

INSPECTION REPORT

St BEDE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Blackburn

LEA area: Blackburn with Darwen

Unique reference number: 119793

Headteacher: Mr J C Challoner

Reporting inspector: Dr K C Thomas
3390

Dates of inspection: 8 – 11 May 2001

Inspection number: 187151

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Livesey Branch Road Blackburn
Postcode:	BB2 5BU
Telephone number:	01254 202519
Fax number:	01254 203801
Appropriate authority:	Blackburn with Darwen
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Fr S J Doyle
Date of previous inspection:	February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3390	Kenneth Thomas	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Business Studies.	What sort of school is it? The School's results and pupils or students' achievements. How well are pupils or students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13762	Norman Shelley	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7926	J Bowden	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
10905	Alan Brewerton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
11838	Derek Cronin	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
19414	Janet Flisher	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Drama.	
10817	George Rayner	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
8756	Patricia Hanage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
11672	Peter Harle	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
22906	Barry Hodgson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communications technology.	
15051	Lyn Kauffman	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
19152	Richard Merryfield	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	
23308	John Morrell	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
11300	B Smith	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs.	

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD*

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London
WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Bede's Roman Catholic High School is a voluntary-aided school for boys and girls aged 11-16 in the Diocese of Salford, and Blackburn and Darwen Local Education Authority. The majority of pupils are drawn from five Roman Catholic primary schools augmented by Catholic children attending other primary schools in the area. The school is about the same size as most other secondary schools with 1038 pupils on roll. The school is over-subscribed and the number of pupils on roll has increased by about 4 per cent since the last inspection. About six per cent of pupils are from Italian backgrounds and a very few from Black Caribbean, Black African, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language, at 0.8 per cent, is low in comparison with schools nationally. Other than English, Italian is the main language spoken. Two Russian-speaking pupils are at early stages of English language acquisition; otherwise, all pupils speak English fluently. The attainment of pupils coming into the school, although wide-ranging, is average, overall. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, at 24.7 per cent, is above the national average, while the percentage of those with statements, at 2.9, is about average. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, at 12.7 per cent, is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Bede's is an effective school, providing a very good quality of education for its pupils. The head teacher and senior management team provide good leadership and this is reflected in the above average standards and an increasing commitment to further improvement. Good teaching enables pupils to make the most of the good opportunities provided. Resources are very well managed and the school provides good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Teaching is good and standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above average.
- Pupils like school and attitudes to learning and relationships are very good.
- Pupils benefit from very good careers education and effective links with the community.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Pupils' learning and interest in school are enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities from which many pupils benefit.
- Very good support from the governing body and good financial planning and management are ensuring that the school makes efficient use of its resources.
- The school has established a good partnership with parents and parents provide the school with very good support.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Provision of information and communication technology.
- Provision for personal and social education.
- The management of the pastoral system and the roles of form tutors and year heads in monitoring and supporting pupils' achievement and progress.
- Opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility.
- The school timetable and the punctuality of pupils.
- The clarity of the information provided to parents in pupils' annual reports.
- Aspects of the accommodation.

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 last inspected in March 1996 and has made good progress since that time. Standards of attainment in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 have risen at the same rate as the national trend. Parents recognise that the school is improving and the roll is rising. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now more good teaching and almost no unsatisfactory teaching. Most of the key issues identified for action in the last inspection report have been tackled successfully. Attendance has improved and is now above average, and adequate curriculum time is provided for the teaching of physical education and music in Years 7 to 9. The management structure is clearly defined and both senior managers and middle managers have a greater understanding of their roles in monitoring and evaluation. However, not all pupils are receiving their full curriculum entitlement with regard to information and communications technology. Appropriate targets are set and the school is well placed to make further improvement.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
End of Key Stage 3 tests	B	B	B	B
GCSE examinations	B	C	B	A

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

At the end of Year 9 in 2000, attainment in the National Curriculum tests was above average in mathematics and science and average in English. In comparison with similar schools, based on pupils' entitlement to free schools meals, results in English were above average, while results in mathematics and science were well above. Taken overall, the end of Year 9 National Curriculum test results represent good progress and achievement from the time pupils enter the school. Boys

achieved better results than girls in science, while girls achieved better results than boys in English. Boys and girls do equally well in mathematics.

Pupils make good progress across Years 10 and 11 and achievement in the GCSE examination is good relative to previous levels of attainment at the end of Year 9. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, both the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades and the average points score, which reflects performance across the whole grade range, were above average in comparison with all schools and well above in comparison with similar schools. Almost all of the Year 11 pupils were entered for the GCSE examination with most achieving five or more A* - G grades. This reflects very well on the progress and achievement of pupils with special educational needs. Results in science, business studies, drama, design and technology, food, history, information and communications technology, music, Spanish, and physical education were above average; in English literature and mathematics they were significantly above. Results in English and French were average, while in art, resistant materials, graphics and electronics, they were below average. The achievement of boys is particularly good and, against the national trend, boys achieved better results than girls in mathematics, science and history, while in English literature their results matched those of the girls. In several subjects boys' results are improving and the difference in performance between boys and girls is narrowing. In lessons and other work seen, standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are above national expectations in most subjects. In relation to the school's targets, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades was just above while the average GCSE points score was just below. The school has set appropriately challenging targets for raising standards even further.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils generally like school, are keen to learn and make good efforts to achieve their learning goals. They respond well when given appropriate challenges.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well both in and out of lessons. A few pupils exhibit unsatisfactory behaviour but this is generally dealt with effectively.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory overall. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are very good and contribute well to learning. When given the opportunity pupils show initiative and are willing to take responsibility.
Attendance	Good. The attendance rate is above average and the unauthorised absence rate is below. However, there is a significant amount of lateness at the start of lessons.

The climate for learning is very good. Pupils' attitudes and the quality of the relationships amongst all groups are very good and strengths of the school. Pupils are generally supportive of each other, and pupils with special educational needs are well integrated with their peers. Because the school occupies a large site, there is an acceptance that a certain amount of lateness is inevitable at the start of lessons and a general lack of urgency in moving between lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is similar at both key stages, with 70 per cent of lessons good or better in Key Stage 3 and 75 per cent in Key Stage 4. Teaching is very good or excellent in 26 per cent of lessons at Key Stage 3 and in 21 per cent of lessons at Key Stage 4. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson. The effectiveness of pupils' learning follows a similar pattern, and they make good progress, overall.

Teaching is good at both key stages in the core subjects of English, mathematics, and science. A particular strength of teaching is teachers' effective use of their subject knowledge to give clear explanations and guide pupils' learning. Lessons are planned so pupils of all attainment levels can learn effectively. However, advantage is not taken of the spontaneous opportunities to extend pupils knowledge and understanding that arise from pupils' thoughtful responses to the questions of teachers. Expectations are high and teachers are good role models. There are examples of excellent teaching in modern foreign languages at both key stages and in design and technology at Key Stage 4. Teaching of this quality had a significant effect on pupils' learning in these lessons. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills. The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are good. The teaching of pupils in the learning support centre, where pupils who might otherwise not be able to be in full-time education are provided with additional support, is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and balanced and, with the exception of information and communications technology, meets statutory requirements. Although provision for personal and social education has some very good features, it lacks co-ordination and is unsatisfactory overall. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are fully included in the school community, are confident and feel secure.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Two pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. They achieve well in practical lessons and when they are taught in small groups in the learning support centre. However, their needs are not sufficiently identified and so, for some of their lessons, they are in sets where their specific language needs are not met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Very good provision for spiritual and moral development and good provision for social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory. The school provides a supportive environment in which to learn.

Curricular provision in Years 10 and 11 has been improved by making option choices more flexible in order to cater more fully for pupils' interests and needs. The school is broadening provision further with the introduction of a GNVQ in information systems in the next school year. Careers education and the range of extra-curricular activities provided are very good. However, provision for information and communications technology does not meet statutory requirements. The school's pastoral system provides very good care and support for pupils' social development, but not enough use is made of form tutors to support pupils' academic progress and achievement. The school has effective links with parents and parents provide very good support for pupils' learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Good. The head teacher provides very good leadership and is increasing the commitment to improvement and the further raising of standards. Curriculum leadership is good but there are weaknesses in pastoral leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and well. They exercise very good oversight and do their best to obtain best value in the decisions they make.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Evaluation of the work of departments is rigorous, with careful analyses of results and systematic use of targets for further improvement. There is insufficient monitoring of the work of form tutors.
The strategic use of resources	The school development plan provides a very good framework for spending priorities. Good use is made of the school's resources, but resources are unsatisfactory in some subjects. Some aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory. The school provides good value for money.

The school has a strong positive ethos and provides a well-ordered learning environment. The senior management team is effective and has developed rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of departments. The work of year heads and pastoral teams is not being monitored and evaluated with similar rigour. The potential of the roles of year heads and form tutors in supporting pupils' academic progress is not being fully realised. There is a good match between teachers' qualifications and their deployment to meet the needs of the school curriculum. The school has adequate resources overall and makes effective use of them to meet the needs of the curriculum. Resource provision in science and music is unsatisfactory. Although the school has made strenuous efforts to improve the quality of the accommodation since the last inspection, accommodation for music, drama and design and technology is unsatisfactory. Best value principles are applied to all spending decisions.

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 expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. • The approachability of the school. • The good teaching. • The progress their children are making. • The school is helping their children become mature and responsible. • The good school management. • Their children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework pupils are given. • The closeness with which the school works with parents. • The information the school provides. • Extra-curricular activities. • Behaviour.

Inspectors agree with all of the positive views expressed. The amount of homework set is satisfactory and usually extends or consolidates the work undertaken in lessons. There is a very good range of extra curricular activities and out-of-school visits, and a high level of participation by pupils. The general information the school provides is good. However, pupils' annual reports do not provide parents with sufficiently clear information about what their children know, understand and can do, and what they must do in order to improve. Inspectors judge that the school tries hard to work closely with parents and to involve them in the life of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The results of National Curriculum tests taken in Year 6, in the last year of primary education, show that pupils' standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science on entry to the school rose in 2000 to be above average. In previous years standards of attainment on entry had been average. However, standardised tests administered by the school early in Year 7, show the intake in 2000 to be average and very similar to previous years. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs has more than doubled over recent years, to be just under 25 per cent at the time of the inspection.

2. Pupils achieve well at St Bede's and results are improving at end of Year 9 at the same rate as the national trend. At the end of Year 9 in 2000, attainment in the National Curriculum tests was above average in mathematics and science and average in English. Comparisons of pupils' average points scores in the three subjects with national figures show that, in science and mathematics, pupils are about a term ahead of pupils in other schools. In comparison with similar schools, based on pupils' entitlement to free schools meals, results in English were above average, while results in mathematics and science were well above. Taken overall, the end of Year 9 National Curriculum test results represent good progress and achievement from the time pupils enter the school. There were differences in performance between boys and girls, with boys achieving better results than girls in science and girls achieving better results than boys in English. There was little difference between the results of boys and girls in mathematics. The 2000 teacher assessments in other subjects show attainment at the end of Year 9 to be average in all subjects other than music and geography, where they are above, and design and technology where they are below. Although assessments show that girls tend to achieve higher standards than boys, a notable feature of the results is the improved performance of boys, particularly in history and modern foreign languages, and a narrowing of the difference in performance between boys and girls.

3. The trend in the average GCSE points score over the last four years is below the national trend. However, comparative analyses of pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Year 9, with their GCSE examination results, show that most pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and that achievement in the examination is good. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, 54 per cent of pupils achieved five or more A* to C grades compared with the national average of 47 per cent, and 93 per cent of pupils achieved five or more A* to G grades compared with 91 per cent nationally. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more A* to C grades was above average in comparison with all schools and well above in comparison with similar schools. The average total points score, which reflects achievement across the whole GCSE grade range, also shows performance in the 2000 examination to have been above average in comparison with all schools and well above in comparison with similar schools. Almost all of the Year 11 pupils were entered for the GCSE examination with most achieving five or more A* to G grades. This reflects very well on the progress achieved by

pupils with special educational needs. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades was slightly above the target set for 2000, although the average GCSE points score was just below. Slightly higher, and appropriately challenging, targets have been set for 2001.

4. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in the 2000 GCSE English examination was close to the national average. Although girls achieved better results than boys, the difference between boys' and girls' results was much less than that observed nationally. Results in English literature were particularly good, with the percentage of pupils achieving A* to C grades significantly higher than the national average. The percentage of boys achieving A* to C grades was significantly above the boys' national average and, contrary to the national trend, their results matched those of girls. The percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades in mathematics was also significantly above the national average. Again the performance of boys was particularly good; while the girls' results were average, boys' results were significantly above average. There were similar differences in the performance of boys and girls in the double-award science GCSE examination. While the overall percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades was above average, the results of boys were significantly above average while the results of girls were average. The percentages of pupils achieving A* to C grades were above the national averages in business studies, drama, design and technology food, history, information studies, music, Spanish, and physical education. Results in French were average, while in art, design and technology (resistant materials), graphics and electronics they were below average. Although there is a general tendency for girls to achieve better results than boys in most of these subjects, boys achieved better results than girls in history. The performance of boys in French showed a marked improvement to be closer to that of girls.

5. In lessons and other work seen, standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are above national expectations in most subjects. The school has successfully implemented a number of strategies to raise the performance of boys and this is evident in the test and examination results. The improved performance of boys was also apparent in lessons and the work seen during the inspection.

6. Satisfactory standards of literacy enable the majority of pupils to make the most of their education. Staff development initiatives have helped teachers to gain a good understanding of issues related to literacy and good examples of the development of pupils' literacy skills are seen in most subjects. Standards of reading are good. Regular practice across a range of subjects leads to pupils becoming competent readers, able to understand texts and to identify different layers of meaning. In history and geography, for example, pupils are required to read a wide range of source material and to make accurate notes and use summarising techniques. Writing skills are sound. Most pupils can write in a range of styles, and standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are sound.

7. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is generally satisfactory in relation to the targets contained in the pupils' individual educational plans. Most of these pupils make good progress both in their lessons and over time. Very recently, two Russian-speaking pupils have been admitted to the school. They are both at an early stage of learning English as a second language. They are learning English at a good rate when they are taught

in small groups in the learning support centre and making good progress in practical lessons such as art. However, they do not make the progress that they should in some lessons. This is because the school has not, as yet, been able to assess their needs and provide the support necessary to ensure that their specific language needs are fully met in all subjects.

8. Oral skills develop as pupils move through the school and are good by the end of Year 11. Listening skills also develop and pupils become increasingly able to express their viewpoints with confidence and to listen to the views of others. This was seen, for example, in a Year 10 French lesson where pupils' rapid and accurate responses to skilful questioning by the teacher made a significant contribution to the excellent learning taking place in the lesson. Pupils are able to understand and use specialist vocabulary in, for example, mathematics, science and design and technology.

9. Pupils' numeracy skills are good. This is because mathematics teaching builds effectively on the methods used in primary schools as part of the National Numeracy Strategy. They are able to use calculators correctly and mental arithmetic accurately to answer questions. These skills help pupils to make good progress in other subjects. For example, pupils in history obtained a fuller understanding of the implications of the Wall Street crash by calculating related profit and loss in the trading of shares. Good numeracy skills also help pupils to make progress in science, for example, in the drawing of line graphs and substituting in equations. In geography pupils are able to represent temperature and rainfall figures graphically. They are also able to create and interpret population pyramids to make comparisons between different countries.

10. All pupils in Year 7 have discrete information and communication technology lessons and standards of attainment at the end of Year 7 are consistent with national expectations. Similarly, the standards in information and communications technology of those pupils in Years 8 and 9 who have discrete lessons and of those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who take the GCSE information systems course are generally consistent with expectations. However, a third of pupils in Years 8 and 9 and over half the pupils in Years 10 and 11 have no taught information and communications technology lessons and, as a result, their levels of achievement are below expectations. Computers are used extensively in the business studies and learning support centres, and some use is made of computers in design and technology and geography. However, in other subjects, insufficient use is made of information and communications technology to support and enhance pupils' learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school, and behaviour and attendance are good. Most pupils value their education and appreciate the support and encouragement received from their tutors and teachers. During the many discussions inspectors held with pupils, pupils said that they like the school and enjoy most of their experiences. This is consistent with the views of 93 per cent of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire.

12. Attitudes in lessons are very good and the large majority of pupils show that they want to learn. They make good efforts to achieve their learning goals, sustain concentration and respond well when given appropriate challenges. This was evident, for example in a Year 10 music lesson where pupils sustained concentration for long periods as they tackled GCSE type listening questions. Pupils identified as having special educational needs display good attitudes to learning in mainstream

classes and in withdrawal groups. They work co-operatively and their behaviour enables them to respond well to the opportunities offered, including the extra help given by learning support assistants and others. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties generally respond well to the strategies employed by the specialist staff. They may at times be withdrawn from mainstream lessons for short periods to receive individual support in the 'Retreat'.

13. The quality of the relationships amongst all groups is very good and a strength of the school. Pupils are generally tolerant towards each other and co-operate amicably when working and playing together. A Year 9 science lesson, for example, was typical of many. Pupils were set to work in groups to answer past examination questions. They chose how they would organise themselves and co-operated amicably as they discussed and agreed their answers. When given the opportunity, pupils show that they are prepared to listen to, and show respect for, the views of others. This was evident, for example, in a Year 7 personal and social education lesson, where pupils were preparing an assembly based on the life and work of Martin Luther King. The preparedness of pupils to listen to, and show respect for, the viewpoint of others was also very apparent in a Year 11 English lesson with lower attaining pupils in which the theme of loneliness was explored with reference to the novel 'Of Mice and Men'. This was in contrast to another English lesson in Year 10, on descriptive writing, where deliberate distracting remarks by several pupils disrupted the lesson and had an adverse effect on pupils' learning. However, there are very few instances of behaviour such as this and the developing maturity of the vast majority of pupils is evident in most lessons. When given the opportunity, boys and girls readily collaborate, but the norm in most subjects is for boys and girls to work in separate groups. Pupils are generally supportive of each other, and pupils with special educational needs are well integrated with their peers. Pupils also form good relationships with adults, and most reciprocate the courtesy and respect they receive.

14. Overall standards of behaviour are good. Teachers work hard to maintain a positive climate for teaching and learning, with the consequence that behaviour in most lessons is good. In these lessons pupils learn well and progress is good. In only 4 per cent of lessons was behaviour unsatisfactory or poor. Unsatisfactory behaviour in these lessons is more likely to be due to the challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, as for example, in a Year 9 science lesson, than because of any significant weaknesses in teaching. Behaviour outside lessons and around the school is generally good. Pupils are generally orderly as they move about the school and act in a responsible manner when, for example, queuing for lunch. However, a few act thoughtlessly and without due regard for others. This can be seen, for example, in the large amount of litter dropped in the school grounds and the failure to dispose hygienically of chewing gum, considerable quantities of which can be seen trodden into the playground and footpaths. The school works hard to support pupils with challenging behaviour and avoid the need for exclusions. Nevertheless, the behaviour of a small number of pupils, and the disruption that these pupils cause to lessons, is such that it inevitably leads to exclusion from school. As a result, during the last school year there were 37 fixed period exclusions and one permanent. The number of fixed period exclusions is about average for secondary schools of similar size, while the number of permanent exclusions is below. The school takes a serious view of

bullying, and the procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying are included in the staff handbook. Pupils interviewed during the week of the inspection reported that occasional incidents of bullying had been dealt with effectively by the school and were confident that any future incidents would also be dealt with effectively.

15. Pupils' personal development is good in terms of conduct, relationships and attitudes towards learning. When given the opportunity, they show that they are able to take responsibility. The head boy and head girl represent the school on formal occasions and school prefects provide good support for younger pupils through, for example, the paired reading scheme. Pupils support charities and enjoy a wide range of experiences through events, activities and trips abroad. However, there is considerable scope to extend the range of opportunities offered to pupils to show initiative and take responsibility for themselves and others.

16. Attendance is good. The need to improve attendance was identified as a key issue for action in the previous inspection report. The school has successfully tackled this issue. The attendance rate is now above average and the unauthorised absence rate is below average. The school works hard to communicate to parents the importance of pupils being in regular attendance, and absence due to family holidays is less than that usually found in secondary schools. A relatively small number of pupils are persistent non-attenders and they account for a substantial proportion of the absences. However, a lack of punctuality is a significant feature of the school. Much of the lateness at the start of the day is unavoidable due to problems with public transport. However, there is a significant amount of lateness at the start of lessons. This is largely due to the fact that the school buildings occupy a large site and pupils may have to walk some distance between lessons. Because of this, an acceptance that a certain amount of lateness is inevitable leads to a general lack of urgency in moving between lessons. Some pupils take advantage of this and as much as ten minutes may be lost from some lessons.

17. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The good standards noted in the previous inspection report have been sustained and the attendance rate has improved. There has, however, been a decline in punctuality at the start of lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. This finding endorses the view of 95 per cent of the parents who responded to the questionnaire. The quality of teaching is similar at both key stages, with 70 per cent of lessons good or better in Key Stage 3 and 75 per cent in Key Stage 4. Teaching is very good or excellent in 26 per cent of lessons at Key Stage 3 and in 21 per cent of lessons at Key Stage 4. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson. Teaching is good at both key stages in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. Teaching in music is very good at Key Stage 4 and good at Key Stage 3. Teaching in art is satisfactory at both key stages, as is the teaching of the business studies course offered in Key Stage 4. There are examples of excellence in teaching in modern foreign languages at both key stages and in food technology at Key Stage 4. Teaching of this quality had a significant effect on pupils' progress and achievement in these lessons.

19. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and draw on this effectively to plan their lessons, provide clear explanations and give appropriate guidance to pupils. In mathematics, for example, teachers use their good subject knowledge to provide explanations that are clearly understood by pupils because they are well matched to pupils' levels of attainment. These explanations capture pupils' interests and they find it easier to remember what they are learning. In science, teachers make good use of their subject knowledge to ask questions that challenge pupils to explain their observations or enable them to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topic. Clear explanations and demonstrations, together with skilful questioning to check and extend understanding, are also a feature of good teaching in design and technology. The good subject knowledge of geography teachers is used effectively to provide a firm base for pupils' learning. However, advantage is not always taken of the spontaneous opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding that arise from pupils' thoughtful responses to the questions of teachers. Similarly, in some English lessons when pupils' responses to questions are short and superficial, teachers do not use supplementary questions to extend and deepen pupils' understanding. This weakness contributed to unsatisfactory teaching in one Year 9 lesson. Specialist information and communications technology teachers use their subject knowledge well to give clear explanations and provide good individual support. In modern foreign languages, teachers make extensive use of the foreign language in lessons. This has a positive impact on learning, especially listening and speaking, as pupils are given a good model to imitate. However, in the few lessons where teachers use too much English, progress in learning is slower. Teachers of Latin have good knowledge of the subject and the examination requirements. This helps them to ensure pupils make good progress in their learning.

20. There are good examples of the teaching of basic skills in most subjects. The English department lays a good foundation for the development of literacy skills and teachers in all subjects have a good awareness of the importance of teaching literacy skills. There is a well co-ordinated and effective approach to the use of teaching and learning strategies that actively promote the raising of standards of literacy. In all classrooms, for example, there are displays of key words designed to help pupils to become confident in their own use of technical language. In geography, teachers provide very good models of the use of specialist terminology and have high expectations of pupils' vocabulary. As a result, pupils confidently use appropriate geographical terms in their discussions. There are opportunities for pupils to plan, draft and rewrite their own work and support for the development of pupils' writing skills through the use of key words and writing frames. Pupils' reading skills are developed and consolidated through opportunities to read silently and aloud in many lessons. Pupils develop their numeracy skills in many subjects. In mathematics teachers regularly include activities to improve recall and mental agility in their lessons. Numeracy is also developed through, for example, measuring and judging proportion in art and design and technology, and in interpreting data in geography and science. Teachers are generally alert to opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills.

21. Lesson planning is good. Teachers plan their lessons effectively and in many cases share their objectives with pupils. As a result most pupils are clear about what they are doing and are fully involved in their learning. In English, for example, a feature of good lessons is the clear explanation of learning objectives at the start of lessons that are revisited at the end to consolidate the learning that has taken place. In science, careful planning, to ensure that learning objectives offer appropriate challenges, enables pupils to make good progress in the acquisition of scientific concepts. Similarly in geography, good lesson planning ensures that lesson activities are well matched to the attainment levels of pupils. Work in information and communications technology is well planned to make

progressive demands on pupils. Although these activities generally take account of the full attainment range of pupils, in some lessons higher attaining pupils are insufficiently stretched. In music, because activities are well planned to extend pupils at all levels of attainment, there is an evident sense of pupil enjoyment in lessons. The close matching of activities to the attainment levels of pupils is a good feature in the planning of lessons in physical education. Activities are carefully prepared to extend the higher attaining pupils and adjusted so that average and lower attaining pupils are also fully engaged in the lesson. This has a positive effect on pupils' levels of achievement.

22. Teachers have high expectations that are communicated clearly to pupils. This leads to good progress and achievement in most subjects. For example, in an excellent Year 7 French lesson, pupils made rapid progress because of the enthusiasm and sense of enjoyment engendered by the challenging pace of the lesson. The high level of challenge was also seen in a Year 10 food technology lesson where pupils made very good progress in response to excellent opportunities for independent decision-making. The best teaching in science is characterised by high expectations and lessons that proceed at a good pace. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, a class of middle attaining pupils made very good gains in understanding the activity series and reactions of metals with acids because of the challenging nature of the teaching. The high expectations of information and communications technology teachers help to ensure that there is a positive learning environment in lessons. Teachers in modern foreign languages have high expectations that all pupils will work hard and behave well. Teachers' high expectations of the use of the foreign language were evident in a Year 10 French lesson, for example, where pupils made significant progress in oral competence and confidence through the intensive use of the language. In most areas of design and technology pupils respond positively to the demands of teachers and concentrate on their work. As a result, good progress is made in the development of pupils' planning and practical skills. In physical education, good progress is made because pupils respond very well to the high expectations of teachers in terms of discipline, behaviour and the need to work to the best of their abilities.

23. Teachers use a good range of strategies to enable pupils to learn and develop skills. Paired and small group work is used well in many subjects. In English, for example, pupils are provided with numerous opportunities to engage in small group discussions. These activities help to develop pupils' self-confidence as they express ideas and challenge each other's thinking. However, because in some lessons teachers do not do enough to ensure that girls have the same opportunities as boys to contribute to speaking activities, boys tend to dominate discussion. Effective small-group work is a feature of most drama lessons. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils working in groups were able to devise a creative short performance; learn how to use a narrator, and practise some aspects of physical theatre. However, in another drama lesson in Year 9, the small-group work was ineffective and progress in the lesson was unsatisfactory because of the immature behaviour of a small number of boys. Small-group work, followed by presentations to the class, was used effectively in a Year 7 personal and social education lesson to discuss examples of responsible behaviour as part of the preparation for a residential visit to an outdoor education centre. In modern foreign languages, pupils benefit from regular opportunities to work with different partners in oral work. Small-group work is used effectively to undertake investigations in science and to discuss ideas and solve problems in business studies. Group work is also used effectively in physical education to develop pupils' skill levels.

24. Classroom management and organisation are good. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good and provide a good climate for learning in most classrooms. In most lessons, teachers create a very supportive atmosphere where all pupils, including those with special educational needs, feel secure enough to be able to offer suggestions, take risks and not be afraid of

making mistakes. In mathematics, teachers use their considerable skills in class management to ensure that expectations of behaviour and classroom routines are well understood by pupils. This helps to create a purposeful learning atmosphere in lessons and makes a significant contribution to the progress pupils are making. Similarly in geography, the skilful management of pupils and good-humoured relationships are significant factors in the progress pupils are making. In design and technology and physical education, lessons are well organised, with concern for safety, and conducted in a manner that encourages pupils to participate. Weaknesses in class management and lesson planning contributed to unsatisfactory progress in the one unsatisfactory lesson observed in English.

25. Teachers make good use of a variety of resources to stimulate pupils' interest and to make explanations clear. Teachers use the overhead projector and video clips well when making demonstrations and to illustrate ideas. This underpins the development of new knowledge and skills and encourages progress. This was a particular feature of an excellent Year 10 French lesson, for example, where the teacher made clever use of overlapping overhead projection transparencies to stimulate oral work. Because the interest of pupils was stimulated by the pace and variation of the lesson and the effective use of resources, they gained a considerable amount of new French. Visiting speakers are well used as part of careers education. The careful selection and use of resources, many of which are made by individual teachers to suit the learning needs of individuals are a feature of geography lessons. This helps to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully engaged in lesson activities. Good use is made of information and communications technology in business studies for pupils to draft, edit and refine their work, and to create spreadsheets to carry out calculations. However, insufficient use is made of information and communications technology as a resource for learning in most subjects, with the consequence that pupils are not provided with sufficient structured opportunities to develop their competence in the subject. In the majority of lessons, teachers make good use of time and set deadlines for tasks to be completed. This provides an appropriate challenge to pupils and helps to maintain a good pace in lessons. A certain amount of the 60-minute lesson time is unavoidably lost at the start of some lessons because of the distance pupils have to walk between lessons. However, teachers do not always challenge pupils who are late at the start of lessons.

26. The marking of pupils' work is well used in several subjects to give pupils clear information on the standard of their work and on what they have to do in order to improve it. In mathematics, for example, work is regularly marked and teachers' comments give pupils clear feedback. Good use is made of marking to check pupils' progress and to see if some topics need more attention. In design and technology, pupils are given detailed advice linked to grades, which encourages them to think analytically about their designing and making. In history, work is regularly marked and, in most instances, provides pupils with analytic comment and helpful advice. However, the criteria on which grades are awarded are insufficiently clear. Marking in modern foreign languages is up to date and gives pupils a good idea of the progress they are making. However, there is a confusing range of marking procedures and inconsistency in the provision of comments designed to assist future learning. The marking of pupils' work in English, science and the GCSE physical education course is regular and generally encouraging, but often lacks the constructive comments needed to enable pupils to improve. There are differences in the quality of the marking in geography. Higher attaining pupils usually receive good guidance through regular marking to support them in identifying targets for improvement, but the marking of the work of middle and lower attaining pupils is generally below this standard. Pupil self-evaluation and peer assessment are features of teaching in drama and design and technology. Although 19 per cent of parents who responded to the pre-inspection

questionnaire felt that pupils are given insufficient homework, inspection evidence indicates that homework is well used to consolidate and extend learning in most subjects. In English and history, for example, the high expectations that teachers have of their pupils are also apparent in the nature of the tasks set for homework. However, although homework is set regularly in music in Years 10 and 11, it is irregular in Years 7 to 9.

27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are generally taught in normal classes and often in smaller teaching groups to which additional support is targeted. This support is provided by experienced, and often subject trained, learning assistants. Because teachers are aware of the general targets in pupils' individual education plans and take account of these in lesson planning, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons. For example, lesson activities are often short with achievable learning objectives so that concentration is maintained and pupils' learning is reinforced through experiencing success. In this way in one Year 11 English lesson, pupils were able to take part in a well-informed discussion of the characters in the play, 'An Inspector Calls'. Teaching within the learning support centre is good. Lessons have clearly defined aims and are delivered with energy and enthusiasm. Good question and answer sessions are used effectively to reinforce learning and the interest of pupils is sustained throughout lessons. Particularly effective use is made of information and communications technology in the learning support centre to support pupils' learning.

28. The two pupils at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language have good support from a language specialist funded by the local education authority for one afternoon each week. The teacher works with the pupils and provides learning programmes which the learning support assistants implement during the week. At other times the pupils follow the same curriculum as all other pupils in Year 9 and the specialist teacher provides practical ideas to help subject teachers support these pupils' learning. Another bilingual pupil also helps the pupils in some lessons. This level of support is enabling the pupils to learn English at a good rate. These pupils are also making good progress in practical lessons such as art, and when they are taught in small groups in the learning support centre. However, the pupils have only recently been admitted to the school and have not, as yet, had sufficient time to identify and assess their learning needs in all subjects. The progress of these pupils is adversely affected because the school does not have the resources to provide the level of support they need from specialist teachers.

29. The school has made good progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection report. The quality of teaching was then judged to be sound, with good teaching about half of lessons. The strengths identified in the previous report have been largely sustained, while improvements have been made in the areas of weakness. The overall quality of teaching is now good with much very good and some excellent teaching.

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

30. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory curriculum. The curriculum is broad and balanced and, with the exception of information and communications technology, the school complies with statutory requirements. Curriculum planning is good in most subjects, and good progress has been made in the revision of schemes of work to ensure that they conform to recent changes in the

National Curriculum. The school strives to increase pupil involvement and interest in school life and to motivate them to achieve high standards. For example, curriculum planning in several subjects, such as mathematics and history, has taken account of the need to raise the standards of boys. All pupils with special educational needs have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. They receive nearly all their education in mainstream classes. As part of its strategy to support educational inclusion, the school has made a significant investment in establishing a 'retreat'. The retreat is staffed by specialist teachers who provide support for pupils with a variety of social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Support is also provided for pupils who might be recovering from physical injuries and who cannot, temporarily, follow the normal school curriculum. Through this excellent facility, very good support is provided to pupils who might otherwise not be able to attend school.

31. The weekly teaching time of 25 hours in all years is consistent with government recommendations. However, there is a need for the consider whether the timetable structure of five teaching periods each day is best suited to the school's present and future curriculum needs. Insufficient time is allocated for personal and social education and the allocation of time for science in Year 7 is low. The science curriculum is enhanced by the provision of the three separate science subjects of biology, chemistry and physics in addition to dual award science. However, this provision requires lessons outside the normal teaching day for those pupils taking the separate science subjects.

32. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is satisfactory. All National Curriculum subjects are taught, together with personal and social and education. On entry to the school, pupils are placed into bands based on attainment levels. Within these bands, heads of department are free to make their own grouping arrangements. This suits the needs of most pupils. The school has offered several successful summer schools, which have provided a useful bridge between primary and secondary education. The school makes very good provision for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the whole of the curriculum. There is a co-ordinated and effective approach to teaching and learning strategies that promote improvement in reading and writing.

33. In Years 10 and 11, pupils benefit from a suitable curriculum and follow GCSE courses in English, mathematics, a double award in science, religious education, a modern foreign language, a design and technology subject, and physical education, together with personal and social education. Pupils also select from a good range of 14 GCSE options that include drama, a second foreign language and, unusually, Latin. In addition, higher attaining pupils are given the opportunity to take the three separate science subjects. Two GCSE courses are offered in art and design: painting and drawing and textiles. The school recognises that curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 is not entirely suited to the learning needs of all pupils, and is beginning to extend choices beyond GCSE by offering a GNVQ in information systems from September 2001. The school is also exploring ways to allow pupils to take advantage of courses in subjects such as painting and decorating at the local college of further education, or to take extended work experience. However, in order to cater more fully for the needs of all pupils and increase achievement opportunities for pupils across the full attainment range, there is a need for the school to explore more urgently ways of extending the range of options in addition to GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11.

34. A discrete information and communications technology course provides coverage of all aspects in the National Curriculum programme of study for those pupils who follow it in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, information studies is offered both as a GCSE option and as a course for a

Certificate of Achievement in keyboarding skills. However, this arrangement does not fulfil statutory requirements for the provision of information and communications technology. A substantial number of Year 8 and Year 9 pupils are withdrawn from information and communications technology in order to take a second modern foreign language and, although the school provides a short intensive course for these pupils in Year 9, it does not cover the syllabus in sufficient depth. In Years 10 and 11, few subjects include the planned use of information and communications technology in their schemes of work, and so pupils who do not take the information and communications technology option do not receive their full curriculum entitlement. Some parents, at the pre-inspection meeting and through additional comments on the pre-inspection questionnaire, complained that, because their children had not taken information and communications technology in Years 8 and 9, they felt they would lack the basic foundations in the subject and be unable to take the subject as a GCSE option.

35. Curriculum provision for personal and social education is unsatisfactory. Form tutors teach the subject in a 25-minute lesson following registration on one day each week. This does not allow enough time to explore and develop topics adequately, or to allow pupils consider them in any depth. Additional time for personal and social education is provided through the 15-minute morning registration periods. However, this time is not being used effectively to support the weekly 25-minute lessons. Some tutorial work with individual pupils is undertaken during the registration period but this involves only a handful of pupils while the remainder engage in social conversation. This does not make for a purposeful start to the school day. Although teachers have a course plan, and are provided with outlines of activities by year heads, most have not been trained in the teaching of personal and social education. Because of this there are inconsistencies both in teaching and in commitment to the course. Nevertheless, provision for personal and social education has some very good features. The police make presentations and actively involve the Year 7 pupils in an anti-drug programme. To increase awareness of the dangers of drugs and HIV infection, the school organises a day involving the Catholic Youth Service. The biological aspects of sex education are covered in science, and sex education in the context of human relationships is covered in religious education and parts of the personal and social education programme. However, the personal and social education course lacks co-ordination and there is no strategy for ensuring that any of the topics covered as 'events' are developed by form tutors and embedded within the programme. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of the course by senior management. The school is aware of these weaknesses and is in the process of revising the course in order to take account of the latest requirements for citizenship. However, a much fuller review of provisions for personal and social education in the school curriculum is needed.

36. The school makes very good provision for careers and vocational education. It has received a Quality Standards Mark for its careers programme and links with neighbouring schools and colleges. The school has particularly strong links with St Mary's Sixth Form Catholic College and has more recently established a new link with the University of Central Lancashire. Careers education is included as part of the personal and social education programme from Year 8 and involves all form tutors with additional inputs through special assemblies and contributions from outside speakers. The programme starts with the 'real game' in Year 8, following which there is a gradual introduction to general and then specific careers opportunities in each successive year. Careers advisors, the use of Kudos, and visits by local colleges form the focus for Year 9. In Year 10, training providers, local colleges, the careers service and the RAF make significant contributions to the careers programme. Pupils also participate in an industry day. Careers education continues in Year 11 and all pupils take part in two weeks' work experience for all pupils. There are very good links with both Blackburn College and St Mary's Sixth Form College, and local training

organisations, who make very good contributions to pupils' post-16 guidance. Some pupils attend college on a part-time basis on alternative vocational education courses. Careers education is supported well by a very good careers library. The careers library is separate from the main school library and manned by pupils. The library provides good facilities for careers clinics led by the careers guidance officer good access to computers for independent research.

37. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities in which a large number of pupils participate. The range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school not only considerably enriches the curriculum, but also extends the range of pupils' cultural experiences and opportunities to achieve. Pupils respond well to these opportunities and standards are high. Music and drama are particular strengths of the school and pupils are provided with numerous opportunities to take part in school productions. The community contributes very well to pupils' learning and personal development. There are regular visits to the theatre, opera, musicals, art galleries, libraries, concerts and sporting events. There are residential visits to France and to the Lakeside outdoor education centre. There is a geography field trip to Arran, a history tour of World War II battlefields or Berlin and e-mail links to schools abroad. The school offers the full range of inter-school competitive fixtures as well as recreational activities. Approximately a third of the pupils have represented the school in inter-school competitive fixtures during the last twelve months. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is a popular option with over 60 pupils involved this year. There are also many subject-based clubs, including a homework club, that support pupils' learning and personal development.

38. The school provides equality of access to the curriculum for most pupils in all years. However, pupils who take a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9 are denied their full entitlement to information and communications technology. They also lose one period of physical education a week. Although the school plans to reduce the number of pupils taking the second foreign language from three teaching sets to one in September 2001, the pupils concerned will still not receive their full entitlement to the subject.

39. Overall, the school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for spiritual and moral development is very good. Provision for social and cultural development is good.

40. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. The school fulfils the aim, expressed in its mission statement, to encourage Christian development in partnership with the home and the parish, with prayer and worship being a central part of school life. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are fully met. There are prayers during form time and in many lessons. Each year group has a weekly assembly, in which there is a strong emphasis on spirituality. These include contributions from pupils, as classes take turns to lead them, and there is time for reflection on the chosen themes. The school celebrates the main events in the Roman Catholic Church's liturgical year. The art department provides visual displays to support these celebrations. Pupils in Year 10 benefit from participation in an annual retreat at Pantasaph, in North Wales, in which there is strong focus on their spiritual development. There is very good support for pupils' spiritual development through subjects. Music plays an important part in the liturgy and pupils are encouraged to participate. In history, pupils consider topics such as the murder of Becket, the role of the church in medieval life, the Reformation and the religious beliefs of North American Indians. In drama, pupils consider the issue of death and the spirit world in studying texts such 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Blood Brothers', and in their improvisations during the topic 'Darkwood Manor'. In

many subjects pupils have opportunities to reflect on their development, to evaluate and respect the opinions of others, and to raise their self-esteem.

41. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school instils a strong sense of right and wrong, which teachers promote in lessons through the example they set. A code of conduct is displayed in every classroom. Conduct is reported in assessments. The school has a full-time counsellor and provides support for pupils with behavioural problems through preparation for and participation in special retreats prior to re-integration into the school. Although there is some challenging behaviour, pupils say that bullying is rare. There is a strong emphasis on moral issues in English. In drama, pupils in Year 9 consider the implications of the death penalty in studying 'Let Him Have It', about the Derek Bentley case. In Year 8 pupils consider issues surrounding physical disability, bullying, and relationships between parents and children. In history, pupils study the Holocaust and debate other moral issues in world history. In science, pupils evaluate the implications of cloning. In modern languages, pupils study the topic of healthy living as part of their coursework. In geography, pupils look at the international reaction to disasters such as the flooding in Bangladesh, and issues of tolerance towards immigrants to the United Kingdom. Some opportunities are lost in design technology; for instance, there is a lack of input on sustainability and biodegradable materials, and on the impact of manufacturing on the environment. Through local clergy, the school invites reformed drug users to address assemblies on the dangers of drugs. Other moral issues are covered in personal and social education lessons.

42. Provision for pupils' social development is good. There are some limitations in providing opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. For example, there is no school council. However, pupils in Year 11 act as prefects, with responsibility for paired reading to help younger pupils, acting as librarians and showing parents around the school. The school provides training for prefects. Pupils take responsibility for organising assemblies. In physical education, pupils can become team captains and also take responsibility for writing reports for the newsletter, and organising tournaments for younger pupils. In geography, pupils of Italian origin explain differences between social customs in Italy and Britain, and inform classmates of Italy's contribution to world culture. There is a strong contribution to social development through residential visits at home and activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Very large numbers of pupils took part in the production of 'Godspell', both in front of the audience and in numerous roles behind the scenes. Pupils in

wheelchairs have long been integrated into school life. There are opportunities in many subjects for pupils to collaborate in various tasks and activities, notably in drama, modern languages, English, science, mathematics, physical education, design technology, history and music.

43. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school strives to develop in pupils an appreciation of their own cultural traditions in many subjects of the curriculum, most obviously through English literature, drama, music, art, history and geography. This work is well supported by educational visits to places of diverse cultural and historical interest. Pupils' cultural development is also supported by visits abroad. The modern foreign language curriculum, for example, is enhanced by the Year 7 visit to France. Similarly, the history department organises regular visits to Belgium and is planning a visit to Poland. The music department makes a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development through opportunities to participate in the senior and junior choir, the school orchestra, the wind band and individual tuition. There are also opportunities to join the Blackburn with Darwen Music Academy, which encourages wind players from associated primary schools to join those from St Bede's in a variety of musical activities. More advanced musicians have opportunities to join the Darwen and Blackburn band. References to multi-cultural education are made in some subjects, for example in art and English, and to different faiths in religious education. However, more opportunities could be provided for pupils to learn about the diversity and richness of other cultures. This is particularly important in a school where there are few ethnic minority pupils.

44. The strengths in curriculum provision noted in the previous report have been maintained and there has been some improvement since the last inspection. Curriculum time for music and physical education has been increased and is now satisfactory. Provision in Years 10 and 11 has been improved by making the option choices more flexible so that they cater more fully for pupils' interests and needs. However, as at time of the last inspection, the issue of ensuring that all pupils receive their the full entitlement to information and communications technology remains.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory. The school provides a supportive environment in which to learn, and responsibilities for child protection are clearly understood by most staff. However, some non-teaching staff have not been formally briefed on child protection procedures and such briefings are included at a very early stage of a new teacher's induction. Links with the relevant child protection agencies are very good and there are effective procedures to ensure that all matters relating to the protection and welfare of pupils are dealt with thoroughly. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities for health and safety. A sufficient number of staff hold first aid certificates and all accidents are properly recorded.

46. Continuity in care is a feature of the school pastoral system, and form tutors and year heads provide pupils with good pastoral support. Pupils are in contact with their form tutors every morning and afternoon for registration, and for their weekly personal and social education lessons. This enables tutors to develop a good knowledge of individual pupils and their particular social and educational needs. However, the role of form tutors is restricted mainly to pupils' pastoral welfare and tutors have little involvement in the monitoring and support of pupils' academic progress. The school has very good links with the primary schools and this helps to ensure continuity in care when pupils enter the school in Year 7. Both parents and pupils believe that the transfer arrangements are

effective and that the school's induction procedures are very good. Pupils are provided with good support and guidance as option choices are made at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. The school's good links with other schools and colleges, the careers service and local employers ensure continuity at the time pupils leave school.

47. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Classroom management is good and teachers apply sanctions consistently. Consequently, with the exception of some disaffected pupils, behaviour in most lessons is good and often very good. The system for monitoring and supporting pupils with challenging behaviour is effective. The school uses a variety of rewards to recognise and promote good behaviour and effort, and to celebrate pupils' successes. An escalating series of sanctions is used to manage inappropriate behaviour. The sanctions include detentions, and removal and referral to a senior teacher for the remainder of a lesson if a pupils' behaviour is disrupting teaching and learning. In order to support pupils who may, for a variety of reasons, have difficulty coping in normal lessons, the school has recently introduced a facility, known as the 'retreat'. The retreat is an important part of the school's educational inclusion strategy and pupils are referred to the retreat for varying periods of time where they are given intensive support. For example, pupils with behaviour difficulties follow a behaviour management programme, under the guidance of specialist staff, and keep in touch with their normal lessons through work supplied by subject teachers. In-class support is then provided when pupils' return to their normal lessons. Although the school recognises that the innovation is too recent to evaluate its long-term effectiveness in terms of behavioural change, the indications are that it is providing very good short-term support to pupils with behaviour difficulties.

48. The school encourages pupils to report instances of bullying but does not provide any way in which pupils can report bullying anonymously. However, the school is confident that bullying is not a significant feature and pupils and parents confirmed this to inspectors. The school supports well pupils' personal development in terms of conduct, relationships and attitudes towards learning. However, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility for themselves as a community. Various aspects of personal development, such as time management, independent study skills, team working and problem solving are not sufficiently developed through the programme for personal, social and health education.

49. The school attaches high priority to regular attendance and attendance is above the national average. Nevertheless, the school strives hard to further improve attendance. Attendance is carefully monitored and pupils are encouraged to achieve the highest possible level of attendance through competitive league tables, rewards and certificates. The school contacts parents by telephone on the first day of absence and this is helping to reduce unauthorised absence. Lateness is checked when pupils arrive at the start of school sessions, but the deterrent of a detention when a pupil is late twice or more in the same week is not effective for the most frequent latecomers. There is a lack of urgency at lesson changeover time and some pupils linger as they proceed to their next lessons. A general acceptance that there will be some lateness at the start of lessons leads to a loss of teaching and learning time and a reluctance to challenge pupils who are late.

50. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainment are satisfactory. A rigorous system is used to collect a range of assessment information, about pupils' attainment. In Year 7 the school begins to assemble a portfolio of information about each pupil; this includes standardized test scores, the results of National Curriculum tests and assessments, together with any effort and conduct grades. All assessments are collected and analysed, and the information is distributed to all heads of department and heads of year. Subject teachers use this information to support discussions at parents evenings and to set subject specific targets. The information is also used when heads of department meet with senior management as part of the school's internal monitoring procedures, and it feeds into department development planning. However, little use is made of the information by form tutors to monitor how well the pupils in their forms are doing and whether they are doing well enough. Because of this, not enough use is made of the pastoral system to support the academic progress and achievement of pupils.

51. Satisfactory use is made of assessment information to guide planning, overall. The school assessment policy provides clear assessment principles and has improved since the last inspection. Very good use is made of assessment information in history, geography and modern languages in planning teaching and learning and in setting pupils targets for improvement. Assessment is used very effectively in mathematics to check pupils' progress and to see if some topics need to be given additional attention. Particularly good use is made of National Curriculum test scores and standardised test results to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress in mathematics. Individual support is provided if pupils are not doing as well as they should. However, in English, assessment procedures are not sufficiently rigorous to allow teachers to monitor pupils' progress closely. In science and design and technology, insufficient use is made of National Curriculum levels to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the standard of their work and to set targets for improvement. The art, physical education and music departments are in the process of incorporating new subject orders into their schemes of work, and assessment procedures are being revised to take account of these changes. Although pupils are provided with opportunities to engage in self and peer assessment in art and drama, as at the time of the last inspection opportunities are limited in other subjects.

52. A small group of enthusiastic teachers is working with the senior management team to make more effective use of assessment information to raise standards. Very informative assessment profiles for each pupil have been constructed and provided to heads of department, year heads and subject teachers. Heads of department are being encouraged to make use of the profile in monitoring pupils' progress and setting targets for improvement. However, there is at present no strategy for form tutors to make similar use of the information.

53. The school meets statutory requirements for reporting to parents at the end of Year 9. In all years pupils have two interim reports, and one final end-of-year summary report that includes outcomes and targets from each subject, as well as an overview comment from the tutor and head of year. Where reports are good, teachers' comments provide a precise indication of a pupil's subject strengths and weaknesses, how these relate to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, and what needs to be done by the pupil to improve the standard of his or her work. However, there is some variation in the usefulness and clarity of

information provided in reports. All subjects report on two or three targets in the annual report and some subjects, mathematics for example, indicate specific learning targets. In other subjects, however, targets are more general and relate more to attitude or effort than identify subject specific learning goals.

54. Individual records of achievement are comprehensive and cover all National Curriculum subjects. Target setting is well established in Years 7 to 9. The school has an effective mentoring system to support Year 11 pupils whose predicted GCSE examination grades are at the C/D border. However, the system is based on volunteer mentors, which, due to other pressures, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find. As a consequence, the system is becoming more ad hoc in nature. Through the Single Regeneration Fund, pupils with particular social needs are provided with good mentoring support.

55. All subjects set GCSE examination targets for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' marking schemes are closely matched to National Curriculum and examination board attainment levels and grades. In most departments, detailed analyses of coursework assessments, tests and examination results help subject teachers to review the impact and effectiveness of their work. With encouragement from the senior management team, some teachers obtain information on their personal performance through a questionnaire distributed to pupils. However, many teachers are resistant to obtaining feedback in this way.

56. The school has systematic procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans are carefully prepared and pupils' progress, in relation to the targets specified in them, is closely monitored. Detailed records of pupils' progress are maintained by the special educational needs co-ordinator and all annual reviews of statements of special educational needs are well documented. Two pupils who are at an early stage of English language acquisition have only recently been admitted to the school. Although these pupils are provided with very good pastoral support, there has been insufficient time for the school to develop systematic procedures for ensuring that their academic needs are carefully identified and met.

57. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Most subject departments are developing good mechanisms for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress, and assessment information is beginning to be used more effectively. The twice-yearly reviews of pupils' progress enable subject teachers to intervene and provide pupils with additional support where this necessary. Parents are informed about any problems and are encouraged to use of the homework diary as a means of maintaining communication with the school and continuous monitoring of their children's schoolwork. The quality of marking has improved in many subjects and pupils are provided with more helpful comments on their work. However, there are inconsistencies in marking in some subjects, with insufficient guidance given to pupils on what they must do in order to improve the quality of their work. The previous report identified the need for further development in the use of pupil self-assessment. This is starting to happen in subjects such as drama and art, and the process of self-assessment is being given more momentum by the pupil profiles being developed by the assessment team. The school is refining and sharing this expertise within the authority by visits and links with other local schools. The commitment of the senior management team to the use of pupil profiling and the effective support provided by the LEA school improvement team, are helping to establish profiling as an important strategy for raising standards further.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

58. The majority of parents have positive views of the school. These views were obtained from the questionnaires that were completed and returned by approximately one third of all parents and from the views expressed by parents at the pre-inspection meeting. As at the time of the previous inspection, parents are pleased with the quality of education provided by the school and there is a good partnership between the school and parents. The school enjoys a good reputation with its parents. Parents say that, because teaching is good, their children are making good progress. They believe their children's personal development is good because the school provides good support and guidance. Parents say that the school is well led and managed and welcomes contact by parents. A minority of parents express concerns about the amount of homework, but inspectors found that homework is set regularly in most subjects and that the amount of homework is not excessive for secondary schools. Some parents are of the opinion that the range of extra-curricular activities is not wide enough, but inspectors found that the range is very good and a strength of the school. Although some parents say that the school does not work closely enough with parents, inspectors found that the school makes considerable efforts to work with parents. Inspectors also found that the school always seeks to act consistently and in the best interests of the child.

59. A significant number of parents feel that they are not sufficiently well informed, particularly about their children's progress. The literature published for parents prior to joining the school and thereafter provides good quality information about the life of the school and its aims and values. Regular consultation evenings are well attended by parents and provide good opportunities to discuss pupils' progress. The school is quick to contact parents about any concerns. Events are organised to inform parents and provide good advice and guidance regarding the option choices at the end of Year 9, and about post-16 education, employment and training opportunities at the end of Year 11. However, comments provided in pupils' annual reports are more often concerned with attitude and effort than with subject specific information on what pupils know, understand and can do and what they must do, in order to improve. Targets are included but are often of a general nature or relate to effort, and are rarely specific to the subject. The letter sent to parents with the reports does not explain the grades applied so that they can clearly understand pupils' standards of attainment. The two brief interim reports that are produced are very helpful progress indicators.

60. Parents are generally very supportive towards the school and make good contributions to their children's education. The parent teacher association is very active and raises considerable funds to assist the school. Many families help in practical ways such as by waste paper collection throughout the neighbourhood. Parents help with transport and behind the scenes when dramatic productions are staged. They are very supportive of their children's participation in sport, music and drama and very high numbers of parents and relatives attend prize giving and other ceremonies to celebrate their children's achievements. The large majority of parents co-operate well with the school's routines for example by checking and signing the homework diary.

61. Some absence occurs because parents choose to arrange family holidays in term time. Although such instances are a little less than in other secondary schools, the pupils involved lose valuable learning time. Lateness is a significant feature in the school and some parents are not doing enough to ensure their children adopt good time-keeping habits. A small but

valued number of parents are involved in the school's curriculum. They assist pupils with their reading and regularly provide materials to supplement learning resources. The school has arranged computer skills classes for parents and speakers have been invited to speak to parents on various topics.

62. The school has maintained the good relationships with parents noted in the previous inspection report and has worked well with parents to improve attendance.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

63. The overall leadership and management of the school are good and recognised as such by the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection. The head teacher provides very good leadership and a clear educational direction for the school. The school mission statement provides a clear guide for policy, practices and procedures. The school has a strongly positive ethos and provides a well-ordered learning environment in which there is an increasing commitment to continued improvement and the further raising of standards. This is evident in standards of attainment, attitudes, behaviour and relationships, all of which are good. Following the previous inspection, the good quality of education being provided by the school was recognised by the Chief Inspector of Schools when the school was identified as a 'Successful School' in his annual report. The school is very well placed to continue its improvement.

64. The senior management team is effective and has developed rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of departments. These procedures underpin the school's commitment to improvement. Senior managers have a clear understanding of the importance of self-evaluation to school improvement and are providing good leadership in developing self-evaluation strategies within departments. This is seen, for example, in the formal departmental review meetings that take place each term when the head teacher and the deputy with curriculum responsibility meet with heads of department. These meetings are sequenced to review National Curriculum test and examination results in the subject, identify development priorities for the department and then to review progress towards the targets identified in school and department development plans. The school's commitment to improvement is also seen in plans to improve teaching and learning by the use of a video recording system that has been installed in one classroom. The school intends to use to this facility to analyse and share of examples of good practice both within and between departments.

65. Effective use is made of a wide range of sources of information in the process of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The school has, for example, established a comprehensive assessment database and good use is being made of this information by the senior management team. Detailed analyses of pupils' performance are provided to heads of department, year heads and subject teachers. Trends in performance are closely scrutinised as part of the review process with heads of department. The outcome of this process is that progress towards targets is closely monitored and there is coherence in school and department development planning. However, similar leadership is not being offered to year heads and pastoral teams. Not enough use is made of assessment information by year heads and form tutors to identify any areas of underachievement by individual pupils and to set targets for improvement. The pastoral emphasis is on maintaining the existing systems of support for

pupils rather than in developing the systems to provide mutually supportive links between pupils' personal and academic development. Because of this, the potential of the roles of year heads and form tutors in the monitoring and support of pupils' academic as well as personal development is not being fully realised.

66. The overall quality of management provided by heads of department is good. The quality of leadership and management in music and modern foreign languages is very good and has positive effects on the raising of standards. Similarly, good leadership in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history and physical education ensures an increasing emphasis on improving teaching and learning in these subjects. Subject leadership in information and communications technology is satisfactory. Heads of department are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of their roles in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, and lesson observations are now being formalised as part of performance management. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are weak in English and this is impeding the raising of standards in the subject. Although there is evidence of the increasing use of assessment information for pupils' target setting and the monitoring of progress in subjects such as mathematics and history, the use of assessment information is weak in many subjects. Two art-based subjects are offered in Years 10 and 11 and the role of head of the art department is shared between the two subject leaders. This arrangement is unsatisfactory, as it does not provide the unity of purpose and sense of urgency necessary to raise standards in the department. The management and co-ordination of special educational needs is very good and there is a strong sense of teamwork amongst all concerned with the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. The requirements of the Code of Practice are clearly understood and the governing body is kept well informed on special educational matters. As part of the school's policy with regard to educational inclusion, the school established a 'retreat' in September 2000. The retreat is intended to provide support to pupils with a range of problems who might otherwise not be able to attend school. Management of the retreat is very good and the facility is providing pupils with effective support.

67. The governing body is very effective and highly supportive. With the exception of the provision of information and communications technology, it meets its statutory responsibilities. Governors take a keen interest in the work of the school and provide the school with a substantial amount of specialist help and advice. Excellent relationships exist between the governing body and the senior management team. Governors receive regular detailed reports from the head and other senior members of staff, and have a good level of awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The quality of financial management and planning is good. Governors are actively involved with the head and the senior management team in financial planning and monitoring, and are given good support by the school bursar. The school has effective procedures to ensure that the principles of best value for money are applied in the use of its resources, and all additional funding received by the school is used for the intended purposes. Action has been taken to attend to the very few issues raised in the most recent auditor's report.

68. There is a good match between teachers' qualifications, and their deployment to meet the needs of the school curriculum. Although non-specialist teachers in a few subjects carry out a small proportion of teaching, there is no indication that this has any adverse effect on standards. The deputy head teacher, who assumed responsibility for the professional development of staff in 1997, has reviewed and improved the school's practices, and arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. The support provided for both newly qualified teachers and students undertaking initial teacher training is very good and highly valued by participants, as are the induction

arrangements for all new members of staff. The school's in-service training programme is now much more closely linked to school development planning. However, a significant proportion of subject teachers lack the information and communication technology skills necessary to be able to incorporate the use of this technology into their subjects with confidence. This is having an adverse effect on standards. The school is aware of this issue and the development of teachers' information and communications technology skills is included in the school development plan. The good quality of the school's professional development programme was recognised by the Investors in People award, which was made in December 1998. Following the implementation of recommendations from the external assessor, the school received confirmation that it continued to meet the required standards in March 2001. Technical staff provide good support in a number of departments, including design and technology and art. However, a lack of learning support assistants is adversely affecting pupils' learning in some science lessons. The secretarial and clerical staff provide an efficient and welcoming school office, and contribute very effectively to the administration and organisation of the school.

69. The school has adequate resources overall and effective use is made of them to meet the needs of the curriculum. The school has made a significant investment in information and communications technology and the ratio of pupils to computers is close to the national average. Learning resources are good in history, art, and physical education. They are used with particular efficiency in English because the head of department ensures that pupils take care of the books and other resources they are provided with. Resource provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and good use is made of information and communications technology to enhance pupils' learning experiences. However, resource provision in science and music is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient science textbooks for pupils to take home and some equipment for laboratory work is barely adequate. In addition, the provision of up-to-date computers and appropriate software in science is poor and restricts coverage of aspects of the National Curriculum. In music, a lack of percussion instruments makes it difficult to teach the full National Curriculum.

70. The library has been improved since the last inspection and provides a very good resource for learning. Many older books have been removed and a suite of computers has been installed as part of the school's provision for information and communications technology. Pupils make good use of these computers to access the Internet when engaged in personal research. The interactive white board and data projector currently located in the library would be more usefully located in one of the specialist information and communications technology rooms where they would be a very useful resource for teaching and learning. The library is staffed by a qualified librarian who provides good support to teachers and pupils. It is open during lesson and lunch times, but not after school. Good communication with subject departments ensures that the library stock matches curriculum needs.

71. The school has made strenuous efforts to improve the quality of the accommodation since the last inspection. Two mobile classrooms have been purchased to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers and a number of internal changes have been made to provide better accommodation for teaching and learning. Provision for special educational needs has been improved by the creation of a new learning support unit and a paired reading centre. Remote-controlled sinks and work-surfaces have been installed in food technology to accommodate wheelchairs, and care has been taken to provide space for two pupils to work together so that those with disabilities will not be isolated. One of the art rooms has been upgraded to provide extra computer facilities for use by design technology and to facilitate the use of graphics within art curriculum, and a new cabling network has been installed as part of the school strategy for the development of information and

communications technology. To celebrate the Millennium, the school has built a new chapel, which provides an appropriate focus for acts of worship. The administration suite provides good office accommodation for senior managers and administrative staff. The library provides very good quality accommodation and is a pleasant and welcoming study area. However, accommodation for music, drama and design and technology is unsatisfactory. The size of the resistant materials rooms impedes circulation and limits opportunities for pupils to engage in independent learning. The music rooms are insecure and in a poor state of decoration. Both teaching rooms are small in size and there are insufficient practice rooms for group work. Consequently all practical groups must rehearse within the confines of their classroom, which makes it difficult for the pupils to listen to their own contribution and the overall sound of the group. Storage for classroom instruments is outside the classrooms, which results in a loss of lesson time from setting up and dismantling the keyboards. One of the two spaces used for teaching drama is well equipped with blackout facilities and specialist lighting, which enables teachers to create the intimate, 'theatrical' atmosphere in which the best experience of drama occurs. However, the other teaching space is a bare, poorly decorated room, unsuited to the teaching of the subject. In addition, these rooms are at opposite ends of the school, which means that it is difficult for the head of department to monitor and support teaching and learning in the department.

72. Pupils show respect for the school buildings and there is little evidence of any graffiti. The school caretaker and his team maintain the school premises to a good state of cleanliness and this makes a positive contribution to the ethos of the school. However, the work of the school cleaning staff is made more difficult by the inconsiderate behaviour of some pupils who leave a considerable amount of litter in the playground and school entrances after break times.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73. In order to raise standards and the quality of education provided, the governors, senior management and staff of St Bede's Roman Catholic High School should:

- Raise standards in information and communications technology by:
 - * complying with the statutory requirements for the provision of information and communications technology in Years 8 to 11;
 - * providing appropriate training to raise the levels of skill of all teachers in order to include the use of information and communication technology in their subject teaching;
 - * ensuring effective planning for the teaching of information and communication technology in all subjects;
 - * increasing access to the computers available for teaching and learning.
(Paragraphs: 10,25,34,68,105,109,125,131,134,137,150,154)

- Improve provision for personal and social education by ensuring that:
 - * there is a broad and balanced personal and social education programme that includes health education, sex education and attention to drug misuse and citizenship.
 - * sufficient curriculum time is allocated for the teaching of the programme.
 - * tutors are provided with appropriate training and resources in order to be able to teach the programme effectively.
 - * the programme is effectively co-ordinated.
 - * there is a clear understanding of the role of the personal and social education co-ordinator for the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of the programme and for ensuring that all tutors use the allocated curriculum time effectively.
(Paragraphs: 35)

- Improve pastoral management and develop the roles of year heads and form tutors by ensuring that:
 - * pastoral and curriculum teams work very closely together to support pupils' progress.
 - * there are established procedures and timetables for the monitoring of pupils' progress and attainment by form tutors, and for making judgements about whether pupils are doing well enough.
 - * more effective use is made of assessment information by form tutors in reviewing pupils' progress and in setting targets for improvement.
 - * there is a clear understanding of the roles of the deputy head with pastoral responsibility and year heads for developing, monitoring and evaluating the work of form tutors.
(Paragraphs: 35,46,50,52,65)

- Increase opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility, and contribute more fully to the life of the school.
(Paragraphs: 15,42,48)

- Review the school timetable in order to ensure that:
 - * there is adequate curriculum time for the teaching of personal and social education in all years and the teaching of science in Year 7.
 - * time is allowed for movement between lessons so that all lessons start on time and any lateness is challenged consistently by teachers.
(Paragraphs: 16,17,31,49,61,103)

- Ensure that reports to parents provide clear information in all subjects on the standards their children have attained, the progress they are making, and what they must do in order to make further progress.
(Paragraphs: 53,59,99)

- Continue to press the case for improvement to the accommodation for drama, music and design and technology.
(Paragraphs: 71,18,151,154)

74. In addition paragraphs 66,74-75,82 (leadership and management in English), 66,109 (leadership and management in art), 7,28,56,78,96 (provision for pupils with English as an additional language), 26,57,100,113,117,124,143,162 (marking) and 33 (range of courses in Years 10 and 11) include weaknesses that have not formed the basis of 'Key Issues' identified above. The school should consider including these in the governor's post-inspection action plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	157
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	21	49	27	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7- Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1038	N/A
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	128	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7- Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	244	N/A

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	19

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	98	108	206

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	55	71	72
	Girls	79	81	70
	Total	134	152	142
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	65 (71)	74 (67)	69 (62)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	23 (37)	45 (35)	36 (27)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	70	75	72
	Girls	79	83	65
	Total	149	158	137
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	73 (54)	77 (73)	67 (66)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	41 (31)	43 (38)	34 (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	100	96	196

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	57	94	96
	Girls	48	88	91
	Total	105	182	187
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	54 (43)	93 (85)	95 (92)
	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	42 (36)
	National	38.4 (38)

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 pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	?	?
	National		?

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	3
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	959
Any other minority ethnic group	67

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	37	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7– Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	63
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:

Y7– Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	299.5

Deployment of teachers:

Y7– Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80
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Average teaching group size:

Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	23.3
Key Stage 4	21.4

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2,345,284.00
Total expenditure	2,348,611.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,267.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	157,982.00
Balance carried forward to next year	154,655.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1038
Number of questionnaires returned	340

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	57	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	50	4	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	49	8	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	55	14	5	1
The teaching is good.	36	59	1	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	52	14	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	40	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	36	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	51	16	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	42	49	2	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	48	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	50	9	2	10

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Other issues raised by parents

Written comments were included with 28 (8 per cent) of the questionnaires returned. Parents expressed strong support for the school and satisfaction with their children's academic and social progress. A small number of parents' comments related to the school's response to parent's complaints, the information the school provides and homework.

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

ENGLISH

75. Pupils' attainment in English at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 is broadly as expected for their ages. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, performance was in line with the national average and above that found in similar schools, although lower than the standards achieved in 1999. Pupils' performance in these tests has fluctuated over the last four years. One reason for this is that until this year the department has not prepared pupils for these tests in a systematic way. A second reason is that the teachers in the department have a great deal of freedom in the resources and methods that are used in their lessons. This means that pupils can receive very different experiences of English depending on the teacher that takes them.

76. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE higher grades A* to C in English was close to the national average and well above similar schools. Boys perform particularly well. Although girls outperform boys, the difference between them is very much less than the national difference. Boys attain higher standards than boys nationally, while girls' attainment falls below national standards for girls. Attainment in GCSE English Literature in 2000 was well above the national average for both boys and girls, even though the department enters a greater percentage of pupils than is the case nationally. The difference between English and English literature reflects the emphasis placed on the teaching of literature. This is clearly effective, but the department has been slow to respond to recent changes in the teaching of English and to the balance required in the National Curriculum between language and literature.

77. The work seen during the inspection confirms the average levels of attainment in external tests and examinations. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, are confident speakers and are able to express their ideas and opinions clearly and fluently. As they move through Years 7 to 9 they learn how to contribute to discussions, listening carefully and responding to what others have to say. Standards of reading are good. Pupils who have problems with their reading are given support by parents and older pupils, who spend time with them on an individual basis. Many opportunities to read for information and for pleasure are provided across a range of subjects. This regular practice means that pupils are competent readers, able to understand texts and look for meanings beyond the literal. The clear benefits of the literacy hour in the primary schools are reflected in the way that pupils in Year 7 can use terms such as rhyme, rhythm, form and structure when writing about the poetry they have read. The department has yet to build on this improved knowledge and understanding of language. Writing skills are sound. Most pupils can write in a range of styles, and standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are sound. By Year 9, average and above average pupils organise their work into coherent paragraphs. They begin to show an awareness of how to use structure and a range of vocabulary to interest and engage the reader.

78. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 build on these sound standards. Boys' achievements in particular are good. They take a more active part in lessons than many girls and, through talking about their work, improve and consolidate their understanding of texts. Planning, drafting and rewriting are

used effectively to improve work. Much of the GCSE course work seen is of a high quality. Year 11 pupils have written essays comparing 'Oliver Twist' and 'A Kestrel for a Knave' that not only demonstrate their perceptive understanding of the texts but also analyse the role of literature as social comment and catalyst. Everyone who completes the GCSE course is entered for the examination and it is a strength of the department's work that almost all pupils, including low attaining pupils and those with special needs, gain GCSE grades in both English and English Literature.

79. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language do not make the progress that they should in some lessons. They achieve well in practical lessons such as art and when they are taught in small groups in the learning support centre. However, their needs are not sufficiently well identified and so, for some of their lessons, they are in sets where their specific language needs are not met.

80. Pupils' sound standards of literacy are developed not only in English but also in lessons across the curriculum. There is a co-ordinated and effective approach to the use of teaching and learning strategies that actively promote improvement in reading and writing. In all classrooms there are displays of key words designed to help pupils to become confident in their own use of technical language. Reading, both aloud and silently, is a common feature of many lessons, and pupils are often encouraged to explore their ideas in structured discussions. This greatly improves their ability to write coherently and clearly. Many teachers expect pupils to plan, draft and edit their work, and this helps pupils to become more critical of their own writing.

81. Most pupils display positive attitudes towards English because their teachers make the work interesting and enjoyable. They behave well, settle quickly and concentrate on their work. This is particularly the case with higher attaining boys in Years 10 and 11 who respond very positively to the demands on them to make good intellectual effort. There are a few pupils, mostly but not exclusively boys in lower sets in Years 10 and 11, who set out quite deliberately to disrupt lessons and to make it difficult for other pupils to learn.

82. The quality of teaching and learning in English lessons is good. Particular strengths in most lessons are teachers' management of pupils' behaviour and the very good relationships between teachers and pupils. These elements provide a good climate for learning in most classrooms. A common factor in good lessons is the clarity of objectives for learning; these are shared with pupils so they are fully involved in their own learning. Most teachers use group work to good effect. Discussions are structured to ensure that pupils are focused and speak and listen to good purpose. This enables them to learn from each other, deepen their understanding through exploratory talk and develop their social skills. In many lessons, teachers plan to contribute to the development of pupils' moral understanding. For instance, in a Year 7 lesson pupils discussed how the destruction of rain forests can affect us all and the ethics of keeping exotic animals as pets. Year 8 pupils discussed crime and punishment and were able to consider various deterrents and their effects. There are, however, weaknesses that make to some lessons less effective. For instance, teachers do not always ensure that girls have the same opportunities as boys to contribute to speaking activities. This becomes particularly noticeable in Years 10 and 11 and could be one of the reasons why boys perform so well in GCSE examinations. Another weakness is that, at times, teachers do not probe deeply enough. When the pupil's response is short and also superficial, the teacher fails to use supplementary questions to extend and deepen the pupil's understanding.

83. The last inspection report highlighted the need to improve the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and to implement consistent assessment procedures. These features remain to be addressed. The curriculum does not build sufficiently well on what pupils already know and has too much emphasis on literature at the expense of developing an understanding of how language works. The varying competence of teachers within the department to use information and communication technology means that many pupils are not given enough opportunities to use new technology to support their work. There is no systematic approach to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning or to the use of assessment data in the planning of the curriculum. This leads to an unsatisfactory situation where pupils receive different experiences depending on which teacher they have. It is also impeding the raising of standards in English. This is a hard-working and committed department; a greater degree of consistency is needed to further improve standards.

DRAMA

84. Drama is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9 and pupils are able to choose it as one of their GCSE subjects. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with expectations, but during Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve very high standards and the proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades A* to C is well above the national average. Pupils in Year 7 rapidly learn to devise and improvise and they are beginning to use a range of techniques to present their ideas. At this stage girls are more imaginative and controlled than boys. By Year 11, both boys and girls have very good improvisation skills. They can devise with imagination and creativity, responding rapidly to others' changes in direction. They develop and sustain character and present their work using a range of dramatic conventions. Pupils are articulate and able to evaluate their own and others' work with perception and sensitivity.

85. Most pupils respond very well to their drama lessons and this is reflected in the high numbers who choose to study it for GCSE. A small number of boys in Year 9 behave very poorly and affect the achievement of other pupils. Teachers do well to keep most pupils working productively.

86. The quality of teaching is good. Particular strengths are the very good relationships between teachers and pupils and the skill with which teachers manage pupils' behaviour. These create a secure and accepting atmosphere in which pupils can experiment and take risks. Lessons are purposeful and very well planned and organised. Assessment is used very effectively to show pupils how to improve their work.

MATHEMATICS

87. Standards are similar across all aspects of mathematics. The emphasis on numeracy, and on getting pupils to explain their methods of solution, has improved standards in using and applying mathematics. This was identified as a weakness in the last report. Achievement is good for most pupils, including those with special educational needs, in all years. Good teaching, a well planned curriculum, pupil grouping by prior attainment, and most pupils' hard work and very good behaviour, are all key factors in this progress. The small size of the lower sets helps many pupils with special educational needs to achieve well.

88. For several years pupils' attainment in mathematics on entry to the school in Year 7 has been broadly average, as illustrated by end of Year 6 National Curriculum test results. However, the current Year 7 gained better results, showing above average attainment on entry. The school is successfully building on these improved skills, particularly in numeracy. The results of the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were above the national average and well above average for similar schools. Inspection evidence is consistent with these results and indicates that the standards of attainment of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is above national expectations, with some pupils reaching high standards. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils can write numbers in standard form. They can use trigonometric ratios to find unknown sides and angles in right-angled triangles. Average attaining pupils can solve linear equations, can simplify algebraic expressions and can plot different types of graphs accurately. They can calculate percentages. Lower attaining pupils know the properties of different two-dimensional shapes, and can use this knowledge to identify given diagrams. Pupils are able to calculate areas of rectangles and carry out a range of calculations, including using simple fractions. By the end of Year 9, pupils are reaching standards above national expectations, with some pupils achieving high standards.

89. The 2000 GCSE results are above national averages at the higher A* to C grades and in line with national averages for the A* to G grades. Nearly all pupils are entered for the GCSE examination and the results indicate good levels of achievement by pupils with special educational needs. In 2000, boys achieved better results than girls. Comparison of the 2000 GCSE results to those of schools with similar prior attainment at the end of Year 9, that is using the 1998 Key Stage 3 test results, shows that the higher and most of the average attaining pupils did better than expected. The performance of most other pupils was in line with expectations. These pupils tended to be at the bottom of the average attaining group, and many of them were absent from school more frequently than other pupils. There was little difference in attainment by gender in the work seen during the inspection. Attainment by gender in external test results in Year 9 and Year 11 fluctuates; some years girls do better, some years boys achieve better results. In addition to the current monitoring of results by gender, the school should also monitor composition of sets and take appropriate action if any clear patterns emerge. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils can simplify a wide range of algebraic expressions. They understand direct and inverse proportion and can use this to solve problems. They can use the cosine rule to calculate unknown sides and angles. Average attaining pupils can use graphs to solve equations and can calculate the probability of given events occurring. Lower attaining pupils can use their knowledge of angle properties to find unknown angles and draw pie charts and bar charts.

90. During their time in school, pupils consolidate, then build on, their existing skill base across all aspects of mathematics. Higher attaining pupils make very good progress in extending their knowledge and range of technical skills; they can apply these with understanding to the solution of complex problems. The early formation of a set of higher attaining pupils, which is able to move at a fast pace, is an important factor in this very good progress. Another is that these pupils have good skills in tackling difficult problems; they don't give up easily and know how to use reference material and work with friends to improve. Average and lower attaining pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge and skills and in the ability to explain what methods they are using and why. All pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9, make good progress in developing accurate and quick mental methods for calculations. The progress of a few pupils, mainly but not all lower attaining pupils is adversely affected because they do not settle down to work quickly enough. A few pupils do not make as much progress as they should due to absence, particularly in Year 11. Some pupils, although their progress this year is good, are still having to make-up some of the ground they lost

due to staffing problems last year. The head of department has done all he can to minimise these problems by tracking any possible underachievement of groups and taking appropriate action.

91. Pupils' behaviour is very good and most enjoy learning mathematics. They work well together on tasks. For example, in a Year 11 class, they worked in pairs on the analysis of statements about the probability of certain events happening; pupils then explained their answers to the rest of the class. This led to a lively discussion as to common misconceptions of the chance of events occurring. Pupils' written work is generally well presented, showing care taken and pride in its good quality.

92. The quality of teaching, and of learning, observed during the inspection week was good overall. In a fifth of lessons seen teaching was very good, and there was a corresponding proportion of satisfactory teaching. Teaching was good in the rest. There was no unsatisfactory teaching; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Crucial to this good teaching are clearly understood classroom routines; pupils know how they are expected to behave and most work well with their teachers. Teachers have used their considerable skills in class management to achieve this situation. Another important factor in pupils' good learning is the amount of individual support provided, both inside and outside lessons. The Year 11 revision sessions, held during the school holidays, are examples of this.

93. Teachers have good knowledge of mathematics, which they use to give clear explanations. They are skilled at using more concrete, day-to-day examples for lower attaining groups and moving quickly to a more abstract level for higher attaining pupils. These examples capture pupils' interests and they find it easier to remember what they are learning. For example in one Year 7 class, comparison with the scoring methods of the 'Eurovision Song Contest' helped pupils understand how to subtract negative numbers. A particular strength is the speed and level of work, often oral, in the first part of the lesson. This puts pupils quickly in a mathematical frame of mind, and develops mental agility. In comparison, teachers are not as skilled at reviewing progress made during the lesson; often there isn't enough time at the end to do this fully. When teaching is satisfactory, rather than good or very good, teachers are slower to identify why pupils are having problems in understanding topics, or a good initial pace is not maintained during the middle part of the lesson.

94. There is some monitoring of teaching. However, there is a need for more systematic classroom observation and scrutiny of written work to make sure best practice is maintained and shared, particularly in the light of recent staffing changes. In general pupils do know how well they are doing, but some lack confidence and underrate their own attainment. Teachers recognise this and are good at helping pupils to develop confidence. The assessment of pupils' work is good. Work is usually regularly marked and feedback on work carried out in class is clear. There are regular tests, which help staff to check progress and see if some topics need more attention. These results, together with other information, such as National Curriculum test scores and standardised test results, enable teachers to track progress closely. Where pupils are not doing as well as they should, teachers work with them to help them improve. Additional classes after school are also a factor in helping pupils to improve the standard of their work.

95. The head of department is effective and efficient. His good organisational skills, including use of pupil tracking data, have minimised the impact of last year's staffing problems. The mathematics curriculum is suitable for different groups of pupils and meets statutory requirements. Good progress has been made in tackling the issues raised at the last inspection. Teaching has improved

and standards have risen. The head of department provides good leadership and, together with other teachers, has worked hard to minimise the impact of recent staffing problems on pupils' progress. The department now has a permanent, well-qualified staff who are providing pupils with an enjoyable, broad mathematics curriculum. The trend of national test and examination results is upwards, particularly for higher attaining pupils, at both key stages. Standards reached by pupils are above national expectations at the end of years 9 and 11. However, as yet there are not enough planned opportunities to use information technology.

SCIENCE

96. In 2000, National Curriculum test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were above average with 69 per cent of pupils obtaining Level 5, or above, and 36 per cent Level 6 or above. By comparison with similar schools, results were above average for Level 5 or above, and well above the average for Level 6 or above. The performance of boys was better than that of girls. The results in science were below those for mathematics but better than those for English. Since the last inspection, the trend has been above the national trend. Teacher assessments indicate that teachers accurately estimated the performance of pupils. These results represent good progress in science, since the attainment of pupils on entry to the school was about average.

97. By the end of Year 9, inspection evidence shows that pupils of all abilities have learned new skills, increased their knowledge of scientific facts, improved their understanding of scientific concepts and made progress in investigative science. For example, high attaining pupils can recall that heat conduction in solids results from vibrating particles colliding with each other. They understand the differences between animal and plant cells and can draw and interpret graphs. Lower attaining pupils, however, whilst having not reached the levels achieved by their higher attaining colleagues, can explain that the angle of incidence of a light beam onto a plane mirror is equal to the angle of reflection. Overall progress in lessons, including that of pupils with special educational needs is good. The progress of a few pupils for whom English is an additional language, however, is adversely affected by inadequate provision of language support assistants.

98. In 2000, the results of examinations for the double award GCSE examination were above average with 54 per cent of pupils gaining grades A* to C. However, boys' results were well above average while those of girls were below average. All boys and almost all girls entered for the examination gained at least a grade G. The number of grades achieved at the highest levels, A* and A, was well above the average for both boys and girls. The results in science were better than those for mathematics but below those for English. The trend since the previous inspection has been above the national trend. When the standards attained at GCSE are compared with the standards of attainment of the same pupils at the end of Year 9, it shows that progress and achievement of pupils through Years 10 and 11, including those with special educational needs, has been good.

99. Evidence obtained during the inspection shows that standards are above national expectations. Overall, however, boys are more secure in their knowledge and understanding than girls. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11, who are following GCSE courses leading to awards in the separate sciences, are confident in their understanding of how genetic information is passed from parents to child; can calculate the concentration of a solution using the 'mole theory', and can calculate the relationship between the primary and secondary coils of an electrical transformer. Lower attaining pupils, following the dual award GCSE syllabus, are less secure in their

understanding of scientific concepts. Nevertheless, they can explain how cell division occurs by mitosis and how ionic bonds are formed between elements.

100. From work seen during the inspection, it is clear that all attainment targets are well covered and that investigative science is well integrated into the teaching programme. Pupils are encouraged to make hypotheses and to explain results in scientific terms. The standard of literacy is, overall, above expectations. Higher attaining pupils cope well with extended writing, using scientific terms with confidence. Spelling is good. Less able pupils, however, are less confident and tend to be more restricted in the range and extent of their written work, often limiting their writing to short sentences in which spelling and the use of scientific terms are less secure. Higher attaining pupils, particularly boys, throughout the school, speak confidently, describing and discussing experimental work, with a good degree of accuracy. Girls are less confident and are often reluctant to discuss their work preferring, occasionally, to defer to boys when questions are asked. Lower attaining pupils often have greater difficulty in speaking and tend to give brief answers to questions. Numerical competency is above average overall. The use of information and communications technology to support learning is still far from satisfactory. This was highlighted as a weakness in the previous report. Reports issued to parents provide useful information on attainment, attitudes and progress. They do not, however, provide focused, subject specific strengths and weaknesses in each attainment target, nor targets for improvement.

101. The quality of teaching is good. Throughout the school, the teaching observed was at least good in all but two lessons, and in these it was satisfactory. In many lessons teaching was very good. There are features that are common to all lessons. Teachers make use of their good subject knowledge to provide very effective explanations and to ask questions that challenge pupils to explain observations or assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. They set out clear objectives that pupils understand. To achieve this, teachers ensure that planning, organisation and classroom management are effective and that lesson content matches the abilities of pupils. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and homework is given, when appropriate, which either consolidates or extends class work. A small minority of lessons, however, are over-directed by the teacher. In these, insufficient opportunity is provided for independent learning. Whilst books are always marked and helpful comments are often made, marking rarely indicates either the level at which pupils have performed or how pupils can improve.

102. Teachers identify appropriate learning objectives that offer challenge, and couple these with good support for pupils. This enables pupils to make good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and information. In the majority of lessons, pupils work hard and at a good pace. When given the opportunity to do so, pupils

work well independently and in groups, think out problems for themselves and concentrate hard. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of good support by classroom assistants, when provided, and because teachers have a good knowledge of their individual education plans.

103. The behaviour of pupils and their attitudes to science are both good. Pupils listen well to their teachers, respond positively to the various activities and show interest and enjoyment. Boys, in particular, answer and ask questions well and have the confidence to discuss scientific ideas and experimental results with their teachers and with other pupils. Girls are often much less confident and show a reluctance to answer questions or enter into discussion unless directed to do so by a teacher. This has an adverse effect upon the performance of girls throughout the school.

104. The science curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. While the allocation of curriculum time in years 8 and 9 is adequate, that for Year 7 is well below the recommended curriculum time. Similarly, while the time allocated for dual award science in years 10 and 11 is adequate, insufficient time is allowed for the teaching of separate sciences. As a result, additional lessons need to be taught outside of normal school hours. This has an adverse effect upon the opportunity for revision time toward the end of the course and puts additional pressure on teachers.

105. The science department is well led by an able and dedicated head of department. He provides clear educational direction, is hard working and committed. Whilst curriculum planning is good, planning for the inclusion and use of information and communication technology, as a support and investigative tool that is well integrated into lessons, is unsatisfactory. Procedures for assessment are well established. However, even though assessment is used effectively to monitor progress and to identify underachievement, its use to support teaching needs further development. The monitoring of the quality of teaching by formal and informal lesson observations is well established and it is used effectively to develop good practice. Even though the number of laboratories is good, the size of some laboratories leads to overcrowding with some larger groups of pupils. Teaching staff are well qualified and they are effectively deployed. However, at the time of the inspection, the number of science teaching staff is barely sufficient. Technical support for the department is good. Resources, in terms of books and scientific equipment, are unsatisfactory and there are insufficient up-to-date computers and appropriate software.

106. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Whilst the use of information and communications technology and the provision of books and equipment remain unsatisfactory, the underachievement noted in Years 10 and 11, due to an inappropriate match of ability to lesson content, is no longer evident. The marking of books is now consistent.

ART AND DESIGN

107. The 2000 teacher assessments show attainment at the end of Year 9 to be above average. Inspection evidence shows that the progress and achievement of pupils are satisfactory and standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are in line with national expectations. The 2000 GCSE examination results were below the national average for both the A* to C grades and the average points score. Over the four-year period from 1997 to 2000 results have varied from below to above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress

and their achievements are often better than in other subjects because of the practical nature of the subject. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and produce work of a comparable standard to their peers. Pupils with particular talent in art attain well, and pupils in Years 10 and 11 produce work of a very high standard. Ceramics work, which includes the making of fantasy castles in Year 7, buildings in Year 8 and larger scale pots inspired by South American examples in Year 9, is of a good standard. By the end of Year 9, pupils experience a wide range of artistic media in textiles, ceramics and drawing and painting, and develop appropriate technical skills. There is also some very good work in textiles inspired by the paintings of Jackson Pollock and some fascinating surrealist work from pupils in Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 11 most pupils have a sound foundation in painting and drawing skills. Good displays of pupils' work in the department and public areas of the school help to build pupil self esteem. Pupils' work is also displayed in the head teacher's study. Art makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy through the use of technical language, and to the development of numeracy skills through the judgement of proportion and scale and the placing of objects in space to maximum effect. However little use is made of information and communications technology in teaching and learning

108. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, with occasional examples of good and very good teaching. The overall quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. Teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge linked to a clear and progressive sequence of skills, knowledge and experience. The planning of lessons and schemes of work is good. Relationships are very good, and pupils' strengths and weaknesses are well known, but passion and enthusiasm are not present in all lessons. Feedback to pupils is generally good and provides pupils with appropriate learning targets. Classroom management and organisation are effective and efficient. Pupils learn through demonstration, example, trial and error, selection and rejection, and above all by doing and refining skills and the work in progress. Pupils work at their own levels, and higher attaining pupils are appropriately stretched. Art from other times and other places is well used in the curriculum. There is an enormous potential in the department, but the inspiration needed to develop real enthusiasm in pupils is not always present. There is a need to identify and share the best art teaching so that it becomes a norm in the department.

109. Pupil response is very good in Years 7 to 9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11. Attitudes are open and positive, and many pupils show a painstaking attention to detail. They co-operate and collaborate well, showing strong mutual support. The few pupils who display inappropriate behaviour generally respond well to the directions of the teacher. Pupils listen carefully to teachers' explanations and there is a sense of purpose in lessons. In the best lessons a sense of fun and fulfilment is linked to hard work and commitment. Pupils show initiative and responsibility when given the opportunity.

110. The curriculum satisfies National Curriculum requirements except in the area of information and communications technology. Due account has been taken of Curriculum 2000, but the new requirements for National Curriculum levels are still being developed. There are currently two art-based subjects in Years 10 and 11 and the role of head of department is shared between the two subject leaders. The arrangement works well at a personal level, but it is unsatisfactory because it does not provide the department with the leadership and vision necessary to raise standards. Development planning, for example, is too general and not sufficiently focussed on the need to raise standards. The accommodation is cramped – especially in the ceramics area, and the light is not good for teaching art. Resources are generally good and well used. However, insufficient use is made of information and communications technology as a tool in teaching and learning. The use of

informal assessment through teacher feedback to pupils in lessons is good, and pupil self-assessment is well used in end of topic evaluation. However, closer links need to be made between the new attainment target levels and other forms of assessment used in the department.

BUSINESS STUDIES

111. The GCSE examination results in business studies are consistently good and above national averages. In 2000, 82 per cent of the girls and all of the boys entered for the examination obtained grades in the A* to C range. All pupils obtained grades in the A* to G range. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection, and inspection evidence indicates that the standards of pupils presently in Year 11 are above expectations. They show a good understanding of business organisations and are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of tall and flat organisational structures. Pupils' coursework is well presented, and the higher attaining pupils produce in-depth evaluations that show a clear understanding of business concepts, together with an ability to apply them in a variety of practical business situations. However, the standards of attainment of pupils in Year 10 are below expectations. They show a developing understanding of business terms such as 'manufacture' and 'production flow', and an awareness of the importance of location in setting up a business. But the level of understanding is below that normally expected in pupils at this stage of their course. Information and communications technology is used effectively to produce word-processed reports with graphs and charts to present information.

112. Teaching is satisfactory. Effective use is made of good subject knowledge in well-structured lessons. Tasks are well matched to the attainment levels of pupils, including those with special educational needs. The teacher ensures that pupils' competence in the use of information and communications technology is supported and improved through regular use in lessons. Very good use is made of assessment in lessons to identify areas of weakness in pupils' learning and to provide individual support as required. Pupils in Year 11 respond well to the teacher's efforts to motivate and enthuse them. They co-operate well with each other and their teacher, and are able to work independently. Pupils show enjoyment in their lessons and progress and achievement are good. However, the response of pupils in Year 10 is at best satisfactory and in one lesson it was unsatisfactory. In this lesson, although some pupils were keen to make progress and worked at a good pace, others were inattentive and, when working on the computers, interspersed data entry with casual social conversations with their neighbours that slowed progress. The teacher worked hard to stimulate pupils and to promote individual pupils' thinking. However, because of the unenthusiastic response, particularly from the boys, productivity in the lesson was low. Homework is regularly set and marked. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully aware of both the GCSE grade level they are working at and how to improve.

113. The business studies department is well managed and department planning is in line with the school's aims. Although the department occupies good specialist rooms, the storage of files and other resources is untidy and more could be done to create the appearance of an efficient business environment. Textbooks and materials from industry and the media are up-to-date. The teacher researches the Internet effectively for financial and marketing data. Links with industry are good. The department has a good capacity to make further improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

114. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were below national averages in 2000, but results show an increase on the previous year's analysis and girls' results are stronger than boys. Work seen during the inspection of the present group, at a similar stage, is in line with national expectations, indicating a further improvement on the 2000 results. Standards at the end of Year 9 are higher than in 1999 because teachers have tackled the weaknesses identified in the previous report, and modules in electronics, graphics, food, resistant materials and textiles are well planned to provide progression through skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers have also introduced good additional strategies, for example, colour coded workbooks to meet the needs of different abilities in food technology, and homework booklets to ensure pupils and parents are informed of the regular requirements of homework in resistant materials, graphics and electronics. As a result pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. However, insufficient use is made of National Curriculum levels in providing feedback to pupils and the lack of self-assessment within product evaluation impedes the development of pupils' critical thinking about how to improve the standard of their work.

115. All pupils use the design process effectively across a range of materials to produce good designs for their practical work. They make very good use of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology across design technology modules. Well-targeted literacy strategies develop pupils' use of technical vocabulary and writing skills. Numeracy skills are used well in measuring, weighing and producing basic working drawings. Information and communications technology is used effectively in the presentation, control and modelling of ideas and has a positive impact on raising standards.

116. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are below the national average. The school's average is an amalgamation of the above average results in food technology and the below average results in graphics, resistant materials and electronics. A thorough analysis of the results, supported by the comprehensive analyses of assessment information provided by senior management, has enabled the department to develop strategies to raise standards, and in particular, to improve the attitude and standards of boys. Comparisons of average point scores show that girls' attainment is in line with their attainment in other subjects but that boys are below. Lower attaining pupils are achieving in line with expectations according to the targets of their individual education plans.

117. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' standards of work and achievement continue to be good in food technology because pupils take full responsibility for their research, investigation and product design. They make effective use of the Internet and primary research as well as industrial practice, and take pride in their high quality design portfolios they produce. Skills and techniques are more sophisticated. In particular graphical skills have improved in food technology because of the links across the department. In resistant materials, graphics and electronics, pupils are reluctant to take independent decisions in the final stages of product realisation. At best levels of achievement are satisfactory. Many pupils rush to complete their work and standards and achievement are adversely affected because insufficient attention is paid to detail.

118. Overall teaching is good. Teaching is satisfactory in graphics and resistant materials, and very good in food and electronics. There are examples of excellence in teaching in food technology. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Planning for individual lessons and longer-term planning are well informed by assessment information. Detailed advice is attached to grades in the marking of pupils' work and this encourages them to think analytically about their designing and making. For example, the very good feedback given at the end of a food technology lesson helped pupils to

target where improvements could be made. However, this is not consistent across the department. The lack of opportunities for self-assessment and pupils' lack of understanding of National Curriculum levels restrict independent learning.

119. Teachers have embedded the development of literacy and numeracy skills in all modules of the subject. They generally give clear explanations and demonstrations, and question pupils skilfully to check and extend their understanding. For example when mechanisms for a child's toy were being investigated, good questioning consolidated understanding. Classroom display is used well to aid learning. In lessons where teachers plan for a high level of active participation, as in a Year 8 food technology lesson on the sensory and nutritional analysis of fruit, pupils were totally engrossed and contributed valuable personal experience to the lesson. However, there is a lack of consistency in actively involving pupils to provide feedback to their peers and in encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning. Generally pace and concentration are better in food technology and electronics because time targets are set, challenging pupils to think and concentrate. Across the department, teachers all make very good use of information and communications technology. The computer facilities in the department, although not as yet part of the whole-school network, are making a positive impact by helping pupils to achieve high quality presentation and designs. Good technical support enables the department to run smoothly and makes the best use of limited equipment and storage facilities.

120. Attitudes and behaviour are good because of the consistent approach to behaviour and standards by all teachers in the department. Pupils understand action needed to be taken to remedy problems but unsatisfactory accommodation often frustrates effective learning. Personal development is very good because planning prepares pupils with the personal skills they will need in life as well as in design and technology. For example, safety is a key feature of learning. They know how and where to research information; understand the value of working in pairs and teams, and can see how to improve their work by discussing and modifying their ideas with their peers and teachers.

121. Management of the department is good and has the vision for further development. The department's response to the last inspection was good. The two heads of department who co-ordinate the subject work well together, as do the team of teachers. They share good practice through mutual observation and feedback. Department development is planned effectively with good use of the limited budget to maintain the present level of resources, but there is little flexibility to develop and meet the demanding requirements of Curriculum 2000. Two handbooks are directed at the specific needs of different elements of the department, but they repeat rather than strengthen the principles of design and technology. Unsatisfactory accommodation and resources have a detrimental affect on resistant materials, graphics and electronics.

GEOGRAPHY

122. In 2000, teacher assessments show pupils' standards to be in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. Geography is a popular subject in Key Stage 4 and the school entered a significantly higher proportion of its Year 11 pupils for GCSE than the national average. Overall standards achieved by these pupils, as shown by their average points score, were in line with the national average. The percentage gaining A* to C grades was below the national average, but the achievement of the highest attaining pupils was good, with the A* rate being twice the national average. Boys' results were better than in other subjects, while nationally they are below. Girls' results were below their results in other subjects, but by a lower margin than was the case nationally. When the prior attainment of pupils taking the examination is taken into account, their results show good achievement.

123. At the end of Key Stage 3, overall standards in lessons and pupils' work were a little above expectations. Most pupils can identify developing countries on a world map. They know why earthquakes happen and most can explain some measures taken to reduce damage from these. Many show good understanding of measures taken to protect rainforests and can identify problems, such as conflicts of interest, that arise when these are put into effect. Almost all can interpret geographical information in a range of formats, such as population pyramids, which supports them when comparing situations in countries such as Britain and India. The quality of the written work of many pupils is affected by lack of detail, although work shows good progress in this, as pupils develop skills in linking ideas and statements. Most pupils in higher attaining sets have high skills in interpreting evidence such as photographs, which they use to raise questions that demonstrate good understanding of geographical topics in countries such as Namibia.

124. Pupils at the end of Year 11 achieve standards that are generally in line with expectations. All pupils have a sound knowledge of the topics that they have studied, although a small minority have difficulty in deploying this with relevance to answer questions. The great majority know the location of British national parks and can explain why they developed. There are appropriate and sometimes good levels of understanding of reasons for the development of tourism, and most pupils can explain why places such as Spain have become popular destinations. In both key stages, the standards of pupils' work in lower attaining sets, while below national expectations, showed good achievement for most. Standards achieved by pupils in higher attaining sets are generally above national expectations, and represent achievement that is at least satisfactory and often good for these pupils. Pupils with special educational needs generally achieve well.

125. The quality of teaching that was observed was generally good. It is an important factor in the good achievement of pupils. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to tackle significant geographical questions and to ask some of their own. These often take place in the context of group work that is well planned and managed. However, spontaneous opportunities for discussion, arising out of intelligent and thoughtful responses from pupils, are occasionally not fully taken up. Tasks normally involve good levels of integration of geographical knowledge, skills and understanding as, for example, when Year 11 pupils used maps to identify advantages of industrial sites located along the M4 corridor and Year 8 pupils referred to photographs to draw sketch maps of coastal landforms. Teachers question well. This provides good opportunities for pupils to recall previously learned knowledge and to test their developing understanding, correcting misconceptions where necessary. Homework is used well to extend and develop learning that takes place in class. Where non-specialists teach, high commitment to the subject and good preparation compensate well for any

relative deficiencies in subject expertise. Work is well focused to meet the general needs within class sets. That for lower attaining pupils has a good balance between accessibility and depth, and many tasks provide genuine, open-ended challenge for higher attaining pupils. However, to ensure that higher attaining pupils within a set always benefit fully from this, teachers need to target specific levels of work and criteria for performance more closely at individuals. Higher attaining pupils usually receive good guidance in marking to support them in identifying targets for improvement. There is a need to ensure that marking for lower attaining pupils is always of this quality. Because of the quality of teaching and the very positive response of pupils to this, learning is good, with good progress in knowledge, skills and understanding generally being made in lessons.

126. The subject makes a very good contribution to the development of pupils' competence in literacy and a good one to their competence in numeracy. Teachers present strong role models in their own specialist terminology and exercise high expectations of their pupils' vocabulary. As a result, pupils confidently use relevant terms in their discussions. Group discussions and presentations to the whole class regularly provide good contexts for developing speaking and listening skills. Teachers appropriately emphasise that reading a range of sources is a key geographical skill and provide good support for improving skills in extended writing by, for example, guiding pupils on techniques in linking statements and elements of an answer. Support for numeracy is also developing well, with pupils often having opportunities to translate information into comparative charts and graphs. There is a commitment to integrate information and communications technology into the subject, with activities included appropriately in the scheme of work. Many are focused on developing pupils' capability in using computers to handle information and to model such processes as the effects of flooding. However, the plans are not yet fully implemented, due to difficulties in securing access to information and communications technology resources.

127. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Guidance and monitoring of teaching, including that of non-specialists, are carried out unobtrusively, but effectively. This has had a considerable impact upon securing a level of improvement since the last inspection. Improvement has been very good because most of the issues that were identified then have been addressed well, and all at least to some extent. Expectations are now generally good for all levels of ability. Work is focused much more upon the questioning of evidence, so that challenge for all, including the more able, is good. A highly appropriate focus upon enquiry now harnesses well the curiosity and willingness to learn of pupils. As a result, pupils now consistently show good ability to synthesise and analyse evidence. Resources have been improved, so that there is now a greater variety of textbooks. Videos, booklets, photographs and other resources, many of which are made by individual teachers, supplement these resources. There are still not enough books, however, for all Key Stage 4 pupils to take one home for homework. There has been some rationalisation of accommodation. However, non-specialist teachers have generally inferior provision, often some distance from the geography base. One Year 10 class has its lessons in three different rooms, one of which is a highly unsuitable art room, which makes it difficult for the teacher to emphasise the identity of the subject or provide access to resources.

HISTORY

128. According to statutory teacher assessments, the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 is almost exactly in line with the national average for all pupils. However, over recent years, the school has made considerable efforts to improve the performance of boys, and the difference between their attainment and that of girls is now much smaller than it is in history nationally. Since the last inspection attainment in the GCSE examinations has fluctuated although, except for 1998, it has always been above the national average, sometimes significantly so. In contradiction to the national picture, boys consistently achieve more highly than do girls, and in the 2000 examinations, girls did significantly worse than their counterparts nationally, whereas boys did significantly better. Work seen during the inspection, combined with better ability profiles in current Year 11 classes, suggests that attainment will continue to be above the national average overall, more markedly so in the case of boys.

129. Most pupils make good progress in acquiring a range of skills. They correctly identify and evaluate different sources in the course of coming to conclusions about keenly debated issues such as the success or failure of the Chartist movement. In a small group of Year 8 pupils with special educational needs, many accurately recalled details about the domestic habits and itinerant nature of the Pueblo and Plains tribes of North America. In all years much attention has been paid to improving literacy. Reading aloud, which most pupils do confidently and competently, is a common feature of history lessons. More unusually, in a lesson on the Wall Street Crash, pupils' numeracy skills were exercised in working out the profits and losses involved in buying shares "on the margin". Pupils write extensively, using technically accurate English with relatively few, although sometimes uncorrected, spelling mistakes. There is greater variability in competence in information and communications technology, as there is currently no consistent incorporation of these skills in the programmes of study. The department is taking action to remedy this omission.

130. History is well taught across all years; there were no unsatisfactory lessons and nearly two-thirds of lessons seen were good or better. Teachers have a thorough knowledge and understanding of both their subject and the needs of their pupils. Lessons are varied, well planned and conducted at a brisk pace. Patience, encouragement and praise are judiciously employed to maximise pupils' motivation and support their learning. Homework is well used to extend, complete, and consolidate pupils' knowledge. Paired and group work are regular features of lessons. Helpful advice, on topics such as exam preparation and undertaking extensive writing, is frequently offered, and evidently acted upon. Skilful and successful management of good-humoured relations with pupils is a significant factor in the quality of lessons and results. Teachers assess and monitor the progress of their pupils very closely and performance data are very well used in identifying and seeking to eliminate underachievement, although this is not yet entirely successful for some lower ability pupils generally, and girls specifically. Work is regularly and closely marked, nearly always with diagnostic comment and helpful advice, although the criteria by which grades are awarded could be made clearer to pupils.

131. History lessons are characterised by very good relationships based on mutual respect. Pupils enjoy their lessons and some of the GCSE candidates regularly attend voluntary after school and holiday revision and study skills sessions. Very few instances of poor behaviour were witnessed and the overwhelming majority of pupils demonstrated a high regard for their teachers and each other. Pupils respond eagerly and positively in lessons and take a justifiable pride in their achievements.

132. The subject is well led and managed and, despite his other responsibilities, the head of department plays a pivotal role in the close, collaborative and supportive relationships that are fundamental to the department's success. Hard work and a genuine commitment to all pupils, combined with variety of experience and expertise, also make a significant contribution. Scope for further improvement exists in devising and implementing a consistent strategy for the teaching of information and communications technology skills, training for which has already been sought. Other priorities are the review and refinement of schemes of work, and clarification of assessment grading. The department has made good progress since the last inspection, most notably in the areas of resourcing, development planning and in the recording and use of performance data.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

133. The Year 2000 teacher assessments of pupils, made at the end of Year 9, show that standards of attainment are just above the national average. In the 2000 GCSE results in Information Systems, pupils in Year 11 gained grades above national level, with 70 per cent achieving A* to C compared with national average of 55 per cent.

134. Inspection evidence indicates that standards of attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 are similar to those seen in most schools nationally. Although the standards of work seen of pupils at the end of Year 11 are similar to national levels, teachers' predicted grades indicate that many pupils will achieve above this level. Pupils perform well under examination conditions, but there is some weakness in their project work, with few pupils gaining high marks. In Year 7 pupils have a good knowledge of word processing and make good use of desktop publishing, being able to use a range of fonts and clip art. Some higher attaining pupils show good skills using graphics software to produce good artwork. In Year 8, pupils make use of a range of skills. Some higher attaining pupils are making good use of databases using graphs from these to illustrate Year 8 'lifestyles'. Some lower attaining pupils in this year have produced good First Aid fliers, making effective use of clip art and word art. In Year 9 pupils are using more advanced word processing skills to produce business style letters, and make good use of graphs taken from spreadsheets. Most pupils understand how to use formulae in spreadsheets. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making use of a wider range of skills learned in previous years. They produce questionnaires for data capture, and then use this with a database. Pupils produce a variety of graphs from their databases, although their ability to use complex searches of databases is less well developed. Generally work is well presented, with high attaining pupils making good use of both graphics and a range of font styles.

135. Pupils are making good progress in nearly all lessons, as well as building on previous knowledge and skills over longer units of work. Good learning is taking place as pupils increase their range of skills and improve their knowledge and understanding of the use of information and communications technology. There is very good progress in Year 7 where pupils significantly increase their knowledge of spreadsheets and cell location in a short period of time. In word processing, pupils develop their keyboard skills and show increasing use of fonts and artwork as

they progress through the school. From Year 7 they show increasing confidence about using the software programmes. However, the learning of some pupils is severely restricted because they have no taught information and communications technology lessons in Years 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11, pupils taking GCSE information studies continue to improve their skills and understanding. They are faster in keyboarding, and show more awareness of audience as they complete their examination projects. However, a significant number of pupils do not receive their entitlement to the subject as under half of the pupils take the GCSE course.

136. Teaching in information and communications technology is good and this helps pupils to make progress in the subject. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and give clear explanations that help pupils to learn new skills and increase their understanding. Classes are well managed and work carefully planned. Work is progressive and planning takes into account the full attainment range of pupils. This is usually well done, but occasionally higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently stretched. Sometimes extended work for higher attaining pupils is done through prepared work sheets. This not only allows higher attaining pupils to gain some independence from the teacher, but also allows the teacher to work with pupils who need specific help. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and the key to good teaching is the relationships between teachers and pupils. In all classes there is a positive working environment in which pupils are able to learn. Although pupils have National Curriculum levels marked on their folders, little is done in lessons to make pupils more aware of the level they are working at and how they might improve. There are no indications in classrooms of National Curriculum levels in the subject.

137. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Staff are well deployed and accommodation used effectively. Resources are generally well used, although the interactive white board and data projector currently in the library would be more usefully located in one of the specialist rooms where it would aid teaching of the subject. There is a comprehensive department handbook, although there is no acknowledgement of how the department makes a contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, or how it supports their literacy and numeracy. Schemes of work are well planned, although assessment using National Curriculum levels needs to be updated.

138. The department made a satisfactory response to the previous inspection. Standards in GCSE information studies have been improved, teaching is good and pupils remain keen and interested in the subject. The school has made a significant investment in new computers and other new technology, such as a data projector and white board, as well as soft ware. However the intended information and communications technology training for teachers in other departments has been interrupted due to dissatisfaction with the quality of the training providers. This has meant that there has been insufficient training, and little use is made of information and communications technology in many subjects. In design and technology there are good developments with prodesk top, and there is good use of information and communications technology with pupils who have special educational needs. However apart from Year 7 where all pupils have taught information and communications technology lessons, there are significant numbers of pupils in other years who do not receive their full curriculum entitlement to the subject.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

139. At the end of Year 9, attainment in modern languages is slightly above the national expectation. Girls do better than boys, but less so than nationally, due to a rising trend in boys' attainment. At the end of Year 11, results at GCSE in 2000 show that, at the higher A* to C grades, attainment was in line with the national average in French. There is a rising trend, with both boys' and girls' results improving over the last three years. Boys' results improved sharply in 2000 to be above the national average for boys. Girls' results remained below the national average for girls. They did better than boys, but less so than nationally. Results at the highest A* and A grades were in line with the national average. Across the full A* to G range, all pupils entered gained a grade, indicating at least satisfactory achievement by lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs. A small number of these pupils gained a certificate of achievement. Results for the smaller number of pupils taking Spanish and Italian were well above the national average. Overall, pupils' results in modern languages were in line with results in their other subjects.

140. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress. In Year 7, pupils respond well to the expectation that they use French in lesson routines, and the spontaneous use of foreign languages is well developed throughout the key stage. Listening and reading skills improve steadily, as pupils cover prescribed topics and acquire a good range of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. In Years 8 and 9, pupils in upper and middle bands apply tenses effectively in their writing, for instance to give an account of a recent holiday. Lower attaining pupils write more erratically but can produce a postcard about a holiday, communicating appropriate information. All pupils have regular opportunities to use the foreign language, both in pairs and in more energetic situations, where they conduct surveys, or exchange and collect information as a class. Pronunciation is usually good in these activities, but less so when speaking is based on written preparation.

141. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. In coursework, higher attaining pupils in both years produce extensive writing on a range of topics, such as accounts of holidays and work experience, personal fitness, and a leaflet promoting their area. They write accurately, using quite complex language. Other pupils cover the same topics with less length and accuracy, but manage to convey a good range of information. Higher attaining pupils in Year 10 speak confidently and with good pronunciation, though there are fewer opportunities for extended oral expression for pupils studying Italian. In other classes, and in Year 11, pupils convey information successfully, but pronunciation and intonation are often weak where too much emphasis is placed on written preparation, and more teacher support is required. Most pupils recall vocabulary well, so that listening and reading skills continue to improve satisfactorily.

142. Pupils have generally positive attitudes to learning a foreign language, and many pupils in Years 8 and 9 appreciate the opportunity to study two. Their enthusiasm and commitment help them to make progress. They collaborate well with classmates, especially in oral work, and behaviour is good. They are polite and helpful, and most take obvious pride in the appearance of their work. They acknowledge good performance by classmates. There is evidence of independent work in written coursework and in pupils' use of computers to improve the quality of their presentation. Poor punctuality to lessons often reduces the time available and has a negative impact on learning.

143. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout Years 7 to 11. Overall, teaching is good or better in two thirds of lessons, an improvement since the previous inspection. There is very good or excellent teaching in almost one third of lessons, and no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Most teachers make extensive use of the foreign language to

conduct lessons. This has a positive impact on learning, especially listening and speaking, as pupils are given a good model to imitate. Where teachers use too much English, progress in learning is slower. Planning for lessons is good. Teachers provide a range of tasks covering different skills. In the best lessons, activities are conducted at such pace that pupils' attention is fully engaged throughout and they enjoy their learning thoroughly. In a Year 10 French lesson on leisure activities, pupils were constantly challenged by a range of oral tasks in pairs and larger groups, assessed each other's oral performance, and did a paired dictation exercise, all in French. They made significant progress in oral competence and confidence, as they responded to the teacher's high expectations. Expectations are generally high, especially where teachers use the foreign language consistently and provide challenging tasks. Teachers make it clear that they expect more than a minimal response, and push pupils to higher levels. They manage pupils well. In most lessons there is no likelihood of errant behaviour because pupils are so involved in their work.

144. Teaching methods vary considerably but are generally effective in promoting learning. Teachers organise pupils in various ways within lessons and support learning well through the use of cassette players and overhead projectors. Time is well used. In a small number of lessons, activities are repetitious and concentration wavers. There are plans to further enhance the breadth of learning experiences through more systematic use of reading resources and computers. Relationships are good, especially where lively teaching includes an element of humour, so that pupils enjoy learning. Marking is up to date and gives pupils an idea of their progress. However, there is a confusing range of marking procedures and inconsistency in the provision of comments designed to assist future learning. Homework is set regularly and usually extends class work appropriately.

145. Provision for modern languages is good. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 can choose between three languages to add to French, and can choose to study two in Years 10 and 11. The head of department, new in post this year, provides very good leadership and management. Curriculum planning, both through schemes of work and meetings, has improved and takes account of data generated by good assessment procedures. For instance, the identification of speaking as the weakest skill has led to a system of rewards for spontaneous use of the foreign language by pupils, which is improving standards. Development planning and monitoring of the work of the department focus strongly on raising standards of teaching and learning, and inspection evidence indicates that priorities are being met. Accommodation is good. Rooms are spacious and work is enhanced by good display within and outside classrooms. Results are similar to those reported at the previous inspection, but teaching, planning and assessment are better, so that there has been satisfactory overall improvement since that inspection, with a clear capacity to improve further.

LATIN

146. Latin is offered in Year 8 as an alternative to a second modern language for higher attaining pupils. Take-up is variable, with 19 girls in Year 8, and small numbers continuing in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results have been variable, and there were no entries in 2000. The work of pupils in the current Year 11 is of a high standard, showing considerable understanding of complex grammar and a high level of intellectual effort. Pupils in Year 8 enjoy a lively approach to the subject, with understanding of grammatical rules reinforced through games. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and its examination requirements, which helps them to ensure that pupils make good progress in their learning.

MUSIC

147. The 2000 teacher assessments show pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 to be above average. Inspection evidence shows that the majority of present pupils are achieving above the national average. Pupils in Year 7 are able to read treble clef notation fluently, some rhythmic notation, and confidently find notes on the keyboard. Pupils in Year 8 are able to play simple pieces on a keyboard with both hands, listen to extracts of music and identify accurately the instruments being played. They also give good reasons why they prefer one arrangement of a piece to another. Pupils in Year 9 listen to Asian and Chinese music, identifying the compositional techniques and using them in their own.

148. The 2000 GCSE results were above the school average and show an improvement in the standard of results achieved since the last inspection. Numbers of pupils taking this examination have fluctuated, partly due to the frequent changes in the second teacher over the past two years. Pupils in Year 10 are developing their composition technique by writing a series of melodies of increasing complexity above a provided ground bass. Pupils in Year 11 have submitted their performance and composition tapes, and are working on the final stages of the preparation for the listening paper.

149. Pupils' make good progress in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Year 7 develop their keyboard playing skills by completing the right hand part of 'Ode to Joy' by Beethoven, adding a simple left hand part, fingered chords and finally a backing rhythmic pattern. They are also beginning to compose a simple melody using the rhythm from the opening line of 'Ode to Joy'. Pupils in Year 8 work on a similar task with Pachelbel's canon, but play more demanding right hand parts. Listening work covers a wide range of periods of music ranging from the Baroque to present day pieces. Pupils in Year 9 listen to and compare the drumming rhythms found in African music with those of the other World music studied, and participate in class drumming ensembles based on these intricate rhythmic patterns.

150. Learning in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils in Year 10 revise the meaning of 'sequence' and 'imitation', and are revising their ground bass melodies with a view to including where musically appropriate, examples of sequence and imitation. Pupils in Year 11 learn how to approach the final question of the listening paper through discussion with the teacher and from their own listening experiences. They gain confidence in observing the various aspects of three individual pieces, and then commenting on the continuity underlying the three pieces and the changes that have taken place over the years.

151. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers set tasks that are mostly practically based and offer challenge to the pupils according to their individual abilities. The higher attaining pupils continue to add new dimensions to their performances, while the less able make good progress producing musical performances of a simpler nature. Such is the success of these tasks that the pupils with special educational needs integrate well with the remainder of the class and often achieve in line with or better than the academically able. Improvements to the information communication technology facilities will enable the teachers to cater for the less musically able who do not have the benefit of previous instrumental experience.

152. Pupil's attitudes and behaviour in music are good, sometimes very good in Years 7 to 9, with the exception of one Year 8 class observed in which the attitudes and behaviour were

unsatisfactory. Attitudes and behaviour in Years 10 to 11 are very good, enabling the lessons to be conducted in a mature manner with the pupils engaging in well-developed discussion with the teacher. Pupils enjoy the largely practical nature of the subject and want to learn. The majority also look forward to the opportunity to perform the results of the work done in the lesson to the remainder of the class. They listen attentively to musical extracts, focusing on the areas identified by the teachers, and make accurate, observant comments in response. To allow all classes access to the keyboards, a change of classroom is necessary half way through the lesson. This is always achieved with minimum waste of time owing to the pupils' desire to continue with the lesson. Relationships between the pupils are good, as are those with the teachers.

153. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good with some of the lessons being very good. Teaching in Years 10 to 11 is very good. Both teachers have considerable knowledge of the subject and good understanding of how pupils learn and benefit from worthwhile musical experiences. Consequently, lessons are well planned, proceed at a good pace, and contain plenty of challenge for pupils of all abilities. This accounts for the pupils' positive response and their enjoyment of the lessons. Questioning is effectively used to enable the pupils to discover knowledge for themselves. Tasks are clearly explained so that the pupils are able to start work and quickly achieve good results. During keyboard work, the teachers circulate, spending sufficient time with all the pupils who indicate a need for their attention. This enables the teacher to evaluate, encourage, and suggest ways in which the pupils might improve their performance. Pupils are thus aware of their progress, both through their own assessment and the evaluation by the teacher. Homework is set regularly in Years 10 to 11, but irregularly in Years 7 to 9. This reduces pupils' opportunities to express themselves using musical vocabulary about music heard, or the experience of participating in a performance. Research about a new module, for example the blues, could also be set, encouraging the use of information and communications technology, but also developing the art of expressing results of research in their own words.

154. Management of the department is very good. The head of department is committed to offering good quality musical experiences to all pupils and has the knowledge and educational understanding to do this. Over the past two years, during which there has been a succession of three assistants, he has maintained standards within the department and increased the range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is satisfactory. With the exception of the use of information and communications technology, the National Curriculum is adequately covered in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is taught in modules lasting 4 to 10 weeks, with a strong emphasis on learning through practical experience. Key Stage 4 pupils' work follows the requirements of the GCSE syllabus. Assessment is satisfactory, with teachers using both formal assessment at end of modules and ongoing assessment throughout the term. However, there is insufficient rigour when applying the results of assessment to the monitoring of pupils' performance or using the results to guide curricular planning. The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. The department provides ample opportunities for music making within the school by providing a range of regular activities including choirs, orchestra, wind band and an annual production. There are also opportunities to join the Blackburn and Darwen Academy, which provides opportunities for wind players from associated primary schools to join those from St Bede's in worthwhile musical activities. As the venture is supported by the Blackburn and Darwen Band, there are also further opportunities for the more advanced players to join ensembles of a higher performing standard.

155. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Because both the teaching rooms are insecure, all of the instruments, particularly keyboards, have to be put away at the end of each school day. This has

caused undue wear and accidental damage to headphones and mains adapters. Both teaching rooms are small in size, and there are insufficient practice rooms for group work. Consequently all practical groups must rehearse within the confines of their classroom, which makes it difficult for the pupils to listen to their own contribution and the overall sound of the group. Storage for classroom instruments is outside the classrooms, which results in a loss of lesson time from setting up and dismantling the keyboards. There is insufficient room in the second classroom to locate the hi-fi speakers within the classroom. This is detrimental to the sound produced and reduces the pupils' chances of observing the intended focus. Curriculum related displays are informative, but otherwise the décor is shabby. In short, the accommodation is having an adverse effect on the musical education of the pupils. Resources are also unsatisfactory. Although there are sufficient keyboards, band and orchestral instruments, there is a shortage of quality pitched and non-pitched percussion instruments, multi-cultural instruments, and computers and appropriate software. The omission of the computers and software is preventing the full delivery of the National Curriculum.

156. Since the last inspection, all the issues raised have been addressed. GCSE results are now above the national average for the third consecutive year. Lesson time allowed for music is in line with recommendations, and staffing restraints have improved, although not totally solved despite strenuous attempts on the part of the department and the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

157. The 2000 teacher assessments show standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 to be broadly in line with those expected for pupils of this age. Boys, however, performed better than girls, unlike the previous year when there were no significant differences. Departmental records show that the girls in 2000 were not a particularly strong group. Because pupils in Year 9 were taking the National Curriculum tests during the period of the inspection, it was not possible to observe any lessons with this age group. However, inspection evidence shows standards in Years 7 and 8 to be broadly in line with national expectations. In core physical education lessons in Years 10 and 11, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. There are no significant differences between the standards of boys and girls.

158. By the end of Year 8, pupils' achievement in athletics is good. Girls are improving their sprinting techniques and boys are developing their competencies for baton changeover in sprint relays. However, the lack of marked changeover boxes means that this element of relay running is not fully covered. Boys also consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the correct techniques for long jump. By the end of Year 11, boys' basketball skills have

developed well. The highest attaining pupils, for example, show good control of the ball and use the 'fake' well, whereas lower attaining pupils lack the confidence to execute this skill effectively. In rugby league, ball-handling skills are secure, as is pupils' movement in small-sided games. In rounders, girls' fielding and striking skills are generally satisfactory.

159. Across all years, pupils have a good understanding of the principles and procedures of warm-up. They often lead their own warm-up exercises with confidence and most name the muscle groups that are being stretched. Although no pupils identified as having special educational needs were observed receiving additional help, they are well supported, integrated and make good progress. The overall challenge in lessons and grouping arrangements ensures all pupils are making good progress in relation to their capabilities.

160. Since 1998, there has been a continuing upward trend in standards at GCSE physical education, and in 2000 the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grade passes was well above the national average for all maintained schools. Because of the small number of girls taking the course it is not possible to compare achievement between boys and girls. In their practical and theory lessons pupils are making good progress. In Year 10, pupils develop their shot-putt techniques by practising each phase of the putt; in their theory lessons, they are develop their knowledge and understanding of the components of fitness. Year 11 pupils consolidate their knowledge of skills related fitness as a result of some well-planned revision lessons that relate theory to practice.

161. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations of teachers in terms of discipline, behaviour and pupils' ability to work to their best. They work very well together as pairs and small groups and show clear respect for the capabilities of one another. Their very positive attitudes, relationships and behaviour help promote a very positive learning atmosphere in lessons, which enables all to make good progress. In boys' basketball lessons in Year 11, learning was characterised by attentive listening and an eagerness to develop expertise.

162. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in all years. In two-thirds of the lessons observed, teaching was either good or very good, whilst in the remainder it was satisfactory. In a very good Year 11 boys' GCSE lesson, pupils were consolidating their knowledge and understanding of the components of skills related fitness through taking part in basketball-style circuit training and then devising their own practices for specific skills. This deepens their knowledge and understanding and prepares them well for the forthcoming examination. The structure of lessons and the use of a variety of planned activities are indicative of teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the activities they are teaching. This range of activities also helps to ensure pupils are on task, as well as offering challenge through, for example, both paired and small group work. Clear introductions to lessons and effective demonstrations, including demonstrations by pupils, ensure that lesson objectives are clear. In a Year 10 long jump lesson, for example, clear demonstrations of the phases and component skills of the long jump enabled pupils to improve their techniques and eventually improve the distances jumped. Effective questioning by teachers in lessons not only helps teachers gauge what pupils know and understand, but also ensures the use of correct terminology. In a junior sports leaders' award lesson, pupils were encouraged to describe the strengths and weaknesses of their work; thus their speaking and listening skills were also enhanced.

163. Pupils are made aware of their levels of attainment in practical lessons through the well-timed interventions of teachers to support and improve the performance of individual pupils. However, in some lessons, opportunities for pupils to engage in peer coaching and evaluation are not taken. In a Year 8 girls' athletics lesson, for example, these opportunities would have helped pupils improve their understanding of the importance of the effective use of the arms as part of sprinting technique. Although participation rates in lessons are high, there are occasions when non-participants are not as fully involved as they could be, for example, through involvement in whole group discussions, demonstrations or in coaching and evaluating performance. There are occasional weaknesses in the planning and pace of GCSE theory lessons with, for example, one lesson having too little content to engage pupils for the full 60 minute period, while in another there was insufficient time to cover all of the planned learning activities. GCSE theory work is marked, but the quality of the marking is inconsistent. Because of this pupils are not being made aware of what they might need to do to improve the quality of their work.

164. This is an effectively led and well-organised department that makes a positive contribution to the ethos of the school. Standards of achievement in the core physical education course have been maintained since the last inspection, as has the quality of teaching and learning. The proportion of pupils achieving A* to C GCSE grade has improved over the last three years. All pupils now show they understand the principles and procedures of warm-up. The amount of time for physical education has been improved for Year 7, but in Years 8 and 9, those pupils who study an extra modern foreign language do not have the same amount of physical education periods as other pupils. The department has made a successful transition to meet the demands of the new National Curriculum requirements, and new assessment procedures and schemes of work have been introduced. However, the assessment levels are not fully understood by pupils and parents, so there is insufficient awareness of what pupils need to do to in order to achieve appropriate levels by the end of Year 9. The balance of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is affected by a bias towards games. Indoor accommodation is enhanced by very good quality display, which gives information and celebrates pupils' sporting achievements.

165. A very good range of extra-curricular provision is available throughout the year. It includes competitive fixtures as well as recreational activities and an annual swimming gala and sports day. This enhances pupils' learning experiences and personal development. As a result of the continuing support of teachers, some of whom are from other departments, a number of individuals have gained representative honours at local and county level in a range of sports. One girl has gained national honours at gymnastics. The Year 7 girls are the Blackburn cross-country champions. Football remains a traditional area of success. Boys' teams have become district league and cup champions and two teams are county cup champions. The under-13 girls' football team has won the community cup for the last two years.