

INSPECTION REPORT

FINCHLEY ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Finchley

LEA area: Barnet

Unique reference number: 101362

Headteacher: Kevin Hoare

Reporting inspector: Gulshan Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 15 – 18 March 2000

Inspection number: 186775

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Boys

School address: Woodside Lane
London

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Michael Bolger

Date of previous inspection: 15 – 19 January 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a Catholic comprehensive for boys aged between 11 and 18, and pupils are drawn from a wide area. The attainment on entry is broadly average, although the school has fewer high and very high attaining pupils than is usual for a comprehensive but equally there are often fewer with low or very low attainment. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is similar to most schools. Socio-economic circumstances locally match national norms and this is reflected in the broadly average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The number on roll is growing and currently there are 997 pupils registered at the school. Whilst a higher than average proportion of pupils have English as an additional language, none is at the early stages of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Good teaching results in good learning and pupils achieve well, especially by the end of Key Stage 4. Test and examination data indicate that the school has been increasingly effective in enabling pupils to reach high standards of attainment in Key Stages 3 and 4. The drop in the 1999 GCSE results was uncharacteristic and mostly reflected a weaker cohort. At A-level, the policy of allowing pupils to embark on A-level programmes even when their prior GCSE results are discouraging means that too many do not even achieve the lowest passing grade. There is a strong sense of community, which is successfully promoted by the Catholic nature of the school. This instills positive attitudes amongst pupils who mature, as one parent described, into 'really nice young men'. Overall, the school provides good value for money and its effectiveness in enabling pupils to reach high standards of work, personal development and behaviour is good. Its capacity to continue to improve is very good given the energetic and informed leadership provided by the headteacher, the good quality of leadership provided by most of those in positions of responsibility throughout the school and at all levels, and the good support and involvement of governors. These factors have successfully engendered a strong commitment from all staff to continued improvement and to getting the best out of all pupils.

What the school does well

- Strong, clear-sighted leadership, particularly by the headteacher, which is having a positive impact on standards of attainment.
- The quality of teaching is predominantly good.
- There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, based on the key aim of producing well-rounded individuals, resulting in a thriving and successful community.
- Parents' views of the school are very positive and parental support for the school is good.
- Educational provision in geography, music, physical education, science and the GNVQ area is good leading to particularly high standards of work.
- There is a high standard of care for pupils and the dedication of staff in implementing the school's ethos is very apparent in the way in which pupils are looked after and taught to care for one another.

What could be improved

- The school is not making sufficient use of information technology. As a result, standards are not high enough and National Curriculum requirements are not fully met.
- In order to improve standards of achievement further at A-level and in the proportions of pupils gaining five or more, or one or more, GCSEs at grades A*-G, the monitoring of, and support and guidance to, pupils on academic matters needs more sustained focus.
- The school should build on existing good practice to improve the rigour and consistency of monitoring and evaluation of teaching across the school in order to extend further the best teaching seen and lift the standard of the minority which is satisfactory.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved well the standards of pupils' work in Key Stages 3 and 4. Results in Key Stage 3 tests have improved at a similar rate to results nationally. At GCSE, the results between 1995 and 1998 were improving at a faster rate, but dipped quite significantly in 1999, although they remained in line with the average of schools nationally and similar schools. A-level results also fell in 1999. Inspection evidence indicates that standards at GCSE and in the sixth form have now gone back to the levels consistent with the 1998 results. The improvement in the GCSE results is quite significant in the increased proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C. However, the improvement in the GCSE average points score has been less marked. During the previous inspection, teaching was judged to be sound with many good lessons. It is now predominantly good with very little that is unsatisfactory. This is a good improvement. There has also been good improvement in the development of pupils' skills in independent learning. The school development plan now reflects the school's thinking on longer-term developments and the targets set are effectively monitored. Whilst the school has made some progress in improving the use of information technology across the curriculum, this remains an issue. Sound progress was being made in developing the use of the library, but the recent vacancy for a full time librarian is holding up further development. Overall, the school has made good progress since the previous inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools*	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	A	B	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	E	N/A	

Similar schools are identified on the basis of the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals

The table above indicates that in 1999, GCSE results were in line with the results obtained nationally and in similar schools. This was a drop from the results in the previous two years, where pupils' performance was better than that found nationally. Pupils' performance at GCSE

is good with respect to the proportion gaining five or more grades A*-C. In 1997 and 1998 their performance was well above average. However, the average total GCSE points score is not as high because only an average proportion of pupils usually gain five or more, or one or more, grades A*-G. A-level results also fell in 1999. However, the school has an open access policy for A-levels and many who take A-levels have embarked on courses with relatively low GCSE grades.

GCSE results are consistently good in art, English, science and geography, and over the past three years have been significantly above average. Results in mathematics are usually above average, but were only close to average in 1999. In most other subjects GCSE examination results normally match national norms. However, results in information technology were significantly below average in 1999. Whilst results in French and design and technology were high in 1999, relatively few pupils took a full GCSE course in these subjects. The remaining pupils took short courses where results were low. Inspection evidence indicates significant improvement in design and technology and some improvement in French.

At A-level, results were above average in physics. In many subjects, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A-E is in line with national averages. However, a minority of pupils do not gain a pass grade. In a significant minority of subjects in 1999, the proportion of pupils who failed to gain a grade A-E was higher than the national average in those subjects. Results over the last three years indicate that the proportion gaining grades A or B is often below average.

Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were above average, being best in science where they were well above the averages found nationally and in similar schools. Results in English fluctuate, they were well below average in 1997, above in 1998 and in line with national norms in 1999. Mathematics results were above average. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment is well above average in science and above average in English and mathematics.

Overall, when pupils' prior attainment is taken into account, achievement is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form, although the school's own value-added analysis indicates that a minority of pupils underachieve in A-level courses. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds show similar achievement to their peers and the ablest pupils do well .

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are interested in their work and usually work hard. At times, when not pushed hard enough, boys are content to put in less than 100 per cent effort.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The school is an orderly community where the vast majority of boys behave well. Behaviour in many lessons is very good. However, temporary exclusions are on the high side, especially for ethnic minority pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships between pupils are characterised by mutual respect and are very good. The majority of boys are sensitive to the needs of others and, for example, take active part in raising funds for a variety of charities.
Attendance	Broadly average. The unauthorised absence is below average, but the authorised absence is high as too many parents take their children away on holiday during term time.

The good attitudes of almost all pupils create a good learning environment for them all.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons and it was good or better in 72 per cent. Very good teaching was seen in 17 per cent of lessons. The quality of learning closely matched the quality of teaching. Good teaching is characterised by high expectations, varied methods which actively involve pupils, good use of questioning to probe and extend pupils' learning and to make pupils think through new ideas and problems for themselves. In response to this good teaching, pupils willingly rise to the challenges presented by thinking hard and demonstrating good skills in independent learning. They respond positively to questioning, often giving extended answers and engaging in fruitful discussion either at whole class level or when working in groups. Overall, pupils make good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding. Good teaching of literacy skills ensures that pupils are able to respond well to the reading and writing demands across the whole curriculum. Teaching of numeracy skills is sound. Teaching is consistently good in geography, music, physical education, science and the GNVQ courses. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons, significant shortcomings were evident in the methods used, control of pupils and in the planning. Some of these shortcomings were also evident to a lesser extent in a few lessons which were otherwise satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good curricular provision, which embodies good breadth and balance in Key Stages 3 and 4. However, National Curriculum requirements for information technology are not fully met at Key Stages 3 and 4. Provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. Whilst there is a wide range of A-level courses, these are not necessarily appropriate for the needs of some who are not academically inclined. Access to the curriculum is good. Extra-curricular provision is very good, outstanding in music, and curricular enrichment is unusually strong.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This provision is good. Individual educational plans have good general targets which are translated well into subject specific targets in English, mathematics and science. Support staff provide good levels of help to pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Staff are very aware of the personal development needs of pupils and provision for this is evident in subjects as well as through whole school activities such as assemblies. The Catholic nature of the school is used well to promote pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural values. There are a wide range of cultural activities, including those provided by visitors.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good in many respects. The pastoral system provides a comprehensive support system to ensure that boys are well cared for. Monitoring of academic standards is not yet consistently established across all areas of the school and needs to be made sharper.

The partnership between the school and the parents and careers of the pupils is very strong and makes a very positive impact on the education which the school provides.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Headteacher provides strong leadership and has set a clear direction for the future development of the school. He is well supported by senior managers. There is very good teamwork amongst staff and a shared understanding of the school's main aims and underpinning values. Many middle managers, including heads of year, provide very good leadership of their areas.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	There is a good partnership between governors and the school and governors are enthusiastic and supportive. They fulfil their obligations well. The curriculum and premises committees have been particularly active in monitoring the school's work. The role of the finance committee has been strengthened recently and governors now need to become more involved in strategic forward planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior management team has made good progress in establishing monitoring and evaluation as a useful tool to drive up standards. There are examples of good monitoring and evaluation within a number of departments and areas of the school. This now needs strengthening in order to make it more sharply focused and systematic across the school.
The strategic use of resources	Generally good, although not enough use is made of computers in subjects. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily.

Overall, the quality of leadership and management makes a positive contribution to the standards of pupils' work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has high expectations of pupils and expects them to work hard Boys like school They find the school easy to approach The school is well managed The school successfully enables pupils to become mature and responsible citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of extra-curricular activities The use of whole class detentions in lower years Getting enough information about their son's progress Pupils being given the right amount of homework

Parents' positive views of the school are generally well supported by the inspection evidence, although there are instances where higher expectations for hard work might be displayed. However, records of achievement do not always provide sufficiently precise information about pupils' progress. Although there have been some class detentions, these are being reduced and teachers are actively discouraged from using them as a sanction for the poor behaviour of a minority. There is insufficient evidence to justify most of parents' other concerns. The range of extra-curricular activities provided and the quality of homework are good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Strong, clear-sighted leadership provided, particularly by the headteacher, which is having a positive impact on standards of attainment

1. The headteacher, who took up post only recently, is providing very good leadership and setting a firm and enterprising agenda for the school's future development. For example, he has initiated the development of joint sixth form courses with another local school. The aim of this development is to provide a wider range of choices for sixth form pupils, encourage the ablest pupils to continue their A-level studies at the school and increase the cost-effectiveness of the sixth form provision. The headteacher has also increased, through his personal involvement, the links with local primary schools in order to encourage more higher attainers to opt for this school as their first choice for secondary education and gain a better balance in the spread of attainment on entry. Within the school itself, there has been a very good focus on evaluating the reasons for the drop in standards in the examinations of 1999 and in putting in place strategies and mechanisms for monitoring the school's on-going work in order to ensure that this does not happen again.
2. The perpetuation of a shared understanding amongst all members of the school community of the school's main aims and its core purpose is a key strength of the leadership of the school. Together with the headteacher, the senior managers have very successfully established a climate of self-evaluation and constructive criticism. The school is open to new ideas and towards changing working practices if they are in the best interests of its pupils. Delegation of responsibilities is well managed and the line management structure provides an effective monitoring and communication system between middle managers and senior managers. It is a productive mechanism for enabling the senior management team to be fully conversant with the strengths and weaknesses within the school. A hallmark of the effectiveness of the school's management systems is the speed with which decisive action is taken to tackle weaknesses which become apparent. The visible presence around the school of members of the senior management team, especially the headteacher and his deputies, is a positive example of their accessibility and 'hands-on' approach.
3. Many middle managers, including heads of year, provide very good leadership of their areas. Energy and enthusiasm ensure a good pace to departmental development and ensure that there is a rigorous focus on improving standards of attainment. The effectiveness of heads of department in promoting good teamwork and good support for staff within their departments ensures that pupils receive a good quality of education which helps them to achieve high standards of work.
4. The work of governors makes a good contribution to the leadership of the school. The work of the members of the curriculum committee is particularly noteworthy. Their active involvement in the school reviews and in hearing from individual heads of department ensures that there is good accountability for standards of attainment. Searching questions are asked of staff and data is carefully analysed. The premises committee is equally active and a number of governors provide valuable expertise to the benefit of the school. Active involvement of governors in financial matters is being encouraged by the headteacher, who has taken decisive and effective action to resolve weaknesses in the school's financial management since he took up his post. The role of the finance committee is now much clearer and governors fulfill their responsibilities as required by law. However, there is now scope for the governing body to extend their role in relation to the strategic development of the school.

The quality of teaching is predominantly good

5. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons and was good or better in 72 per cent. Very good teaching was seen in 17 per cent of lessons. It was better in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, where there was no unsatisfactory teaching, than in Key Stage 4, where there was some. The quality of learning closely matched the quality of teaching.
6. Good teaching is characterised by high expectations which ensure that the work set provides a good level of challenge for pupils. It was noticeable that in many lower attaining sets, the high expectations and sustained challenge were enabling pupils to come close to nationally expected standards. In most lessons, teachers demonstrated good, and often very good, subject knowledge. This was usually well used to provide clear and coherent explanations to pupils and often to broaden pupils' perspectives and make learning relevant by bringing in uses and applications in the wider world. The methods used were predominantly good and pitched at the right level for pupils. The frequent active involvement of pupils made a good contribution to the development of their learning skills and also served to engage fully their interests. Questioning of pupils was demanding in the majority of lessons, and in the best it was unrelenting so that pupils had to work out their own answers and to think for themselves.
7. In response to this good teaching, pupils willingly rise to the challenges presented by thinking hard and demonstrating good skills in independent learning. They respond positively to questioning, often giving extended answers and engaging in fruitful discussion either at whole class level or when working in groups. Overall, pupils make good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding. Good teaching of literacy skills ensures that pupils are able to respond well to the reading and writing demands across the whole curriculum.
8. Expectations of behaviour are invariably high. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and, in most lessons, use them well to establish a good working atmosphere in the classroom. As a result, pupils work at a good pace often maintaining very good concentration. Teachers' use of the hour-long lessons is finely tuned to make the most of the time available.
9. Teaching was consistently good in geography, music, physical education, science and the GNVQ courses. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons, significant shortcomings were evident in the methods used, control of pupils and in the planning. Some of these shortcomings were also evident to a lesser extent in a few lessons which were otherwise satisfactory. In the very best lessons, swift pace, imaginative and creative methods and stringent demands made on pupils are common characteristics.

There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, based on the key aim of producing well-rounded individuals, resulting in a thriving and successful community

10. The school's provision for pupils' personal development is firmly rooted in Christian principles and values. Its distinctive Catholic nature instills a profound belief that all pupils should be valued as individuals of equal worth and the education provided by the school is well focused on turning out well-rounded young men. The widespread commitment to these aims and values promotes a strong sense of community and an atmosphere where pupils feel they are worth something.

11. Assemblies provide meaningful experiences for pupils and give them worthwhile opportunities for reflection on a wide range of moral, social and spiritual matters, such as justice, peace, standing up for one's beliefs and valuing others. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate the teaching of spiritual, moral, social and cultural principles into their lessons. Thus, pupils are given very good opportunities to seek answers to questions about aspects of life which go beyond the material, and to develop their own curiosity about the values and beliefs of others through reflection on their own and others' experiences. For example, discussion and debate arising out of the study of literature in English lessons enable pupils to question the motivations of characters they read about and to consider if their actions are morally right. In science, there are good opportunities for pupils to wonder at the beauty of nature and in geography to consider the moral issues behind the treatment of the environment. A broad programme for personal and social education gives pupils ample opportunities to develop the skills to confront difficult moral and social questions. This helps them to arrive at decisions that are informed by a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and to exercise responsible and mature attitudes. Pupils are regularly taken on retreats in order to reflect on their own lives and their faith. Pupils questioned about these experiences spoke very positively of them. Overall, the wide range of opportunities available helps pupils to develop valuable insights into life and provide experiences of enduring worth.
12. Many subjects promote with great success pupils' cultural development and provide very good opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding about European cultures as well as the range of cultures representative of Britain today. They have very good opportunities, for example, in music and art to examine the work of artists from different ethnic backgrounds. A thriving programme of visits and visitors makes further inroads into developing pupils' awareness of the traditions and beliefs of their own and other cultures. The multi-ethnic nature of the school community itself serves to provide a rich resource for cultural development. Pupils are successfully taught to live and work harmoniously together.

Parents' views of the school are very positive and parental support for the school is good

13. Parents are very supportive of the school and many staff rightly see the extent of their co-operation and interest in their son's education as a strength of the school. Parents' meetings are well attended and any requests from the school to see the parents of individual pupils receive a quick response. A Year 7 meeting for parents during the week of inspection was exceptionally well attended and pupils were encouraged to accompany their parents.
14. The parents' meeting and the responses to the parents' questionnaire provide further evidence of the parents' support and positive views of the school. A very high proportion of parents felt that the school's expectations of their sons were high and that the school expected pupils to work hard and to achieve their best. Almost all also felt that staff were approachable and that their son(s) liked school. Statements in the questionnaire about good leadership and management and the positive impact of the school's ethos on pupils' personal development gained strong support from parents.
15. In the meeting with inspectors shortly before the inspection, attended by about 75 parents, the views expressed were predominantly positive and affirmed parents' overall good opinion of the school and its provision. Virtually every parent present seemed to be impressed by the school and pleased that their son was attending it. The school's caring ethos was given much praise. In a very real sense, the staff of the school and the parents of the boys see themselves as working in partnership to provide the best possible quality education for the school's pupils.

Educational provision in geography, music, physical education, science and the GNVQ area is good leading to particularly high standards of work

16. In these areas, the standard of teaching seen during the inspection was consistently good and sometimes very good. A common feature was the high expectations of the quality of pupils' work, usually matched by the high quality of teachers' own planning and preparation. Good quality curricular experiences which provide relevant learning and enrichment opportunities are characteristic of all these areas. In geography, for example, there are very good field study opportunities covering all year groups and including residential experiences in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Music and physical education both provide an extensive range of extra-curricular activities enjoyed by a good number of the school's pupils. Curricular provision in music provides a very well balanced programme of practical and theoretical studies. The physical education courses in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are very well structured to provide practical experiences and intellectual challenge which are carefully interlinked.
17. In science, practical work is well used to develop pupils' understanding of the links between what they see happening in experimental investigations and the scientific ideas which are used to provide the explanations. There is a good focus on helping pupils to understand science as well as to learn facts. All pupils in Key Stage 4 follow a double science course, and this provides them with good breadth to their knowledge and understanding of science.
18. The GNVQ courses are well organised and well managed so that pupils are taking charge of their own learning with teachers acting very effectively as consultants and facilitators. Assignments are well structured carefully assessed. Key skills are well integrated into the course assignments.
19. As a result of the good quality of provision in geography, music, physical education, science and the GNVQ courses, pupils are stretched well and reach high standards. This was seen in the quality of work in lessons and from analysis of pupils' written work. In addition, examination results at GCSE were substantially above the national average in 1999. In the science National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the results for 1999 in science were well above national averages and the averages found in similar types of schools. The results at A-level in physics were above average as were the results in the GNVQ courses.

There is a high standard of care for pupils and the dedication of staff in implementing of the school's ethos is very apparent in the way in which pupils are looked after and taught to care for one another

20. The pastoral team provide very good oversight of pupils' welfare and guidance and set high standards for the overall care of pupils. The Catholic ethos of the school places strong emphasis on pupils as individuals and this informs the approach taken by staff in their dealings with the boys. Genuinely warm relationships between staff and pupils are tempered with a discreet professional distance so that pupils are confident about going to a member of staff if they have a problem or concern and know that it will be firmly dealt with.
21. Pupils, parents and staff confirm that bullying is not tolerated. Boys are encouraged to report any should they encounter it. The school's firm handling of any incidents of bullying gives pupils and parents confidence in the school as a secure and safe place. Year 7 pupils said that they had been pleasantly surprised when starting at the school by good relationships between pupils and the lack of the bullying they had anticipated they might meet. The school staff work hard to ensure that there is no oppressive behaviour and pupils are not harassed by others. They actively support the development of mutual respect

between pupils, especially between older and younger boys, and the community code is used as a lynchpin for continual endorsement of the school's ethos.

22. Procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are very good. Risk assessments are carried out in all areas of the school and the governors' premises committee is actively involved in ensuring that the buildings are safe and well maintained. Child protection procedures are also very good. For example, all heads of year have undergone intensive training and all staff are made aware of the school's procedures.
23. The programme for personal and social education is used well to develop pupils' caring attitudes towards others. Sessions on racism, relationships and the value of friendship, for instance, all contribute towards developing pupils' empathy with others. Many pupils are involved in raising money for charities and do so very successfully.
24. The care that staff give to pupils extends beyond their personal welfare and well-being, and the majority of staff make themselves available after school and at lunch times to help pupils with their work. There is, for instance, an extensive range of out-of-hours homework and revision classes as well as extra-curricular clubs and activities. Thus staff by example promote the caring attitudes they wish to instill amongst their pupils.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school is not making sufficient use of information technology. As a result, standards are not high enough and National Curriculum requirements are not fully met

25. Standards in information technology work are below average in Key Stages 3 and 4 and GCSE results for those pupils choosing to follow the examination course were substantially lower than national averages in 1999. Although GCSE results in 1998 and 1997 were in line with national averages, over the last three years pupils taking an information technology related GCSE course have consistently achieved less well than in their other subjects. The results of teacher assessments carried out at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate that standards are below the national expectations.
26. The use of information technology was a key issue in the previous inspection report. The school has made some progress in tackling it, mainly through the increased provision of computers and computer equipment. In addition, there has been a good improvement in the level of skill and confidence that teachers have in using information technology. A number of factors have resulted in the key issue not being fully addressed and the development of the use of information technology needing continued work. Staff turnover, especially with respect to technicians, has slowed down developments and changing over to a new network has caused some operational difficulties. However, a key problem responsible for the lack of sufficient development has been a persisting weakness in the co-ordination of information technology across the school.
27. There is a cross-curricular management group, but currently this does not meet frequently enough. Teachers who teach on the information technology courses in place in Key Stage 3 and Year 10 meet on an informal basis. They have worked hard and made a good effort to provide worthwhile learning experiences for pupils. However, the schemes of work they follow are not based on a common format and are of variable quality, some being quite poor. There is no clear progression established in terms of what pupils are expected to know by the end of each unit. As a result of these factors, pupils' experiences are not of as high a quality as they could, and should, be. As yet there is little development of a cross-curricular map identifying the contributions of individual subjects to pupils' learning in information technology, although many subjects have incorporated information technology activities

within their subject planning and subject teachers are very keen to make regular use of computers.

28. Staff are keen to make use of computers and to take their pupils to the computer rooms. However, many find access difficult. The reasons for this are not immediately clear since the rooms are bookable and there is a substantial amount of time when the information technology suites are not timetabled for information technology lessons. The time that the rooms are available has increased this year because the school has stopped offering information technology at GCSE. Some of the difficulties of accessibility are due to networking problems because security is not yet tight enough. Some departments, such as science, are in need of specialist equipment which can be used in their areas or on field trips.
29. At the moment, assessment procedures are at a very early stage of development. A useful assessment recording form has been developed by the information technology co-ordinator. This involves pupils in assessing themselves and keeping track of what they have learnt. This assessment method needs to be extended to include endorsement from the teacher to confirm the standard of the work completed. A comprehensive system to monitor and track pupils' progress and attainment as they move through the school has yet to be put in place.

In order to improve standards of achievement further at A-level and in the proportions of pupils gaining five or more, or one or more, GCSEs at grades A*-G, the monitoring of, and support and guidance to, pupils on academic matters needs more sustained focus

30. Although pupils' achievements at A-level match their prior attainment, the overall points scored are low and in 1999 were well below average. In too many instances pupils sitting an A-level examination did not achieve a grade A-E. This is mainly because the school has a policy of open access which allows pupils to embark on A-level programmes regardless of their performance at GCSE. Thus, a number of pupils who have obtained low grades at GCSE begin A-level courses for which they are not suited. There is limited provision for vocational courses, which might well be more suitable for those who are likely to attain poor results at A-level. The school needs to be firmer in its application of the entrance thresholds and to consider how it could enlighten parents and pupils about the advantages of vocational courses. Closer tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress as they move through the school is also needed in order to inform pupils and their parents accurately about the levels of attainment, actual and potential, of some pupils, and to start guiding and advising pupils from an early stage. At present, the balance between offering encouragement and recognition for effort on the one hand, and making crystal clear the levels of attainment being achieved on the other, is not always being struck well. The joint sixth form endeavour with another local school is a useful initiative to broaden the opportunities for pupils and to attract abler pupils into the sixth form.
31. Another aspect for the school to address in improving the performance of pupils on their A-level courses is the extent and role of induction in preparing pupils for the considerably greater demands of them at A-level, and instilling a stronger work ethic amongst some who are not quick enough to realise the difference in expectations between A-level and GCSE.
32. At GCSE, pupils perform well, often very well, in relation to obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. However, their performance in terms of the proportions obtaining five or more, or one or more, GCSE grades at A*-G is not as good and, in 1999, was lower than in the majority of schools. In previous years it has been broadly similar to the performance of pupils nationally. The overall impact has been on the average total points score which does not reflect the good achievement, often very good achievement of pupils, in gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C.

33. In order to improve the average achievement of all pupils at GCSE, there is scope for making better use of assessment data and improving the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress in order to support and guide their further development. There are many good examples of good practice on this aspect of the school's work, but no consistent or coherent whole school approach as yet. The school is trialling a mechanism for monitoring pupils' academic progress in Year 8, and heads of other years are keen to become more involved in tracking academic achievement of pupils. Some heads of department have well-developed systems for analysing and using data from tests on entry, examination and test results. In the English, mathematics and science departments, for example, there is a useful method of identifying the value added at Key Stage 4 by comparing the test results of pupils at Key Stage 3 with their GCSE grades. This highlights the better progress made by pupils in the higher sets compared to those in the lower, but not necessarily the lowest, sets. However, the level and depth of analysis of data is not consistent across the school. As a result, it is not consistently well used to inform planning, and target setting for individual pupils so that those at any risk of underachieving can be given the support they need.
34. Pupils' individual records of achievement provide useful information about what they have achieved. However, the comments made do not always provide pupils with clear targets for improvement and, at times, the comments are more encouraging than evaluative. Similarly reports do not provide precise enough information about pupils' progress and what they need to do to improve.

The school should build on existing good practice to improve the rigour and consistency of monitoring and evaluation of teaching across the school in order to extend further the best teaching seen and lift the standard of the minority which is satisfactory

35. There is much good practice in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work, including monitoring of the quality of teaching. However, monitoring has not been consistently established within all areas. New teachers are effectively monitored and the biennial reviews the school has had in the past have provided good information for helping it to move forward. The school now needs to build on existing good practice to improve the rigour and consistency of monitoring and evaluation of teaching across the school in order to extend further the best teaching seen and lift the standard of the minority which is satisfactory.
36. Although much of the teaching is good, and very little is unsatisfactory, the minority which is satisfactory tends to have minor weaknesses and sometimes to lack a sharp enough focus on the intended learning outcomes for pupils. Sometimes, the expectations of work are not high enough, and a leisurely approach to work by pupils is too easily accepted. In some French lessons seen, the management of pupils was barely adequate and relationships between pupils and teachers were tense. These factors led to lack of motivation and interest amongst pupils. Monitoring and evaluation need to be used as effective tools to examine such issues in teaching and improve the pupils' experiences within the classroom.
37. The proportion of very good teaching is similar to that found normally, and there is scope for the school to build on the considerable proportion of good teaching in order to increase the frequency of very good teaching. Whilst most heads of department regularly monitor the work of staff within their areas, there is not enough of a focus on monitoring the teaching of established teachers. In particular, the aim of sharing and extending the best practice and challenging good teachers to become even better is not well established.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

38. In order to raise standards further the school should:

- 1) Improve pupils' learning about and through information technology throughout the school in order to raise standards and meet National Curriculum requirements in full by:
 - Improving the co-ordination of information technology across the curriculum;
 - Improving the quality of schemes of work;
 - Establishing comprehensive systems of assessing pupils' work;
 - Improving the access to the computer rooms;
 - Improving the technical support for the maintenance and operation of all the school's information technology equipment.

(Paragraphs 25-29)

- 2) Improve the monitoring of, and support and guidance to, pupils on academic matters in order to raise standards of achievement further at A-level and GCSE by:
 - Establishing a coherent whole school approach to monitoring of pupils' progress and attainment;
 - Developing the use of data to set targets for pupils and improving the quality of information to pupils and their parents on their current levels of attainment and how they can do better;
 - Applying the entrance criteria to A-level courses more judiciously.

(Paragraphs 30-34)

- 3) Establish a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation of teaching across the school in order to extend further the best teaching seen and lift the standard of the minority which is weaker in order to continue to improve the quality of learning for pupils.

(Paragraphs 35-37)

The school should address the following minor weakness in the action plan:

- Decrease the number of fixed term exclusions, especially for boys from ethnic minority backgrounds.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	82
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	13	55	26	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y11-16	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	819	178
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	90	N/A

Special educational needs	Y11-16	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	157	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	122

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	154	0	154

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	84	117	109
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	84	117	109
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	55 (80)	76 (70)	71 (66)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (29)	47 (41)	35 (33)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	121	121	105
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	121	121	105
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (71)	79 (75)	68 (70)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (35)	46 (44)	39 (30)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	142	0	142

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	70	127	136
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	70	127	136
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (59.3)	89 (92.1)	96 (94)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38 (41.4)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	72	0	72

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	11.8	N/a	11.8 (14.7)	4.5	N/a	4.5 (4)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	40
Black – African heritage	50
Black – other	5
Indian	17
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	3
White	870
Any other minority ethnic group	7

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	3	0
Black – African heritage	8	1
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	58	3
Other minority ethnic groups	2	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	270

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	25.8
Key Stage 4	21.6

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	3183135
Total expenditure	3411623
Expenditure per pupil	3412
Balance brought forward from previous year	220495
Balance carried forward to next year	-7993

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	997
Number of questionnaires returned	177

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	37	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	42	3	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	44	5	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	44	9	3	1
The teaching is good.	50	47	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	41	9	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	27	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	23	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	53	38	6	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	64	31	2	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	36	2	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	38	14	3	6

Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the meeting with inspectors raised the concern about detentions given to the whole class when only some in the class had behaved badly. They felt these were too frequent in the lower part of the school. Discussions with staff and pupils indicate that class detentions are not given very frequently and that the school is actively discouraging teachers from using them as a sanction.