils at the start of lessons and evaluation takes place at the end. In most lessons the pace and challenge are appropriate for all pupils. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and provide a wide range of learning activities for pupils including opportunities for discussion in small groups or pairs. In a Year 10 class pupils used a range of multi-cultural texts to examine issues relating to racism in a mature and sensitive way. Marking is constructive and diagnostic and work is assessed regularly. Targets for improvement are set for individual pupils. The media studies course at Key Stage 4 is well taught and some of this type of study could be a valuable stimulus for boys if introduced in Key Stage 3. There is a need to teach more specific knowledge about language. The department is one of the most frequent users of information technology. Homework is set regularly and is monitored carefully by staff but pupils in the middle range of ability need to complete more work at home. The work of the librarian and the quality of fiction books in the library are valuable learning resources.

120 The school has recognised the importance of improving low levels of literacy in order to raise standards of attainment across the curriculum. In many classrooms key words relating to individual subjects are explained on display boards. In science pupils are

taught key concept words and encouraged to read and in history writing frames are used to encourage extended writing. However, in many subject areas (other than English) there are only limited opportunities for pupils to produce extended writing and opportunities to read widely are limited. There are good examples of pupils being given the opportunity to explore new ideas in group discussions in geography, music, science and information technology. Learning is consolidated when this occurs. Extra literacy lessons have been introduced in Years 7 and 8 and the quality of the Year 7 programme is of a high standard. Liaison with feeder schools to learn about the Literacy Hour is an invaluable part of staff development.

121 Progress has been made since the last inspection with work being matched more clearly to pupils' needs. Joint planning and shared schemes of work ensure quality provision across all year groups. Assessment and marking of pupil work is now a departmental strength. The department evaluates its work at meetings and through reviews conducted by the senior management staff of the school. The department is very well managed with a strong philosophy based on improving standards for all. Resources have improved in quality and quantity although they are still limited in number.

• 122 Drama contributes to the standards of attainment in English particularly in raising the level of speaking and listening.

123 Standards of work in drama are good at Key Stage 3 and 4. In 1998 GCSE pupils achieved A\* to C grades of 87.5 per cent compared with a national norm of 68.5 per cent. Pupils make good progress in their lessons which they enjoy and, over time, develop confidence in using an extending range of drama techniques. The contribution drama makes to improving standards of speaking and listening is a major benefit for all pupils. In examining issues such as bullying the department contributes significantly to the moral and social development of pupils. The wide range of extra-curricular activities enhances pupils' cultural development. The subject is well organised by an efficient and capable teacher who ensures high quality lessons which are challenging and enhance the learning of pupils. Pupils and staff work in a drama studio which has been refurbished recently and which provides a high quality learning environment.

## **Mathematics**

124 In the Key Stage 3 national tests in 1998, the percentage of pupils gaining at least level 5 was below the national average but above the average for similar schools. For level 6 it was below the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The average points score in mathematics in 1998 was above the average for similar schools and better than in English or science in this school. The 1999 results showed a marked improvement and there has also been a considerable increase in the level 7 performance.

125 At GCSE in 1998 the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was well below the national average of 44 per cent, and considerably lower than those in science and English. In 1999 there was a good improvement to 38 per cent. The number of pupils gaining higher grades has improved steadily and very few of those entered for GCSE failed to get any grade. All pupils take an accredited course, the lowest set taking the Welsh Board Certificate of Achievement.

126 As reported in the previous inspection, standards are at average levels in Key Stage 3, but below expectation in Key Stage 4. Performance at both key stages over time has been fluctuating rather than showing year-on-year improvement, although in the best years performance has been close to the national average. At both key stages there is little difference between the performance of boys and girls, although girls are improving their performance in relation to boys.

127 Attainment in lessons is around the national expectation in Key Stage 3. Pupils in top sets work at or above the national average, while those in lower sets are below it. Standards of numeracy are reasonable although some pupils have problems in recalling number facts and lack reliable strategies for mental calculation.

128 The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below the national average, as measured by cognitive ability tests and national tests. A little over half the pupils have the national expectation of level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 and one-fifth have achieved beyond this. The department has not systematically measured progress in terms of gain in National Curriculum levels, but the present Year 10 pupils gained on average over 1.5 levels during Key Stage 3. This is an appropriate rate of progress through the National Curriculum, and is better than in English or science.

129 Progress in lessons is generally satisfactory. Pupils make sound progress in number and algebra, shape and space, and data handling. Progress in using and applying mathematics is to some extent limited by the lack of guidance about this essential aspect of the work, as reported in the last inspection. The school has begun to provide dedicated numeracy lessons which are proving highly effective and very motivating for pupils, but the development of numeracy is not a regular part of the majority of lessons.

130 The response of most pupils was good in the majority of lessons seen. Pupils are very well behaved. They follow the teachers' instructions and work conscientiously at the tasks set. Pupils are interested in their work, particularly where activities are motivating. On a few occasions they are able to demonstrate their willingness and ability to offer their own ideas, as for example, in a lesson about sorting shapes according to their own criteria. The presentation of work in exercise books varies, some being very good while others are not of an acceptable standard.

131 As in the last inspection teaching was sound or better in the great majority of

lessons, and good or very good in about half. Teachers are generally effective in maintaining discipline. Lessons are generally well planned and taught. Some teachers are effective in questioning in order to probe pupils' understanding and make sure they all contribute to the whole-class part of the lesson. Other lessons would benefit from more use of pupils' contributions, for example in explaining answers. This would assist the teacher to assess the performance of the class. There is still no clear guidance on the nature and assessment of using and applying mathematics (attainment target 1) so that many good practical and investigative activities do not fulfil their potential in enabling pupils to use mathematics in context, communicate their ideas and make and justify general statements. There is insufficient use of IT. Marking is generally satisfactory although sometimes when pupils mark their own work teachers need to oversee this more carefully.

132 There should be more use of practical resources to help pupils to understand difficult points. In one good lesson on congruence the teacher had prepared a series of large shapes which the whole class could see and discuss. In a lesson about bearings the blackboard protractor was unsuitable for class demonstration and the lesson would have been more effective with the use of an overhead projector or by allowing pupils to demonstrate at the board. In another lesson pupils were expected to imagine the symmetry of shapes when they needed the ideas demonstrated practically. There is interesting and stimulating display of mathematics posters and pupils' work in the classrooms and in the corridors which gives a high profile to the subject. Key vocabulary is displayed in classrooms and is referred to in teaching, contributing effectively to the development of literacy, but there is insufficient explicit teaching of numeracy through regular mental activity.

133 The head of department provides good leadership. A departmental handbook has various helpful policies. The scheme of work outlines the content of work, with varied tasks or materials to meet the needs of different groups of pupils to ensure steady stages of learning and well-judged coverage of linked aspects. Levels of the National Curriculum indicated are generally appropriate, but lesson planning does not always match these levels. For example upper and lower sets in the same year did similar work on conversion graphs, with insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils or sufficiently rich experiences at lower levels for less able pupils. Formal assessments are built into the course with regular tests but these are not directly related to National Curriculum. There is some standardising of activities between teachers: this practice could usefully be extended. Reporting to parents has improved since the last inspection but there could still be more reference to pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

134 The departmental development plan has relevant priorities relating to raising achievement and improving teaching and learning. These should be linked to explicit targets for improving attainment. Further development is needed in ICT and attainment target 1. Since the last inspection the allocation of time in Key Stage 4 and distribution of

lessons are much more appropriate. Setting arrangements are generally effective in ensuring that pupils have an appropriate curriculum which provides equality of access and meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

## **Science**

135 At the last inspection the science department was seen as a good department with good teaching, high expectations, good organisation and good leadership. Now a good department has become even better. Attainment is now higher and progress better. The performance of pupils in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999 was well above those for similar schools and around the national average. On entry to the school the average level of attainment of pupils in science is below the national average.

136 In 1998 most pupils took double science and the percentage achieving A\* to C at 77 per cent as well above the national average at 48 per cent. A minority of pupils entered for single award GCSE science and did considerably better than nationally with 34 per cent gaining A\* to C compared to 18 per cent. Variations in attainment between boys and girls in GCSE are similar to those at national level. Pupils did significantly better in science than they did in the other school subjects.

137 Work in science lessons shows that pupils' attainment in relation to national standards and expectations is above average at both key stages but the range is wide with pupils in the higher sets performing much better than the national average while those in lower sets perform less well. Generally pupils demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of appropriate attainment targets. They demonstrate a good level of skill in practical work and science investigations, for example the need to take a rough reading followed by three readings which are then averaged. They are particularly good at planning and executing investigations (for example in investigating the variables affecting a falling parachute), predicting and evaluating the results. Pupils usually record their work accurately. The standard of presentation is variable, and for some classes has deteriorated since the beginning of the year, but much well presented and carefully planned work was offered by the higher sets in both key stages.

138 All pupils including those with special educational needs, make sound progress with a majority making good progress at both key stages. Most increase their understanding of key scientific ideas and principles, for example the production of gases by means of electrolysis. More able pupils make progress in applying these principles in unfamiliar situations and in developing confidence in quantitative aspects of science, for example in discussing inheritance and selection. They make observations and measurements with increasing accuracy and record their findings in progressively clearer and more sophisticated ways as they move up the school. The more able can remember and apply knowledge gained in previous lessons to new situations and here the need for guidance and assistance in the planning and execution of investigative and other practical

work diminishing perceptibly as pupils progressed through the school.

139 The response of pupils in both key stages is usually good and sometimes very good. Pupils in nearly all lessons engage fully in their work and make effective use of their time. They show scientific curiosity and enthusiasm for tasks set; particularly investigative work and practical activities. They ask and answer questions frequently and willingly. In some lessons they feel able to join in discussion, for example in a Year 7 class where groups classified solids, liquids and gases and illustrated their conclusions in a poster. They are able to listen carefully and sustain concentration though they do not always remember what they have heard or see how it applies to the activities they do next. This restricts the pace of progress as teachers need to repeat instruction frequently. However, pupils work conscientiously and productively, for example in an experiment on measuring the energy obtained from food. Pupils' behaviour in science lessons is always satisfactory and usually good in both key stages. They form constructive relationships with each other and co-operate well with their teachers.

140 The quality of teaching in both key stages is always satisfactory, usually good and often very good, particularly at Key Stage 4. Teaching is a major strength. Teachers are well qualified to teach their subject, have a real interest in it and have a secure knowledge of the National Curriculum. Teaching is well matched to the pupils' stage of learning but teachers always encourage progress. The setting arrangements enable the most able to be sufficiently challenged. Tasks develop critical thinking, enable the acquisition of practical skills and provide excellent coverage of attainment targets at both key stages, for example investigation of the effect of varying strengths of acids in a neutralisation experiment.

141 Lessons are well planned with clear goals. They are based on detailed schemes of work. Overall, there is a good blend of theory, discussion, demonstration and pupil practical work. Staff have clear learning targets for all lessons which are shared with pupils. Forward planning of practical work is well organised and the necessary materials and equipment are always to hand. Not all lessons have tasks to match the differing abilities of pupils though the use of practical work and investigation allows for a varying response. Teacher exposition is good in all lessons and question and answer sessions are carried out well. Teachers not only reinforce recall of knowledge but probe and extend understanding. Care is taken to try and ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are less motivated, participate by directed questioning. Teachers manage pupils well and achieve high standards of discipline. They have very good relationships with their pupils.

142 Time is well used in most lessons but further 'fine tuning' of the time allocation to activities in some lessons will improve the balance of time pupils spend listening to guidance and performing practical tasks. Each science period is now 50 minutes. This is too short a time for a practical lesson of substance with older more able pupils and makes the teachers' task difficult. Lessons where the teacher had a time plan for the various

activities were particularly successful in maintaining good pace. Organisation for practical work is effective. Materials for practical work are selected carefully, well prepared and ready. The laboratory technician provides excellent support in practical work. In all lessons the health and safety aspects are ensured through safe laboratory procedures. IT is well used in a variety of ways. For example, one teacher got pupils to enter the results obtained in a class experiment and then processed them to produce meaningful averaged results. Marking of pupils' work is regularly carried out, with useful comments which encourage, challenge and guide pupils.

143 The planning and organisation of the curriculum in all year groups effective. There are schemes of work of good quality in both key. Setting and the reduction in group sizes of lower sets, provides more effective teaching for all pupils. There is opportunity for movement of pupils between sets, usually towards the end of the first term if it becomes obvious from test results that pupils have been misplaced. There are effective procedures for assessment, recording and reporting.

144 The department is excellently led and well managed. The thorough schemes and tests at the end of units of work enable the head of department to monitor the progress of the teaching and individual teachers take responsibility for different sections of the schemes. There is no developmental system in the department of visiting lessons to share good practice.

145 The department makes strenuous efforts to ensure high achievement. It ensures a comprehensive scheme of work, using graded tests, analysing pupil performance and if necessary altering its own practice. Teachers build in revision sessions, set clear targets and, if necessary agree a strategy for improvement with parents, ensuring high standards of coursework and creating a culture of achievement. Staff show a caring attitude to the pupils and are dedicated to the development of positive attitudes, good relations and equal opportunities.

## OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### · Art

146 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is lower than national expectations. In lessons it is generally in line with or below national expectations in both key stages. Examination results remain well below national averages. Since the previous inspection recorded results well below national average, no improvement in attainment has occurred. Results for 1999 indicate slightly better performance than in the previous two years. In lessons girls were generally attaining better than boys and in 1998, girls' attainment in examinations was better than that of boys. A number of Year 7 and 8 pupils report limited contact with art in previous schools and consequently attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 remains below national expectations even when steady progress is made. Attainment in investigating and making is higher than knowledge and understanding in both key stages. Generally pupils make satisfactory progress, starting from low levels of previous artistic experience. In most of the Key Stage 3 lessons pupils made satisfactory progress. In one lesson good progress was made and in one lesson it was unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 4 progress was generally satisfactory with some lessons in which it was good. In some lessons progress is slowed by poor behaviour or by task avoidance. Generally progress is insufficient to enable pupils confidently to plan and develop their ideas and images. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress. The best progress is often made by self-motivated girls who are able to work independently of the teacher.

147 Behaviour is mostly satisfactory although there are a few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour in both key stages. These are handled well by the teachers but often limit progress. Few pupils are confident enough to evaluate and modify their work without considerable support from their teachers. Only a few respond positively to criticism and advice. Too few pupils develop the capacity for sustained independent study.

148 Most teaching is satisfactory, some is good and occasionally it is unsatisfactory. Teachers' expectations do not always match the standards shown in recent national publications. Sometimes too much praise is given to work which does not justify it and which pupils do not consider as their best efforts. This is particularly evident in pupils' sketchbooks. Aiming to motivate and raise pupils' self-esteem by guaranteeing successful outcomes, teachers in fact create too few occasions to challenge and extend pupils' thinking. There are too few opportunities for pupils to analyse their work and justify their ideas and choices. Teachers manage pupils well, generally achieve satisfactory standards of discipline and mostly use time and resources effectively.

149 A detailed scheme of work is ready to be put into practice. It is planned effectively to provide well linked coverage in suitably judged steps of learning and is an effective framework for medium- and short-term planning. Extra-curricular provision enriches the



subject through the use of gallery visits and contacts with local artists. Where possible, visits to locations such as the local garden centre enhance and extend the curriculum. Much of this has been achieved while the department has been disturbed by refurbishment and re-location of its work spaces. Currently there is no formal monitoring of effectiveness by art staff and development planning does not yet focus on raising attainment through reviewing and modifying approaches to teaching and learning.

150 There is no technician support and consequently teachers' time is used on routine preparation of materials and equipment. Overall time allocations are adequate, but breadth and depth of the curriculum are curtailed by the single 50 minute lessons in which proportionately more time is lost to dispersing, collecting and cleaning equipment. The practice of allocating two lessons per week to Years 7 and 8 and one lesson to Year 9 curtails curriculum coverage at the very point at which the required depth of study is greatest. Each of these constraints adversely affects some aspect of artistic learning and limits attainment.

151 There are good quality displays which celebrate pupils' achievements. The gallery areas designed and built by art staff are excellent additions to the cultural life of the school. They house displays of objects and artefacts to stimulate visual interest and curiosity. These are in noticeably good condition with a complete absence of damage or vandalism, in spite of the attention the exhibits attract at breaks and lunchtimes.

#### • **Design and Technology**

152 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. In lessons attainment is generally around the average with few examples of below average attainment. These resulted from insufficient use of knowledge and understanding when designing. In Key Stage 4 attainment is generally around the average and in GCSE examinations in 1998 it was slightly below national averages but at the average for similar schools. At the time of the last inspection, attainment was significantly above the national averages for comprehensive schools. Attainment has declined, therefore, but has remained around the average for the last two years. Girls out-perform boys in lessons, in work seen and in examinations. Food technology achieves better results than graphics, systems and control and textiles and resistant materials achieves a third of the A\* to C grades achieved in food technology. The department is working on a school initiative to raise the attainment of boys. Generally pupils attain better in the making skills than in the designing or the knowledge and understanding aspects. Lower levels of attainment in designing, investigating and evaluating produce work which modifies existing products rather than involving pupils in imaginative and creative responses.

153 Progress is generally satisfactory and often good. Where progress is sometimes insufficient it is because the tasks set limit pupils' inventiveness and ingenuity. Two activities notably improve progress: learning how the other designers work as seen in food

technology lesson where products were being carefully taken apart; and references to real industrial and commercial practices. Pupils with special needs progress at rates appropriate to their abilities and learning needs. Progress made by girls is better than that of boys as seen in a textile lesson and in Key Stage 4 work on resistant materials.

154 Most pupils work and behave well in lessons. As yet, only the more able pupils develop the capacity for independent personal study and use their personal interest and experience of products in their work. This results in many relying only on mail order catalogues to stimulate ideas.

155 Teaching is always at least satisfactory, often good and on occasion very good. There is well-structured forward planning and good teamwork in the department. Although expectations of pupils are sometimes insufficiently high to challenge their thinking and deepen their technological knowledge and understanding, there is a high standard of discipline and constructive relationships. In the better lessons, teachers require pupils to work out their own answers, challenge by asking questions which require thoughtful responses, and expect pupils to be able to work independently and accept responsibility for their own work and learning. Most teachers have secure understanding of the making aspects of the subject and most are confident of teaching the processes of designing in a structured way, particularly the generation and refinement of ideas. Sympathetic and patient teachers encourage pupils to relate positively to others, participate in the community and develop personal responsibility when working in teams.

156 Curricular planning and organisation are good. Good leadership and clear direction are provided for staff and there is effective teamwork. As yet, no plans focus on raising attainment through improving teaching and learning so that all becomes as good as the best. There is effective technician support in the workshops although not enough time is available to meet the needs of food and textiles rooms. Pupil numbers in some groups would create over-crowding were all to be present in some lessons. There is sufficient specialist accommodation for effective curriculum coverage and the range and quantity of the learning resources, materials and equipment are good.

## **Geography**

157 The subject attracts a large number of pupils at Key Stage 4; all have been entered for GCSE examinations. The results at GCSE have declined since the last inspection in 1996 when passes were close to the national average. Pupils in 1998 achieved pass levels at A\* to C which were below national standards. The attainment of boys has been below that of the girls particularly at the higher level of passes for several years. Results within teacher assessment at the end of the Key Stage 3 indicate that the standard of work for the majority of pupils is very close to the level of other pupils in other schools.

158 Attainment in classes reflects these results. Pupils in all classes are using a good

range of geographical terms and relevant vocabulary. The majority of pupils have a sound understanding of physical processes and show that they can link the effects of geological changes with the consequences these would have on people. Most pupils in the upper school are able to describe and to offer explanations within complex geographical topics. Questions posed by pupils on the concept of location indicate a sound understanding of complex issues. Attainment in classes in both key stages is presently hindered by some pupils displaying poor literacy skills and by untidy presentation of written work. The department supports the school literacy policy and has several strategies in place, but these need to be further incorporated into planning and exercises in order to give more guidance and support to pupils' written answers. The pupils' capacity to conduct more extended enquiry work was shown to great effect in the completion of good individual pieces of course work for last year's examination by the more able pupils. Pupils presently studying a recently introduced GCSE course, travel and tourism, are generally producing satisfactory standards of work. They offer logical explanations to travel issues and couple these with an acceptable knowledge of place location.

159 Pupils' achievements at the commencement of the course are well below national standards. Most pupils in all Year 7 make satisfactory progress and soon became confident when asked to use new terminology to describe a whole range of topics. Boys make good improvements when they are regularly asked to explain orally either their personal views or to offer explanations for problems posed. Middle and higher attainers continue to make satisfactory gains in progress in knowledge, understanding and skills. Regular use of atlases and up-to-date text-books produces good gains in knowledge of geographical facts. Lower attaining pupils with special educational needs make slower progress than could be expected due to worksheets or tasks not being matched well to their individual learning needs. The department is currently working with the SEN department to improve this. The curriculum organisation provides an IT component in each module of work at Key Stage 3. However, overall progress in information technology skills is less than it should be, although some good ICT work is evident in individual enquiry projects.

160 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They arrive in lessons prepared for the work. They readily answer questions and are able to work together in pairs. Pupils feel respected and listen carefully to both teachers and to other pupils. Teachers provide good displays of both children's work and of visits to foreign places by pupils who might have family roots in those countries. Pupils show respect for the very good quality geography rooms. The occasional lesson is spoiled by pupils gossiping and not staying on task and there are some careless attitudes to presentation.

161 The overall quality of teaching is good and is very good in the upper school. In lessons where quality of teaching is high there is an atmosphere of interest and enthusiasm both by pupils and teachers. Pace of lessons is good and timed exercises maintain learning throughout. Teacher relationships with pupils are excellent and students know what is expected of them in terms of knowledge and understanding. The planning of both lessons

and tests at the end of units is conscientiously undertaken. National Curriculum descriptions of what pupils must be able to do to achieve at particular levels and what constitutes evidence of such achievement are rarely used for assessment or lesson planning. There is a departmental portfolio identifying work unit assessments and grades. More use of assessment would improve the quality of teaching plans and help to raise standards consistently across all lessons. Particularly pupils with lower abilities should be set targets for improvement against agreed criteria. The management of the department is good. Teachers' training needs are annually reviewed, and although more regular attendance at in-service courses by all members would help to provide more pointers for development for the whole department, this is made more difficult by the senior management commitments of the head of department.

162 Since the last inspection the department has introduced a very effective practice of incorporating key geographical terms into all lessons. These are continually reinforced and used with understanding by most pupils. The introduction of regular tests at the ends of units of work helps to track the progress of pupils. This now needs to be linked with target setting. The library and resource centre has recently purchased new books and coupled with the very good textbooks and atlases in the department these should allow independent learning and research to become part of teaching schemes.

## **History**

163 Pupil attainment is significantly below the national expectation at Key Stage 4 with 29.3 per cent of pupils gaining a grade of A to C at GCSE in 1998. These results are similar to those for 1997 against a national average of around 54 per cent. Pupils in history perform slightly less well than the average subject performance for the school as a whole, though the total cohort includes pupils other than those opting for history. Boys perform significantly worse than girls with an A to C pass rate in 1998 of 21.7 per cent. There is evidence that results are improving with 42.4 per cent of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in 1999 but with the gender difference remaining.

164 At both key stages, pupils of average attainment and above show a satisfactory grasp of the key elements within the subject. They are able to place events, people and changes within a chronological framework, for example in lessons dealing with the development of medicine in Year 10 and the accurate sequencing of source materials in Year 7. Within both key stages, pupils are consolidating both the range and depth of historical knowledge and understanding for example in Key Stage 3 work on World War 1 and Key Stage 4 work on the American West. Oral skills for many pupils of a range of attainments are at least at, and sometimes above, national expectation, reflecting the emphasis of present teaching and learning strategies being pursued by the department. Deductive skills are variable but for most of the more able pupils at both key stages these are satisfactory and sometimes good, for example in determining whether or not the Catholic conspirators were 'framed' by James 1. The department works extremely hard to

promote the skills associated with the craft of being a historian. Writing and recording skills are sometimes less than satisfactory as in the Year 7 lessons on life in Rome. Pupils' knowledge of history is hindered by less effective writing and recording skills.

165 Pupils are at the appropriate point in the respective scheme of work. Standard Attainment Test results and other data derived via cognitive testing and teacher assessment place pupils entering Key Stage 3 at below the level of national expectation. Appreciable progress is achieved by the end of Key Stage 3 against a low attainment base, added value being most apparent in terms of verbal reasoning skills. At Key Stage 4, progression in acquiring historical knowledge and more advanced and abstract analytical skills in the consideration of sources in a wider context is at or slightly above expectation, for example in local field studies on castles in Year 11.

166 Pupils at each key stage demonstrate a good and often very good level of interest in their work. They rise to the many and varied intellectual challenges set, for example in preparing prosecution and defence speeches in respect of Guy Fawkes. In all settings the classroom ethos is purposeful and contributes positively to learning.

167 The quality of teaching is good and often very good at each key stage, making a significant contribution to educational standards. The sequencing of questions is excellent. Oral work is well extended and this is underlined by an increasing confidence of pupils to engage in critical debate. A wide range of teaching strategies is used with worksheets tailored to the different abilities found in mixed ability classes. There is too little emphasis on written and recorded work and the department needs to review arrangements for checking that such work is completed by pupils.

168 The curriculum meets statutory requirements and there are good quality schemes of work. Data on pupil performance is accessible but there is limited evidence of this being translated into clear learning strategies for pupils at both ends of the ability range. A learning guide to enable pupils to be clear about the targets to be reached should be considered. There is little use of peer group assessment and this should be reviewed. Curriculum enrichment is satisfactory but every opportunity should be taken to extend learning through experience. There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for example in Year 9 and Year 10 coursework.

169 The department is satisfactorily managed but there is too much reliance on informal methods both in communication and in monitoring of teaching. The planning and use of classroom assistance in terms of reinforcing historical learning should be further developed. Professional development is weak and attention should focus on the development of subject based strategies linked to increasing literacy and attainment in written work. Library provision is inadequate in terms of book-stock which can widen and deepen historical understanding and local themes.

## **Information Technology (IT)**

170 In the 1998 IT short course examination (counting as a half GCSE), a similar percentage to that nationally achieved an A\* - C pass. Evidence during the inspection shows that attainment in IT in lessons in both key stages is always equal to the national expectation and often above it especially for pupils in Key Stage 4 who have opted to study additional IT at Key Stage 4. This is an improvement on the previous inspection.

171 Pupils in Key Stage 3 are able to use the networks and computers with confidence and show competence in using computer packages such as those for word-processing, desk top publishing and spreadsheet use. For example they are able to use a spreadsheet to model the effect of varying interest rates on a given investment after a varying number of years. In Key Stage 4 they are able to use desk top publishing packages to design and produce products up to a commercial standard. They are able to carry through projects, using a variety of IT skills, to design suitable IT systems for a small business. There is no significant variation in attainment of pupils of different ethnicity, gender or background. The standards achieved by pupils with special needs reflect those of other pupils.

172 IT was seen in other areas of the curriculum. In science computers were used to process results both by averaging the collated results of all pupils in a class experiment and also by plotting a cooling curve using a temperature sensor. In design and technology a programmed lathe was used by pupils and recent work showed the use of word-processing, databases and computer aided design. In geography pupils used information derived from the Internet. In modern foreign languages a group carried out vocabulary work using a computer program and the suite is booked by other subject departments quite heavily. The activities do contribute towards the achieving of IT capability but they are not sufficiently structured and integrated within an overall plan. An examination of work across the curriculum shows that IT is recorded as being used in some of the other subjects but not all. In some subjects where it is used it is used rarely. There is a need to record carefully how pupils learning is going to be enhanced in each curriculum area, to monitor the teaching given and assess the IT capability so achieved in terms of the National Curriculum.

173 Progress is always satisfactory and often good in both key stages in specific IT lessons. This again is better than during the previous inspection. In Key Stage 3 pupils are gaining understanding, knowledge and skill in IT though most do so from an initially low starting level when they enter the school. The progress made in the first few weeks is considerable with pupils mastering the intricacies of saving and retrieving work on the network. They are already using word processing packages and drawing packages to design, for example, a holiday postcard. In Key Stage 4 pupils are gaining competence in being able to use computer packages. Some tasks allow pupils to progress at varying rates and so to achieve according to their capability and extension tasks are built into the Key Stage 4 'IT-for-all' activities. In some lessons the pupils have the same tasks which

do not always allow those who are already quite capable in IT to progress as much as they can. The new and developing teaching programmes provide pupils with a good range of basic skills which they rapidly master and from which they can develop more independence. The GNVQ course provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to design their computer systems using a variety of IT skills so building up pupils' ability to work independently. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in improving their basic skills using the newly purchased 'Success-maker' package. There is no significant difference in the progress of pupils of different gender, ethnicity or background.

174 The response of pupils to the IT teaching in both key stages is good. Pupils show perseverance, commitment to what they are doing and maintain their concentration on the tasks set. They follow instructions quickly and carefully. They are actively engaged throughout lessons and show great interest. Pupils show respect for the equipment they are using and their behaviour is good. They work together with each other and with the teacher in a co-operative manner. Aspects of personal development such as creativity, initiative and problem solving are beginning to develop in the option courses at Key Stage 4.

175 Whereas the quality of teaching in specific IT lessons was sound at the time of the last inspection it is now good in both key stages. Teachers have confidence and competence in their knowledge of IT with a good command of the subject. They have good background knowledge which enables them to include commercial and industrial uses in their examples of IT use. Teachers are clear in their explanations and questioning. Each lesson has clear objectives which are shared with pupils and is well planned with the required resources available. The management of pupils is always good. Teachers create a disciplined working environment but maintain excellent relationships with the pupils. Teachers always insist on high standards and help pupils to achieve them. They are very good at intervening to provide help and inspiration. Where teaching was seen in other subject areas using IT this was satisfactory.

176 The school has greatly improved the provision of IT in the curriculum since the last inspection though the amount in Year 9 is small. All specific IT courses are carefully planned with a series of units. These are being developed into clearly detailed lesson plans. All departments supply a statement of when IT has been used and they can book an IT room when this is available. A record is kept of these bookings. There is no record of the IT capability gained through the cross-curricular activities, though departments keep a record of them. This is where more structure and cohesion is needed. Support has been provided by IT staff to departments wishing to incorporate IT in their schemes of work.

177 Computer rooms are open to pupils from 8.00 am each day for pupils to develop their skills and carry out projects using IT. The rooms are also open at lunchtimes and after school. This is good provision particularly for pupils who do not have access to a

computer at home and it shows the commitment of staff to pupil achievement. The head of IT provides excellent leadership. The ethos of the department reflects the school's commitment to providing a good environment for learning, good relationships and equality of opportunity for all.

178 The school has three well equipped computer rooms on a network although some of the equipment is rather dated and pupils do not always have industry standard equipment. The computer rooms provide a good environment for specific IT teaching. There is a good supply of generic software on the networks but most departments have not developed an extensive library of useful IT software resources. The special educational needs department has well developed IT facilities with seven computers and a good selection of software. The ratio of pupils to computers is around 9:1 which is slightly worse than the national average. The school has not yet received any computers through the National Grid for Learning initiative so this will enhance the provision in the near future.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

179 Pupils study either French or German throughout the school. No pupils at present take a second foreign language option. Pupils take either the full course GCSE or the Certificate of Achievement.

180 In 1998 41.7 per cent of pupils gained grades A\* to C in French GCSE and 37.8 per cent in German. The national figures for comprehensive schools were 41.1 per cent and 48.1 per cent. Since nationally German is often taken as a second language by better linguists, these results are broadly as might be expected. Only 57 per cent of the age group was entered for GCSE. Girls performed much better than boys. Candidates' average point score was not significantly different from the national figure. The short course GCSE results were relatively poor by comparison, mirroring national trends.

181 In 1999, according to the schools' information, far more pupils were entered for the full GCSE course. Girls again performed better than boys, but the gap was less wide than in 1998.

182 In Key Stage 4 lessons observed, standards were slightly below the national expectation. In one year 10 German class pupils coped well with a lesson on likes and preferences, learning new vocabulary on types of television programme and linking it to prior learning, showing a sound grammatical base and some flexibility of response. One low ability set in Year 10 showed good understanding of simple vocabulary on the blackboard, although their speech was limited. In most classes pronunciation was acceptable, but spoken contributions were often inaccurate and hesitant, and use of tenses imprecise. Some good writing was seen in GCSE coursework, but generally writing was limited in amount and accuracy. Too often even some able pupils presented it poorly in



exercise books. There were more girls than boys in the top sets.

183 Attainment at Key Stage 3 is at or above the national expectation, and Key Stage 3 teacher assessments show a steady improvement over three years. Most Year 7 pupils understood lessons conducted in the target language. In a Year 9 top set, pupils were confident with basic grammar and had the appropriate vocabulary to arrange to meet a German friend. Sometimes spoken responses were brief, and there was a limited range of written work, some of which was poorly presented. In Key Stage 3 boys often perform as well as girls, and ethnic origin does not affect attainment.

184 Pupils' progress is also better in Key Stage 3. Over both key stages it is satisfactory or better in about three-quarters of lessons, and sometimes good or very good. Pupils acquire increasing vocabulary, helped by the structured use of bilingual dictionaries, and their listening comprehension also improves. The teacher's wish to move on too quickly to increase the pace of topic coverage and the unnecessary use of English sometimes hinder progress. This limits the time spent on practice by the less able or on increased challenge to more able pupils. Progress in reading in a Year 8 library lesson was satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, a notable example being in a very small French Year 10 Certificate of Achievement set. There was no evidence seen of individual targets being set for Statemented pupils, or of classroom support. Sometimes the progress of the weakest pupils is reduced because they are regularly extracted for support or tuition elsewhere.

185 Pupils' response is usually at least satisfactory in both key stages but particularly in Key Stage 3 where it is often good or excellent. Younger pupils show real enthusiasm for the subject. They settle quickly, co-operate with the teacher and work well in mixed as well as single sex pairings. Pupils listen carefully, remain on task and take responsibility for their own learning through dictionary hunts and structured worksheets based on books read in the library. Occasional noisy behaviour in both key stages results from low previous achievement or insufficient practice of new or half-known material.

186 Teaching is satisfactory or better in over four out of five lessons and sometimes good or very good. Thorough lesson planning and good use of the overhead projector supported pupils' understanding. Class control and relationships are generally good, and there are examples of humour as well as firm discipline. Occasional disruption sometimes meets with excessive response and merit marks are sometimes given for modest performance. Homework is set regularly, but the range of tasks is limited. In some lessons different task sheets for pupils of differing abilities were provided. Teachers follow the school's policy on high quality teaching and learning, but written marking is often brief and the department relies on pupils remembering teachers' oral comments. Staff are good enough in their languages to teach throughout the school, but where the target language is less used, this impedes pupils' listening skills. The best lessons surrounded the pupils with idiomatic French or German, with a variety of sequential

activities. The least successful lessons included more English and lacked systematic linking of written and oral work. Structures presented in speech were not consolidated before moving to written work. As a result, pupils were insufficiently encouraged to use the language spontaneously or in extended form. This should be remedied, to support the school's cross-curricular literacy drive.

187 The scheme of work is full and covers statutory requirements. Although little use of information technology was seen, it is within planned provision and the department makes frequent use of the IT suite. Planned first hand contact for pupils with the foreign culture, at home or abroad is limited, although the department established a successful 'Café France', and it is too early to judge how effective the newly set up assessment procedures are. Departmental leadership and staff relationships are good. Staff development opportunities are taken. The most fluent teachers spark the best response from their pupils. In view of this the school should help staff to have more regular intensive contact with the foreign countries and their nationals, including making foreign assistants available.

188 The four specialist rooms provide an effective learning environment with shared resources. Available equipment and classroom display are good. There is some redundant equipment. Screens sited over blackboards prevent both being used well together. One room has no screen and no dim-out, which hinders visual presentation. Classroom book resources are sufficient to support learning, and library stock is building up well.

189 Since the last inspection the department has made major progress by establishing and staffing a full course for all pupils at Key Stage 4, and by introducing library lessons for Years 7 and 8. It has narrowed the gap between boys' and girls' performance at GCSE. Timetabling arrangements are better, although movement between sets is not always possible. ICT is used, and further use is planned. The achievement of the most able is still too low, particularly in Key Stage 4. Some teachers still use too much English, and pupils still do not use the foreign language enough spontaneously and for genuine communication. The department is aware of these remaining challenges, and is capable of meeting them successfully.

· **Music**

190 GCSE results over time are at the national average and among the better results in the school; numbers are generally small, but viable as an option group. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is at the national average; this is also true by the end of Key Stage 4. The higher attainers are generally those with instrumental playing skills, who also have readier access to staff notation. Pupils with special educational needs attain appropriately, and sometimes well. Good standards were seen with a Year 7 class, where a whole class performance in five parts involving tuned percussion, brass and piano worked well, and which gave the pupils a sense of pride and delight. In the Year 10 GCSE group widely

varying standards were seen, from three flautists at Grade III Associated Board level, to others with minimal musical skills at any level. One girl was composing for two flutes using parallel motion, contrary motion, harmony and counterpoint. The Year 7 percussion ensemble was playing with rhythmic vitality and effectively varying the texture. Around 13 per cent of pupils take part in the varied and interesting extra curricular musical activities; less than 5 per cent of pupils receive instrumental tuition from the LEA service.

191 Pupils' progress over Key Stage 3 is good, and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. The best progress is from those already possessing some playing skills. This is dramatically evident with the Year 10 group, where progress rates differ widely between the abler and less able members of the group. Those with special needs make appropriate progress – even good progress in some cases where literacy needs are less of a problem. The best progress of all was from the Year 7 whole-class ensemble already mentioned, who made great strides in individual and ensemble skills to perform well.

192 Pupil response at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory – and good in a significant number of lessons; it is satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Pupils respond well to good class management, and most react very positively to teachers' enthusiasm. Pupils concentrate well, and work effectively both individually, in groups and as whole class units. They get out and put away equipment efficiently without direct supervision. They are strongly mutually supportive.

193 The quality of teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. Teaching is based on the effective communication of enthusiasm and commitment, and rooted in expertise as teachers and as musicians. Planning is good, with clear targets set, and musical criteria established to measure success. Relationships are very good, and class management good, producing a relaxed and high quality ethos in the department. A real strength is the nature of teachers' feedback, which not only tells pupils how well they are achieving, but supports the subsequent development. There is also a good formal assessment scheme which involves pupils in mutual and self assessment. Appropriate extension activities are available for abler pupils. Homework is well used, and regularly helps pupils to develop a music specific vocabulary. Good teaching was seen across the school, from the Year 7 ensemble class to the Year 10 group working on individual composition work.

194 The two specific issues in music at the last inspection remain unresolved. IT resources are still inadequate, and the main music room is located near to the main hall, with consequent serious limitations on curriculum access while the hall is being used for examinations, and difficulties in finding appropriate teaching spaces for instrumental teachers.

## **Physical Education**

195 The attainment of the majority of the pupils at Key Stage 3 is in line with national

expectations, and at Key Stage 4 is above national expectations. This is evident in the level of skill acquisition noticeably in invasion games and in their knowledge and understanding of health related issues.

196 In Key Stage 3, pupils acquire a range of skills and are able to work well together. They have learned different strokes in swimming and are increasing their range of gymnastic actions. Year 7 pupils play the ball effectively in rugby.

197 Examination courses are a strong element of the curriculum with GCSE results improving year on year. In the summer of 1999 all pupils gained a pass A-G. The majority of present Year 11 pupils observed showed a good understanding of drugs in relation to sport and in their lessons, related theory to practice and were able to participate well in activities and games. Most were able to plan a relevant training schedule.

198 Progress is apparent in most lessons and through the key stages, exemplified by the successful defining of skills and understanding of body movement. Students with special educational needs make considerably better progress than expected owing to the department's well documented and applied special needs policy.

199 The attitude and behaviour of pupils are good. They maintain high levels of interest and enthusiasm. Their respect for each other is good and the interpersonal relationships between themselves and staff is noteworthy. They are willing to take responsibility and levels of co-operation are good. Levels of participation are very good and little time is lost in lessons. Girls, too, had a positive attitude to their gymnastics and responded well to the lesson on balance in Year 8.

200 The quality of teaching overall is good. Teachers are very secure in their knowledge of course components and their expectations of pupils are high. The good management of pupils linked with sound teaching methods and good organisational strategies promotes good educational standards. Praise and encouragement are well used and lessons are generally well paced and resourced. The performance and evaluating elements within lessons are good but the planning element less apparent, hindering the pupils' capacity to take initiative. There is a need for more closely matching tasks to pupils differing present ability levels. Literacy and information technology policies need to be formulated and applied and more instructional posters are needed.

201 The curriculum meets statutory requirements at both Key Stages 3 and 4. However, delivery is heavily restricted by the reduction in core curriculum time especially in Key Stage 4. This impacts on the quality of education and educational standards achieved by the department. The quality of access for all pupils to the curriculum is good, especially for those with special educational needs.

202 The extra-curricular programme is a strength of the department. The programme

is extensive, open to all, and much appreciated by pupils and parents alike. Some pupils go on to gain representative honours. The department runs trips to sporting events and has links with the local community who share the school's sports facilities.

203 The department's method of assessment has continually been reviewed and evaluated, in the light of possible national directives and school curriculum issues. Ability and effort are assessed at the end of each unit and reported annually to parents. Target setting needs to be more subject specific. Also methods for securing and recording evidence of pupils progress through the vital stages of learning need to be established.

204 The department promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development implicitly through its teaching programme, but needs to formulate good practice into a policy. Cultural development is less evident.

205 Physical education is a well organised and managed department with sound educational direction. Good day-to-day procedures are established, and well documented. Health and safety procedures are in place and the accommodation including the new sports hall is very good and well managed.

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## **Religious Studies**

206 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average, though the attainment of some pupils in specific lessons matches the national average. Whilst many pupils have some knowledge of the main themes studied in this key stage, their understanding is below average and the ability to explain their knowledge of religious belief and practice is restricted by poor vocabulary and inability to use appropriate religious language. In expressing personal opinions orally, many match national expectations, though the standard of written work by the majority of pupils is below average.

207 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. Their response to religious questions raised in class tends to draw upon general knowledge rather than on a clear understanding of the religion being studied and their ability to recall previous learning and to use religious terminology is below average. The ability of pupils to express a personal opinion is stronger, the work of many pupils matching national expectations and some, on occasion, attaining above average levels in their ability to express personal opinions in writing.

208 The attainment of pupils on entry is below average and their knowledge of religious traditions variable. The progress of the majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. They are acquiring knowledge of the main features of the religions studied

and consolidating previous learning. Progress in the skills of enquiry, presentation and evaluation is less well-developed than in knowledge of the traditions and the progress of more able pupils is poor, sometimes held back by whole-class teaching which does not have appropriate challenge for these pupils. Good progress was observed in a Year 7 class, where most pupils could recall previous learning accurately, building upon this to extend their understanding of the theme of suffering and enlightenment in Buddhism. The progress of these pupils is good for this early stage of the course. However, progress is not maintained at the same pace throughout the key stage.

209 The progress of pupils in individual lessons in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory though progress over the key stage is poor, especially in developing a coherent understanding and secure knowledge of the religions pupils are studying.

210 The response of pupils in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. The majority of pupils are well-behaved, attentive in lessons, settle to tasks willingly, ask questions and respond positively to questions posed by the teacher. The immature behaviour of some pupils in Years 8 and 9 sometimes slows the pace of lessons. Written responses are less well developed than oral responses. The work of some pupils is poorly presented and often incomplete. Very good responses were observed in a Year 7 lesson; pupils were lively and engaged with the subject, maintained their interest throughout and were well behaved.

211 The response of pupils in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. They apply themselves to the tasks set and willingly respond to teachers' questions, though oral contributions to lessons are often undeveloped and pupils do not always respond to opportunities for discussion.

212 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Lessons are purposeful, intentions are clearly explained to pupils and expectations of behaviour clearly stated. Discipline is maintained. In some lessons the pace is slow, and does not always enable more able pupils to progress at an appropriate rate. Some adapted materials are used to support the learning of lower attaining pupils, but is not always well targeted to their specific needs. Very good teaching was observed in a Year 7 lesson on Buddhism. Pupils' previous learning was effectively re-inforced, time was well managed and positive relationships with pupils encouraged them to participate in the lesson with enthusiasm and interest, the teacher responding sensitively to pupils' responses and setting appropriate homework to extend their learning. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Most teaching is characterised by an energetic style, clear aims and good pace. On occasion the input by the teacher is too lengthy and restricts pupils' participation in lessons, slowing the pace of the lesson and losing the attention of some pupils. Good teaching was observed in a Year 11 lesson, marked by confident style, good explanation and effective use of video material to stimulate discussion.

213 Opportunities are provided in many lessons for pupils to reflect on moral and

social issues to which they often respond with genuine interest and engagement. Occasionally visitors speak to pupils in lessons, though opportunities to visit local religious communities and for visitors from these communities to enrich the learning of pupils are undeveloped.

214 Improvements have been made in the provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 since the last inspection. Lessons for pupils in this key stage incorporate topics from the local agreed syllabus. Time allocation, however, is insufficient to meet the requirements of this syllabus in full. At Key Stage 3 the curriculum meets statutory requirements. Planning for well linked coverage and suitable stems in learning at Key Stage 3 is good in relation to pupils' knowledge, but is poor in planning for the development of study and enquiry skills. Assessment is undeveloped. Pupils' work is marked but there is little use of assessment to set targets for their future learning.

215 The teacher in charge of the subject is experienced and committed. A scheme of work provides support for non-specialist teachers of the subject. A development plan has been drawn up but is limited in its scope and has no clear focus on improving pupils' attainment and progress.

216 The teacher in charge is the only specialist in the subject; she co-ordinates the teaching of five other teachers. Opportunities for professional dialogue for this teacher are limited. This has created a feeling of professional isolation. Non-contact time is taken up with routine duties, severely limiting the time available for developmental planning and implementation.

217 Accommodation for lessons at Key Stage 3 is good. A display of art-work and press cuttings enhances the environment for learning. Most lessons in Key Stage 4 are taught outside this accommodation, restricting opportunities to display pupils' work or to provide other visual stimulus to learning. Book resources for the subject are adequate for work in class and have been improved by recent purchases, but are still insufficient to support home learning. The provision for visual aids and artefacts is poor, restricting opportunities for pupils, especially those with learning difficulties, to make progress in their understanding of such key aspects of religion as symbolism, ritual and artistic expression. An excellent range of books has recently been purchased by the librarian to support pupils' learning of world faiths.

218 The school has made improvements since the last inspection in provision at Key Stage 4 and in text-book resources. Improvements need to be made in planning to improve pupils' attainment and progress, especially of more able pupils, in assessment and in visual resources and artefacts.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Business Education**

219 Attainment is at the level of national expectation at Key Stage 4 with 47.8 per cent of the entry of 46 pupils securing grades A\* to C in the 1998 GCSE examinations. The comparable national figure for similar schools is 49.9 per cent. Attainment is lower in 1999 - with 27.3 per cent of an entry of 33 pupils securing grades A to C. Girls outperform boys but the relative size of the entry does not allow for statistical validation of this pattern which is reflected in the results for both years. The School should monitor gender performance and consider also whether the current curriculum best meets the needs of a broad, mixed ability cohort, many with limited literacy attainments. There is only one class group currently studying this option in Key Stage 4.

220 Progress is at or slightly below a satisfactory pace. There is a satisfactory grasp of relevant terminology, for example the four 'P's is known by the majority and concepts such as the break even formula are known and understood by those of average attainment and above, but the process of applying such knowledge and understanding is less secure for many of the group. Pupils of above average attainment are insufficiently challenged and consideration needs to be given to appropriate extension activities.

221 Pupils are able to work independently and collaboratively, for example in consolidating their research skills in writing up the outcomes of Mini Enterprise activities. In general however pupils do not display significant initiative, for example in selecting appropriate forms of presentation of empirical work. Attitudes to learning are more positive in practical exercises in their coursework, such as the setting up and operation of small businesses. Presentational skills are variable and greater emphasis needs to be placed on raising attainment in written and recorded work generally.

222 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge is secure and the lessons observed were characterised by good pace and planning. Exemplars of what constitutes good or indifferent work are provided to pupils, for example in writing up research tasks and similar empirical work. Satisfactory use is made of the pupils' own knowledge, for example in the preparation for Mini Enterprise activities. Lesson plans are available for each lesson and there are clear schemes of work but these are not translated into learning strategies which can be shared with pupils.

223 Management of this subject is inadequate, particularly in terms of planning and evaluation and the school is addressing this deficiency through additional staffing.

224 Accommodation is adequate but separate arrangements have to be made to access ICT which is given insufficient emphasis within the scheme of work. There is insufficient display of pupils' work. Teaching resources are adequate though rather dependent on



photocopied material. Library resources available for pursuing study in this area of the curriculum are inadequate and this should be urgently remedied since pupils are unlikely to have access to journals, trade directories and the financial columns of quality newspapers elsewhere.

## **Child Care**

225 Pupil attainment is slightly below national expectation with 35.5 per cent of the entry of 31 pupils gaining A to C grades in GCSE in 1998 against national performance of 39.5 per cent in similar schools elsewhere. Attainment has fallen significantly with only 17 per cent of pupils gaining grades A to C in 1999. Gender comparisons are not possible since the overwhelming majority of pupils opting for this subject are girls. The School should consider whether the current curriculum meets the needs of pupils opting for this subject since they are predominantly low attaining pupils with very limited literacy attainments and poor oral skills. Attainment is restricted for many pupils by poor patterns of attendance and the School should remedy this.

226 Attainment in the lessons observed was below national expectation. Knowledge of conception and contraception is insecure for the majority of pupils and the ability to record work is limited other than for more able pupils. Progress is below national expectation and the majority of pupils are not at the appropriate point within the programme of study. The response of pupils is variable. When provided with a stimulating task, for example in the individual child study, they can question and take initiative but on other occasions, pupils display limited concentration and enthusiasm.

227 The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory. There is good support of individual pupils, including tutorial support outside lesson time. Some pupils receive additional tuition arising from their placement within an on-site, privately run crèche/nursery and this is valued by those studying this option. Good use is made of the school nurse and other staff to deliver specific sections of the course. Lesson plans are provided but no scheme of work was included within the paperwork for the Inspection. Documentation includes a skeletal syllabus outline. The purposes of lessons are not always made explicit and there needs to be greater structure within whole class teaching which reviews and summarises key learning points at the end of lessons. Marking of work is variable and greater attention needs to be focussed on incomplete work.

228 Professional development is unsatisfactory and should be reviewed in parallel with consideration of the suitability of the current curriculum. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and urgent consideration should be given to creating a fixed base for the delivery of this subject. Library resources are inadequate for extension work in child care.

## **Key Stage 4**

## **Media Studies**

229 Pupils can take an option to study media studies in Key Stage 4, although at present they have not prepared for it in Key Stage 3 and are often unaware of the content and demands of the subject. Those that do are not always representative of the full ability range and results at GCSE although satisfactory when set against other subjects are slightly below the average nationally for grades A\* to C, but better than average for grades A\* to G.

230 Pupils make good progress, learning the skills of the subject for the first time and moving on quickly to a situation where they are working independently on projects of their own devising. Here, they show inventiveness, knowledge of the media and use ICT and graphics to produce original animations, edit video film which they have made and are able to research and take notes for themselves. In addition the needs of the subject have a beneficial effect on the standards of listening and speaking of these pupils all of whom could explain confidently what they were doing.

231 Teaching is taken by two members of staff. Enthusiasm and interest in the subject shine through all the lessons and pupils are motivated and supported very well by high expectation of what they can achieve. Teaching is good with clear planning, good knowledge of syllabus requirements and regular assessment and feedback on pupils' work.

232 Relationships are good. Pupils' attitudes are positive and they are learning the skills of collaboration and self-reliance to support their work. Behaviour is good and they sustain concentration well.

233 Resources are limited but managed well by the teacher from a very small annual capitation allowance. It is a subject area which appeals equally to boys and girls.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

234 The inspection was conducted by a team of 13 inspectors, including the Registered Inspector and lay inspector. The inspection covered all National Curriculum subjects, religious education, careers education, sex education, personal, health and social education lessons, business studies, media studies, child care, travel and tourism and vocational courses in Key Stage 4. Assemblies, registrations and extra-curricular activities were also inspected. Forty-seven inspector days were spent in school, 184 lessons were inspected, and nearly 160 hours were spent in lessons and observations. Samples of pupils' written work were inspected and discussions were held with pupils representing each year group. All staff timetabled for teaching and present during the inspection were seen teaching, and received reports on the quality of the lessons taught by them.

235 Interviews were held with the headteacher and deputy headteachers, governors, all heads of department, and with many other staff with posts of responsibility. Inspectors interviewed members of the local community. Three evening meetings of the inspection team were held during the inspection week and the conclusions of the report represent the corporate views of the team of inspectors.

236 Before the inspection, 148 parents completed and returned questionnaires sent to them by the school and the registered inspector held a meeting attended by 23 parents. Views expressed by parents in the questionnaires, in writing, and raised at the meeting were noted and fully taken into account during the inspection.

### **DATA AND INDICATORS**

#### **237 Pupil Data**

\_Number of pupils of roll  
(full-time equivalent)\_Number of pupils with statements of SEN\_Number of pupils on  
school's register of SEN\_Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals\_\_\_Y7 –  
Y11\_824\_32\_78\_182\_\_

#### **Teachers and classes**

##### **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (fulltime equivalent\_46.7\_\_Number of pupils per  
qualified teacher\_17.6\_\_

### **Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of education support staff 11 Total number of aggregate hours worked each week 285 Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes 76.3 Average teaching group size KS3 26 KS4 19

### **Financial Data**

**Financial Year: 1998-99** £ Total Income 1,749,831 Total Expenditure 1,748,268 Expenditure per pupil 2,205 Balance brought forward from previous year 17,434 Balance carried forward to next year 18,997

### **PARENTAL SURVEY**

820

Number of questionnaires returned: 148

**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 25\_64\_9\_0\_0 I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren) 42\_49\_7\_0\_0 The school handles complaints from parents well

22\_51\_15\_4\_1 The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught

23\_64\_8\_3\_0 The school keeps me well informed about my children's progress

39\_50\_3\_4\_0 The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work

34\_57\_5\_1\_1 The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons 32\_56\_7\_4\_1 I am satisfied with the work my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home 25\_59\_6\_7\_1

The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren) 27\_55\_11\_1\_3 The school achieves high standards of good behaviour

31\_48\_13\_3\_1 My child(ren) like(s) school

28\_55\_8\_3\_3