

INSPECTION REPORT

BELMONT COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Belmont, Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114308

Headteacher: Mr P N Howarth

Reporting inspector: Mr R C Hancock
2715

Dates of inspection: 30th April – 4th May 2001

Inspection number: 186789

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 16 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Buckinghamshire Road Belmont Durham Co Durham
Postcode:	DH1 2QP
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Pye
Date of previous inspection:	29 th January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2715	R Hancock	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and students' achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
12682	J Griffin	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English	
27416	T Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics	
5241	C Millband	Team inspector	Science	
16348	J Nicol	Team inspector	Art and design	
20588	I Hodgkinson	Team inspector	<p>Design and technology</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p>	
17732	D Martin	Team inspector	<p>Geography</p> <p>History</p>	
4891	B Keenan	Team inspector	<p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>English as an additional language</p> <p>Modern foreign languages</p>	
31660	M Young	Team inspector	Music	
13108	I Annis	Team inspector	Physical education	
12179	L Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education	
25551	A Hodge	Team inspector	Vocational education.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Belmont Comprehensive is a mixed 11 to 16 school for boys and girls and with 756 students on roll is broadly average in size. It lies to the east of Durham. The social and economic backgrounds of the students are mixed, comprising areas of relative affluence and some which are far more deprived. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is 14.4 per cent which is below the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs is in line with the national average but the proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is much higher than the national average at 6.5 per cent. The percentage of students for whom English is an additional language is less than one per cent. The school incorporates local education authority bases for students with visual and hearing impairment. National Curriculum tests show that the attainment of students on entry is average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Belmont Comprehensive School is an improving school. It is being well led. The management of the school is satisfactory and the governing body is providing sound support. Students' attitudes are positive and their behaviour is good. Students are well cared for. Their overall attainment at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory but they need to do better. Their attainment is higher at Key Stage 4 but students are capable of reaching higher standards yet. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but is good at Key Stage 4. The curriculum is broadly satisfactory but information and communication technology [ICT] is too little used in all subjects and the spiritual aspect of the curriculum is weak. The school does not meet the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship. Financial planning is sound and the school is giving satisfactory value for money. The high quality work of the resource bases is a strength of the school.

What the school does well

- Students have positive attitudes to school and behave well.
- Students achieve good standards in design and technology and history because they are taught well.
- The school cares for its students and looks after their personal development conscientiously.
- Students with hearing or visual impairment receive a very good education.
- Good relationships exist between students, between students and teachers and with partner institutions.

What could be improved

- The overall attainment of students, particularly that of boys, needs to be higher by the end of Key Stage 3.
- Standards in science are not high enough, especially at Key Stage 4, and the subject requires better management.
- The attainment of students in information and communication technology is below average at Key Stage 4 and the use of information and communication technology in the wider curriculum is limited.
- The overall quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 needs to be improved and some weaknesses in teaching at Key Stage 4 need addressing, especially in science and information and communication technology.
- Vocational courses are not fully established at Key Stage 4.
- The spiritual aspects of the curriculum are weak.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was inspected in March 1996. Since then, its progress has been mostly good. The quality of teaching is better and learning is more varied. Homework is better organised. The school is well led and has satisfactory systems for planning and improvement. Cultural aspects of the curriculum are stronger but spiritual aspects are still weak. The requirements for teaching physical education are met. The health and safety aspects of accommodation in the science department have still not been remedied. The school does not hold a daily act of collective worship. Although teachers' expectations of students at Key Stage 3 are now higher, attainment at this key stage is still not high enough. Standards have improved at Key Stage 4.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16-year-olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Students' performance in reaching five or more grades at A*-C has been improving over three years. However, for five or more grades at A*-G it has been below the national average. The trend of improvement in the core subjects has been above the national trend. Results in English and mathematics were above the national average in 2000 but were well below average in science. Students reached above average standards in design and technology and history but results were below average in art, geography and information and communication technology. At Key Stage 3 in 2000, English results were average in comparison with all schools and in comparison with similar schools, but boys have been under-achieving. Standards of current work in Year 9 are average. Results in mathematics were in line with the national average, but in comparison with similar schools they were above average, although boys have been slightly under-achieving. Standards of current work in Year 9 are above average. Science results were in line with the national average, and were also average in comparison with similar schools. Standards of current work in Year 9 are average. The trend of improvement in the core subjects is below the national trend. By the end of Key Stage 3, students' standards are highest in history and design and technology. Lower attaining students are doing better than at the time of the last inspection. Higher attaining students are doing well in art but could achieve more in science and geography. Students with special educational needs make good progress and those with hearing or visual impairment achieve especially well. In 2000, the school exceeded its target at grades A*-C in the GCSE examination but did not meet its target for five or more grades A*-G although results improved.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The attitudes of students are mostly positive and help them to concentrate well, to work hard and to be motivated.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority of students behave well in lessons. Movement around the school is orderly.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The majority of students grow in confidence and learn to take on responsibility. Relationships are informal but effective in developing an easy but productive working relationship between teachers and students.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school is working hard to improve attendance rates.

There are some pockets of misbehaviour in the school, especially by some boys in Year 8, but most students concentrate on their work in class and allow teaching and learning to proceed without interruption. When moving through the school, students open doors, and do not push or jostle. Allowed on the premises in the short breaks and at lunchtime, they show respect for the fabric of the building and can be trusted not to damage work on display. Little litter was observed in some of these rooms despite extensive use. Significant numbers of students take on major roles of responsibility and help to run the library, serve on the flourishing school council or become mentors and prefects.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	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.

At Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is satisfactory. It is good at Key Stage 4 in both English and mathematics. Teaching in science is satisfactory but expectations are too low in a significant proportion of lessons. Students' progress in science is slowed because teaching does not give sufficient attention to planning activities which make greater demands on students as they move through the school. In the school as a whole, there is more good teaching at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3, a factor which is preventing the standards of students' work from rising at this key stage. The major strengths of the teaching are the use of imaginative learning activities to help students learn effectively; good management of students and the use of high quality presentational skills. The major weaknesses are to be found in lessons which lack clear learning objectives, students not being managed well and insufficient use of assessment as a means of raising students' levels of achievement. The quality of teaching was excellent in 3 per cent of lessons, very good in 19 per cent, good in 37 per cent, satisfactory in 36 per cent, unsatisfactory in 5 per cent and poor in 1 per cent. Teaching is especially good in history and design and technology. Students with visual and hearing impairment are very well taught. The quality of learning was sound or better in the majority of lessons seen. At Key Stage 3 it was good or better in half of the lessons, and good or better in two-thirds of the lessons observed at Key Stage 4. There is good learning in most subjects. Where learning is good,

relationships between teachers and students are strong, students are actively involved, make gains in knowledge and understanding, and increase their practical skills. Where the quality of learning is less successful, objectives are not clearly set and students are uncertain about the nature and purpose of what they are being asked to learn.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory at both key stages. The vocational aspect needs strengthening at Key Stage 4. Information and communication technology is not yet used widely enough in all subjects.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. There is excellent provision for students with hearing and visual impairment. Other students make good progress in most lessons.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The school works hard to ensure that these students have full access to the curriculum. In a few lessons, their specific needs are not being catered for.
Provision for students' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Students have few opportunities for reflection but there is good scope for them to consider the moral implications of many of the things they study. There are good opportunities for students' social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. The school's environment is largely safe and students are well cared for.

All students are able to take advantage of what the curriculum offers. Extra-curricular activities enhance provision in music and physical education but otherwise are limited in range. Provision for students' personal, social and health education is largely effective. Careers education is well planned. The school's partnership with parents is good. The information provided for parents in the progress reports is largely good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership and satisfactory management. The headteacher and key staff provide a clear sense of direction. Whilst most departments are well managed, some have weaknesses because they do not have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of their departments or an effective means for improving performance.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body supports the school and takes an interest in its progress. It has worked hard to ensure that the school's environment for learning has been improved.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school is gathering and analysing key data from students' performance in national tests and public examinations but the process is not yet fully developed.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. All subjects have sufficient basic resources to enable them to do their work but texts are ageing in geography and some other subjects. The learning resources centre is being reorganised and is not yet at the heart of the school's work on learning.

Staff in leadership roles want the school to succeed. They work well as a team. The school is preparing to become involved with major initiatives, such as 'Investors in People'. It has already gained the 'Sportsmark' award. The work it has undertaken on teaching and learning has already had a direct impact on the quality of education in the school. The management of teachers' professional development, including that of newly qualified teachers, is good. Lack of appropriate accommodation is holding back students' development in drama, design and technology and music. Major areas of weakness, such as the need to raise standards at Key Stage 3 and to improve the spiritual content of the curriculum, remain to be addressed. The way the governors address the principles of best value is satisfactory. The management of finances is careful and the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

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's high expectations of students. • That students make good progress. • That the school expects students to work hard and to give of their best. • That the school is approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency and regularity of homework. • Information about students' progress. • Their relationship with the school. • The behaviour of students. • Extra-curricular activities.

The inspection team agrees with parents that the school is approachable and that it expects students to work hard and to give of their best. However, it considers that students are not making the progress they should at Key Stage 3 and it is at this key stage that the teachers also need to have higher expectations of what students can, and need, to achieve. In many lessons, the inspection team found homework being handed in or being set and considered that its use was making a positive contribution to standards. The inspection team believes that the school provides adequate information about students' progress. It also felt it helpful

that parents receive a termly report on students' progress. Relationships between the school and parents are good. Students behave well. Extra-curricular activities are strong in sport and music but they are limited in range overall and a number of activities were poorly supported by students in the week of the inspection.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Over the last three years, students' performance in reaching five or more grades at A*-C in the GCSE examination has been an improving one and the 2000 result was the school's best ever, recognised by the School Achievement Award. Since 1998, the school's results have been close to the national average. However, students' performance in terms of reaching five or more grades at A*-G has been below the national average. The students' average points score has also been below the national average. Nonetheless, the school's results in 2000 were close to the national average for all schools in the five or more grades at A*-C range and in the five or more grades at A*-G range, although they were below average for one or more GCSE grades at A*-G. The trend in the core subjects for the past three years has been above the national trend.
2. In 2000, the proportion of students obtaining grades A*-C in both English and English literature were above the national average and the proportion of students in both subjects obtaining grades A*-G were in line with the national average. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results have been broadly consistent over the past three years. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that examination results accurately reflect the standards being currently attained in the school. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, their achievement by the end of Year 11 is above average. Results in mathematics have been above the national average. The current achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is also above average. The percentage of students achieving A*-C grades in the double science award was well below the national average. Boys' results were significantly lower than girls. Overall, standards have slightly improved in science since the previous year. In the small group of 22 students studying the separate science subjects, results in chemistry and physics were above average and below average in biology. Girls achieved more highly than boys but, overall, students' current work shows that their achievement in science in relation to earlier attainment in Year 9 is unsatisfactory.
3. In 2000, students reached above average standards in GCSE examinations in design and technology, history and physical education. Their current work shows that they are continuing to achieve well in these subjects. Students' results were below average in art, German, geography and information and communication technology. Current work shows that standards are improving in these subjects, apart from information and communication technology where standards are well below national expectations. The majority of students studying on the short religious education course could also achieve more.
4. At Key Stage 3 in 2000, students' average points score in the English tests were in line with the national average, and were average in comparison with similar schools. Over time, boys have been doing less well than boys nationally. Results have not been as good as those for mathematics and science. Results in 2000 were less good than those for 1999. The standard of current work in Year 9 is average. In the same year, students' average points score in the mathematics tests were in line with the national average, but in comparison with similar schools, they were above average. Over time, boys have been doing slightly less well than boys nationally. Results have been better than English results. The standard of the current work in Year 9 is above average. The students' average points score in the science tests were in line with the national

average, and in comparison with similar schools they were also average. Results in 2000 were less good than those for 1999. The standard of the current work in Year 9 is average. The trend of improvement in the core subjects is below the national trend. By the end of Key Stage 3, students' standards are highest in history and design and technology.

5. At the time of the last inspection, lower attaining students were performing very badly. This picture has improved in most subjects and these students are now making better progress although there is still room for improvement in lessons in English, in science at Key Stage 4 in particular, in writing in design and technology and information and communication technology and in the way they read questions in history. These are also the students who would benefit most from a consistent approach by the whole school to the improvement of literacy and numeracy standards. Higher attaining students are doing especially well in art but could achieve more in English at Key Stage 3, in science generally and in some lessons in geography. Boys are doing less well than girls at Key Stage 3, especially in English, science and modern languages.
6. The majority of students with special educational needs make good progress in most subjects. They are achieving especially well throughout the school in mathematics, science, modern languages and art, and in design and technology and history at Key Stage 4. They could do better in music, and in information and communication technology at Key Stage 4. Students with hearing or visual impairment achieve especially well in all subjects. The several students for whom English is an additional language are making good progress overall but in some lessons, support for their needs is insufficient.
7. In 2000, the school exceeded its target for students' performance in terms of grades A*-C in the GCSE examination. The target for 2001 has been set at an appropriately higher level. The school met its target for the students' average points score in 2000. This, too, has been set at an appropriate level for 2001. The school did not meet its target for five or more grades A*-G although results improved from the previous year. This target remains as an appropriate one for the school to aim for.
8. Although students are now achieving better results at Key Stage 4 than at the time of the last inspection, their standards of achievement in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 have not markedly improved.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

9. The students' attitudes to learning are mainly good. Because the school has succeeded in improving the overall quality of learning since the last inspection, there is a marked increase in students' active involvement in lessons. Practical skills and techniques are generally well developed. There is some increase in students being encouraged to take the initiative, posing their own questions and working independently of the teacher in locating, selecting and organising information, but as yet, this does not permeate every subject of the curriculum. There is a marked improvement in students working collaboratively in all subject areas where discussion between students helps them to learn. Students support one another especially well in mathematics and science.

10. Students show good attitudes towards school and their work, behave well, form very good relationships and their personal development is good. The good partnership with parents, combined with the open respectful way in which students' views are heard, makes significant contributions to these positive attitudes and values. Their attitudes and values have improved since the previous inspection, due primarily to the effective way in which students are now routinely listened to, involved and trusted. In turn, the resulting very good relationships provide a key reason behind the significant improvement in students' behaviour.
11. There is no significant difference in attitudes between the key stages. Based on questionnaire returns and discussions, the great majority of students like school which plays an important part in their lives. For example, a group of Year 9 students ranked school ahead of friends and hobbies and only behind family in a list of the important things in their lives. They like the positive atmosphere in the school. For example, they speak about an 'open' school, in which they are free to go most places. They consider that most teachers make their learning enjoyable by providing clear explanations and being responsive to their questions. A significant majority are proud of their school, based primarily on the help that they get, the improvements to the accommodation and the good progress they consider they are making. Some students also mention representing school at various sports and musical events as reasons to be proud of school. The use of information and communication technology is lower than normally now seen in secondary schools and as a result, many students' interest in this subject and its applications to other subjects is lower than often seen. The best attitudes and behaviour occur in lessons where expectations are high, work is demanding and students are busy and engaged in a variety of activities which provide the right level of challenge for them.
12. Behaviour in classrooms during lunchtime and playtimes is good overall. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The good and reliable behaviour of nearly all students is a key element in the prevailing positive atmosphere for learning. In nearly all lessons, students are well behaved. Outside lessons, students move about in a calm and responsible way. Behaviour of students at lunchtime and playtimes is good. As a result, students are trusted to stay in tutor rooms without overt supervision. There is no overt sign of bullying, sexism, racism or other anti-social behaviour. Indeed, the ease with which boys and girls socialise and work together, particularly in Year 11, is striking. Parents' questionnaire responses support this positive picture, with three-quarters of parents being positive about students' behaviour. Parents are also particularly positive about the improvements in students' discipline since the previous inspection. For example, they are positive about the fact that nearly all students now wear the school uniform, including avoiding wearing trainers. Students take good care of property and resources and help keep the school in an attractive condition. Despite this positive picture, the levels of fixed and permanent exclusions are still above the national average. This reflects rigorous but consistent application of an appropriate sanctions system in an environment where significant behaviour improvement has been achieved, but still cannot be taken for granted.
13. Relationships between adults and students and among students are very good overall. Very good relationships among students, including those with special educational needs, is a striking feature. Teachers value students' work and effectively praise effort and good work. For example, a group of Year 9 students spoke very positively about the way teachers show their trust in the students by treating them like adults. As a result, they feel comfortable expressing views and asking questions of their teachers. Relationships between special needs students, including the visually and hearing impaired, and other students are very good. Parents consider that the contact with the

the visually and hearing impaired students in particular, has a very positive effect on their childrens' attitudes to others.

14. Students' personal development is good overall. Most students know, value and calmly carry out the daily routines expected of them. They enjoy speaking with visitors. When questioned in groups, students are comfortable listening to different views expressed by others. Students show concern for others if they are ill, hurt or otherwise upset. Students regularly and without prompting, hold doors open for each other and adults. Students are keen to help others. For example, Key Stage 4 students help new entrants to settle into the school. A group of Year 11 students have formed the 'Belmont Friendly Society' to provide student-to-student counselling in confidence, in relation to any suspected threatening behaviour or bullying. This group is particularly valued by some Key Stage 3 students. Students take responsibility routinely for their class and school duties. Indeed, some students' enthusiasm to explain elements of their work to the whole class could be gainfully used more widely, for example, in Key Stage 3 mathematics lessons. The school council operates effectively and there is also a system of subject prefects. However, evidence of students showing initiative in relation to their learning could be developed further. For example, few use computers for wordprocessing or research on the Internet at lunchtime.
15. Attendance is satisfactory overall. It is broadly in line with the national average and has risen significantly since the previous inspection. The unauthorised absence level is below the national average for the current year. Punctuality is good. Nearly all students come to school on time and settle to their work promptly and calmly.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. In the school as a whole the quality of teaching is excellent in four per cent of lessons, very good in 19 per cent, good in 37 per cent, satisfactory in 34 per cent, unsatisfactory in five per cent and poor in one per cent. It is at its best at Key Stage 4 where the overall quality is considerably better than the teaching at Key Stage 3. The quality of teaching has improved greatly since the last inspection. The teachers' use of imagination to devise learning activities which help students learn most effectively is a major strength. Other qualities include: the effective management of students through the skilful use of questioning; the use of high quality presentational skills such as lucid explanations of complex ideas; and sharing with students the levels of achievement they have reached and what they need to do to improve further – the last characteristic, being especially noticeable at Key Stage 4.
17. In the weakest lessons, teachers do not make use of clear learning objectives or sometimes confuse learning objectives with learning activities. In some lessons, students are not managed well, are allowed to call out or to interrupt lessons which interferes with the pace of learning. Whilst satisfactory lessons are properly organised and students are disciplined, the very limited use of assessment to ensure that students raise their overall level of achievement means that lessons do not make a major difference to their progress.
18. Students with hearing and visual impairment are being taught very effectively because teachers and learning support assistants know their needs so well and can match them to the work. Their planning is meticulous. Other students with a statement of special educational need are also taught well. Other students who are on the school's register of special educational need are mainly well taught and only in some lessons are they left to fend for themselves and then their progress is often slow or negligible.

19. The teaching of basic skills is largely satisfactory. In English, teachers pay good attention to fundamental aspects of paragraphing, students' choice of words, spelling and punctuation. Teachers of other subjects are not consistent in the degree to which they pay attention to these aspects, although some provide good opportunities for students to write at length and helpfully identify key words to be learned for the study of their subject. Generally speaking, teachers are inconsistent to the extent that they correct students' misspellings or weak use of punctuation. There are also missed opportunities in some lessons for teachers to reinforce the numeracy skills of students, especially in the upper part of the school where numeracy standards are weaker.
20. The quality of learning was at least sound in the majority of lessons seen and was often good. At Key Stage 3, the quality of learning was good or better in half of the lessons, and was good or better in two-thirds of the lessons observed at Key Stage 4. There is good learning in most subjects. Where learning is effective, the relationships between teachers and students are strong, students are actively involved, make gains in knowledge and understanding and increase their practical skills. They understand the tasks they have been given and know what they have to do to achieve them. Very good examples of this could be seen in lessons in design and technology at both key stages. In history lessons, too, good planning, questioning, very clear instructions and good source materials result in students being able to use both information and inference to develop their understanding of medieval life. In an introductory textiles lesson, students learned to look carefully at products and materials and began to make important connections about how they could be used. They benefit from observing excellent exemplars such as puppets. Through witnessing a very good demonstration, students were able to use both an overlocker and a computer-aided design embroidery machine effectively to produce accurate work, thus increasing their practical skills.
21. Where the quality of learning is less successful, objectives are not clearly set and students are uncertain about the nature and purpose of the learning task. For example, in an information and communication technology lesson, students cut out and pasted images and text from the Internet but did not learn about the technology which enabled them to undertake the task. In a drama lesson there was a lack of clarity about the learning task which resulted in uncertainty and time being wasted.
22. Students with special educational needs mostly learn well. Those who are visually or hearing impaired make especially good progress when integrated into the main school as do students with a statement of special educational need. Because of the good level of support, they are able to participate effectively. For example, in art, a visually impaired pupil used clay modelling to create a book illustration rather than a charcoal drawing. Students for whom English is not their first language can make good progress, such as that observed in an art lesson where a pupil used familiar Islamic tile decorations and architecture as inspiration for his work. On the other hand, a student was left to find his own way in an information and communication technology lesson without any specific support to cope with the demands of the lesson and made little progress. Teachers are making good use of homework to improve standards. Marking usually provides helpful feedback to students. The majority of teachers are making good use of assessment to identify students' weaknesses and to provide ways of overcoming them.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?

23. The quality and range of the curriculum are satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, there is an appropriate degree of breadth and balance because all students are able to study the full range of subjects in the National Curriculum and religious education for appropriate

amounts of time. In Year 7, students are organised in two populations and are mostly taught in mixed ability groups, apart from mathematics where they are grouped according to ability. In Year 8, students are grouped according to ability in mathematics, science and French. This is also the basis for the composition of teaching groups in Year 9. This way of organising students is largely effective. Where students are grouped on the basis of their ability in a subject, work is largely well matched to their capabilities. Where the ability range is much greater, work mostly caters for the wide range of needs. In some lessons, however, lower attaining students and those with special educational needs are not always well served because work is not closely matched to their ability levels. The school does not enhance provision in modern languages by buying in any foreign language assistant hours.

24. At Key Stage 3, students also have lessons in personal, social and health education which provide further breadth to their learning through a wide-ranging programme which includes drugs awareness and sex education. Students also have the opportunity to study drama which helps to develop their social and communication skills. In Year 8, students have the opportunity to study German which adds further breadth to the curriculum. Unlike at the time of the last inspection, the physical education curriculum is now being delivered in full. The provision for information and communication technology has also been enhanced but further developments are needed to ensure that all students have sufficient opportunities to appreciate the ways in which it can aid their learning in all subjects.
25. At Key Stage 4, the overall curriculum has both breadth and balance. Students have appropriate opportunities to make choices which reflect their interests and aptitudes. The school has introduced vocational courses to add further breadth, although these have not been very successful in attracting large numbers of students. Many boys now choose to study food technology at GCSE examination level and they do well; but boys still do not study textiles at GCSE level. A weak feature of the curriculum at this key stage is the limited use of information and communication technology in subject teaching, especially in English, design and technology and music. There remains an imbalance in the opportunities students get to develop their computer skills so that those who follow a full course in religious education do not get their statutory entitlement to a planned programme of information and communication technology, and those who take German in Year 9 get a reduced programme. The use of communication technology, such as e-mail, is underdeveloped in the curriculum. Careers education is well planned and builds effectively on work undertaken at Key Stage 3. Work experience for Year 10 students adds an important vocational aspect to their study. In religious education, the school is not teaching about the two religions which it claims to do.
26. There is a commitment in the school's prospectus to a broadening of the curriculum through the adoption of GNVQ courses at Key Stage 4 but at present, only one class exists in Year 11, and there is none in Year 10. On the other hand, the GCSE business studies course attracts large numbers, but is unsuitable for many of the lower attaining students who currently study it. Oversight of the broader vocational curriculum of GNVQ, business studies, the ASDAN award and careers education, is fragmented amongst several members of staff and benefits would come from closer co-ordination to provide a stronger and more coherent programme.
27. In the curriculum as a whole, the attention paid to the development of students' basic skills is satisfactory and subject teachers are able to build effectively on the students' competence in literacy and numeracy. There are, for instance, particularly good opportunities for students to develop their reading and writing skills in history and design and technology so that their understanding in these subjects is further

developed. However, there are weaknesses in the basic competence of many lower attaining students and their progress is restricted by the lack of consistency in the response that teachers make to errors in punctuation and spelling and other aspects of expression in written work. The numeracy initiative has been incorporated successfully into mathematics lessons in Years 7 and 8. The school has a numeracy policy in draft form but it is not yet resulting in numeracy being addressed in all subjects and the numeracy skills of students in the upper part of the school are weak.

28. A strength of the curriculum is the degree to which it offers scope for students with hearing and visual impairment to succeed. It provides a strong basis upon which teachers and learning support assistants can plan and operate. For students more generally with special educational needs, it also offers good scope for learning and most teachers are able to adapt material to match the individual needs of students, so allowing them good access to the learning experiences enjoyed by other students.
29. In music and physical education, extra-curricular activities offer further scope for students to learn but there is limited provision elsewhere. There are after-school clubs for science and art and students are encouraged to join homework groups. A number of subjects also offer students opportunities to continue working after school hours. For the most part, in the inspection week attendance at the clubs was disappointing and the overall contribution being made by extra-curricular activities to students' development is no more than satisfactory.
30. Students get good opportunities to work together. In the school at large, students work effectively in teams to support charities and to promote special events and there is a good element of social interaction when they do so. They band together to provide a self-help group to counteract bullying. The workings of the school council, and an experience such as the recent drama production, provide further opportunities for students to benefit from working together. Through the personal, social and health education programme, in subjects such as history, and through the caring ethos of the school, there is also good provision for students to consider and learn about the moral implications of human behaviour. In physical education, students are encouraged to compete but to play fairly.
31. Musical activities provide good opportunities for students to appreciate and enjoy aspects of their local culture and traditions, especially through the strong ceilidh bands and their links with other schools through gatherings and festivals in the North of England. In art, students learn about cultures from around the world. For instance, in Year 9, students study Native Americans and create their own totem pole. They have also studied aboriginal patterns, African tribal decorations and jewellery, and have created their own ceramic bead necklaces. They also design Mhendi Indian patterns and look at artefacts from the Inca, Aztec and Mayan cultures. At Key Stage 4, individual course work draws inspiration from a wide range of periods and cultures, embracing Pop Art, Impressionism, traditional Japanese costume, and Islamic tile decoration and architecture. In English, students have good opportunities to study books by writers from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. In history, students learn about the impact of the Great War on the local culture and way of life. Overall, cultural provision is good.
32. Although the school has undertaken an audit of the opportunities provided by the current curriculum for developing students' spiritual awareness, despite one or two striking examples, the curriculum is not providing sufficient scope for students to reflect, to be moved or to think at some depth. Assemblies sometimes touch on these areas but they are not fully exploited. Form time does not make provision for ideas such as 'a thought for the day' or 'theme of the week' when students are asked to reflect on a

significant area of human experience. The school is not complying with the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship. There are many missed opportunities in the curriculum for developing students' awareness in the spiritual area, especially in subjects such as art, music and English and this aspect of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

33. In some important respects, the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. The school has continued to work well with partner institutions and has forged good links with primary schools and with colleges for education post-sixteen. The breadth of the work in design and technology and history is now especially good. Full statutory requirements are met at Key Stage 3 and more time has been allocated to the teaching of geography and history. At Key Stage 4, more time has been allocated to the teaching of religious education. The total time devoted to teaching the curriculum is now in line with recommended figures. The school has recognised the potential of the library for developing learning and is in the process of turning it into a learning resources centre. The school keeps the curriculum under regular review and is responsive to developing needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

34. As at the previous inspection, the care arrangements for students are good. The procedures and use of assessment information are now satisfactory overall. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The educational and personal support and guidance for students are good.
35. Procedures to promote and ensure students' wellbeing are good. The school has good arrangements for induction to Year 7 and other classes. Students and parents are well supported in Year 9 in the task of choosing GCSE examination options. Students confirm that they are well cared for when they are ill or otherwise distressed. The school nurse is involved effectively with the small proportion of students who experience a diverse range of significant problems. Child protection procedures are good. There is a good quality school policy. The designated person and his deputy, together with the procedures to follow, are known by adults in the school. Effective links exist with social services. Students are made appropriately aware of this issue as part of their personal and social education.
36. Procedures to ensure students' health and safety are broadly satisfactory overall. Teachers make students aware of health and safety issues in lessons, such as physical education and science. This effectively contributes to the development of a safe and health conscious attitude amongst them. Fire alarm testing and fire drills are carried out regularly. However, concerns about aspects of health and safety in the science department, raised in the previous report, have still to be rectified.
37. Procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and discipline are good overall. The main emphasis is now on recognising and rewarding good behaviour and nearly all students respond positively to this approach. This is a significant change of emphasis since the previous inspection. Rules defining expectations for behaviour in classrooms are clearly displayed. The school 'Code of Conduct', based on respect for others and property, is included in the 'Homework Planner'. Students are well aware of these and many feel responsible for helping to maintain them. Ongoing praise in lessons and assemblies are routine features. Class teachers deal effectively with minor incidents and have a clear route for referring more serious incidents. In nearly all classes, teachers use praise effectively and maintain clear and consistent boundaries between what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Letters from year team managers to

parents recognising good behaviour are another important positive feature. There are effective links between teaching and lunchtime staff.

38. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, including bullying or racism, are good overall. There is a clear set of appropriate sanctions in relation to unacceptable classroom and playground behaviour. Helped by regular meetings between year team managers, application of the sanctions is consistent. As a result, there has been a significant improvement in students' behaviour since the previous inspection. The small minority of students with significant behavioural difficulties are clearly identified. Behaviour improvement programmes involving parents and students are used as appropriate. Pastoral support plans are created for students at risk of permanent exclusion. Good use is made of the local authority's behaviour support staff in these cases. The lunchtime staff feel well supported by the headteacher and staff in relation to playground incidents. Parents are effectively involved where concerns arise. Assemblies are used to remind students regularly of the importance of telling adults if they see any signs of bullying or racism. Students confirm that any bullying and very rare racist incidents are handled well. A list is kept of these incidents and of the measures taken to resolve them.
39. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance are good. Using the services of an outside company, first day of absence contact with parents is now routine. This has contributed to the significant decrease in unauthorised absence in the current year. A small minority of students with persistently poor attendance are clearly identified and the Educational Welfare Officer is effectively involved in helping to resolve such cases. Rewards are given for full termly or annual attendance and for significant and sustained improvement in attendance; the system is having a good effect.
40. The use of assessment was a key issue at the last inspection. Since then, improvements have taken place and procedures and use of assessment information are now satisfactory and in some subjects they are good. There is a school policy setting out the assessment, recording and reporting requirements. A school self-review of this policy takes place so that the process is ongoing and developmental. The school has taken steps to strengthen the range and variety of assessment data that can inform departments and class teachers about each student's potential and actual performance. However, these procedures are not as yet consistently and effectively used within departments. They are understood and used effectively in some departments, for example in design and technology, art, history and geography. In these subjects, there is good tracking of students' achievements and information used to guide curricular planning. In design and technology, assessment by both teachers and students links achievement to National Curriculum levels or GCSE criteria so that students' progress is highly transparent. Targets are set effectively and students know how to improve their work.
41. Quality assessments take place every term which grade selected pieces of work using National Curriculum levels. Student progress days are also held as part of the monitoring process. Heads of department are also expected to analyse data from GCSE examination results in order to identify particular areas of strengths and weaknesses in order to raise achievement. This gives departments ownership and responsibility for monitoring students' progress in their subject.
42. New procedures for tracking students' progress were started for Year 7 students in September 2000 using data provided by the local education authority. Individual pupil profiles are built up, starting with the results of national tests taken in the last year of primary education and targets are set for individual students. The school intends to monitor and review progress during subsequent years.

43. There is a marking policy to aid consistency. However day-to-day marking which informs the assessment of students' work is not carried out consistently in all subjects. Marking in science, for example, although done regularly, does not have enough rigour and more constructive comments are needed. Good informative comments on students' work were seen in mathematics and art. Not every department has a policy which leads to corrections being made to spelling and punctuation mistakes and a stricter approach to these is needed if students, especially those who are lower attainers, are to be helped to improve their literacy standards.
44. The assessment of the needs and progress of students with hearing and visual impairment and those for whom English is an additional language are good. Students' needs are identified and their progress is monitored.
45. Procedures to monitor and support students' personal development are good. The practice whereby students have the same tutor groups and year managers for five years means that students' individual needs are well known to staff. The well established school council and additional student consultations mean that their collective views and needs are also well known. Parents are very positive about the school's part in helping students become mature and responsible. They particularly like the courtesy, respect and kindness which underpin the very good relationships between staff and students. Good work and attitudes are celebrated regularly in assemblies. This recognition and reward provides students with frequent and public confirmation of what is good in their lives and helps raise their self-esteem. A coherent, well-delivered personal, social and health education programme provides students with a good grasp of a wide range of issues. The practice of holding an annual 'review day' in the summer term, creates good opportunity for form tutors and students to reflect on students' achievements and think about areas they need to improve. The resulting student targets are currently recorded in their record of achievement. It is planned to also include this information in students' 'homework planners', making it more routinely visible to students and parents. The school creates good opportunities for students to take responsibility for themselves and others. For example, older students help the Year 7 students to settle in and students contribute to a range of charities. Team sports, musical events, combined with residential trips and visits, further develop students' discipline, personal application, team spirit, a sense of fair play and a wider knowledge of surrounding areas.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Overall, the partnership with parents makes a good contribution to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved. There has been significant improvement in the effectiveness of the partnership since the previous inspection.
47. Overall, parents are broadly satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. Around a quarter of the parents replied to the questionnaire and 13 attended the pre-inspection meeting. Most confirm that their sons and daughters like school and make good progress. They consider that school expects students to work hard and helps them become mature and responsible. Most are positive about the teaching. They feel comfortable approaching school with suggestions or concerns and consider that it is well led and managed. Specifically, they are positive about the improvements, since the previous inspection, in Key Stage 4 standards, students' behaviour and dress, provision for special needs students and in the accommodation. However, around a quarter of the respondents have concerns about inconsistencies in homework levels, the range of extra-curricular activities and the information they get about their childrens' progress and the behaviour of students. As a result, about a quarter of respondents

consider that school does not work closely with parents. Judgements on parents' views are reported in the summary and, as appropriate, throughout the report.

48. The school is now open, welcoming, listens to parents' concerns and tries to resolve them. It consults as well as informs. For example, a number of the key improvements listed by parents were identified earlier as issues in the school's consultation with parents and students. Based on questionnaire returns, nearly all parents feel comfortable raising questions or problems with the school.
49. The quality of information to support students' progress is good overall. All students have a 'homework planner' which provides a routine communication link between school and home. Parents, students and form tutors sign these weekly and raise any ongoing issues. In addition to annual written reports, parents get interim reports prior to the consultation evening. These provide a good progress report on students, including their effort, behaviour, attendance and organisation levels. Any issues identified in the interim reports can then be discussed further at the parents' meeting to which the students are also invited to attend. As a result, all partners are kept well informed and involved on a regular basis. A useful homework guide helps define good practices for homework.
50. The quality of students' written annual reports is satisfactory overall. Reports convey a clear sense of how well students are getting on. As well as the statutory reporting of results in Year 9, the levels achieved in tests are included for other year groups. The predicted GCSE examination grades are also provided for Years 10 and 11 students, in most subjects. However, the identification of key areas for improvement is not routine or fully effective. Where improvements are identified, these are dominated by attitudes and make insufficient reference to key skills, such as literacy and numeracy. The practice of getting students and parents to comment is a positive feature.
51. The school provides good information to parents about its activities. Regular newsletters keep parents well informed on ongoing school life. The prospectus gives a clear and coherent outline of the school's expectations and character. The governors' annual report provides a clear picture about the main issues which the governing body is working on.
52. Parents' involvement with the work of the school makes a good contribution to students' learning and the life of the school. Discussions with students indicate that nearly all have somebody at home who checks that homework is done. A significant majority of students are represented at parents' evenings. Parents of special needs' students attend their reviews. Many parents of students in Years 8 to 11 attend and enjoy the annual presentation evening, where effort, courtesy and consideration, community and academic achievements are recognised. They also attend concerts, Year 7 tutor evenings, Year 9 evenings on GCSE option selection and the Year 11 conference and record of achievement evenings. There is an active parent teacher association which works well with the school. It organises a range of fundraising and social events, typically raising up to £2,000 annually. Recent funds have contributed to library refurbishment, for example. Parent-governor positions are filled.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The school has an appropriate set of aims which are largely reflected in its work. There is a good range of policies which guide day-to-day practice. Sound improvement plans are in place which help to ensure that the school has a clear sense of direction. There is a good degree of emphasis on evaluation and review to ensure that provision is appropriate. Currently, the aims of the school are being re-examined to make sure that

they are up to date. The curriculum is reviewed on an annual basis. The processes leading to the formulation of plans and policies take good account of the views of all interested parties and because they are consultative, they reflect the views of those most affected.

54. The headteacher provides good leadership. Stressing the significance of raising standards further, he understands what needs to be done in order to achieve this outcome. He is able to motivate others so that staff work on a team basis. Morale in the school is good. Staff are keen for the school to improve further. Finances are used well to support key priorities. Although small in number, the senior management team carries out its duties efficiently. Whilst most departments are well managed, some have weaknesses because monitoring is limited and they do not have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of their departments or a fully effective means for improving performance. The literacy policy is not well managed and is currently ineffectual. The learning resources centre has yet to be promoted in the school. The governing body also exercises an effective leadership role. It is clear that it wants to help the school to improve its overall academic standards and to forge strong links with parents and the community.
55. The governing body is hard working and responsible and is fully committed to improving the school further. It works well with the headteacher to further the interests of the whole school. It has done especially well to improve the quality of classroom accommodation which has done much to raise the self-esteem of students. The governing body also takes great pains to try to ensure that the school makes good staff appointments. It is providing strong, loyal support for the headteacher and this partnership provides a strong foundation for future improvement. It is largely fulfilling its responsibilities but there is a weakness in the school's failure to observe the daily act of collective worship and the limited application of information and communication technology in the wider curriculum.
56. The school has initiated some very effective management practices, especially in preparation for the introduction of performance management. Monitoring in the form of classroom observation is well established and has helped to improve the overall quality of teaching. The management of the resource bases and of the students they support is excellent because of the attention to detail, commitment and the quality of the planning. The provision for students with special educational needs is well managed in the school as a whole. Newly qualified teachers are supported exceptionally well and have good opportunities to reflect on their work and to see other teachers in action. The management of the professional development of teachers through forms of in-service training is also developing well because there is a firm link with the priorities of the school's improvement plan and good efforts are made to ensure that teachers get good value for money from courses and that they disseminate good practice widely.
57. While most departments are well managed, there is some unevenness at this level and not all departments understand how to ensure that their department is managed so as to secure further improvement. Year leaders bring experience and competence to their work but the degree to which they see themselves as responsible for helping to ensure that students' achievement is high enough is more pronounced at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 although there is now good emphasis in Year 9 on data analysis. More use is being made of data relating to students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 and 8. In the school as a whole, numeracy and literacy policies are not yet in effective use.
58. Support staff, both educational and administrative, are very positive about their work in the school. They feel respected and valued. They make good use of training

opportunities to keep themselves up to date and use new technology confidently. They are flexible and enjoy working in a team. They show a good sense of responsibility. Administrative staff present a very positive picture of the school to the outside world which engenders confidence. Educational support staff bring to their work a degree of sensitivity and awareness which is of a high order.

59. The school makes appropriate use of its budget. There are no major shortages of books or equipment such as to affect standards adversely. The school ensures that any major initiatives are properly costed. It does its best to ensure that it gets value for money from its purchases. Recent auditors' reports have found no irregularities in the way in which the school conducts its financial affairs. Any recommendations made by the auditors are acted on. The school helps the majority of students to make satisfactory progress in their time at the school and because the unit cost for educating students is on the low side of average, it is giving satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. In order to improve the quality of education and raise attainment further, the headteacher, staff and governing body now need to:
- Raise the overall attainment of students at Key Stage 3 through the use of assessment data, paying particular attention to the achievements of boys. [paragraphs 66, 70, 71, 75, 84, 88, 90, 96, 106, 112, 126, 138]
 - Improve standards in science, especially at Key Stage 4, by raising expectations and introducing effective management practices to the department, such as monitoring and planning for improvement. [paragraphs 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 96,97]
 - Improve the attainment of students in information and communication technology at Key Stage 4 and extend the use of information and communication technology in the wider curriculum. [paragraphs 74, 90, 103, 109, 117, 124, 127, 129, 148, 155]
 - Improve the overall quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 and some of the teaching at Key Stage 4, particularly in science and information and communication technology, through the use of target setting to ensure that all students make good progress. [paragraphs 73, 83, 94, 96, 116, 129, 142, 153, 154]
 - Strengthen the provision and promotion of vocational courses at Key Stage 4. [paragraphs 25 and 26]
 - Use the information derived for the school's audit to help ensure that all subjects adapt schemes of work so that they make a significant contribution to the spiritual aspects of the curriculum. [paragraph 32]

The following, less significant, issues should also be considered:

- Rectifying the health and safety aspects of the accommodation in the science department. [paragraph 97]
- Ensuring that the school meets the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship. [paragraph 32]
- Ensuring that two religions are taught in religious education at Key Stage 4. [paragraph 155]

- Promoting the learning resources centre so that it is at the heart of learning in the school. [paragraphs 33, 54, 104,124, 144]
- Improving the teaching of basic skills in the curriculum as a whole by ensuring that the school implements effective policies for literacy and numeracy. [paragraphs 5, 19, 27, 57, 76, 77, 78, 86, 106, 126, 128]

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

The work of the bases for visually impaired and hearing impaired students

61. Two linked bases under the direct auspices of the local education authority provide learning support for students whose sight or hearing are seriously impaired. Students come from far afield to take advantage of this service. Numbers fluctuate but currently stand at 15.
62. The bases provide an education which is of the highest order. They are making a very significant contribution to the academic and personal development of the students. The environment in each base is dedicated to its specific purpose. Resources are imaginative and meet the wide range of needs of the students. Good use is being made of new technology. The environment is safe and stimulating and provides the students with a secure starting point for their development.
63. All students are helped to become confident through their work in the main part of the school. At all points this support was observed to be caring, sensitive and very effective. Staff are dedicated to serving the needs of students which they do expertly. Good examples were observed of how all the students were able to benefit from the full curriculum through the support they were receiving. In a Year 11 German class, a boy with visual impairment was able to succeed at the highest level, helped by the use of a computer and specially prepared sheets to aid access. There were many such instances of students benefiting directly from the support they receive. The quality of the teaching is excellent. Planning is meticulous and is based on a good working knowledge of the curriculum and a detailed awareness of the specific needs of students. Consequently, all students make very good progress and their attainment shows that their potential is being fully realised both in terms of National Curriculum test results and performance in GCSE examinations.
64. Relationships with the main school are excellent. This results in students gaining ready access to all that the main part of the school offers. One student, despite acute visual impairment, was able to take a major part in the school's recent musical production. Such experiences add greatly to the personal development of the students. The work of the bases in turn also helps with the development of positive attitudes of all students towards disadvantage. The staff have been working specifically and effectively to ensure that all members of the school's community develop understanding and awareness.
65. Ever-raising students' self-esteem, staff do not shrink from making difficult professional decisions concerning the degree of access students can cope with in the main school and strike a good balance between the challenges of the wider environment and the security of the bases. At all points, there is intelligent and committed endeavour by the full team of teachers and support assistants which leads to excellence in provision.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	142
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	52

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	19	37	35	5	1	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 students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	756	
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	110	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	52	
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	167	

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.5
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.1
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	93	78	171

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	58	52
	Girls	63	57	50
	Total	110	115	102
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (69)	67 (73)	60 (63)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (35)	42 (49)	30 (36)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	56	61	44
	Girls	66	58	41
	Total	122	119	85
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (75)	69 (73)	49 (66)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (35)	41 (50)	22 (32)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	81	58	139

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	35	76	79
	Girls	33	51	52
	Total	68	127	131
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	49 (42)	91 (89)	94 (96)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38
	National	38.4

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	n/a

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	747
Any other minority ethnic group	3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	57	5
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	45.2
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	511

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0.78
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	
Key Stage 3	24.8
Key Stage 4	22.9

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1,821,469
Total expenditure	1,812,122
Expenditure per student	2,327
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	9,347

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	756
Number of questionnaires returned	181

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	22	63	9	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	30	60	6	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	56	13	5	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	55	22	4	1
The teaching is good.	15	70	10	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	51	19	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	45	6	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	52	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	16	53	23	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	26	58	8	4	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	57	8	2	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	39	21	7	20

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

ENGLISH

66. When they enter the school, the attainment of students in English is in line with national expectations. In 2000, the average National Curriculum points score obtained in English tests for students at the end of Year 9 was in line with the national average for all schools and was also average in comparison with similar schools. The proportion of students obtaining Level 5 and above was in line with the national average and the proportion obtaining Level 6 and above was below the national average. Girls performed better than boys. Results in English were below those obtained in mathematics and just below those obtained in science. Results have fluctuated over recent years. From 1996 to 1998, they dropped to below the national average but in 1999, they improved markedly to being above the national average.
67. In 2000, the proportions of students obtaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in both English and English literature were above the national average and the proportions of students in both subjects obtaining grades A*-G were in line with the national average. In English literature, the school entered approximately one-tenth more of the cohort than is entered nationally, which means that results obtained in the subject are all the more creditable. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results have been broadly consistent over the past three years.
68. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that examination results accurately reflect the standards being currently attained in the school. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory and by the end of Year 11, it is good. Students with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as other students.
69. In all year groups, most students enjoy taking part in oral work and do so confidently. Higher and middle attaining students possess a sound vocabulary and use language flexibly. As they progress through the school, students learn how to take part effectively in group discussion. For instance, in a Year 11 lesson they were able to discuss the extent to which an article intended to deter young people from smoking was convincing. Students spoke in turns, listened carefully to each other and were keen to relate the issues to their own lives. Students' achievement is enhanced by participation in drama lessons where they explore new social roles through improvisation and are able to improve their powers of non-verbal communication. Scope for further learning is at present limited by the cramped accommodation in classrooms.
70. By the end of Year 9, students read novels and poems that are appropriate for their age groups. Higher attaining students read aloud with good pace and expression, as was seen, for example, when Year 8 students read from Alfred Noyes' 'The Highwayman'. Middle attaining students read with fluency but show limited expression, whilst lower attainers are hesitant, struggle to recognise common words and are not able to read independently. By the end of Year 11, students go on to read more complex literature. In this they examine in some depth the social issues that arise and many students display a good understanding of how writers create character. This was seen, for example, when Year 11 students explored the contrasting ways in which loneliness and isolation are presented in George Eliot's 'Silas Marner' and Susan Hill's 'I'm the King of the Castle'. Lower attainers mostly confine themselves to the gist of what they read rather than engaging directly with the text.

71. Students at all levels learn to write for a variety of audiences. By the end of Year 9, they are able to write poems, narratives, diaries and reports. By the end of Year 11, students go on to extend their range to include, for example, discursive and analytic writing. High quality, well reasoned and carefully researched work was seen on media topics in which, for example, Year 11 students made detailed comparisons between how *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sun* presented particular news items. Many high and middle attaining students produce good quality, lengthy narratives that use a wide vocabulary and hold the attention of the reader well. However, inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, together with simplistic sentence structure, mar the work of low attaining students. Students' use of information and communication technology is below the level that is expected nationally.
72. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and is good in Years 10 and 11. Examples of very good and good teaching, and a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, were also seen. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. In the majority of lessons, teachers maintain good discipline and students' behaviour is good. They show respect for each other and a secure environment is created in which learning can take place. When the teacher has good subject knowledge, students feel encouraged to ask questions and explore ideas in greater depth. This was seen, for example, in a Year 11 lesson on Susan Hill's 'I'm the King of the Castle', when the teacher's close knowledge of the text enabled her to lead students in a lively and penetrating discussion on how the writer creates particular effects in her descriptive writing.
73. When a variety of tasks are introduced into the lesson and a good pace is maintained, students' interest and enthusiasm is aroused and they make an intellectual effort and learn quickly. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson based upon an extract from a modern version of 'Beowulf', in which students learned new verbs and explored how they might be used in a variety of contexts. A very good feature of the teaching is that classroom assistants are well briefed on how they might support students with special educational needs and any additional resources are provided most efficiently. When teaching is less effective, teachers' planning does not sufficiently take into account students' prior attainment and as a consequence, some higher attaining students in Years 7 to 9 are not sufficiently challenged to enable them to make rapid progress. Additionally, when the pace of lessons is too slow, or when the teacher's discipline is not effective, students lose concentration and behave inappropriately. More generally, however, most students display a positive attitude towards learning and are co-operative in lessons. As they move up the school, students take increasingly more responsibility for their own learning.
74. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Attainment and the quality of teaching and learning by the end of Year 9 have remained as they were whilst by the end of Year 11, they have improved. The range of texts available to the department is drawn from a range of cultures and is now sufficient to meet the needs of the National Curriculum. It remains the case that the use of information and communication technology is limited.
75. The management of the department is satisfactory. The acting head of department is effectively supporting temporary teachers in the department and has clear ideas about how the subject might develop. As a means of further raising standards, consideration might be given to raising the level of attainment of potentially higher attaining students by the end of Year 9, raising the attainment of boys by end of Year 9 and achieving greater consistency in the quality of teaching. Attainment in drama is restricted through the lack of suitable accommodation.

76. In the school as a whole, standards of literacy are in line with the national expectation and the strategies employed by teachers across the whole curriculum to teach literacy as a basic skill are largely satisfactory. However, there are some inconsistencies of practice amongst different subjects which means that some weaknesses in written expression, most noticeable in the work of lower attaining students, persist because they are not being systematically addressed.
77. In a number of subjects, including English, mathematics and design and technology, key words are on display in classrooms and this helps students to develop their subject-specific vocabulary, though the effectiveness of the strategy varies according to the extent that teachers refer to the words and reinforce students' understanding of them. In some subjects, students are given opportunities to develop their range of reading skills. In English lessons and in form periods in Years 7 and 8, students are required to equip themselves with reading material and are given the opportunity to read silently. This helps to develop their enjoyment of reading and many can express a preference for particular authors or genres. In design and technology, students use their reading to conduct research on the Internet on such topics as product design. More generally, however, opportunities for students to conduct research or to read widely are limited.
78. In a number of subjects, students are provided with ample opportunities to develop their writing skills. In English, for example, they learn to write for a variety of audiences and by the time they reach Year 11, many produce extended writing of a high quality. In history, students also produce substantial pieces of work on such topics as the American West. In science and history, students develop their skills in writing for a particular audience. When students present their mathematics investigations in Year 11 they write clear reports, illustrating what they have to say by reference to diagrams and tables. In design and technology, students learn how to annotate diagrams and project work is often good, though the evaluations of products are a weakness. However, whilst there is good practice, the whole curriculum is not being fully used to develop skills in writing to the extent that might be expected.

MATHEMATICS

79. When they enter the school, the attainment of students in mathematics is in line with national expectations. Overall, within the school, standards are in line with national expectations. In 2000, the results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were close to the national average but were above average when compared with similar schools. Girls performed better than boys and have done so over previous years. Students' performance in mathematics was better than that in English and science. After maintaining standards above the national average, the school's results fell to just below average in 2000. However, teachers' assessments were close to the test results indicating that the fall was not unexpected. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining the higher grades in the GCSE examination was close to the average for all schools and above average for similar schools. All boys achieved grades A*-G and two boys achieved A* grades. However, girls achieved above the national average in their A*-C results, which was better than the achievement of boys. There is a rising trend in the proportion of students gaining A*-C grades and in the average points scores of students, but this is less than the rise in the national trend.
80. Despite the apparent decline in Year 9 results in 2000, these students made progress above national expectations when measured against their levels of attainment on intake. Standards of achievement observed in current lessons in Years 7 to 9 are also above average. By the end of Year 9, class work and the results of test papers of

higher attaining students show that their achievement is appropriate. The more able students have good understanding of the movement of points, quadratic equations and trigonometry and can find probabilities of combined events. Average attaining students are able to use straight-line graphs, factors and multiples involving quadratic terms and transformations. In a mixed group of high and average attainers, students successfully demonstrated a range of geometric skills in determining centres of rotation and lines of symmetry. However, a middle set observed using 'trial and improvement', were hampered by lack of understanding of some basic algebraic terms. Lower attaining students show a satisfactory understanding of simple graphs and areas of compound shapes.

81. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. By Year 11, many students are entered for the GCSE examination early in the year, with almost all entrants gaining an A*-C grade. Students then have the option of improving their grade in the summer examination. Work covered in lessons is of a high standard. Students in a high attaining set worked effectively with graphs based on physical situations and were able to determine meaning from the tangents to the curves and the areas beneath them. Their books showed good awareness of vectors and transposition of formulae containing quadratic terms. Groups of average attaining students were seen confidently revising graphs and accurately plotting curves and straight lines, then accurately solving associated equations. Lower attaining groups follow a course leading to the foundation level GCSE. They are successful in gaining certificates from a recognised examination board to build confidence and maintain motivation before taking their final GCSE examination. A group of these students showed that they had the skills to use the Internet and made good use of it to study revision topics on 'transformations'.
82. In all years, students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well, in line with other students of the same ability. This was seen in Year 9 when a student with severe visual impairment was able to produce work on transformations at a level equal to other high attaining students in the class. The integration of students from the resource bases for visual and hearing-impaired students is a strong feature of the department and highlights the effective way in which teachers are able to provide different materials to match the needs of individual students. The help provided by assistants from the resource bases and by other learning support assistants is of the highest quality and enhances the teaching provided by the department.
83. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better with just over half of the lessons being good or very good. Teaching was better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The best teaching contains challenge, pace and relevance for the students. Many teachers offer a variety of activities which enrich students' learning. Good organisation, challenge and provision for the differing needs of students are common features of many lessons. In a lesson for low attaining students, some students effectively led groups competing to find the results of investigations. The enjoyment and excitement engendered provided a memorable learning experience for them. The relationship between teachers and students encourages good relationships amongst students and there were many instances of students supporting each other's learning. Behaviour in the classroom and co-operation are good and this helps to provide a secure learning environment. As a result, students feel confident when demonstrating their ideas in front of the class or acting as models in teachers' demonstrations to the class. However, there are a few students who have poor listening skills and talk at the same time as the teacher. Where this goes unchecked by teachers, the quality of learning is reduced.
84. There is good leadership from the head of department. He is well supported by teachers who share the aim of improving the learning of their students. This has led to

the shared objectives of raising standards of teaching and providing a caring learning environment. The new schemes of work now provide greater clarity and enable new staff to co-ordinate the work of students effectively. However, the number of part-time contributors to the teaching of mathematics has led to some classes being taught by more than one teacher within the week or the use of teachers with limited understanding of the subject. This is reducing the quality of learning for some students. The department's approach to assessment and recording is not sufficiently formalised and does not allow staff to make rapid comparisons of students' relative performances or to identify areas of weakness. The reporting to parents lacks consistency in details of what students can do and what they need to do to improve.

85. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The department has improved the quality of teaching, introduced a new scheme of work and widened the range of learning experiences for students. Displays of work are now evident throughout the department which encourage students to understand what can be achieved. The provision of different learning material for lessons has improved the quality of learning for students of differing abilities. Some aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy have been adopted and a school numeracy policy has been drafted but has not yet been adopted across all subjects. The numeracy initiative has been incorporated successfully into mathematics lessons in Years 7 and 8.
86. Mental arithmetic skills are weak for all ability ranges of students above Year 8. Many students have to work out basic arithmetic on fingers or calculators. In Year 7, mental arithmetic skills are well developed as was seen in a lesson in which all students were able to form a given number using two different steps, one of which had to be multiplication. Students in all years have developed strategies for solving problems involving number, sufficient to allow for progress to be made in all subjects. Subjects which contribute effectively to the development of students' numeracy include science, design and technology, information and communication technology and geography. In science, students use a variety of compound units such as speed and can collate and present experimental finding with accurate graphs. The measuring aspects and overall accuracy of students' drawing in design and technology are being effectively targeted as an area for improvement. In this department, students also conduct surveys as part of their work on design projects and present their findings in a variety of graphical forms. Lessons in geography make a strong contribution to students' ability to analyse data and interpret a variety of graphical forms. In this they show good numeracy skills. Other subject areas do not make significant contributions to the numeracy of students but some make use of graphic skills. This was seen in students' work in English and history.

SCIENCE

87. When they enter the school, the attainment of students in science is in line with national expectations. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were average compared with all schools in 2000 and were also average when compared with similar schools. Girls' results were better than boys'. Results have declined since the previous year when they were well above the national average. The percentage of students achieving the higher Level 6 and above was above the national average although it has declined since the previous year. Compared with similar schools, this standard was average. Taking the last three years together, results have slightly exceeded the national average but have declined since the last inspection.
88. In the GCSE examination, the percentage of students achieving A*-C grades in the double science award was well below the national average. Boys' results were significantly lower than the results of girls. Overall, standards have slightly improved

since the previous year. In the small group of 22 students studying the separate science subjects, results in chemistry and physics were above average but were below average in biology. Girls achieved more highly than boys.

89. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were average at the end of Year 9. Students' achievements and progress in relation to standards on entry to the school are satisfactory. How well students increase their knowledge and understanding is linked directly to the quality of teaching. For instance, students reach standards above expected levels when teachers have high expectations of their capabilities and plan interesting lessons. Low attaining students in Year 8 ably built up a simple chemical equation that described how plants manufacture sugar from water and carbon dioxide, using light energy, by playing an interesting card game devised by their teacher. The imagination of high attainers in Year 9 were immediately captured as 'sedimentary rock' quickly formed before them from heated, grated candle waxes. Their attention was fully gripped by the slitting open of a tube of striped toothpaste and by the reservoirs of colours revealed as their teacher pulled his fingers through the sticky mass. They were left in no doubt about how metamorphic rocks were formed and what caused the layers of crystals, represented by the stripes in the toothpaste. Analyses of exercise books showed, however, that expectations for middle and low attaining students are too low and that higher attainers are not given sufficiently challenging activities for them to make their best progress.
90. At Key Stage 3, students develop good use of their mathematical skills as they become more familiar with measuring apparatus and equipment. There is good development of technical language when teachers stress key words in lessons and then ensure that students use them in their own explanations. Skilful management of practical activities by teachers and positive attitudes towards helping each other by students, lead to good developments in practical skills such as the setting up of equipment and the noting of relevant observations. The development of skills in problem solving, scientific enquiry and analysis, are weak. Opportunities for students to understand scientific method are poor. They have little ability to suggest hypotheses and explore their own ideas. They rarely plan class experiments. The majority of students are given few opportunities to practise making predictions based on information acquired in lessons and to analyse results more deeply to arrive at sufficiently detailed conclusions. The use of computers has improved since the last inspection, although this work has yet to be fully integrated into schemes.
91. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average, but there are variations within this overall picture. Only two observations of Year 10 classes took place because of examinations; judgements are based upon analysis of students' work, school tests and examinations results. Attainment is notably affected by the variable quality of teaching at this key stage. Achievement in relation to earlier attainment in Year 9 is unsatisfactory and, overall, students have made unsatisfactory progress. In the best lessons, students made good progress. In Year 11, students learnt clever revision techniques for ideas about atomic structures and biological systems because of their teachers' skilful management of sharply focused activities and high quality, 'homemade', specialised resources. They were enthusiastic about sorting out misconceptions and consolidating learning because they were highly involved in effectively organised sessions. Students said that they 'had learnt more and identified what they had forgotten and needed to revise'. Alternatively, where lessons have vague objectives, students are not clear about what is happening or where the lesson is going. Progress is also adversely affected by lacklustre lessons where the expectations of teachers are too low. Students do not respond well, lose attention, miss points and under-achieve in these lessons.

92. An analysis of exercise books shows work pitched below the capabilities for middle and low attaining students and ideas not studied in sufficient detail for high attainers. Students have difficulty in applying facts in their explanations. Opportunities to develop experimental procedures in classwork are missed. The highest attainers record investigations to a very good standard but the majority need to increase the sophistication of observations and raise standards of evaluations in classwork. Most students have difficulty in using their own knowledge of science ideas and research to interpret results and draw conclusions. Course work showed, however, that some lower attaining students accurately graph results in different ways.
93. Students with special educational needs make good progress through skilled support. Visually and hearing impaired students make very good progress. One of the major reasons for this is the use of high quality materials produced well in advance of lessons through good planning.
94. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory overall at both key stages but ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. Furthermore, certain lessons, however, although judged satisfactory, were only just adequate in promoting progress and these, together with the significant minority of unsatisfactory lessons, had an adverse affect upon learning and progress in both key stages, but particularly in Years 10 and 11.
95. Where teaching is very good, speedy and skilled questioning deftly encourages students to recognise patterns in observations, for instance, about predator prey relationships in a food web. No superficial answers are accepted, correct technology is required, and gaps in knowledge quickly detected, demonstrating that teachers' expectations are high. In another class, confusions between 'atom' and 'ion' were easily remedied because of the teacher's perceptive recognition of the problems and competent specialist knowledge. Clear explanations, coupled with interesting and unusual illustrations, helped students to understand the formation of old limestone.
96. There are some notable weaknesses. Generally, expectations are too low in a high proportion of lessons. Progress is slowed down when insufficient attention is given to planning activities that become progressively challenging. In a Year 9 class, progress considerably diminished for some students as they waited for their next task while its understanding by others was checked by their teacher. Where lesson plans focus more upon the organisation of activities rather than on learning, students misunderstand the links between practical work and the ideas it is illustrating. Similarly, links between fascinating demonstrations and subject matter are not always made explicit. Where there is weak planning, lessons are not well rounded off, and not enough time is left at the end for thinking about what has been learnt. Unsatisfactory lessons were not well prepared and, consequently, ideas were not clearly explained in different ways so that students could understand their meaning. What students learned and understood was not always checked and questions did not help them to apply information or activities sustain their interest.
97. Textbook provision has improved since the last inspection and there has been some refurbishment of the accommodation although certain poor displays do not support learning about science. The main preparation space continues to be insufficient and unsafe. This was identified at the time of the last inspection. Its use by teaching staff adds to its congestion. Nevertheless, good quality technical support contributes soundly to the quality of practical sessions. Homework, regularly set to extend learning, is closely monitored. The department has only very recently begun to evaluate its performance. Rigorous procedures for monitoring teaching and learning through classroom observations and regular scrutiny of work are not in place.

Teachers do not consistently check the progress of students based upon previous achievements. Completion of the Key Stage 3 scheme needs to be a priority so that students can make smooth progress and teachers have sufficient guidance in planning successful lessons. The department has yet to establish a team ethos with a clear way forward for self-improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

98. When students enter the school, their skills in art vary greatly, with a significant proportion being unsatisfactory. Their observation, drawing and painting skills are poor. They make good progress overall and by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, their attainment is broadly in line with national standards.
99. The 2000 statutory teacher assessments of students' work at the age of 14 were overestimated, showing attainment as being above the national average. Procedures are now in place to ensure more accurate assessments with the introduction of the new National Curriculum levels in art. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 2000 GCSE examination shows attainment well below national standards. Data analysis has enabled the department to review provision in Key Stage 4 in the light of this decline in performance, and the current work seen in school shows standards to be in line with national averages. Overall, whilst attainment is in line with national expectations, the standards reached by one-third of students is good at both key stages.
100. Students with special educational needs, especially when these relate to hearing and visual impairment, make good progress throughout the school, largely because they have the same opportunities as other students to benefit from working in a broad curriculum. The majority of students make good progress in their ability to use a range of materials and techniques in both two- and three-dimensional form, including drawing and painting, printing, ceramics, textiles, graphics and creating cardboard sculptures. Their work shows that they make good gains in knowledge and understanding of a wide range of art from a variety of cultures and periods in time and are able to use this to inform their own work. For example, in Year 7, a focus on the formal element of line is enhanced by a study of the work of Van Gogh and his use of line to represent tone, texture and movement. More able students achieve particularly well. They use line fluently when working from observation. Exploring illustration in Year 8, students effectively study the work of Mondrian, Grosz, Delauney and Matisse and learn about abstraction and simplification in drawing composition. In this topic, a visually impaired student was able to interpret the task in clay, modelling a character from 'James and the Magic Peach'. In one Year 9 class, students worked collaboratively to produce effective constructions based on American Indian totem poles. Another class worked independently to model ceramic glyphs based on Mayan symbols, learning the skills of manipulating and joining clay with slip.
101. At Key Stage 4, students learn to develop topics in a diversity of styles and materials. They use pencil, paint, oil, pastels, ceramics, textiles and collage to develop such themes as Third World Body Adornment, studying examples from Hawaii, Thailand, Samoa and New Zealand. Practical examination work entitled, 'Inside: Outside Body', demonstrates students' ability to develop a clear rationale for choices. For example, the influence of Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, Roger Fenton and Frido Carla shows an imaginative mix of anatomy and machinery. Drawing skills are well developed as is the ability to investigate other materials like leather, sand, inscribed copper foil and paint. More modern themes include Goths, Freaks and Hippies, resulting from research into the fashion of the 1960s, 1980s and 2000, and were effectively displayed as hardboard mannequins.

102. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Lessons are characterised by good introductions and demonstrations, have clear objectives and make good use of the work of artists to illustrate learning. Practical work is well supported through individual tuition and teacher intervention. Plenary sessions reinforce learning. Classroom routines are well established. Good planning and pace and a mixture of teaching styles maximise students' concentration. Students are encouraged to investigate and experiment with ideas and materials, particularly at Key Stage 4. Good teacher subject knowledge and good relationships between students and teachers enhance the quality of learning. The best teaching occurs at Key Stage 4 where students develop individuality of style and interest.
103. Leadership and management in art are good and there is clear evidence of strong teamwork. Since the last inspection, the department has successfully reviewed the scheme of work to include a wider variety of media and a broad range of artists from a variety of periods and cultures. Information and communication technology is still at an early stage of development. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and assessment has been developed to provide a clear picture of attainment. Self-assessment is developing at Key Stage 3 and has become established at Key Stage 4. Students receive good feedback from marking and assessment and generally know how well they are doing, what to improve and how to improve.
104. The department makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Whilst resources have improved considerably in terms of practical equipment and materials which are now adequate, there is a significant shortfall in reference materials and books to support art education both within the department and in the learning resources centre.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105. Students' work and attainment in lessons in Year 7 indicates that their knowledge and skills in designing and making products are below expected levels when they join the school. By the end of Year 9, though, overall standards are in line with schools nationally, and teachers assessed end of Key Stage 3 attainment to be at national average levels in 2000. Students therefore make good progress across the key stage and achieve well. The strengths of the work at this stage lie in the good quality of products that students make. They are precise in cutting, shaping and joining materials, and confidently use a range of tools, equipment and utensils to help them complete tasks with accuracy. In Year 9, a wide range of food products designed for a school canteen were prepared and presented to professional standards, while Year 8 students making fabric containers were able accurately to pin out and cut materials and make very good use of machines to produce strong seams and embroidered lettering.
106. The department's teaching programmes help students to develop these good skills through a broad range of practical tasks, while building a satisfactory awareness of the principles of product design. Good course booklets help them in this regard. Across Key Stage 3, though, there are weaknesses in students' drawing and writing skills. Sketches and drawings are well annotated to communicate design ideas but students lack the technical skills to draw to high standards and there are weaknesses among middle and lower attainers in the quality of writing about the effectiveness of product designs and approaches to making them.
107. GCSE examination results were well above average in 2000. Both girls and boys did well, and boys achieved particularly well at grades A* and A in relation to national averages. Results have improved strongly in food, resistant materials and textiles since the last inspection. In lessons and work seen, standards by Year 11 are well above

average. The practical strengths identified at Key Stage 3 are evident, so that in graphic products for example, to be examined for the first time this year, boxed and packaged items are made to exceptionally high standards and have a genuinely professional quality. There are some exceptionally well produced design portfolios, reflecting very strong product development techniques and a good awareness of industrial and commercial approaches in design. Weaknesses remain apparent in the writing skills of middle and lower attainers, particularly in the breadth and depth of their evaluations of products and designs. Students of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, nonetheless achieve very well at Key Stage 4.

108. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, particularly at Key Stage 4 where students are very well prepared for their GCSE coursework and examinations. During the inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was seen, and 90 per cent of lessons were good or better. A particularly strong feature of the teaching is the clarity of objectives which teachers set for the students. Students know what they will be learning and why, and they are given very clear guidance on how to achieve the targets which are set for them. Teachers plan their lessons and their courses very well to help students achieve these goals. They monitor the progress of students closely so that, for example, a high proportion of students complete their GCSE coursework successfully and are entered for the examination. The use of available resources by teachers is good. Teachers obtain a range of products and materials from industry to illustrate principles of commercial design, and make good use of previous work by students in wall displays to motivate and inspire others. Technology is employed which allows students to work with accuracy and understanding but in an uncomplicated manner. Students in a Year 7 textiles class, for example, were able to use overlockers for seams and computer-aided machines to embroider their names onto their work after a brief explanation by the teacher; while the progress of Year 8 students in understanding electronics was improved by building circuits based on simple copper tracks.
109. The incorporation of computer-aided manufacture has significantly improved the quality of some aspects of work, but students do not make sufficient use of computers, particularly for design of products and circuits and for the presentation of work at Key Stage 3. Students with special educational needs learn well; teachers are aware of students' needs and offer appropriate help in the classroom. Students from the bases for the hearing and visually impaired are exceptionally well supported in lessons by their support assistants. A visually impaired boy, for example, played a full part in building an electronic circuit. He was guided closely in his use of tools and developed his understanding of components through touch and discussion.
110. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There has been strong planning to raise achievement, at the core of which has been the development of a very good system for assessing students' work with direct relation to National Curriculum levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9 and to GCSE requirements in Years 10 and 11. This has enabled students to understand what they need to do to improve the standards of their work and teachers to plan to help students to succeed. There is a strong commitment to high standards throughout the department. The food and textiles rooms are pleasant and stimulating. The workshop accommodation is, however, unsatisfactory and imposes a number of constraints on teaching and learning, forcing, for example, some classes to be taught together. The cramped nature of the accommodation restricts both the amount of equipment which can be employed and access to the machines which are available. The prevalence of wood as the material chosen for resistant materials GCSE project work partly reflects the difficulties of working in other media. The stock of computers in the department is old and in need of updating to meet the needs of the new National Curriculum.

111. Since the last inspection, GCSE results have improved significantly and there has been a strong improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, brought about in part by a very good system of assessment. Many boys now choose to study food technology at GCSE examination level and they do well; but boys still do not study textiles at GCSE level.

GEOGRAPHY

112. On entry to the school, the attainment of students in geography is in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, the oldest students are on target to achieve standards in line with what is expected nationally. Given the students' attainment on entry, in particular the lack of breadth to their geographical knowledge, they are all making satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. The progress of students with special educational needs is good. The demands made on their geographical knowledge and skills are as challenging as for everyone else but they are provided with more support to help them cope and they do so well. In their written work and orally, all students can give good descriptions of the physical and human processes that they are studying, such as how a tropical storm is formed. Higher attaining students show good skills in explaining these processes, such as the impact of natural hazards on people's lives. Overall, the development of the students' enquiry skills is good, particularly their accurate use of geographical vocabulary which teaching continually focuses upon. However, all students have difficulty in posing appropriate geographical questions and for middle and lower attaining students, their knowledge of the location of the places they study is weak.
113. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, students' attainment in the A*-C range was well below the national average for all schools and for similar schools. It was also below the attainment in other subjects in the school. This represents a decline from the previous year. However, overall the trend, despite fluctuations, is one of gradual improvement over the last three years and the increase in the number of students achieving the higher grades is a positive indication of this. Lesson observation and the scrutiny of students' work indicate that this improvement is being maintained as the standard of work of students currently in Year 11 is in line with national expectations. This improvement is the result of good teaching that focuses effectively on helping students to cope with the difficulties they experience with the syllabus. Unlike at the time of the last inspection, teaching now concentrates more on the needs of students of all abilities with an emphasis on greater challenge for middle and higher attaining students.
114. The changes made to how students complete their coursework are having a positive impact on standards. Whilst the number of girls and boys choosing the subject is now much more balanced than at the time of the last inspection, the percentage of students in the cohort choosing geography has fallen over the last three years. At Key Stage 4, students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language, are also now making satisfactory progress. What students do well is to communicate their geographical ideas orally. They do this very well, for example when describing the characteristics of hill farming or interpreting Ordnance Survey map extracts. For the majority of the students, their coursework on whether the quality of life improves the further you move away from the city centre of Durham, shows good commitment to their studies. What all students find most difficult is communicating their geographical understanding in writing. Lower attaining students find difficulty in recalling the case studies they have worked on. These weaknesses have been recognised and are being worked on effectively as part of a revision programme.

115. The quality of teaching in geography is always satisfactory and frequently good at both Key Stage 3 and on the GCSE course. There are a number of strong features of the best teaching. In all lessons, teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour that students respond to. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, ensuring that students are willing to listen, answer questions and learn from the activities they are given to do. They are encouraged by their teacher's confidence in them and work hard. Teachers maintain the students' interest by giving them a range of interesting tasks to complete with sensible time limits. In a Year 7 lesson, students were clearly enjoying the challenge of recording variations in temperature and wind speed, amongst other variables, in studying the microclimate of the school building and grounds. All were able to describe what they found and the higher attainers were beginning to develop the skill of explaining the pattern they had found. Teachers also make good use of questioning. All members of a mixed ability Year 9 group were fully involved in a brisk revision session on tropical storms. Through the teacher's skilful match of question to pupil, all were able to answer something correctly.
116. Teachers evaluate their teaching and students' learning effectively. This is particularly true at GCSE level where a number of sensible changes have been made to the teaching. In a Year 11 revision lesson, the teacher helped the students to understand exactly how to use their case study knowledge in the final examination through asking them to devise, answer and then mark their own questions. Students responded well to this task in groups and made clear progress in understanding what was required for the examination. The relative weakness in teaching is in a lack of pace and insufficient challenge for higher attainers in some lessons.
117. The department is well led and managed and there is a strong commitment to improve. Resources are adequate although some textbook materials are now rather dated and the learning resource centre offers very little support at present. There is a clear need to develop the use of information and communication technology at Key Stage 3 to help here.
118. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The profile of geography in the school is now much higher. Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved and progress is being made at GCSE level although there is still more work to be done in this key area. Good progress has also been made in ensuring that there are clear objectives behind the teaching and learning activities at Key Stage 3. The department has also developed a good system of assessment at Key Stage 3.

HISTORY

119. On entry to the school, students show a sound knowledge of history but there is a lack of depth to their chronological understanding. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of the students are on target to achieve standards in line with what is expected nationally and a small minority achieve above this. Given the students' overall attainment on entry, these standards are good. At Key Stage 3, all students are making good progress. The progress of students with special educational needs is helped by the fact that they are expected to cover the same ground as other students but with more help. The majority of students produce writing at length and in some depth. This was seen when students were required to answer questions such as why the Normans won at Hastings. Students show good factual knowledge and understanding and can give accurate descriptions of features of past societies such as how farming was carried on in medieval society. Their enquiry skills are also good, whether they are looking at a data file of casualties in the Great War or propaganda from the English Civil War. By the end of the key stage, students' chronological understanding has become stronger.

120. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, students achieved excellent results. Attainment at grades A*-C was well above the national average for all schools and for similar schools and also above the attainment in other subjects in the school. Attainment at the highest grades A*-A, particularly for boys, was well above the national average. This forms part of a trend of increasing excellence over the past three years. This is the result of very good teaching which is focused well on the key historical issues of the syllabus, and the students' own commitment to their studies. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of work indicate that these standards are being maintained by students currently in Year 11. At Key Stage 4, students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are making very good progress. What students do well is to communicate their historical ideas orally and in writing when explaining complex historical developments such as the improvements made in public health in nineteenth-century Britain. They all show very good factual knowledge and understanding of events and changes in medicine and in the American West and they have the skills to make good use of source material. Lower attaining students find difficulties in deciding exactly what is required by some examination questions. This weakness is recognised and explicitly tackled in revision teaching.
121. The quality of teaching in history is good at Key Stage 3 and is very good at Key Stage 4. There are a number of strong features of the best teaching. In all lessons, relationships between teachers and students are very good. Teachers have high expectations of students' work and behaviour which students match. This creates an atmosphere where learning is valued and students clearly enjoy their study of history. Many students in all groups are keen to respond to the teacher's questions and all are helped to contribute through the skill with which teachers break up the bigger questions into smaller, simpler steps. Another feature is good planning. In a Year 7 lesson, the teacher cleverly brought together pictorial sources in a video extract, information from the class textbook and the use of overhead transparencies to enable students to study medieval farming. Together with a simple task sheet, this enabled students not only to build up factual information, but also to make more subtle deductions about the quality of life for peasants from the illustrations.
122. Lessons move at a good pace. In a Year 9 lesson, students had to explore a data file of casualties in the Great War. As a result of very thorough preparation, the teacher skilfully led the students through the wealth of potentially overwhelming materials and allowed them to make some fascinating discoveries for themselves about what had happened to the men of Durham, and the local villages, who had enlisted in the Durham Light Infantry. By the lesson end, students had covered a wide range of questions. The teachers' knowledge and examination expertise is also a very positive feature. In a Year 11 lesson, the revision booklet prepared by the teacher enabled students to revise their work effectively on cattlemen and cowboys and to appreciate the reality behind the myths such as the existence of cowboys who were Mexican, black and native American as well as white.
123. History is very well led and managed and there is a strong commitment to improve in the department. This lies behind the excellent standards and the increased numbers opting for history in the school. It is clearly evident in the superb display of students' work in history classrooms. History is a strength in the school.
124. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards in GCSE examinations have been further improved. There are increased opportunities for independent study at Key Stage 3, although the learning resource centre offers inadequate support here. Schemes of work at Key Stage 3 have been revised and make learning objectives explicit. Those for the GCSE course are less detailed. There

is now an excellent assessment procedure in operation at Key Stage 3 with very good record keeping of students' progress which is beginning to support target setting. Students working for the GCSE examination are very clear about what their level of achievement is and how they can improve. Problems of access have hampered progress in developing the use of information and communication technology at Key Stage 3 and there is also a need to develop the local history dimension in Year 8 to match the good work seen elsewhere at Key Stage 3.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

125. Students join the school in Year 7 with understanding and skills in using computers in line with those found in schools nationally. Year 7 students are competent at being able to find their way around computer programs when following instructions from their teachers; they are also precise in entering instructions to control machines.
126. By the end of Year 9, students' standards of attainment remain broadly comparable with those found nationally. This finding confirms teacher assessments that standards were at the national average level in 2000. Students can use computers effectively to help them complete a variety of tasks. For example, to process information from a survey on computer technology in supermarkets into tables and charts for a report, to set up databases, and to search for important data such as the number of fatalities in the aftermath of World War 1 for a history assignment. There are weaknesses in the way in which work is presented, though, with insufficient skill shown in the use of facilities to help check spelling, grammar, and the way in which work is set out on the page. Students are not always sufficiently aware of the requirements of their readers and audiences in presenting their work. Overall, achievement is satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 3.
127. GCSE examination results in 2000 were well below average and show a decline from the previous year when they were also well below average. Girls' results were particularly weak. The results were not as high as they should have been for these students and there was overall underachievement, although higher attaining boys did well, with a well above average proportion of boys gaining the highest grades at A*. Attainment in the current Year 11 is also well below that expected in schools nationally. A significant proportion of students following the GCSE short course have fundamental weaknesses in their ability to use computers, such as in understanding how to cut and paste text and pictures between programs, how to use tools to help them present work on a word processor and how to search for items on the Internet, for example. Their folder work shows little detailed knowledge or understanding of computer systems and software. Standards of work are better among other students at Key Stage 4. The coursework of some students, including girls, extends to the highest grades but the attainment remains below that expected because of weaknesses in students' ability to understand and apply the factual knowledge they have acquired about computer systems. Standards across Key Stage 4 are therefore not high enough. However, with better teaching and learning, all but the higher attainers should achieve more.
128. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory, although a significant proportion of students on the short GCSE course in Year 11 have experienced unsatisfactory teaching. For Years 7 to 9, the teaching is satisfactory and has some good features. All teachers in information and communication technology lessons at this key stage are non-specialists but they show much confidence in taking their classes through some demanding tasks. Students in Year 7 were, for example, able to make rapid progress in learning how to program sequences of instructions to simulate control of traffic lights and a stage set. In textiles in Years 7 and 8, students only needed short but very clear explanations of how to set up a computer-aided machine before they were able to

embroider their names onto their work. There are inconsistencies in the detail of marking and assessment of work in Years 7 to 9, especially in the degree to which weaknesses of presentation of work are corrected. Students do not use computers enough in other subjects for preparing and presenting word processed documents and reports. In English, for example, where use of computers is below expectation and so there is insufficient reinforcement of the skills of writing and designing documents for particular purposes.

129. Across Years 10 and 11, wide variations are evident in standards of teaching and learning. On the short GCSE course in Year 11, a high proportion of students have not kept on course to pass the examination. They have learned insufficient fact and theory and many have withdrawn from the GCSE course because they have not been able to meet coursework requirements. There remains an unsatisfactory lack of clarity in the teaching about how the gaps in students' understanding should be best filled. Elsewhere in Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning have been more effective and students produce well-organised folders to build up their knowledge of systems and software although many have difficulty in applying this knowledge in the solution of problems. Marking, and information to students on how standards of coursework can be improved, is detailed and clear. In some other subjects, there is some good work using computers. In graphic products, card is shaped using a computer-aided cutter to make boxed products of a very professional quality, and where used, the quality of design and technology coursework folders is improved greatly by the use of designs, lettering and scanned images. In mathematics, computers help to improve learning in number and graph work as well as in more general revision, but generally speaking, information and communication technology is not being used enough in the broad range of subjects.
130. While students in the school apply themselves well in lessons, they have less general enthusiasm for using computers than one would expect to find. During the inspection, for example, there was little use of the computers in the learning resources centre or in after-school clubs. As a consequence, many GCSE students lack up-to-date awareness of new systems and software. Students with special educational needs mostly make satisfactory progress, although work at Key Stage 3 occasionally moves on too quickly for lower attaining students before they have secured their understanding. Students from the visually and hearing impaired units are particularly well supported and make good progress.
131. While the leadership of the subject is satisfactory in taking steps to secure improvements, aspects of management in the recent past have been unsatisfactory. In the absence, until recently, of a technician and network manager and suitably skilled teachers, the curriculum team leader has been so preoccupied with establishing a modern network of computers in the school that time has not been available to develop the use of computers across subjects and to ensure consistently satisfactory standards of teaching and of work of all students. There remains an imbalance in the opportunities students get to develop their computer skills so that those who follow a full course in religious education do not get their statutory entitlement to a planned programme of information and communication technology, and those who take German in Year 9, get a reduced programme. The use of communication technology, such as e-mail, is underdeveloped in the curriculum.
132. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 have been maintained but they have declined at Key Stage 4. The use of computers for learning in many other subjects remains underdeveloped. Recently, however, the quality of the computer facilities in school has improved significantly, and this, combined with a

programme of training for teachers and the appointment of good quality technical support, is beginning to address these weaknesses.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

133. All students start French in Year 7 and can choose to study German in Year 9. A few students also choose to study both languages at Key Stage 4. Severe staffing difficulties in German in the recent past almost led to the subject's disappearance but its place in the school's curriculum is now secure. At Key Stage 3, students achieve standards which are a little below their potential in French but above in German. They have a good understanding of how languages work but are less able to apply this knowledge in French. Students' writing is generally accurate but their speaking skills are more limited and students lack confidence. At Key Stage 4, students are making faster progress, particularly in German. In French, speaking remains the weakest skill. Students with learning difficulties are very well supported by support staff and by teachers. They achieve standards above expectations. The most able are also well provided for.
134. The results of the Key Stage 3 teacher assessments last summer and a scrutiny of current Key Stage 4 work suggest that overall standards in both languages are improving. However, the proportion of students reaching GCSE grades A*-C in 2000 was slightly below the national average for French, but were well below average for German. Standards in French are being maintained and are being slightly improved but standards in German are clearly rising.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is good at Key Stage 3 and is very good at Key Stage 4. All teachers are appropriately experienced and qualified. They are good classroom managers and there is a good atmosphere for learning in lessons. No Year 10 lessons could be observed during the inspection week because of school examinations, but all the teaching seen in Year 11 was good or better. There is more variation at Key Stage 3. Sometimes, the absence of any clear communicative aim leads to less productive lessons in which students hardly speak French at all. However, in one Year 7 lesson, when encouraged to ask questions about the appearance and situation of houses, students spoke accurately, showing that they had fully understood the questions put to them. They demonstrated more fluency than students from more experienced groups. In a very well planned Year 9 lesson, students showed that they were fully aware of the grammatical implications of what they were doing and were given a number of opportunities for reflection, which is unusual in language lessons at this level. They relied heavily on a supporting text to start with, but without any detrimental effect on their pronunciation, they then moved towards greater independence and fluency.
136. Students of all levels of ability are well motivated. They understand the spoken and written word at appropriate levels, although they speak much more freely in German than in French. They expect the teacher to use the foreign language most of the time and make an effort to respond when directed to do so. However, when they initiate dialogue with the teacher and with each other, they are more likely to do so in English.
137. The department is well led and managed. It has a range of good policies. Teaching and learning are thoroughly monitored. Assessment is well developed and the targets that result are helpful to students and parents. More needs to be done to identify the reasons for the small numbers of boys in some top French sets. More use also needs to be made of National Curriculum levels for planning to ensure effective continuity of learning. Satisfactory progress has been made overall since the last inspection. Some students are still too reliant on support from the teacher, notes and the text book.

Relatively few are able to take the initiative in oral work. However, there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and in students' motivation. The school does not enhance provision by buying in any foreign language assistant hours.

MUSIC

138. Students' standards on entry to the school vary widely. Over the last three years, only a small number of students have chosen to study music on a GCSE examination course but all have achieved a grade. No candidates have achieved the highest grades and there were no examination candidates in 2000. Students' attainment at the end of Year 9, based on teacher assessments, shows it to be well below national expectations. Girls were achieving higher than boys but standards were still below expectations. However, standards of work seen in notebooks, lessons and from taped compositions show that in fact standards are higher than these results indicate and suggest that the department needs to look closely at how it uses assessment criteria. Introducing the new system of level descriptions to students' work will give an opportunity for a revision of assessment procedures in order to monitor and assess students' progress accurately. Overall, girls' achievement is still higher than boys' but both are still below national expectations.
139. Observation of attainment during lessons for students in Years 7 to 9 gives a mixed picture. A Year 8 class worked successfully in pairs to create a short keyboard melody and ostinato pattern. Concentration was good and students were aware of the most effective ways to create their compositions. A student with visual impairment was able to make good progress with this activity due to the high level of support given during the lesson. All students attempted to play their compositions using correct finger technique that led to fluent playing. Students worked well together and enabled each other to make progress. However, not all lessons had this rigour and so were less successful, with some students not making appropriate progress. Consequently, overall progress at this key stage is satisfactory.
140. By the end of Year 11, the standard of students' work observed is in line with national expectations with some examples being above. Students are challenged and motivated effectively. Written work is neatly presented and there are regular revision sessions built into lessons to ensure there are no gaps in students' knowledge and understanding. Students discuss their compositions maturely giving clear references to other musical influences. One student took the inspiration for her composition from listening to 'The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba' by Handel. Another student's composition was influenced by her interest and participation in the school's Ceidlih band. Students' performances are musical and show awareness of phrase and style, and a performance of a piece by Grieg demonstrated confident fluent piano playing.
141. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Students on the GCSE course are encouraged to contribute to their lessons showing knowledge and understanding of music beyond the classroom. Good teacher knowledge and effective questioning ensure that students develop their answers fully and this leads to good musical discussion. Lessons are planned effectively giving clear focus and homework is effective, being set to reinforce work done in class. Good demonstrations are given to students and a variety of musical styles are used when considering and understanding musical techniques, for example, the use of cadences in composition. Students' learning is developed through an effective link between written work and practical exercises.
142. Students in Years 7 to 9 undertake musical activities during lessons but the range and variety are restricted by the limited accommodation available. It is not possible for

students to work in small groups outside the classroom easily. Access to the practice room is through another classroom or from outside. Where lessons are successful, students are aware of expectations and are given appropriate challenge. They are given constructive and evaluative comments in order for them to understand how to improve their work. Many students can read standard notation and transfer this knowledge to keyboards when playing melodies. In one lesson, students were allowed to become passive and unsatisfactory singing was praised. A large number of worksheets are used and these are not of sufficient variety to meet the full range of students' needs. The more able need to be set more challenging targets because at present, they are not reaching their potential. At present, students who are visually impaired and hearing impaired make very good progress due to the provision of appropriately challenging work, specialist equipment for the keyboards and good support during lessons. They are able to work in paired and group work on occasions and contribute to class discussions. However, this is not the case for all special needs students.

143. The extra-curricular activities enhance the department giving students a real understanding and experience of local traditions and culture. Opportunities are taken to perform in a variety of different venues. Recent performances have taken place at the Millenium Dome and Durham Cathedral. The different ensembles and choirs help to promote good standards, aid relationships and give a relaxed and harmonious department outside lessons. Other staff support and run some of the extra-curricular work. The numbers of students having instrumental lessons is still small, but many gain places in different county ensembles.
144. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory overall. The department is handicapped by inadequate accommodation that means that teaching and learning styles cannot be varied. There are poor storage facilities for instruments and the stereo system does not give an acceptable quality of sound for students. Although Years 10 and 11 students use multi-track recorders during their work, there are no appropriate computer programs for composition use within the department. The selection of books in the learning resource centre is very limited and does not cover multicultural music. A thorough revision of the schemes of work for all students needs to be undertaken. This will ensure that clear lesson objectives are set and that assessment opportunities can be built into lessons. This will help the department to analyse students' performance in more detail so that all students are appropriately challenged in order to achieve their full potential. This is a largely effective department with the capacity to raise standards further. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

145. Students' standards on entry to the school vary widely. At Key Stage 3, most students reach standards that are in line with the national expectation for their age. A substantial minority reach higher standards in hockey and football, where they demonstrate good ball control skills and show an emerging awareness of what is involved in playing games. In football, the most able students can control and pass a ball accurately under pressure, use space well and show good judgement when to pass. In hockey, many students are establishing good dribbling and passing skills and an understanding of how to maintain possession. By contrast, students who have only recently started rugby have yet to establish sound basic skills. In outdoor and adventurous activities, students are beginning to develop sound navigation skills in orienteering. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls and sensory impaired students achieve good standards.

146. At Key Stage 4, the more able students reach standards above national expectations, with overall standards being broadly in line with them. In basketball and football, a significant majority of students demonstrate good dribbling, passing and shooting skills and have good awareness of these games and show an ability to make effective decisions in attacking play. Standards of performance in badminton and table tennis are not as high and there is considerable variation in the students' bat and racquet control and understanding of the logic of the games and their rules. The school does well in GCSE examinations as results are above national averages on all measures. Students in general do better in PE than their average performance at GCSE. It was not possible to observe Year 10 lessons during inspection week due to school examinations.
147. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good or very good in two-thirds of all lessons. It is better at Key Stage 3 overall and, in particular, in hockey and football, where the teaching is consistently very good. The quality of teaching has a direct impact on the progress made by students in lessons and the standards attained. In the vast majority of lessons, students make at least satisfactory progress and in two-thirds of lessons, it is good or better. The very best teaching is characterised by careful planning that takes into account the range of ability in the group and prepares activities that are accessible, yet challenging to all students. The lessons proceed through stepped progression at a brisk, yet appropriate, pace with individuals and groups supported by specific feedback on performance, effective questioning and measured praise and reinforcement. The teachers have good subject knowledge and can communicate their understanding and enthusiasm at an appropriate level for their students. They have an excellent relationship with students of all abilities and manage resources, space and groups effectively. Students with special educational needs are integrated well with attention given to their needs in a low key, yet effective manner. Care is taken to match students' abilities to tasks, thus ensuring the right balance of support and challenge.
148. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Considerable effort has been made to extend and develop gymnastics, dance, athletics and outdoor and adventurous activities. Whilst the curriculum is still strong on games, there is now an appropriate balance of activities. The department is fulfilling statutory requirements at Key Stage 3. Improvements in teaching time and in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have all contributed to better provision for students. Evidence of this improvement is the school receiving the 'Sportsmark Award'. Funding levels are now much higher than at the time of the previous inspection although a reduction in teaching time in Year 9 this year is a retrograde step and has affected the breadth of provision. The department is keen to develop the use of information and communication technology but needs to show how its use would be incorporated into schemes of work.
149. The department is well led and efficiently managed and has made good progress since the last inspection. The curriculum is regularly reviewed, together with schemes of work and teaching and learning processes. The physical education staff make a significant contribution to extra-curricular activities at the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

150. Students' standards on entry to the school vary widely. Their standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the standards outlined in the agreed syllabus. The students have a sound basic knowledge of Christianity, Islam and Judaism but their knowledge of religions from the Indian tradition is not so strong. The students can understand and use some religious language effectively. Overall at this

key stage, the students' knowledge and understanding is significantly better in learning *about* religions than it is in learning *from* religions, that is, their understanding of how the study might be relevant to their own personal lives and experiences. Students have good verbal skills and their writing skills are also sound, but at times, too much time is taken up with low level skills such as pasting, colouring and putting words in gaps at the expense of more extended writing and investigation and research. Students' knowledge and understanding of the external manifestations of religions, such as festivals, rites of passage and worship, are good but this needs to be balanced with more understanding as to *why* these things are taking place so that they have a clearer knowledge and understanding of the underlying beliefs and how they have been derived.

151. At the end of Key Stage 4, the six students entered for the full course GCSE examination in religious studies in 2000 achieved good results as all students received a C grade or above. Of the students entered for the short course examination, the level of achievement was below the national average in terms of grades from A* to C. Of the work seen in the lessons and in books, students' attainment on the full course is in line with the expected standard. Students have a basic knowledge and understanding of Christianity and can talk appropriately about Christian behaviour, attitudes and lifestyles. The ability of the students to make clear, specific connections between the basic beliefs of Christianity and its moral implications is not as strong. The work of students following the short course shows that attainment is below the standards expected. Overall, their familiarity with the topics in the syllabus and their ability to talk effectively about the ones they know are limited. Students can express themselves verbally but do not commonly show that they can write at length or in some depth.
152. Overall, the achievement of students in relation to their prior attainment is broadly satisfactory, though in the case of some students on the GCSE short course, this is not the case. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory as some good use is made of materials specifically prepared for them so they can make progress at their own level. Some extension work enables the more able to make progress but this needs to be more challenging. Overall, there is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
153. At Key Stage 3 the teaching is satisfactory in half of the lessons but is good or excellent in the rest. Where the teaching is excellent, the expectations are high and there is very good pace and subject expertise. Here, the religious content of the lesson is unambiguous and students are challenged to examine what relevance the content of the lesson might have to them. Consequently, in these lessons, learning is strong. In the satisfactory lessons, the specifically religious content is less prominent and the content more restricted to comprehension about the facts of religion. Overall, teachers have clear objectives for lessons but these are not always indicated to the students themselves and so at times, the students are unclear as to what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. This has an adverse effect on their learning. The pace of most lessons could be improved so that more work is done in the time available. A significant number of lessons are not intellectually rigorous. These last two points would help improve the concentration and motivation of the students.
154. At Key Stage 4, the teaching is good in about half of the lessons and unsatisfactory and satisfactory in equal proportion in the rest. Where it is unsatisfactory, there is insufficient direction given to the lessons and the lessons are mostly about moral and social issues with minimal, if any, religious content. The objectives of the lesson are unclear to the students and often the work is of a mundane level. Overall, at this key stage, the teaching lacks energy and pace and expectations are not high enough. Students are not benefiting from opportunities to write at length and in some depth so

that they develop ideas. Homework is set at both key stages and there is an effective assessment policy. Recording and reporting systems are in place.

155. The department is satisfactorily managed by a part-time head of department. A newly qualified teacher teaches about a third of the lessons. Allocation of time for the subject has significantly improved since the last inspection and is now sufficient to meet statutory requirements. Many more students are now choosing to do the full course GCSE examination. No other significant issues were raised at the last inspection. The requirements of the agreed syllabus are being met at Key Stage 3 though more emphasis and planning needs to be made to deliver Attainment Target 2, ie reflecting about religion, as well as more planning to deliver the skills and attitudes indicated in the syllabus. At Key Stage 4, the GCSE examination does not meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus in that only one religion is being studied. The use of information and communication technology is in the early stages of development. The department makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of students' development through the study of some world religions. The accommodation and resources are good.