

INSPECTION REPORT

ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Mansfield

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122900

Headteacher: Mr K. Daly

Reporting inspector: Terence Parish
15465

Dates of inspection: 15th – 19th January 2001

Inspection number: 187377

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 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Broomhill Lane Mansfield Nottinghamshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr. F. Higgins
Date of previous inspection:	4 th March 1996

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14214	G. Smith	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with its parents
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15396	R. Bulman	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well the school is led and managed
15706	R. Crocker	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
8873	C. Evers	Team inspector	History Equality of opportunity	
27503	M. Foulds	Team inspector	Science	
2683	D. Gaulton	Team inspector	Geography Provision for students in the sixth form	
13066	M. Harrison	Team inspector	Art and design Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
18967	B. Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30648	B. Skelton	Team inspector	English Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
30128	S. Stanley	Team inspector	Music	The curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
21806	P. Swinnerton	Team inspector	Design and technology	
19295	P. Wall	Team inspector	Physical education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive and, with 1,152 pupils on roll, is larger than average. Most pupils are Roman Catholic, almost all are white and the number with English as an additional language is very small. The overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs is below average. Few pupils have statements of special educational needs, reflecting County policy. The school is very popular and pupils travel to it from considerable distances.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school that has been successful in maintaining pupils' GCSE academic standards above average over many years despite receiving less money than similar schools. Although the school has managed to raise GCSE standards further in 2000, insufficient money to do what is now needed is a significant barrier to maintaining standards or improving them further. Very good behaviour and attitudes and good attendance by pupils help them to improve academically and develop well personally. The headteacher leads the school very well and is supported by good managers. Teaching is good. The school provides very good value for money and the sixth form is both successful and cost effective.

What the school does well

- It fosters a good standard of pupils' work in many subjects at GCSE.
- The teaching of English, drama and music is very good.
- There are high standards of drama, music and poetry within both classrooms and at extra-curricular events and performances. A high number of pupils take up instrumental tuition.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good.
- Pastoral care of pupils is very good.
- Pupils behave very well and have very good relationships with each other due to the school's expectations and encouragement and the pupils respond with common sense and maturity.
- The school provides a wide range of courses in the sixth form in which the students achieve well.

What could be improved

- Test results at the end of Year 9, particularly the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels in English.
- Standards of girls' attainment in GCSE mathematics and science.
- Standards of pupils' work in GCSE French, particularly boys'.
- The quantity and quality of resources including those within science, art and design, design and technology and ICT.
- Almost all accommodation and especially that for science, drama, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), music and physical education.

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. Since then the good standard of pupils' work has been maintained overall and improved in many areas. Teaching has improved further. Opportunities for pupils in the sixth form have increased. The governors are linked better to work within departments. The school has achieved Investors In People status and also embraced local and national initiatives designed to make teachers better and raise pupils' standards of work further. The financial deficit has been reduced but at a significant cost to what might have been achieved and low funding remains a burden. Consequently, improvement since the time of the last inspection is satisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2000, based on national tests, was above average compared to national standards and average compared to similar schools. Overall test results have declined since 1998 owing to relatively low proportions of pupils attaining higher levels in English. The cohort of pupils who took the tests in 2000 was weaker in reading and language skills, compared to previous years, when they entered the school. Science results are best, then mathematics, then English. Boys do relatively better than girls, particularly in science.

GCSE results in 2000 showed pupils made good progress from when they were in Year 9. The school exceeded its statutory targets. The trend in GCSE results over time is similar to the national trend, a gradual improvement. Particularly strong subjects were the single sciences, English language, at higher grades in particular, ICT, history, geography, music and drama. Pupils who took French did not do as well as they should have done and neither were mathematics results as good as they should have been, particularly for girls. Girls also continued to attain lower than they should in science. Boys did particularly well in 2000. Advanced level results in the sixth form were well above average in 1998 and 1999 but average in 2000 when there was an increase in the number of pupils entered.

Pupils' work seen in Key Stage 3 is average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, modern languages, music and physical education, and above average in design and technology, history, geography and ICT. At Key Stage 4 pupils' work is average in mathematics, science, art and design, and modern languages; above average in design and technology, history, ICT, music and physical education; well above average in English and geography. 'A' level work seen during the inspection is generally average.

Pupils show particular strengths in creative skills within art and design, music, drama and technology, high level work in trigonometry and algebra, language skills in Spanish and ICT skills. They have weaknesses in investigative skills in mathematics and science. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 9 and well by the time they are ready to leave at the end of Year 11 or Year 13. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily overall, better in some areas, for example English.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils and students are proud of their school and respect its values.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils respond to crowding, queuing and difficult accommodation very sensibly indeed. There is a small number of temporary exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are admirable at supporting each other and work well for charities. They speak well to adults and audiences but have insufficient opportunities to debate issues.
Attendance	Good. Unauthorised absence low. Year 13 needs closer monitoring.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching in four fifths of lessons in Years 7-11 is good or better and over a quarter is very good or excellent. There is a higher proportion of very good or better lessons in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in the sixth form was only seen in Year 12. In the sixth form 84 percent was good or better and 28 percent very good or excellent.

Teaching in English and in music is very good and in all other subjects it is good. The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught both in English and mathematics and across the school.

Teachers' strengths include their knowledge of their subject and how it should be adapted for pupils and students so that they understand it; their firm but positive management of pupils; the range of methods they employ to engage and interest pupils and students. Teachers' weaknesses include their insufficient use of assessment information, to predict how well they might do and set targets to see that they reach or exceed expectations. This weakness extends to unsatisfactory reporting to parents about pupils' progress and how they might improve. It also contributes to some under achievement by girls. Another weakness is the under-use of computers by many teachers to support teaching and learning. Insufficient resources contribute significantly to this weakness.

Teaching satisfactorily meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs. When learning support teachers and assistants are involved with these pupils their teaching meets their needs well. Not all teaching meets the needs of gifted and talented pupils as they are not often sufficiently identified by the school except in music. Girls are sometimes not actively encouraged in classwork.

Pupils put a lot of effort in their work due to the great interest they have in it. For example, Year 8 pupils' poetry writing and performance. Weaknesses in learning are related to pupils' insufficient understanding of exactly how well they have done and what they must do to improve, particularly in Key Stage 3.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory Key Stage 3. Good Key Stage 4 though some weakness in ICT. Very good in the sixth form. Very good for drama, music and poetry.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Good for pupils with statements of need and when learning support teachers and assistants are involved.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory when necessary. Currently, very small numbers of pupils in school and these have at least satisfactory English skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Spiritual good; moral and social very good. Cultural good. Teachers provide good role models. The personal and social education lessons make a significant contribution. Pupils take an interest in other cultures and their own.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Pastoral care very good. Use of assessment data to monitor and raise pupils' attainment further is unsatisfactory.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has a good partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership with a clear sense of direction. The senior management team provides effective and complementary support. Good management overall across the school. Effective administrative support.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Keenly interested and becoming more involved in curriculum issues. A little work needs to be done on the annual report.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Insufficient use of data to predict pupils' probable achievement, to monitor pupils' progress and to ensure that they achieve as well as they can.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. In a very tight financial situation best value is always sought. Staffing is just adequate. Accommodation is poor and resources inadequate.

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 progress pupils make.• The behaviour of pupils.• Teaching.• Leadership and management.• How pupils mature and develop.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The organisation and quantity of homework.• Information about pupils' progress, particularly within end of year reports.• How the school works with parents.

The inspection team agrees with parents' and carers' views except that it considers the school works at least satisfactorily with parents, given the large area pupils come from.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

1. Pupils who enter the school in Year 7 are, overall, above average on the basis of tests given to them at the end of Year 6. The standards of Year 7 work seen indicates about a third of pupils are above average and a tenth below average. So there is a 'skew' that confirms the overall picture is above average but it is not huge. Pupils achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 9 and well by the time they take their GCSE examinations and post-16 qualifications in the sixth form.

2. At the end of Year 9, national test results in 2000 show that pupils' attainment is above average when compared with pupils' attainment in all schools and average when compared to their attainment in similar schools. When compared to those in similar schools, science results are good, mathematics results are average and English results are below average. Pupils' attainment in English actually falls just below the national average. This is largely due to relatively low proportions of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 scores in their tests. If boys and girls results are compared to their own national averages, then girls do relatively less well than boys. The most significant difference is in science, though the gap is a little less in 2000 than in recent years. The overall school trend in Year 9 test results is falling behind the gradual rise in national results. The school's results are declining whilst national are rising. English results contribute most to this decline. Results in English have fallen from a peak in 1998 and dipped below national averages for the first time in 2000. Mathematics and science results also fell in 1999 but picked up again in 2000, effectively following the national trend. There is a link between Key Stage 3 test results and the attainment of pupils when they entered the school. The best results of 1998 were attained by pupils with a better set of reading ages on entry, than the pupils who took tests in 1999, and much better than those in 2000. There are also indications from other test results that Year 9 pupils in 2000 had more problems associated with literacy than pupils in previous years. The school is addressing any literacy problems through substantial and effective support and teaching.

3. The pupils who did well in their 1998 Year 9 tests also did well in their GCSE examinations in 2000, boys particularly, and the school exceeded its statutory targets. The overall attainment of pupils was well above national and similar school averages. Their achievement, based on their prior attainment in Year 9, was good. The school did particularly well, above average, in the proportions of pupils who attained 5 or more A*-C and 1 or more A*-G grades. These proportions generally represent the higher attaining and lower attaining groups of pupils. The school appears to do less well in the proportion of pupils who attained 5 or more A*- G grades. This was average compared to similar schools but poor if related to pupils' prior attainment in Year 9. However, a significant number of pupils within this group follow courses that lead to certification rather than GCSE. They are, overall, appropriately successful in these certificates.

4. The school's trend in GCSE results is broadly in line with the gradual improvement seen nationally. Results in 2000 show a faster improvement. Though girls' results are, overall, better than boys', the difference is marginal and not the same as the national picture.

5. Simplistically, boys' results are *well above* the national average for boys, and girls' results are *above* the national average for girls. This relative performance is not just a reflection of boys doing particularly well in 2000 but is a trend over three years. Girls achieve particularly less well than boys in combined science (double award), and mathematics. They also achieve less well than boys in English language. If girls' GCSE results are compared to their Year 9 results, the picture may appear to be more positive but girls also showed relative underachievement then, and have done for several years.

6. At 'A/AS' level, in the sixth form, the overall attainment of pupils in 2000 was average. This followed two years when students' attainment was well above average. It is hard to draw any conclusion from this as courses and the numbers of students on them changed. The total number of students increased by about 50 percent. Neither is it very meaningful to compare subject grades with each other or with the national picture as class sizes are often small. Results in A level English literature were very high but English language results are weaker. The attainment of the small number of students entered for less than two GCE A Levels or equivalent, or for Advanced GNVQs, was average. The overall standard of all students' work seen during the inspection was average.

7. The overall standard of pupils' and students' work seen across all subjects and years is never less than average, often above average and sometimes well above average. It is average in Key Stage 3, above average in Key Stage 4 and average in the sixth form.

8. In Key Stage 3, the standard of pupils' work is average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, modern languages, music and physical education. Standards are above average in design and technology, geography, history and ICT.

9. In Key Stage 4, the standard of pupils' work is average in mathematics, science, art and design, and modern languages. It is above average in history, ICT, music and physical education. Standards are well above average in English, design and technology and geography.

10. In the sixth form, the standard of students' work is average in mathematics, science, design and technology, history and modern languages. It is above average in English language, art and design, ICT, music and physical education. It is well above average in English literature and geography.

11. The standard of drama and other work that pupils perform, for example poetry, is well above average in all years. The standard in vocational subjects, at the end of Year 11 or the sixth form, is at least satisfactory and often good. The standard in child development is satisfactory and certainly appropriate for the pupils who choose it as an option.

12. In English, pupils achieve satisfactorily in Key Stage 3 and very well in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Their speaking and listening skills are very good at all ages. Their standards of reading are average at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Their writing is good in many subjects and examples of very good written work are seen in English essays. Good quality research and extended writing was seen in a Year 10 history project on 'The History of Medicine'. Extended writing of very high quality was observed in an AS level ICT lesson.

13. In mathematics, pupils' achieve satisfactorily overall in all years. Girls significantly underachieve at the end of Key Stage 4 when they take GCSE. Though pupils' work on shape, spaces, measures and handling data is at least satisfactory their use and application of mathematics is weaker. There is insufficient development of investigational skills. Pupils' numeracy skills are generally good and significantly better than this in Year 7 through the

use of Mental Mathematics and other techniques utilised from the National Numeracy Strategy.

14. Pupils in science, overall, achieve satisfactorily in all years. However, there are a number of significant weaknesses. Whilst their gains in knowledge and understanding of science are good, sometimes very good at Key Stage 4, their investigative and experimental skills are below average in all years. This weakness is a direct result of poor funding, resourcing, accommodation and too little technical support. Girls underachieve in GCSE science examinations. Whilst high attaining boys opt for three separate sciences few girls do so, and there is little sign of high attaining girls doing as well as they should in dual award science.

15. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in art and design in Key Stages 3 and 4 and students achieve well in the sixth form. Only small numbers take GCSE or A Level. Pupils are good at discussing their ideas, sketching and ceramics.

16. In design and technology pupils achieve well in Key Stage 3 and very well in Key Stage 4. Students achieve well in the sixth form. Pupils are good at research, including using the Internet appropriately. Their planning is very good and practical skills satisfactory or better.

17. In geography pupils and students achieve well in all years. Presentation of work is very good and pupils and students can explain processes well. High attaining pupils write at length, fluently and with well-structured arguments.

18. In history pupils and students achieve well in all years. Pupils can successfully explain events, write well at length and use a variety of sources of evidence competently.

19. Pupils in ICT achieve well in both key stages. Students in the sixth form achieve satisfactorily. Pupils are well able to prepare and present work in a professional format and use databases and spreadsheets appropriately. Control, using computers, is at least satisfactory. Pupils' abilities to collect and analyse information from scientific experiments is hampered by a lack of resources. 'A' Level geography students use sophisticated Internet research for their work on flood plains.

20. In modern languages pupils achieve well in Key Stage 3 and satisfactorily in Key Stage 4. Students achieve well in the sixth form. Pupils can communicate in their chosen languages at a level appropriate for everyday situations. After an appropriate time of study they can write in the language in several styles and with some attention to grammar. Pupils taking German and Spanish achieve rather better than those taking French where they are less confident and require more prompts or reference to notes.

21. In music, pupils achieve satisfactorily in Key Stage 3 and well in Key Stage 4. Students achieve well in the sixth form. Pupils can perform and adapt melodies and have a wide range of skills on musical instruments. A high proportion of pupils and students are studying particular instruments and bands and choirs perform to high standards.

22. In physical education pupils and students achieve well in all years. Personal fitness is above average. Many pupils represent the school in teams and sports.

23. In vocational subjects pupils achieve at least satisfactorily at Key Stage 4 and often much better than this. In business studies pupils can use a variety of research techniques well, use technical vocabulary, and articulate arguments and ideas well.

24. Most pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress according to their prior individual attainment. In some departments, English, music, physical education, history and art and design, they make good progress because teachers understand their needs better and make good provision for them. In 2000, six pupils on the Youth Award Scheme achieved bronze awards. Others studied for various GCSE examinations and Certificates of Achievement in French, mathematics and science and were successful.

25. Pupils and students who are gifted and talented are insufficiently identified, except in music, to ascertain whether the progress they make is appropriate or sufficient. There are very few pupils with English as an Additional Language, none where this might cause difficulties to their learning. They make the same progress as their peers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

26. The previous inspection found that pupils had positive attitudes to school and to learning which continues to be the case. It is especially evident in the sixth form where the students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils of all ages and abilities are well motivated and keen to succeed in their work. They come to school in a positive frame of mind and are proud of their school. Pupils themselves are good company and they are helpful and polite towards visitors. Pupils' positive attitudes help to underpin their consistently good progress and the standard of work they are subsequently able to achieve. This school has a good atmosphere and is a nice place to be.

27. Several areas of the school have been used heavily for many years and need to be refurbished and redecorated. Although lack of funds may prevent this for the foreseeable future, pupils respect their school and its values and take very good care of the facilities provided. Despite the fact that interest in extra-curricular clubs is high, in practice many pupils still find it difficult to attend. More than half the pupils use school buses and they can only participate in extra-curricular activities if their parents are able to get them home afterwards. Where parents have plenty of advance notice, however, they are often able to do this and levels of participation are excellent. Within the drama department, for example, recent productions of *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Grimms' Fairy Tales* have proved to be extremely popular and pupils have put on performances at several of the contributory primary schools. Pupils are very interested in hearing about the lives and values of other people and races. For example, during a World Justice Day, Year 10 pupils were fascinated to hear about a trip one of their teachers had recently made to Bangladesh, under the auspices of the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD). Pupils' response to homework is good. They enjoy a good rapport with their teachers and feel confident about asking and responding to questions about their work. In some lessons girls can be more reluctant to participate than boys. In other lessons teachers take answers from boys and allow girls to remain passive. Where girls are fully involved they are confident and articulate.

28. Previously considered to be good, the standard of pupils' behaviour has improved further and it is now very good. During lessons, pupils work hard, do their best and take care to ensure that their work is as neat as possible. Pupils behave sensibly during lessons and during practical lessons, for example in science and design and technology, pupils can be relied upon to use the equipment responsibly. Relationships within the school, including those between Catholics and non-Catholics, are very good. Pupils work well together in pairs or small groups. They care about each other's welfare and readily offer help and support if someone is upset or unsure of what to do. For example, during a technology lesson, pupils

volunteered help to a classmate who had previously been absent and was unsure about how to solder wires onto an electronic circuit board. Their intervention ensured that she quickly made up for lost time and their consideration also helped the teacher. Work provided during lessons is interesting and encourages the very high standards of behaviour seen. Many lessons take place in 'temporary' classrooms not connected to the main school building and, before each lesson, pupils have to queue up outside. They do so patiently and amicably, even when space is limited and the weather is inclement. In order to minimise congestion within the dining hall, pupils have lunch at different times, according to their year group. The amount of available space is still limited, however, and although there is some pushing and shoving, the overall standard of behaviour remains high. The number of temporary exclusions is similar to the national average. There have been no permanent exclusions over the last year.

29. Pupils' personal development is very good and pupils of all ages, and sixth form students, can be relied upon to work sensibly even when they are not directly supervised. They use their initiative and make good use of the library when researching topic work. Although there are few opportunities for pupils to have a 'voice' in the organisation and running of the school, when opportunities are provided, pupils' response is very positive. Each year, individual year groups decide upon and organise fund raising programmes for nominated charities. Parents and the local community provide generous support and significant sums are regularly raised for CAFOD and The Catholic Children's Society. Student organisers (special notebooks) are generally used very well for recording homework and provide a means whereby pupils can record their progress in the acquisition of Key Skills. However, pupils are not currently receiving the support they need when deciding upon their own personal academic targets. This aspect of their personal development needs to be developed further.

30. Pupils with special educational needs respond well in lessons overall, especially when supported by learning support teachers in small groups or support assistants in mainstream classes. For example, a small group of Year 8 pupils worked hard in a basic skills workshop taught by a learning support teacher, Year 7 pupils showed interest and enthusiasm in mathematics and a small group of Year 7 pupils had excellent attitudes and behaviour when taught by a learning support teacher, supported by a learning support assistant. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties have specific targets on their individual education plans, behaviour based 'positive reports' and specific detailed pastoral support programmes, including a 'buddy system', most of which are monitored by heads of year. There is an effective anger management programme.

31. The previous inspection found attendance to be good and it continues to be above the national average. Unauthorised absences are rare – around one quarter of the number usually found at similar schools. Many of the sixth form students, however, leave school during the day, for example to study at home or to take driving lessons. This can result in the 'absence' of up to a quarter of students at some time during any day that is inadequately monitored.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. Teaching is good across the school. This is better than at the time of the last inspection when it was satisfactory.

33. Four fifths of lessons are good or better and over a quarter are very good or excellent. There is a higher proportion of very good or better lessons in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in the sixth form was seen only in Year 12. In the sixth form 84 percent was good or better and 28 percent very good or excellent.

34. Teaching in English and in music is very good and in all other subjects it is good. The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught both in English and mathematics and in many other subjects.

35. Teachers' strengths include their knowledge of their subject and how it should be adapted for pupils and students so that they understand it; their firm but positive management of pupils; the range of methods they employ to engage and interest pupils and students. Teachers' weaknesses include their insufficient use of assessment information, to predict how well they might do and set targets to see that they reach or exceed expectations. This weakness extends to unsatisfactory reporting to parents about pupils' progress and how they might improve. It also contributes to some under achievement by girls. Another weakness is the under-use of computers by many teachers to support teaching and learning. Insufficient resources contribute significantly to this weakness as teacher training is in place and teachers are willing to use new technology.

36. Very good teachers' planning in English leads to a range of interesting activities that encourage pupils to work at a good pace and learn for themselves. Pupil management is very good and allows pupils to work in pairs and groups, helping them develop ideas. Teachers use 'assessment profiles' on pupils so that information on how well pupils are doing can be passed to the next teacher. In the process pupils understand better how well they are doing and how they might improve. Though teaching is good overall in mathematics there are weaknesses. It is good where a variety of activities are well timed, giving pace to pupils' learning, and there are clear objectives. Weaknesses include teaching to the middle attaining pupils within sets, so insufficiently challenging higher attainers in them, and giving homework that does not meet the needs of the range of attainment in the class. Though assessment of pupils within the classroom is often good, marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and teachers' comments do not often indicate how pupils might improve. Pupils are unclear about how well they are actually doing. Investigative skills, posing and solving problems, are not taught effectively enough and pupils' understanding in this area is insecure. In science, teachers' good subject knowledge and very good class management underpin good teaching. Teachers encourage pupils to think and work independently through good questioning and well-prepared handouts that match pupils' attainment. Homework is not so demanding and marking rarely indicates how pupils might improve. Teaching about science is well done and pupils acquire a good level of knowledge and understanding but investigative, experimental work, is taught much too infrequently. Pupils' acquisition of investigative and practical laboratory skills is unsatisfactory and extends upwards to students in Year 12. Poor accommodation, inadequate resources and insufficient technical support are significant reasons for too few experiments.

37. Drama teachers provide a range of very challenging activities that make pupils apply a lot of creative effort and become very involved in their work. Good teaching in art and design sets pupils challenging tasks and they work hard to address and finish them. Satisfactory teaching has inconsistent management of pupils and some become less productive and noisy. Very good teaching in music is due in part to teachers' very good knowledge of the

subject and their own very good skills in instrumental playing. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to teach large groups of mixed ability pupils in Key Stage 3. Pupils are very enthusiastic about music, work hard and learn skills quickly. A high proportion take their work further through instrumental tuition.

38. In geography, teachers use a wide range of methods effectively. Activities are well planned and timed to make pupils work faster. Pupils' work is well monitored in the classroom so that their progress is assured. Homework is used well to extend work in lessons but marking, though regular, does not inform pupils sufficiently about how to improve. In history lessons are well planned and often lead to immediate feedback to pupils on their quality of work. Work set by teachers challenges pupils appropriately and they acquire a good knowledge base and understanding about the past. A variety of teaching methods is used that allows pupils to work independently, in pairs and in groups and this helps maintain their interest. Sometimes girls are insufficiently involved as boys can dominate lessons.

39. Teachers' high expectations of pupils in design and technology, coupled with teachers' good subject knowledge and communication skills, enable pupils to learn well and progress significantly throughout the school. Teachers share their expectations of standards of work with pupils. Consequently pupils know what they must do to do well. Teachers of ICT plan whole class work well but do not always take on the needs of individual pupils with a wide range of prior attainment. Where teaching is good there is frequent support to individuals within classes.

40. Teaching in modern languages varies from satisfactory to excellent. Brisk lessons lead to a good pace of learning and often pupils' obvious enjoyment. Interesting activities help them learn well. Sometimes lessons drag and pupils lose interest. Insufficient use of assessment by teachers in French contributes to insufficient progress by some pupils who achieve less well than they might.

41. Challenging and vigorous activities in physical education lessons set high expectations for all pupils. Teachers give clear explanations of what is needed and pupils know what they have to do to be successful. They respond with enthusiasm and make good progress.

42. Teaching of vocational courses in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good. Thorough planning by teachers leads to carefully structured lessons that encourage pupils' independent learning skills. Students in the sixth form can particularly sustain concentration and think and learn for themselves. They demonstrated these attributes in the significant amount of lessons that take place 'on-line' through video conferencing. The expert elsewhere in the country poses searching questions that put students on the spot and makes them think.

43. Pupils and students with special educational needs generally have additional staff support within classrooms. Some pupils are withdrawn from lessons for basic skills work. The quality of teaching by teachers in the learning support department is good overall. Where teaching is very good, the teachers use discussion and specific language very well, which keeps pupils motivated, makes them think and increases their knowledge and understanding of the subject. The work challenges the pupils and they are given appropriate tasks, which promote an excitement in learning. Classroom management is very good and pupils are not allowed to stray off their work. In satisfactory lessons, classroom management is less effective. The quality of support given by learning support assistants (LSA) is very good overall and they understand when to give pupils support and when to encourage their independence. The quality of teaching, for pupils with special educational needs, is less effective and consistent, when unsupported teachers have to plan work for all the pupils in

their class, including those who have individual education plans. Some teachers do not fully understand how to plan work for these pupils, or how to set pupils targets that can be achieved in a short time, so ensuring that pupils experience success and make progress. The individual education plans are reviewed once a year and teachers are responsible for overseeing the progress of pupils with special educational needs who are not specifically supported by learning support teachers or assistants. The school has already identified the need for training, which will enhance teachers' skills in this area. However, teachers in some subjects do plan well for pupils with special educational needs, for example, in history and in music.

44. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well when taught by learning support teachers or supported by learning support assistants. Pupils, who do not consistently have this type of support, achieve satisfactorily. Pupils with statements of special educational need achieve well. Gifted and talented pupils are not identified well enough, except in music, but several teachers have attended relevant courses to help get appropriate work started.

45. Effective literacy teaching for pupils with special educational needs includes work on handwriting skills, working with *Toe by Toe* and using *Starspell* programs on computers. Teachers' good use of a range of strategies for improving literacy is seen in Key Stage 3 history and geography. These include note-taking and drafting skills and the use of writing frames and the teaching of 'starters and connectives' so that pupils can write good lengthy reports. Teachers are developing pupils' good range of literacy skills in design technology subjects, ranging from discussion at the planning stages to drafting and redrafting as the writing up of assignments is tackled. The teaching of spellings and key words is inconsistently done in science, but pupils are required to answer in full sentences using the correct terminology. In science pupils are taught to deliver oral presentations on specific topics. In mathematics lessons key words are introduced and pupil discussion is being used to develop their investigation skills. Teachers in mathematics lessons also use 'spelling boxes' and pupils are required to read aloud. Teacher supported discussion in art and design lessons also effectively enhances pupils' speaking and listening skills. GNVQ Business students in Year 12 are formally taught high level oracy skills as they learn how to conduct a discussion.

46. Number skills are taught well by the mathematics department, with frequent practice in mental calculation as well as standard written methods and techniques. Recently teachers have begun to value pupils' own methods of mental and written calculation, a development promoted by the National Numeracy Strategy. The numerical skills of Year 7 are much improved as a result. Many teachers in a wide range of subjects make significant contributions to raising the standards of pupils' numeracy. Consequently they achieve well and are well practised in working with numbers by the time they leave school. In Year 7 food technology a unit of work on weighing and measuring is taught well, using the imperial and metric systems. In Key Stage 4 GCSE resistant materials technology, good teaching allows pupils to calculate and estimate quantities of materials required and calculate costs well. In history and geography, good teaching ensures pupils use graphs and interpret data well. Teachers also encourage students' correct interpretation of statistical data in French 'A' level, and science in all key stages. Teachers use Mental Mathematics calculations well with pupils in all spreadsheet work in ICT and a variety of calculating methods used in science. Teachers give sound support for numeracy in art and design, with pupils having to work with patterns, shape and form and measurements needed for 3-D work. Teachers currently do much of this work as part of their subject teaching. There should be a greater degree of co-ordination as the Key Stage 3 Pilot initiative rolls forward.

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

47. Since the time of the last inspection provision for ICT and modern languages has improved and the sixth form curriculum now has more subjects within it.

48. In Key Stage 3, the quality of the curriculum and the range of learning opportunities are satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 they are good and in the sixth form they are very good. Although there are some shortcomings in the ICT curriculum, the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are met. The sixth form curriculum is described more fully in the sixth form section of this report.

49. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory throughout the school. The school ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal opportunity to study all aspects of the curriculum. Special provision includes courses with Certificates of Achievement and The Youth Award scheme that recognises personal development. Two pupils from this scheme impressed inspectors with their confidence and skills during an early visit to the school. The school is committed to including all pupils in its community and to giving them the opportunity to succeed. The provision for pupils with statements is good and they make good progress.

50. In Key Stage 3 the school provides all the subjects of the National Curriculum and drama. The time available for these subjects is appropriate. In Key Stage 4, in addition to normal subjects, the school has introduced work-related courses in order to provide a more relevant curriculum for those who might do less well on straight academic courses. There are many courses available for pupils to choose from, including child development, business studies, health and social care and five different courses within design and technology. The actual number of courses pupils can follow, in addition to those they must do, such as mathematics, are limited to two. This is rather more restrictive than in many schools. However, good opportunities are provided outside of normal lesson times, for example the on-line GNVQ in ICT. Few girls choose to do three sciences or technology based in workshops and few boys choose to do music.

51. The school is making sustained and successful efforts to develop pupils' literacy as a means of raising their levels of achievement. The first literacy summer school was organised last year. The school now has a literacy co-ordinator and the positive effects of a literacy policy are seen in several areas of the curriculum. English lessons in Year 7 and Year 8 systematically include skills and techniques adapted from the National Literacy Strategy. All English lessons in Key Stage Three include 'Interactive Literacy' sessions lasting about ten minutes. Time is set aside in registration for Year 7 and Year 8 pupils to practise private reading. A paired reading scheme has recently been introduced which has a secondary aim of raising the attainment of boys. The school has a Reading Week. The development of literacy skills is an important part of the school's participation in the County's pilot initiative 'Raising Standards at Key Stage 3'. There is no numeracy across the curriculum policy, but the effective strategies used to develop pupils' competence in numeracy are not hindered. Numeracy is developed and implemented well across the curriculum and no problems were noticed that prevented achievement in other subjects.

52. In the sixth form the wide range of subjects available for pupils to choose from includes sociology and politics. Both subjects are taught live, by video conferencing to universities, using a computer. In lessons seen, this arrangement works well. Students take responsibility for going on line and for e-mailing assignments to the tutor. Initial difficulties with support were seen being addressed via a visiting tutor taking a mentoring session and making arrangements for future visits when students felt they were necessary.

53. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. There are teams for all major sports. Music is strong and pupils take part in choirs and band. Both groups are successful. The overall quality of singing in choir is very good and the school has released a music CD. Pupils are given numerous opportunities to play at high profile events in the school and in the community. There are visits to the theatre. There are several drama productions during the year and one goes on tour to each feeder school, taking actors and all that is needed for a full production. There are language clubs, music GCSE for all years, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, 'Young Enterprise', a German exchange trip and many outdoor educational trips.

54. The curriculum is equally accessible to all pupils. There is however, as at the time of the last inspection, a problem for pupils who live at some distance from the school in participating in extra-curricular activities. These pupils have to rely on parents or staff to provide lifts home after school buses have left. There are few girls taking three sciences or resistant materials or electronics technologies and few boys taking music. The school does not have a clear strategy to try and encourage a better gender balance and this was also the case at the last inspection.

55. Provision for personal and social education is satisfactory. However, the school is aware of the need for more detailed planning and monitoring in this area. There are examples of good practice. In one Year 8 lesson, pupils were using information from subject reports to identify their individual strengths and weaknesses. Through discussion with the teacher, they then formulated targets for improvement. Drugs education and sex education are satisfactorily addressed through personal, health and social education (PHSE), science and religious education lessons.

56. Careers education is good. It is supplemented by a two-week work experience scheme for Year 10 pupils and a one-week scheme for Year 12 pupils. The scheme is well organised and valued by the pupils. The careers library is well stocked and additional computers have been ordered. The school organises a careers evening for Key Stage 4 pupils. There is a post-16 options presentation for Year 11 pupils. The school has strong links with the 'Guideline Career Service'. Representatives from the service interview pupils and help share the responsibility of informing pupils and parents about careers. Pupils start their careers education in Year 9 PSHE lessons. Years 9, 10, 11 and the sixth form have access to a range of careers software in lesson time.

57. The school has good links with the community and there are plans for further links to develop. There are very strong links with the Church that provides role models and mentors to individual pupils. Through the work experience scheme the school has good links with local industry and commerce. A local packaging company has supported the provision of ICT in the school. For example, it recently sponsored a competition in which pupils designed their own web page. There are plans for a representative from a bank to speak to Years 10 and 11 about money management in PHSE time. The school is arranging an evening when a bank manager will speak to Year 13 students about bank accounts and the student loan system. The school has good links with the feeder primary schools and further education. There is a good transfer of academic and other essential information between schools. Pupil and students visit universities to establish a 'feel' for them.

58. The provision the school makes for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good overall. The religious ethos of the school makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual development. There is no written policy, but the school is aware of the need to ensure pupils have opportunities to reflect in all subject areas. There are examples of good practice. In music, pupils are given the opportunity to listen and experience the ways in which the music makes them feel. In design and technology, opportunities are given for pupils to be creative and to use their creativity to help solve other people's problems to make the world a better place.

59. The school's provision for the moral and social development of pupils is very good with significant strengths. Teachers and non-teaching staff provide good role models for the pupils. Pupils respect and value them. The personal and social education curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' moral development by encouraging discussion and evaluation of a variety of moral and personal issues. It reinforces the school's good code of conduct and involves pupils in their own personal values. In science pupils discuss wider issues such the impact of genetically engineered crops. Pupils generally work well in pairs and groups. They show respect for each other and for the environment in the classroom and around the school.

60. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is good. Music schemes of work include music from around the world and the British Isles. In history, pupils study past cultures of Rome, Egypt and Greece. In ICT pupils use computers to 'visit' virtual and actual (recordings) galleries, museums, music and dance and the natural world through art and design and literature. The recent poetry workshop managed by the English department allowed a large number of Year 8 pupils, including those with special educational needs, to create their own culture and appreciate that of others. The confident performance of their work before a large public audience was a truly marvellous event for all. The contribution of the headteacher and several staff as 'background' to one act, not only underlined the very good social development of pupils in the school, but also added a little 'awe and wonder' to all who watched it.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

61. The previous inspection found that this school takes good care of pupils and this continues to be the case. The pastoral system works well and helps to ensure that any problems that pupils and students may have are identified and addressed quickly. The form tutor, who works closely with each head of year, oversees pupils' day-to-day educational guidance and support. As part of their role as learning managers, they provide good support for pupils in all aspects of their school life with the aim of raising pupils' individual achievement. Liaison with contributory schools is good and this helps pupils to settle down quickly once they arrive. It is clear that all members of staff have a sincere commitment to the well-being of the pupils and work very hard on their behalf. The careers programme for sixth form students, including the advice to students seeking university places, is well organised.

62. Child protection procedures are good and statutory requirements are met. The local education authority recently undertook a health and safety audit and the school was given a clean bill of health. The inspection, however, brought a number of health and safety issues to light. These have been brought to the attention of the governing body and are being addressed.

63. Pupils with special educational needs follow the same curriculum as their peers. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is monitored and recorded each year. However the monitoring is not tight enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Progress made by pupils who are supported by learning support assistants is more tightly monitored and recorded by these assistants. Statements are in place and are reviewed annually. The special educational needs co-ordinator has good links with outside agencies. An appropriate range of vocational qualifications is provided in Key Stage 4, including the Certificate of Education and the Youth Award Scheme. There are very few pupils who have English as a second language and these speak English well. The school does not identify pupils who may be gifted or talented except in music. As a consequence, there is insufficient information available to judge the standard of provision for these groups of pupils. Provision for pupils with physical disabilities is good.

64. The previous inspection found that assessment information was not used effectively when deciding what pupils should do next. This has improved over the intervening five years. For example, standardised information provided by the contributing primary schools is put to good use when placing pupils into various ability bands at the start of Year 7. As pupils move on, procedures for assessing the standard of their work are good. Over a period of time, therefore, the school assembles a considerable range of data. The results of assessment, however, are not usually used to make predictions about the expected standard of individual pupils' future work, nor are they used to set subject-specific targets for pupils to aspire to. Consequently, procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory. An impact of this weakness is the general underachievement of girls that has been insufficiently recognised or acted upon. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they find teachers' verbal and written comments, about their work, useful. Although pupils' targets for improvement are provided in music and art and design, these are the exception and their importance is reflected in the high standard of work often achieved in these subjects. The provision of clearly expressed individual targets should be extended further so that pupils know exactly what it is that they have to do, in order to improve the standard of their work towards what assessment information indicates they should be capable of achieving.

65. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are largely informal but are satisfactory overall. They are largely based upon teachers' observations and their knowledge of their pupils' individual circumstances.

66. Procedures for promoting good behaviour and high standards of discipline are good. Much of the success of the school's policy is the result of good teaching and the very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils. Members of staff have high expectations and pupils have a crystal clear understanding of what is, and what is not, acceptable. Should a pupil behave inappropriately, they may be placed on report. This system can be tailored to suit the individual misdemeanour and is effective in the majority of cases. Should it not solve the problem, however, a pupil may be referred to the 'isolation room' for a period of time. Good use is made of external services such as the behavioural support service, although the amount of time available for the school is limited. The school has an appropriate policy for bullying and a lot of very relevant work has been undertaken, for example, within drama. Year 7 pupils have completed an anti-bullying project and have reflected on a range of aspects relating to bullying and how one could cope.

67. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good and registers are carefully maintained. The school works closely with the education welfare officer in its efforts to improve attendance further and to monitor the relatively small number of pupils who are regularly absent. Attendance of students in Year 13, however, is not monitored as well as it might be.

68. For several years now, the school has been subjected to severe budgetary constraints and the amount of time that teachers can devote to the monitoring of pupils' progress and their attendance is very limited. The school has worked hard to overcome its financial deficit and there are plans to introduce, for example, a computerised assessment system as soon as funds become available. As things stand, however, this is not likely to happen within the foreseeable future. This inability to invest is having a detrimental impact on the effectiveness with which the school is able to predict and monitor pupils' progress and makes it harder for teachers to help pupils achieve even higher standards of work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

69. The previous inspection found that parents were very supportive of the school and its Christian values and this continues to be the case. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and those who returned the questionnaire indicate that they hold the school in high regard and are pleased with virtually every aspect of the school's work. Indeed, the school is heavily over-subscribed and enjoys a good reputation both locally and within its widespread catchment area.

70. The special educational needs co-ordinator has good links with parents through telephone and written contact. Parents usually attend annual reviews. If they are unable to do so contact is made so that they can make a contribution.

71. The only significant concern that emerged from the analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire concerns the level of information parents receive about their children's progress. Inspectors agree and consider the overall level of information provided for parents to be unsatisfactory. Pupils' annual reports do not provide a clear picture of how well pupils are actually doing. Although they contain plenty of information about the work that has been covered by the class, details of their child's attitude and how hard they have been working, they do not give parents a feel as to whether or not their child's work is of a good enough standard. Nor do they clearly indicate whether or not he or she is making sufficient progress in relation to their ability. In addition, teachers do not usually give subject-specific improvement targets for the future and parents are therefore given little idea as to how they can help their child improve. In addition, at Key Stage 4, many pupils' Record of Achievement folders fail to mention ICT at all. Where it is acknowledged, there are few comments regarding how the pupil could improve in the future. ICT comments in the sixth form reports contain relatively little evaluative comment.

72. The school prospectus is a very professional publication and contains lots of useful information. It is misleading, however, with regard to the physical education facilities. In reality, indoor facilities are unsatisfactory and they are not suitable for the range of sports required by the National Curriculum. In addition, the school prospectus and the governors' annual report do not contain all the information that they should.

73. Although many parents live some distance from the school, the partnership between home and school continues to be strong. Parents support their children well. For example, they ensure that their children complete homework on time and, by making sure that their children attend regularly, they help them to achieve work of a high standard. Parents also

provide generous financial support through the parents' association. Funds raised are put to very good use and usually go towards new learning resources, such as audio-visual equipment. Many parents also provide lifts home if their child wants to take part in an extra-curricular club so helping pupils to broaden their experience of the range of sporting and other opportunities available.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

74. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. Most parents agree that the school is well led. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future development and improvement of the school. He is well supported by his two deputy headteachers and the assistant headteacher whose experience and complementary skills contribute to providing the staff with effective management. Most responsibilities have been efficiently redistributed following the reduction in size of the senior management team since the last inspection. The school's senior administration officer leads a hard working team of support staff who contribute much to the management and organisation of the school.

75. The management of special educational needs is sound. The co-ordinator has been in post for approximately one year and has made a good start in addressing the needs of pupils with special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides members of staff with clear information regarding different disabilities. Pupils' progress is not always effectively monitored.

76. The school's aims of raising achievement, developing the individual and creating a supportive learning environment are evident in its work. The academic progress and pastoral care of pupils and students in the sixth form are managed with equal care and attention. A carefully considered system of meetings and consultation procedures enables liaison between the senior and middle managers as well as involving subject teachers and their support staff, though opportunities for all staff to meet together are few. Teachers at all levels of seniority contribute to the spiritual and caring ethos that underpins the school's success and growing popularity.

77. The school's priorities for development are appropriate, and the staff has both the desire and the professional skills to improve standards. In several instances the school's intentions are limited or frustrated by inadequacies of funding, due to under funding over many years. This under funding led to a significant deficit budget at the time of the last inspection. Very good management of financial resources by governors and the headteacher has reduced this deficit considerably and school finances should move into the 'black' soon. The school has made good use of separate, specific grants that it receives, for example for special educational needs and for the Key Stage 3 Pilot. The governors now need to consider how best to use other grants that may become available and the school's own general finances, once the deficit is cleared. The school seeks 'best value' whenever spending the money it does have and, given the academic standards it achieves, the good teaching it provides and the very good attitudes of pupils, the school provides very good value for money. This is also supported by the cost effective sixth form provision the school has. The money brought in by the numbers of students pays the cost of providing the sixth form curriculum.

78. Aims and objectives are clearly stated in a detailed improvement plan presented annually to the governing body and approved by the local education authority. These include the extension and refurbishment of school buildings, new laboratories and learning resources such as the library. Curricular aims such as extending the use of ICT have been partially accomplished. Insufficient attention has so been given to the major issue of underachievement of girls that is evident in some subjects' examination results. The school

has made insufficient progress in the interpretation and analysis of statistical data for following and predicting the achievements of individual pupils.

79. The quality of most curriculum and pastoral leadership is good overall. Curriculum leadership is very good for English, mathematics, drama and music. Departmental planning is closely allied to the school improvement plan, which is drawn up and revised after due process of consultation. There are informative schemes of work for many subjects and planning is usually sound, thoughtful and realistic, given the financial constraints on the school. Where departments work together, as in English and drama or business education and ICT there is close and harmonious co-operation. There is weakness in the leadership of French, reflected in the relatively low standards attained by many pupils in recent GCSE examinations, the inadequate departmental documentation and the unavailability of assessment evidence.

80. The composition of the governing body has changed substantially since the last inspection, over half of its members having been recently appointed. Other members have had a long and fruitful association. Governors take a keen interest in the life of the school and are well informed about its strengths and weaknesses. In response to the last inspection they have added a curriculum committee to the others concerned with aspects of school management. The governing body largely fulfils its statutory duties, although a few items are missing from its annual report to parents, for example the statement relating to admitting pupils with disabilities. Governors are active in helping the school to fulfil its aims, whether seeking funding for building developments, supporting the recent Arts College bid or attending to everyday matters such as bus transport to and from school. They regularly receive and approve detailed reports from the Headteacher and heads of department. Presentations by curriculum managers help them stay involved and aware of changes in demands on the school and its response to them. The governing body is effective and influential in sustaining the Christian ethos of the school.

81. The school is proud of its status as an Investor in People and well placed to respond to the demands of performance management. Involvement in the national Key Stage 3 Pilot Project has engaged all teaching staff in training for the development of literacy and numeracy. Work on several initiatives organised by local education authority advisers, colleges and universities has raised the level of debate about the quality of teaching and learning in school. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, including direct observation of work in the classroom, is already a regular feature of the school's programme of professional development. The headteacher is sufficiently well informed to be able to counsel many of the large number of teachers applying to cross the new pay threshold.

82. The school has appropriate policies for monitoring the performance of newly qualified teachers and providing them with guidance and training, but the level of mentor support they received prior to the inspection was perceived by them to be inadequate. The arrangements for the induction of other teachers who are new to the school are good. Provision for the professional development and training of staff is good and the school is both an effective provider of initial teacher training and a place where training can be effective.

83. The number, qualifications and experience of teaching and teaching support staff meet the demands of the curriculum satisfactorily. There is a good level of experience among the teaching staff and almost all teachers are appropriately qualified for the subjects they teach. The quality of the teaching makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. In mathematics, however, the number of teachers who are part-time or have major responsibilities outside the department is high and this has an adverse effect on the development of teaching and learning in the subject. The number of learning support assistants is satisfactory and they provide good support for pupils with special educational

needs. The provision for instrumental music teaching is good and this contributes to the high quality of the school's musical activities. The level of technical support for design and technology, science and ICT is unsatisfactory. In science, too little technical support restricts pupils' opportunities to experience practical work and develop their skills in scientific enquiry. Staff involved in caretaking, cleaning, supervision and meals provision contribute fully to the school community and the high values it fosters.

84. Although the school uses its accommodation efficiently the overall provision is poor and this affects standards in some subjects. Increased numbers of pupils have put a strain on accommodation, particularly in practical subjects. Since the last inspection there has been some deterioration in the general condition of the main building and the 'temporary' classrooms making it harder to create an atmosphere conducive to good learning. There are areas in need of redecoration, broken floor tiles and old heaters that occasionally fail, resulting in cold working areas. Some subjects, particularly those taught in the 'temporary' classrooms, have only very limited space on which to display pupils' work and celebrate their achievements. There is insufficient space to teach science although a new block, which addresses this problem, is scheduled. Technician space is also limited and problems exist with fume cupboards. The accommodation in music is particularly poor and necessitates large groups of pupils having to be taught together by a team of teachers. During the inspection pupils were practising instruments in odd corners all over the school. Physical education has insufficient indoor space and hard playing areas. There is no gymnasium. During the inspection, lessons were observed in a corridor and the dining hall. In addition to cramped conditions that create circulation and noise problems, in art and design, science and design and technology it is necessary to pass through one room to get to another. This movement of people is distracting to other pupils working in those rooms. The sixth form common room is also, effectively, a wide corridor. The teaching of drama suffers because the drama hall is often used for other purposes and one room in which drama is taught is unsuitable. All history rooms are not grouped together and moving resources wastes time. Insufficient space for meals compounds problems experienced in a continuous day, it is difficult to get pupils through in the time available. The weather during the inspection was dry but very cold. All pupils have to move frequently between isolated outside classrooms and wet weather is a real problem neither conducive to good health, behaviour or progress. They manage to do very all the same. Some improvements have been made since the last inspection including alterations to walls in art and design and technology to make better use of the available space.

85. Accommodation in the learning support department is unsatisfactory. There are no specific areas for pupils to work in and there are no private areas suitable for discussions with parents or pupils. Pupils who use wheelchairs can access all but the top floor.

86. Funding for resources is low. The current provision is unsatisfactory except in history where good resources contribute to good results. The effect of low funding is that departments are unable to purchase items of large or modern equipment required to raise standards and implement curriculum improvement. They are restricted to the purchase of consumables to keep the department functioning.

87. A significant weakness is in the provision for ICT. There are insufficient computers within departments to support learning. Those that do exist are often outdated. Access to centralised computers for subject lessons is problematic because there is a heavy demand for them and the system is slow and often fails. Appropriate software exists in most departments to support learning.

88. Pupils have adequate textbooks in most subjects but they are not always available to take home. Pupils are given the opportunity to purchase their own textbooks to use at home and for revision purposes in some subjects. Teachers often produce their own resources and the standard of these is generally good. The provision of textbooks is good in art and design. The number and quality of books in the school library is generally good but the science section needs updating. There has been some improvement in resources since the last inspection, including computers.

89. The school has tried hard to provide resources for pupils with specific disabilities. For example, changing the colour of paint, and indicating the tops of certain surfaces with paint to aid pupils with a visual impairment. Resources are unsatisfactory. The department does not have sufficient appropriate computers or software although a good start has been made.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To increase the standard of pupils' work further, raise their achievement and improve the quality of their education generally, the headteacher and governors should:

- (1) Raise the standard of pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 further, particularly that of girls', and attainment at higher levels of English, by:
 - Monitoring pupils' achievements by gender and establishing where girls and boys achieve appropriately and where they do not.
 - Reviewing teaching styles and classroom practice to determine whether changes to them might improve girls' achievement.
 - Monitoring the impact of literacy initiatives on pupils' higher level attainment in English.
 - Moving faster on staff development and other work related to using information about pupils' attainment to predict, support and monitor pupils' achievements.

(Paragraphs: 2, 3, 38, 64, 68, 77, 96, 110, 117)

(2) Raise the standards of girls' achievement further in GCSE mathematics and science by:

- Taking rapid action to identify, address or reduce any underachievement by current Year 11 and Year 10 girls, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Investigating why so few girls take three sciences as an option and why high attaining girls in dual award science do not do as well as they might.
- Ensuring investigative work in science and mathematics is a major component of pupils' work.
- Ensuring good practice in mathematics teaching is more consistent.
- Ensuring marking of pupils' work is more rigorous and helpful to pupils in both mathematics and science.

(Paragraphs: 5,13, 14, 36, 64, 68, 77, 110, 111, 118)

(3) Raise the standards of pupils' work in GCSE French, particularly boys', by:

- Raising teachers' expectations of the broad band of pupils that are between the higher attainers and the lower attainers – increase the proportion of pupils gaining 'C' grades or higher.
- Ensuring undoubted very good practice by some teachers is better shared and adopted in all classrooms.

(Paragraphs: 20, 40, 78, 86)

(4) Improve the quantity and quality of resources including those within science, art and design, design and technology and ICT.

(Paragraphs: 86, 88, 89, 95, 124, 135, 149, 158, 179, 207, 213)

(5) Improve almost all accommodation and especially that for science, drama, design and technology, history, ICT, music and physical education.

(Paragraphs: 84, 85, 95, 124, 135, 149, 169, 196, 197, 207, 213)

In addition to the issues listed above the governors may wish to incorporate the following points in their action plan.

- Improving annual reports to parents about pupils' attainment, progress, and what pupils must do to improve. (Paragraphs: 71, 178)
- Increase the amount of technician support particularly in science and technology. (Paragraphs 83, 123, 135, 149, 178)
- Increase opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. (Paragraph: 29)
- Address some imbalance in the numbers of girls and boys taking some subjects in Key Stage 4, for example physics and music. (Paragraphs: 50, 118, 190, 194, 195)

THE SIXTH FORM

90. The attainment of sixth form students in both 'A' level and vocational subjects has been consistently above average since the previous inspection. 'A' level results declined a little in 2000, yielding an average points score per pupil still above, but closer to, the national average. Value-added data provided by the local authority shows that many students make good progress during their sixth form career but, until recently, the school has not made sufficient use of its own internal data for monitoring progress. Procedures for monitoring academic performance have been strengthened for the current cohort of students and should provide a clearer picture of where underachievement is occurring and form a more secure basis for target-setting. Target-setting for students is at an early stage of development. As yet there is no formal system for identifying gifted and talented students but those who are identified as high attainers are given appropriate help and support, as are the small number of pupils having special educational needs.

91. The sixth form offers a wide range of courses and subject choices. Around 20 'A' level choices are available, in addition to vocational options in health and social care and business studies. Consortium arrangements with neighbouring schools increase the range of options available and allow a greater choice for pupils wishing to study a minority subject. The open access entry to the sixth form and the wide range of courses available ensure that pupils with varying interests and academic success rates at GCSE level have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications. The school has been innovative and imaginative in its use of distance learning techniques for the teaching of sociology and government and politics. Students are linked to a tutor through video conferencing equipment and this is proving to be a successful way of encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning and to become more independent. Setting up these arrangements created some initial difficulties and pupils have had to adapt to radically different working habits. These difficulties led to some students changing courses at an early stage and show the importance of the guidance and support provided for students.

92. The recently introduced 'A' level psychology course is a valuable addition to the range of subjects available. From the sample of lessons seen, the subject is taught well and pupils are achieving good standards. The results of the first group to be examined in 2000 reflected a full spread of grades but with a greater proportion in the lower range, highlighting the need for more accurate monitoring and target setting procedures. Entry for 'A' level general studies is at the discretion of the individual student and the course is not timetabled. Results are good with a significant number of high grades indicating that lack of formal lessons does not have a detrimental effect on those who do enter.

93. A comprehensive and well-organised programme of Key Skills teaching supports students' academic progress. The programme is taught by a committed team of teachers under the guidance of an effective co-ordinator. Initial difficulties in establishing the course have been overcome and regular team meetings provide good opportunities to discuss and resolve the emerging issues. For example, the procedures for administering diagnostic tests have not yielded information at an early enough stage to enable the course to begin promptly in Year 12, or enabled teachers to pitch the work at an appropriate level to enable students to build on prior attainment. This delay has created doubt in the minds of some students, as to the value of the work, and the school has taken active measures to improve the status and image of Key Skills and impress upon students its value in supporting their academic and personal development. Teaching in the sample of key skills lessons seen was good or very good.

94. A broad range of other activities enriches students' academic curriculum. All students receive religious instruction and there is a well planned and effectively delivered personal and social education programme. This programme includes appropriate and detailed careers advice and the many students who wish to move on to higher education are given good support and advice with their university applications. All Year 12 students undertake a period of work experience and opportunities for contact with the world of work, through GNVQ courses, work experience or participation in the successful Young Enterprise scheme, are good. Sport is a neglected area of the enrichment curriculum and opportunities to participate are limited to extra-curricular teams and clubs. Students are encouraged to become involved in a wide range of activities designed to develop their personal and social development, including helping with paired reading, mentoring lower school pupils and working for charity. Most students speak highly of the supportive and caring atmosphere provided by the sixth form and the opportunities it provides for them to develop into mature adults through, for example, acting as prefects in Year 13.

95. The leadership and management of the sixth form are sound. Good relationships generated by the pastoral team contribute to the positive, friendly and supportive atmosphere to be found in the sixth form area. A financial analysis shows that efficient use is being made of the resources available and that there is a close match between the income generated by students being present in the sixth form and the costs that they incur. Small group sizes in some subjects such as French, music and GNVQ health and social care do not significantly affect the overall efficiency of the sixth form. The level of funding for some subjects is low and this limits resources. Accommodation is satisfactory for delivery of much of the curriculum but does not have the flexibility needed to provide the necessary base area for GNVQ health and social care or for psychology. Students have limited access to resources for research, and limitations are placed on teaching and learning styles. Accommodation for social and quiet study areas is unsatisfactory. The common room is too small for the number of students wishing to use it and is in a poor state of maintenance. Lack of appropriate study areas creates a demand for Year 13 students to work away from the school site. Insufficiently rigorous monitoring and recording procedures makes attendance figures for this year unclear.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	168
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	24	52	20	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 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	960	192
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	97	5

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	73	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	22

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	9.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.27
National comparative data	0.40

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	106	89	195

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	71	79
	Girls	73	62	65
	Total	136	133	144
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (76)	68 (69)	74 (69)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (22)	43 (38)	33 (34)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	69	60
	Girls	56	54	53
	Total	99	123	113
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (69)	64 (65)	58 (57)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (31)	33 (40)	19 (28)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	87	91	178

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	49	82	87
	Girls	53	82	86
	Total	102	164	173
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57.3 (58.5)	92.1 (88.5)	97.0 (97.0)
	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	44.2 (42.0)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	31	48	79

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.4	17.3	17.4 (20.6)	4.4	2.3	3.3 (2.2)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	6
Indian	10
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	7
White	1120
Any other minority ethnic group	7

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	17	0
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 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	68.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	327

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	23.2
Key Stage 4	21.4

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2 827 066
Total expenditure	2 778 907
Expenditure per pupil	2 412
Balance brought forward from previous year	(64 710)
Balance carried forward to next year	(16 551)

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1152
Number of questionnaires returned	315

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	47	3	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	45	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	45	5	2	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	53	13	2	0
The teaching is good.	44	51	3	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	44	18	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	35	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	24	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	46	11	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	58	34	2	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	41	4	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	40	7	3	9

Other issues raised by parents

Parents commented on the poor accommodation that has concerned them for some time.

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

ENGLISH

96. Standards in English are good overall, and significantly better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Pupils' standards in English are above average when they enter the school in Year 7. While standards at GCSE and A Level have improved over the last two years, standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 have declined. In 1998 over three quarters of Year 9 pupils achieved level 5 or better in English, A Level above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. In the two years 1999 and 2000 pupils did not achieve as well and the proportion attaining Level 5 or better dropped to 69 percent. The numbers achieving Level 6 or better also dropped from 22 percent to 16 percent and this is well below the national average of 28 percent. Overall, the trend in attainment in English at Key Stage 3 has shown a decline from above the national average to close to the national average. Reading age scores and literacy related tests do show that the pupils who took Year 9 tests in 1999 and 2000 were weaker in these areas, than previous years, when they entered the school.

97. At GCSE in 1999, well over half of the candidates achieved grades A * -C in English and last year this proportion rose considerably to almost three quarters of the entry. In English Literature over the last two years a high proportion of pupils entered have obtained grades A * -C. At this level, more girls than boys are being entered and, although they are attaining better than boys, they are achieving relatively less well than girls nationally.

98. At GCE 'A' level in English Literature standards are very high. In 2000, no students failed and more than half of those entered obtained the highest grades, A or B. However, attainment in 'A' Level English Language is not so secure and three students out of seven did not pass. In the work seen and the lessons observed standards achieved by students were in line with and often better than those represented by examination results last year.

99. Speaking and listening skills are very good at all ages. Pupils listen attentively and respond to questions with well-developed and well-formulated answers in Standard English. Although they are enthusiastic, they do not call out, but listen patiently and respect the views of others. They have been given the confidence to use language to test hypotheses and concepts and they are not afraid to volunteer answers or offer personal views on a range of subjects. Very good teaching requires them to support their answers with proof or textual reference and to build on the contribution of others when working in groups. By Key Stage 4 pupils are confident in the use of technical terminology related to literature, drama and media studies and this expertise develops further in the sixth form.

100. Standards of reading are average at Key Stage 3 and good at GCSE and in the sixth form. Teachers offer good examples and pupils pay attention to atmosphere, intention and character when reading, for example when reading a Shakespeare text in parts. Pupils are encouraged to use the library, but there was little evidence observed of pupils being set tasks requiring them to read for research from text or electronic sources. Significant efforts are being made, especially in Key Stage 3, to encourage pupils to read for pleasure and some registration time is set aside for private reading.

101. Written work is good and well presented. Many pupils use ICT for word processing, more often at home than at school. Pupils have a good understanding of the aims and expectations associated with a piece of writing and are made aware of the criteria by which it will be assessed. Pupils with special educational needs receive good help and make good progress in their writing. Creative writing is fluent at Key Stage 3 and standards of spelling,

punctuation and grammar are good. Teachers mark thoroughly, but pupils miss an opportunity to improve their written work when they do not correct their spelling and expression errors noted. Teachers' comments at this stage recognise well pupils' efforts and achievements, but are not sufficiently prescriptive about targets for improvement. Correction and improvement of written work are more effectively dealt with at GCSE and GCE A Level through the good teaching of note-making and drafting skills. Some excellent written work was seen, showing that pupils of the highest attainment are achieving very well, for example Year 10 essays on short stories by D.H. Lawrence, on 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and on the issue of 'Women in Society'. The best lengthy written work is well-structured with thoughtfully developed argument. It is written with flair in an appropriately formal style and with skill in the precise use of technical, critical terminology and reference. Evidence was also seen of pupils writing timed essays as examination practice.

102. The quality of teaching in English is very good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and in one third of the lessons observed teaching was very good or excellent. The teaching of basic skills is good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and are very good in their management of pupils and the effectiveness of their teaching methods. The best teaching includes a range of activities that keep the pupils actively engaged in all Attainment Targets: [speaking and listening, reading and writing]. This was a target following the last inspection. Good use is made of pair work and group activities in which pupils take responsibility for their own strategies and progress instead of being reliant on teacher guidance. This philosophy is strongly held in the department by teachers who have the skills to make it work successfully. In good lessons, teachers use a balance of support and probing to make pupils show that they have acquired skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils respond well and it is clear that they enjoy being challenged. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of pupils and help pupils of all abilities to achieve well in lessons. The majority of lessons observed were brisk and productive. Pupils behave well so that there is no loss of time. The use of homework is good, although in some cases it is not as demanding as the lesson that leads to it. Lessons were observed which picked up and developed very effectively the material covered by the homework. Good procedures exist for assessing pupils' progress and attainment in English and detailed 'profiles' go with them as they move up the school. Assessment on public examination courses is rigorous, detailed and based on the syllabus criteria.

103. The curriculum is good with a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. In an effort to raise standards, the curriculum in Key Stage 3 is being revised. All National Curriculum requirements are fulfilled and the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, schemes of work have been amended where necessary for pupils with special educational needs. Through the study of literature and by developing pupils' ability to express themselves, English makes an important contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of all pupils. The department could do more to identify the needs of gifted and talented pupils. Insufficient use is made of ICT. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the curriculum meets public examination specifications. The department is coping well with changes to 'A' Level GCE requirements. Equality of access to the curriculum is excellent. Extra-curricular provision is good, with theatre visits and activities ranging from "Catch Up Club" and Reading Week to public speaking and a Poetry Evening. The latter was seen in the course of the inspection. Year 8 pupils performed their poems following work by English teachers and professional poets. It was excellent.

104. The department is well managed and very well led. Day-to-day management is competent and efficient. The departmental handbook clearly sets out sound policies and effective procedures. Resources in English are adequate and well managed. Accommodation is cramped, but classrooms are attractive. Most of the rooms used for English are close together. There is a base room where teachers can meet, work together and store assessment data. Consequently there is a strong sense of teamwork and a unity of purpose. Educational philosophies are sound and are enthusiastically shared. The head of department systematically monitors the quality of pupils' work and the quality of teaching. Staff are well deployed and their qualities are appreciated. The academic and intellectual leadership of the subject is a strength and the department's capacity to improve is good.

Drama

105. In both key stages and in the sixth form pupils achieve high standards in drama. At GCSE in 2000 all but one of the fourteen candidates obtained the higher grades A *-C and half achieved grades A or A *. At GCE Advanced Level in performing arts all six students passed and two obtained grade A. The quality of teaching was good or better in four fifths of the lessons observed. Teaching seen at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form was very good or excellent. The teaching of small groups exploring ideas and experimenting with techniques was very good. It offered support when needed, but more often it encouraged students to think for themselves.

106. The curriculum is very good and schemes of work are well planned to combine three elements: a contextual strand, based on a script or a situation; an opportunity for personal expression and a theatre skills element to develop abilities in a range of techniques. A strength of drama lessons is the high proportion of the time that pupils of all abilities are actively engaged in challenging activities which require them to take responsibility for their own attainment and the progress of the groups in which they are working. Written work seen from both key stages showed the amount of high quality research that pupils put into investigations through drama into topics like bullying or running away from home. Year 7 pupils use the Internet effectively to visit organisations like 'Childline' as part of their research. A digital camera is used to help pupils visualise positions and choreography. The combination of poetry, music and dance in an excellent Year 12 assignment on the First World War was evidence of the broad cultural awareness that they draw on to succeed in drama. Through the texts studied, the themes explored and the personal qualities demanded, drama makes a very valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils.

107. Income from productions and from the National Lottery (in recognition of work within the community) is well used to supplement capitation. Accommodation for the subject is inadequate. The drama studio is adequate, but the mathematics classroom used for many of the Key Stage 3 lessons is entirely inappropriate and has a negative impact on the behaviour and attainment of the pupils. The drama studio is too often used for other school activities, but would allow pupils to develop their work in an environment resembling that of a real theatre. Pupils enjoy drama and its popularity has grown at GCSE, with 29 pupils currently in Year 10 and 26 in Year 11. Assessment criteria for the subject are well formulated and understood by pupils. Self -evaluation and group evaluation are important in the progress made by pupils. They learn the confidence to evaluate their work and that of others honestly, positively and objectively, so that they are helped to understand what they need to do to improve.

108. Extra-curricular opportunities in drama are excellent. Educational trips to plays and to dance performances are organised and "Roundabout", Nottingham's Theatre in Education company, visits the school each half term. In addition to the major school production, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which last year involved more than 150 staff and students there are six other productions each year, some in school, others in places such as Newark Theatre. Year 10 pupils are currently working to tour feeder primary schools for a week with a performance derived from *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Given the structure of the school day, which makes lunchtime rehearsal difficult, and the reliance on coaches to take pupils on long journeys home straight after school, that level of extra-curricular involvement represents an exceptional level of commitment by staff, pupils and parents. The quality of drama is an important element in the school's bid for an Artsmark Award and for Arts College status.

109. The department is very well managed and led with vision and a clear sense of educational direction. Her work with the Board of Nottingham Playhouse and with Nottingham Trent University provides the head of drama with opportunities to develop the subject further.

MATHEMATICS

110. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 in the 2000 national tests was above the national average. It was in line with pupils' attainment in similar schools. Boys do relatively better than girls. The 2000 GCSE results were in line with national averages for the proportion of pupils attaining A* - C grades and A* -G grades. However, the pupils in Year 11 in 2000 were above the national average in their Year 9 tests, two years earlier. Consequently, they did not do as well as might have been expected. Boys achieved significantly better results than girls, with 56 percent A* - C grades, compared to the girls' 44 percent, a reverse of the national trend, revealing considerable under-achievement by girls. Results at age 18 in 'A' level GCE have been consistently good since the last inspection, and passes in 2000 were over 90 percent, although there was a decline in the number of higher grades.

111. Standards of pupils' work are average in all years, with higher attainment in number and algebra and average attainment in work on shape, space, measures, and handling data (mathematics attainment targets 3 and 4). Pupils' use and application of mathematics (Attainment Target 1) is weaker, with insufficient development of investigational skills, posing and solving problems, generalising, explaining and justifying conclusions. This aspect was criticised in the last inspection and although development has occurred, further integration with all teaching and learning is needed as well as the development of separate projects for each year group. Standards in each class are dependent on the quality of teaching, being good where there is a variety of timed activities, clear objectives shared with pupils, clear explanation making difficult concepts seem easy, and a fast pace with high expectations. Lower standards than expected, considering prior attainment, were seen for example in a Year 7 top set where the higher attainers were held back and others became confused by the poor and muddled explanation from the teacher. A tendency to teach to the middle, or lower, of each set meant that in many cases higher attainers in each group were not stretched and challenged enough. Homework was not always matched to individual's prior attainment and capability, with the same work being set for all. Examples of excellent standards with a high degree of challenge to all pupils were in the Year 10 top set work on trigonometrical graphs, and solving simultaneous equations in Year 11 sets 1 and 2. Pupils with special educational needs achieved well when good teachers prepared suitable materials, and where learning support assistants helped pupils in the bottom set classes.

112. The school is involved in the national pilot Key Stage 3 initiative, and training in the National Numeracy Strategy techniques have helped the better teachers develop the '3-part lesson structure', and mental maths 'starters' to lessons, which are improving learning in all years. Interesting examples were seen, such as the simple 'dart board' practice in combining addition and multiplication in a bottom set Year 9, and the addition of numbers with eyes closed until a certain multiple was recognised in a Year 7 middle set. Numeracy is developed and implemented well across the curriculum.

113. The planning and preparation of most teachers is very good, and the 'starters' employed are often planned to lead into the main activity. Sometimes teachers' use of time does not allow the lesson to end as planned but where review of learning does take place at the end of lessons, and is not rushed, it enhances pupils' achievement and their enjoyment of the lesson. Some teachers use humour well and incidentally develop general knowledge or cultural awareness, which adds interest. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They behave well in their mathematics lessons, come ready to learn and are usually keen, attentive and interested. On the whole the relationship between teachers and pupils is very good, with evident mutual respect. Pupils work very well together, helping each other, valuing others' ideas and methods. Where discussion is a planned and constructive activity it contributes hugely to the consolidation of pupils' learning and is an improvement since the last inspection. The use of practical work was also criticised previously, and has shown some development, but this is limited by the low funding for resources. Good examples of the benefit of practical work, especially to lower attaining pupils, were seen in the Year 10 Foundation group's work on volume and nets by making cuboids and prisms and the Year 9 set 5 work using protractors to draw and measure bearings.

114. Teaching is good overall, varying from excellent to satisfactory, with over 80 percent being good or better, and 35 percent being very good. On the whole teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is good, they teach basic skills very well and have good pupil behaviour management strategies. Number skills are taught well by mathematics teachers, with frequent practice in mental calculation as well as standard written methods and techniques. Recently teachers have begun to value pupils' own methods of mental and written calculation, a development promoted by the National Numeracy Strategy. The numerical skills of Year 7 are better than at the time of the last inspection and numeracy overall is good, although some weaknesses were seen in Year 9 to 11 pupils, notably in manipulating negative numbers, and a too ready recourse to calculators.

115. Teachers' on-going visual and verbal assessment in classrooms is good. Teachers circulate well, keeping all pupils on task and helping those with problems. Marking of work is inconsistent. Pupils often mark their own work but this is not always checked and monitored. Comments in pupils' books are often brief and congratulatory, not constructively helping pupils know how to improve. There is no system of self-assessment, or setting formative targets, and pupils rarely reflect on their own learning. Pupils with special educational needs have targets, specified in their Individual Education Plans, and these are used to monitor learning by teachers or assistants helping them achieve well at their own level. A criticism in the last inspection was the lack of guidance to pupils to help them improve and although some development has occurred this is still a weakness. Much data is collected and recorded on pupils' achievement but it is not analysed enough, on an individual or group basis, to monitor progress, adapt the curriculum, or change teaching or learning styles. The under-achievement of girls at GCSE in 2000 had not been identified as an issue and action to prevent the pattern continuing needs to be planned and implemented.

116. Leadership and management of the department are good. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Low funding over many years has hindered the development of a good range of practical and text book resources. There is very limited access to computers, although software has been purchased and development planned. The mathematics department is based in mobile temporary accommodation that does not help develop high standards. The head of department is a good role model as a teacher, was appointed since the last inspection, and has developed the department with some very good teachers who are committed and have the capacity to improve. More collaborative planning and sharing good practice are needed to develop greater consistency of teaching and learning and raise achievement further overall.

SCIENCE

117. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9, as measured by national testing in 2000, is above the national average and above average when compared with results in similar schools. Teacher assessments were significantly lower than the actual test results. Over the past four years, results have fallen slightly when compared with the national trend of gradual improvement. Although boys have consistently performed better than girls, in the latest results the difference is not quite as large.

118. Pupils' overall attainment in the 2000 GCSE examinations for dual award science is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades A* - C is below the national average but this can be explained, to some extent, by the fact that a number of higher attaining pupils opt to take separate sciences. The proportion of pupils gaining A* - C is above average in all three of the separate sciences, biology, chemistry and physics. Most of these pupils are boys as few girls choose to take three sciences. Taking dual award and the separate sciences together, results in GCSE science have risen steadily since 1997 until 2000 when they fell. At A Level, results are above the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining A -E grades but below for the higher A - B grades.

119. Standards of pupils' work in Key Stage 3 are average overall. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of science are good and reflect the test results. For example, Year 9 pupils, with higher prior attainment, relate their knowledge of the properties of light to the colourful appearance of the moon during the recent eclipse. In Year 8 they display good concepts of balanced forces and can do the related calculations. Pupils with lower prior attainment in Year 7, use observable features to help them group living things systematically. Pupils' investigative skills at this key stage, however, are below average. Pupils have very limited skills in planning, carrying out and evaluating full practical investigations not indicated in the national tests.

120. In Key Stage 4, pupils' standards of work are in line with national averages overall and mirror their GCSE results. Through Years 10 and 11, pupils show good, and sometimes very good, gains in knowledge and understanding of chemistry, physics and biology. For example, pupils with higher prior attainment in Year 10, have an in depth knowledge of the different ways in which atoms bond together. In Year 11, they have a detailed understanding of the functioning of the kidney and show very good use of the correct technical terminology in their discussions. Pupils of lower prior attainment have less depth of understanding but have a satisfactory grasp of basic scientific knowledge. For example, pupils in Year 11 can answer simple questions about sound and can recognise oscilloscope patterns displaying changes in pitch and amplitude. As in Key Stage 3 however, pupils' investigative skills are weak.

121. In the few sixth form lessons seen, pupils' standards of work were appropriate for A Level GCE in biology and chemistry but below average in physics, where students' technical knowledge was imprecise and where there were insufficient appropriate resources to handle

data. Through all key stages, progress in theoretical science is good, enhanced by the wide range of curricular opportunities the department offers. Overall achievement, however, can be described as only average since the lack of practical work limits the development of essential scientific skills.

122. Teaching is good. In over half of the lessons seen teaching was good and in nearly a third, very good. Good subject knowledge enables teachers to plan their lessons well and very good class management contributes to the pace of learning. Limited resources are put to good use in many lessons, and are effective in capturing the imagination of pupils and promoting understanding. In one Year 7 class, for example, cotton reels powered by elastic bands were raced to demonstrate and investigate stored energy. Well-prepared and helpful handouts match pupils' attainment and are used appropriately. In lessons expectations are often high, pupils frequently having to apply their knowledge to a variety of problems and situations. Open-ended questions are used effectively and pupils are encouraged to think and work independently. Homework, on the other hand, although given regularly, is not always sufficiently demanding. Marking is not always thorough and rarely indicates to pupils how standards may be raised. Inadequate attention is being given to the teaching of investigative skills. These are not being effectively interwoven into the curriculum. From Year 7 upwards, pupils need to do more planning, predicting and evaluating of practical work. Teachers are very seriously hindered in delivering this aspect of the curriculum by insufficient technical support. It is unrealistic to expect one technician to cope with all the necessary preparation and assistance in a department of this size and, in particular, with the A Level work where more technical support is required. Good classroom assistance and appropriately designed schemes of work in key stages three and four enable pupils with special needs to make good progress.

123. Throughout all year-groups, the positive attitudes and good behaviour of pupils in class contribute significantly to their progress. They co-operate willingly with teachers, showing interest and sustaining concentration.

124. Leadership and management of the department are good and responsibilities are delegated well. Organisation of the school day imposes some limitations on formal meetings, but there is clear educational direction. Assessment procedures are good throughout the key stages and pupils' progress is being monitored. However, insufficient use is made of data available to predict pupils' performance and to monitor whether they are achieving their expectations. Resources are poor and this adversely affects how the curriculum is taught and hence pupils' standards of work. The department values the librarian's assistance but the under-resourced library facilities do not adequately support the work done in the classroom, especially at advanced level. Although the department has recently bought useful datalogging equipment (to allow computers to support experiments), a serious shortage of computers limits the development of ICT within science. Accommodation is poor and the absence of any properly functioning fume cupboards inhibits teaching about some chemical processes.

125. Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils gaining appropriate standards in Year 9 national tests has increased and the recent appointment of a Key Stage 3 co-ordinator makes further curriculum development possible. At GCSE more pupils are gaining higher grades in the separate sciences and the overall performance of boys has improved.

Exciting plans have been passed for a new science block of nine laboratories, and building work should begin within a few weeks of this inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

126. In the 2000 statutory teacher assessments, pupils' standards at the age of 14, were above the national average. Almost 90 percent of pupils at least achieved the national expectation and a quarter exceeded it. Trends are variable over the last three years but the results in 2000 were better than the two previous years. Girls achieve better than boys.

127. In 2000, pupils' standards in GCSE art and design examination results were below those in 1999 but still fractionally above the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining grades A *- C. All pupils obtained a grade in the range A *-G. No pupils achieved A * or A grades. Pupils' results in art and design were relatively low in comparison to results that they gained in their other subjects. The number of pupils opting for art and design at examination level is low and declining. The small numbers of pupils taking the GCSE examination make national comparisons unreliable.

128. In the sixth form, the very small number of students taking the GCE A Level examination also makes national comparisons unreliable. In 2000, five pupils took the GCE A Level examination. One pupil achieved an A grade, one a B grade and 3 pupils achieved C grades. These results were much better than the 1999 results. A Level results are improving.

129. The art and design department has assessment procedures to identify pupils' level of skill in observational drawing at the start of Year 7. From then, pupils achieve satisfactorily overall in Key Stage 3. Pupils' achievement is also at least satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Several pupils in Year 11 achieve very well. For example, a 'still life' exercise shows very good progress in composition and depiction of form. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily overall and occasionally well. This is because teachers are sensitive to their individual needs and when necessary plan specific tasks or produce different worksheets. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve standards similar to other pupils. Students in the sixth form achieve well

130. Standards of pupils' work are average at Key Stage 3. Pupils can design a piece of work that reflects their own life. They confidently discuss their ideas with each other, for example, model car racing, bikes and jewellery and sketch their designs well. Other classes learn about techniques that they have not used before, such as 'decoupage'. The small sculptures produced by Year 7 pupils, after studying Henry Moore's work, at the Yorkshire sculpture park, are good and have a spiritual quality.

131. At Key Stage 4, pupils' standard of work is average. Pupils can discuss a number of art movements, including Surrealism, Cubism and Pop Art. Because of good teaching, they are very aware of the standards that they are working to and they can discuss their work, point out their mistakes and suggest ways in which they can improve them, for example, how they can improve their composition and tonal work. Pupils' work indicates that the higher and average attainers are improving their sensitivity when using pencil and are improving their printing and collage techniques. They carry out research using CD ROMS and the Internet, use their sketchbooks appropriately and are gaining in critical analysis skills, for example, when writing about the work of Salvador Dali. Some lower attaining pupils have difficulty in deciding the right amount of paint to put on their brush, but show improvement over time in the use of pencil crayon and composition.

132. No lessons were observed in the sixth form. Students' work indicates that standards are above average. Students use their sketchbooks well when they investigate and explore their chosen theme. Higher attaining students use colour very well. For example, they produce particularly delicate 'still life' compositions of vegetables and fruit. Average students sometimes have difficulty in depicting form and shape when using paint but have made good gains in composition skills. Other students have improved their drawing skills, for example, after studying Henry Moore's drawings of people sleeping in the underground during the war. Ceramics has a high profile in the school and students produce work of good quality using a range of techniques. An example is a coil pot with applied and impressed decoration, where natural forms have been used as a stimulus. Students widen their experience in drawing techniques when they attend life class sessions at a neighbouring college.

133. Art makes a good contribution to literacy through writing, speaking and listening, as in Year 11 classes. Art makes a sound contribution to numeracy, for example, when pupils work out precise measurements for their decoupage bowl.

134. The quality of teaching is good overall. Where lessons are good, teachers expect pupils to behave well and work hard. They set tasks that are challenging and use homework consistently to support lessons. They use good resources and methods to motivate the pupils. In otherwise successful lessons, classroom management is not consistent and pupils are rather noisy on occasion. The features of good teaching help pupils to learn basic art and design skills. For example, pupils usually start their projects with observational drawing, as in Year 8-classes. Pupils make good gains in their learning, such as in their creative thinking. Good teaching helps pupils to concentrate and to work well together and they listen well to the teacher. Their concentration has a positive effect on their behaviour, which is good.

135. Leadership in the art and design department is good. Changes implemented by the new head of department, including improved assessment procedures, have already had a positive effect on pupils' attainment. Resources and accommodation are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of storage space, floor tiles are missing and the school is currently addressing several health and safety issues. ICT resources are better than at the time of the last report but still insufficient. There is insufficient technical support and this compromises teachers' time and opportunities for practical work.

136. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Teaching is now monitored; training is linked to the school's plan for improvement; resources, including computers, have improved; assessment has improved; efforts are being made to raise boys' achievement and interest in art and design. In addition, a wall has been built in the department to provide an extra classroom; display has improved; the curriculum has been widened and ICT is now planned well and integrated appropriately throughout the art and design curriculum.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

137. Pupils' standards of work at the end of Year 9, indicated by teacher assessments are above average.

138. GCSE examination results in 2000 are above national averages for the proportion of pupils gaining grades between A*-C and A*-G. This good performance has been consistent over a number of years. Taking account of some fluctuation in results between the five

different examinations within design and technology and the fact that more boys opt for electronics and more girls for textiles, girls achieve slightly higher results than boys.

139. Pupils' standards of work throughout Key Stage 3 are good for pupils of all prior attainment, including those with special educational needs. Pupils acquire a sound understanding of the design process. This enables them to solve design problems effectively. They work with a range of tools and materials and develop an understanding of how these can be used to achieve a desired result. They pay careful attention to health and safety matters. Most written work is better than that generally seen. Work is well presented and clearly communicates the generation and development of design ideas through carefully annotated drawings and written explanations. Pupils have a good understanding of the various individual stages in designing and making a quality product.

140. Pupils are good at carrying out research by such methods as devising questionnaires, surveys or using the Internet, and can interpret their findings. Pupils show creativity, for example, the Batik designs for cushions. Pupils' planning, for example, for making a product like a biscuit in food technology or a mechanical toy in resistant materials, is very good and is often carried out using flow diagrams. Pupils gain appropriate knowledge and understanding of systems and control that they use to make electronic devices for a particular purpose, for example, moisture detection. Pupils display above average skill in evaluating their own work. Practical skills are at least satisfactory and are displayed when pupils make their designs. Good examples were observed in all areas, but some weaknesses were also seen in pupils use of sewing machines in textiles and soldering techniques in electronics. Some good use of observational skills was seen in the sensory analysis of cakes made by using a variety of fats.

141. Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 3 and most achieve above average standards. A small number of low attaining pupils struggle to complete their work owing to a limited number of modified materials to help them. Their progress is satisfactory.

142. Pupils' standards of work in Key Stage 4 are good overall with very good standards in electronics. Pupils of all attainment achieve very well and make very good progress.

143. All pupils build on the firm foundation laid down in Key Stage 3 and make good progress in developing and applying their knowledge and skill in designing and making. Pupils are able to work in a material area suited to their interest because of the wide range of courses on offer. This choice has a positive effect on standards of their work. Coursework folders display high standards of work and pupils present it very well. Pupils write good specifications for their products and are able to refer back to these when they evaluate their work. Insufficient computers result in pupils carrying out much of the ICT content of their work at home. Pupils' practical work is good overall. Some have weak skills in food technology because they have had little previous experience in working with food in Key Stage 3, due to staffing difficulties in the past that have now been resolved.

144. On the limited evidence available during the inspection, standards of students' work in the sixth form are satisfactory. A Level GCE product design has been introduced this year after a long time without it. Students can make a realistic attempt to solve design problems. They are good at discussing and explaining their work to other people. The folio work seen was satisfactory but lacking the depth and originality to make it better. The quality of note-taking was poor when pupils were asked to sift through information to pick out the salient points. Students achieve in line with their prior attainment. The limited provision in school for ICT results in poor practices when students can only prepare work in school to do at home where their provision is better. The ICT work produced by those students who choose to incorporate it in their work is good.

145. The quality of teaching is good. It is very good in Key Stage 4. Teachers are specialists with good subject knowledge that they communicate well to pupils. Teachers have high expectations, which they share with pupils so that they are themselves aware of what constitutes high standards. How marks for work are given is shared with pupils. This helps them know what they have to do.

146. The Key Stage 3 course takes account of National Curriculum requirements, but needs to be clarified to identify gaps and overlap and to accommodate recent changes, particularly in the use of ICT. There are too few textbooks and teachers mostly produce their own materials. These are generally of a good standard but a few are poorer quality and create unnecessary problems for pupils when they are hand-written and then photocopied. Currently pupils in Key Stage 3 receive insufficient information about their level of attainment and what they need to do to improve. Only a few modified materials exist to address the needs of pupils with differing prior attainment. The frequency of homework depends upon the individual teacher. There is no consistency of practice.

147. The Key Stage 4 and sixth form work is well planned to take account of examination board requirements. Pupils receive good feedback, both formal and informal, from teachers about their progress and all work is assessed. Good teacher pupil relationships exist throughout the department and are a particular strength, resulting in good behaviour from pupils and an atmosphere in which good learning takes place because there is an ongoing dialogue between teachers and pupils. Practical skills are well demonstrated promoting good standards. Pupils are given the opportunity to work individually, in pairs, in groups and in teams. The latter helps to develop interpersonal skills.

148. Pupils respond to the good teaching they receive by talking positively about the subject. They show interest in what they are doing and work productively. The behaviour and attitude of pupils are good.

149. The department is well led and teachers work well together. Very recently a Key Stage 3 co-ordinator has been appointed. Technician time is insufficient and results in teacher time being used inefficiently. The head of department promotes high standards by example. The department has monitored and evaluated its performance including teaching. The current resources are well used but need updating and more are needed. The accommodation is old and in need of refurbishment. It is not always able to accommodate current group sizes easily. There is difficulty undertaking practical work in one of the food rooms because of the shortage of cookers.

150. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Examination results have continued to rise. Strategies have been introduced to help pupils generate design ideas and these have been successful. Two new courses, A Level Product Design and Graphic Products GCSE have been introduced. Some limited technician help has been provided. Some small gaps still exist in the Key Stage 3 programme. Provision for ICT is still inadequate. Weakness still exists in assessment procedures at Key Stage 3 and in using assessment data to inform planning. Reports to parents do not give sufficient information about pupils' ability in designing and making.

Child development

151. GCSE results have fluctuated over a number of years with small groups of pupils. In 2000 they were below the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C but above average for grades A*-G. The standard of work seen was in line with pupils' prior attainment. Some very good coursework folders were seen, where pupils had applied their knowledge and understanding of how a child develops to an observational study of an individual child.

GEOGRAPHY

152. Teachers assessed pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9, in 2000, as above the national average. In the GCSE examination in 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C was significantly above the national average and all achieved at least grade G. Pupils' grades in geography were significantly above the average of those gained in their other subjects and above those of pupils with similar levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in other schools. In both Key Stage 3 and at GCSE, girls performed better than boys by about the same margin as they did nationally. Results at GCE A Level in 2000 were well above the national average, with half of the students gaining grades A or B. Over the last three years, results at both GCSE and GCE A Level have been above average and have been improving.

153. Standards of pupils' work are above average for pupils aged 14 and well above average for pupils aged 16 and for 18 year old students. At Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, pupils and students achieve standards above what would be expected from their earlier attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good progress in the sixth form. The great majority of pupils of all levels of attainment present information on maps and graphs neatly and accurately. Most pupils in Year 9 can describe and explain geographical patterns and processes in work on climate, volcanoes and regional differences in Italy. Higher attaining pupils write at length and explain how physical processes and human activity interact to change places, such as the Alps. By Year 11, most pupils have a good understanding of issues such as the causes and effects of changes in farming or the relationship between the size of a settlement and its functions. Higher attaining pupils provide detailed explanations and support them well with examples. The relatively few pupils who produce work below the national average standard offer only brief explanations and lack detail in their case studies. Sixth form students have very good knowledge and understanding of river features and processes, and of changes in urban geography, for example in Sheffield.

154. Pupils make good progress through the school in the development of their enquiry skills. By the age of 14, most pupils can select information from a number of sources and use a variety of skills to present well-organised findings, as in a Year 9 enquiry into the effects of the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. Many, of all levels of attainment, use ICT well to find and present information. By the age of 16, many pupils produce well-structured studies of a high standard on coastal erosion in their GCSE coursework, with well-argued proposals for coastal management from higher attaining pupils. Sixth form students demonstrate good, independent research skills, for example, in their work on natural hazards, and the ability to organise and carry out individual fieldwork investigations to a high standard.

155. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages and in the sixth form. Teaching is good, sometimes very good, in the great majority of lessons and is never unsatisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this enables them to explain issues clearly and to use questions and well-chosen examples effectively to extend pupils' and students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers' subject knowledge was demonstrated very well in a Year 13 revision lesson on natural hazards in which students made very good gains in

understanding how to use their already good knowledge of the subject most effectively in the examination. Teachers manage classes very well and relationships between pupils and teachers are good. They maintain very good discipline unobtrusively in an atmosphere characterised by respect, encouragement, good expectations and, often, good humour. As a result, pupils of all ages and levels of attainment respond and learn well.

156. Teachers plan well and use a good range of teaching methods very effectively. They set short deadlines for activities to maintain interest and the pace of work, and they monitor and support pupils well to ensure they are making progress. In a Year 8 lesson on the Brazilian rain forests, the lesson was divided into a series of short pupil activities and whole-class reviews of their learning. The teacher used questions very well to assess pupils' understanding, maintained a very lively pace and introduced pupils to interesting and effective ways of organising and summarising information. Pupils responded enthusiastically and made very good progress in understanding the lifestyle of Amazonian Indians and their interaction with the rain forest environment. Teachers use a number of well-structured methods to help pupils enhance the quality and range of their written work, especially in Key Stage 3. Homework is used well at all stages to reinforce and extend work in lessons. Pupils' work is marked and graded regularly but teachers' comments, especially in Key Stage 3, do not tell pupils clearly enough what they need to do to improve.

157. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 and students in the sixth form have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well. Because the teaching is stimulating, the great majority of pupils of all ages and levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, are interested, concentrate well and try hard. As a result, they use their time productively and learn well. Relationships between pupils are very good. They work together constructively and enhance their learning through sharing and comparing ideas and information. Year 9 pupils worked well in pairs in two lessons to identify the characteristic features of northern and southern Italy, and Year 12 students cooperated very effectively in groups to research recent changes in the geography of Glasgow.

158. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a good ethos for learning, reinforced in classrooms by display that makes good use of the cramped accommodation, and teachers work well together. Pupils receive a broad and mainly well-balanced experience of the subject that contributes well to their moral and social education. Their opportunities to use ICT are too limited because they do not have ready access in school to appropriate equipment, although many make good use of their own computers for homework. There are systems in place for monitoring pupils' progress but the department does not yet make enough use of information on pupils' prior attainment to evaluate their performance in the subject.

159. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Performance in examinations at GCSE and GCE A Level has improved at a faster rate than nationally. This is reflected in standards of work seen during the inspection that are higher at all stages than those recorded previously. Good standards in teaching and learning, and in the management of the department have been maintained. There has been good progress in monitoring and supporting teaching. The quality and range of textbooks has improved, but provision for ICT is still unsatisfactory. The department's capacity for further improvement is good.

HISTORY

160. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment overall is above average. Teachers assessed their pupils as being above the national average in 1999 and in 2000 by the end of Year 9. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was above that seen nationally. The vast majority of pupils in Years 7- 9 achieve well and make good progress.

Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards and make good progress.

161. Although it was not possible to see any Year 9 classes during the inspection, owing to the timetable, a large sample of assessed work was seen. Pupils in Years 7-9 see the causes of past events, and successfully explain the reasons for actions taken by people in the past. Projects completed by pupils in Year 9 showed good understanding of the reasons for the existence of slavery in America in the early 19th century, of the conditions in which slaves lived, and of the attitudes towards slaves. The work from the highest attainers showed good understanding that not everyone held the same views about slavery, and explained why this was so. Many pupils write well at length, as, for instance in work by pupils in Year 7 on the effects on Pompeii of the eruption of Vesuvius.

162. Pupils taking the GCSE course in Key Stage 4 reach an overall standard that is above the national average, a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. In 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades was above the national average, and in 2000 it was well above average. The percentage of pupils gaining A and A* grades was significantly above average in 1999 and 2000, and was above average in the previous two years. The performance of boys has improved considerably since the time of the last inspection. In 2000 the proportion of boys gaining A*-C grades was significantly above both the overall national, and the boys' national, averages. The performance of boys in the examinations in 2000 was higher than that of girls.

163. The overall standard of work seen in Key Stage 4 was above the national average. Pupils who take the GCSE course achieve well and make good progress. They have good knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. They understand and explain the causes of past events. In a lesson on the reasons for the success of the Nazis in gaining power in Germany, for example, pupils in a Year 11 group successfully explained the causes and the higher attainers made valid links between causes. Pupils successfully identify change and continuity over time. They use sources competently for information on which to base their understanding of the past. Pupils in Year 10, for example, identified changes in medical treatment of smallpox, and evaluated Jenner's contribution to the changes, using text, pictorial and statistical sources.

164. The standard reached by pupils taking A Level is broadly average, a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. Although the number of pupils gaining a pass grade at A Level in 2000 was below the national average, a quarter of the pupils gained an A or B grade. Results at A Level have fluctuated over the past four years from well above to below average. The overall standards of work seen during the inspection were average for pupils in Year 12. Pupils have sound knowledge of the topics they are studying. Essays written by higher-attaining pupils in Year 12 were well-structured and presented an cogent argument firmly based on valid evidence. Some essays were, however, poorly organised, and contained many spelling errors. Work seen during the inspection showed good understanding of the role of individuals in shaping events, and very competent analysis and use of sources.

165. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was very good in a quarter of the lessons seen. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers know their subject well at all levels and communicate it effectively. As a result, pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding about the past. Teachers understand examination requirements very well, especially at GCSE level, and as a result pupils gain very good knowledge about how to reach the highest standards in examinations. Lessons are well planned and most teachers outline clearly the aims of the lesson. In many lessons teachers check work as pupils complete it, and give immediate feedback on progress.

166. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of pupils and set suitable work that challenges the highest attaining pupils and allows them to work at a high standard. In a lesson on the 1919 Treaty of Versailles pupils in Year 11 were asked to explain the decisions made by the powers, and to consider the effects of the decisions. The work set for pupils with special educational needs is appropriately demanding. In a lesson on the Gunpowder Plot, for example, pupils retold the story of the Plot, using a suitable guidance sheet to help them record the story in pictures and text. Teachers manage their pupils well, with a firm but friendly approach. They ensure a good working environment in all lessons.

167. An appropriate variety of teaching methods, including individual study, work in pairs and whole-class discussion, ensures that pupils have good opportunities to learn in a range of different ways. In a small minority of lessons boys are allowed to dominate question and answer sessions, and teachers do not sufficiently involve girls, restricting opportunities for the girls to achieve well. ICT is used effectively, but too infrequently, as a means of developing pupils' knowledge and understanding. Very effective use was seen, for example, in a lesson on the Bayeux Tapestry, in which the teacher used a series of computer-generated images showing scenes from the Tapestry to guide pupils through the events of 1066.

168. Most pupils show interest in, and commitment to, their work. Most clearly want to achieve good standards, and work hard in order to do so. As a result they make good progress in acquiring new knowledge and understanding. Work in pairs is done with good co-operation and tolerance. Pupils listen to their teachers' instructions and most concentrate well on their work. The behaviour of almost all is good, and often very good.

169. The subject meets the statutory teaching requirements for Key Stage 3. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear commitment to maintaining the above-average attainment in GCSE examinations, and there is a good ethos for learning in lessons. The accommodation is insufficient. Classes are taught in a large number of rooms across the school. This makes the efficient management of resources difficult for the teachers, who have to move textbooks around the school, and restricts access to audio-visual and ICT equipment. The department has a good range of books for pupils in Years 7-9, including some specifically for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. All pupils taking GCSE have their own textbook for use at home. The small number of up-to-date computers available in the department is a weakness, and the limited availability of ICT equipment elsewhere in the school, at times suitable for the department, restricts the use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

170. Most pupils enter the school with average skills in the use of ICT. Teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2000, show the proportion of pupils reaching national expectations of attainment was well above average. The standard of pupils' work seen is above average overall. Pupils have good information technology skills across the curriculum. Standards are high mainly because of good teaching. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to exchanging information and ideas with others, use technology systems to control events and reshape and explore patterns. ICT is used well by teachers to support design and technology, history, geography, art and design, music and drama. Many pupils use ICT in the completion of their homework in art and design, drama and geography.

171. In Year 8, pupils use computer generated slides to organise information in a history project on the Spanish Armada. They can arrange slides in sequences that are modified with music and special effects to help remember what they need to know. In Year 9, pupils learn and achieve well, when studying control technology in the design and technology department, because of good quality computer software and appropriate teaching of challenging concepts. The overall trend in pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9, has been significantly upward, with boys attaining slightly higher results.

172. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* - C at GCSE was well above the national average and the proportion gaining an A* - G slightly above the national average, in 2000. Results by boys are slightly higher than those obtained by girls. Standards of pupils' work are currently close to or above national averages. This is mainly because there is a good match of the range of exam courses to pupils' needs. Pupils can understand different uses for databases and how to conduct a search within one. They can use the Internet well for research, for example in designing a skiing poster. Pupils in Year 11 have developed very good skills in preparing documents to business standard including memos and flyers for an estate agent. By Year 11 most pupils have not only become more confident users of databases and word processing but can talk clearly about the use of ICT in the outside world. They reflect on the impact of the subject in their lives with maturity in discussion. Pupils have good ICT skills related to art and design, drama and music.

173. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good but pupils with a particular talent for ICT lack work that challenges them sufficiently. Pupils' numeracy is well supported by mental mathematics that occurs in the teaching of formulae in spreadsheets.

174. In 2000 sixth form students gained accreditation in a range of vocational courses that are particularly well matched to their needs. Current standards in AS Level Information and Communication Technology are satisfactory and pupils know how to seek ideas, structure work and measure the end product of their coursework. Pupils' skills in the use of unfamiliar software need greater support in practical sessions. Pupils have good standards in the use of tables, graphs and in design skills in GNVQ. Students' literacy is well supported in extended writing within courses. Boys outnumber girls in AS Level and girls outnumber boys in vocational ICT classes to support basic skills. Students leave the school well equipped to use ICT in their everyday lives.

175. Pupils enjoy ICT lessons and are becoming more independent learners throughout the school in lessons, working in the library and on their own at home. In Years 10 and 11 not all pupils can be accommodated in ICT classes and the school is participating in a GNVQ Intermediate distance-learning course run by another school. Pupils' work at home and at school, in lunchtime and after school classes, using the Internet to access the course materials and scheme of work. Pupils find the targets to be met challenging in the time

available.

176. Teaching seen was good overall and sometimes very good. In Years 7, 8 and 9 the whole-class introduction is appropriate but the planning for differing prior attainment of pupils is absent in some classes. Good practice was observed when teachers reviewed the work of pupils several times in a lesson. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and there is effective management of classes. There are significant gaps in the provision of ICT skills and the use of computers in English, mathematics, science, physical education and modern foreign languages. Practical opportunities for research and investigation by pupils using ICT are available before and after school but are not sufficiently well used, partly because of the high number of pupils who travel a long way to school.

177. Pupils progress well in ICT in Year 7. In Years 8 and 9 achievement for most pupils improves and is at national expectations in most areas except databases. Pupils progress well because there is generally a good match of work to pupils' prior attainment. Most pupils use e-mail at home but not in school as the system is insufficiently filtered. Some assessments in Years 7, 8 and 9 are related to attainment levels within the National Curriculum. There is insufficient use of pupils evaluating their own work. The recording of the use of ICT by pupils, on a page for that purpose in the 'student organiser' does not happen often enough.

178. The department is well led and works sympathetically with the needs of the whole school achieving much with very limited resources. The department policy is in-line with school policy and there is a development plan that clearly identifies targets for the whole school. For example the appropriate use of government funding, meeting the challenge by each subject department, and the provision of networked resources to improve access for all pupils. The technician provides support on three days a week but this is inadequate for a school of this size. Access to computer facilities is available to most subjects except at busy times on the timetable. A significant minority of pupils do not experience the subject in years 10 and 11 and only pupils who follow GCSE, GNVQ or other vocational courses gain a qualification. Not all parents receive a report on the progress made by pupils in the subject in Years 10 and 11.

179. Since the last inspection there has been progress in the improvement of some computer facilities, the range of appropriate courses, the development of ICT in some subjects and the ability of teachers to support pupils' learning with ICT. The opportunities for all pupils to use ICT, the network and technical support and the development of a school wide network have not developed at a brisk enough pace in order to meet the needs of all pupils. The ratio of computers to pupils is worse than the national average but the access to them is satisfactory overall. Most pupils access the Internet connection in the school once a fortnight and a good start has been made to the school Intranet and its website. These have been well prepared and show current work in progress. For example, Year 8 web pages show photographs of school trips, Year 10 and 11 PSHE work, reference materials and useful websites to visit. A whole-school strategy for improvement has been identified and there is good potential for development across the school.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

180. The current attainment of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is in line with national expectations.

181. In 2000, the proportion of pupils who attained GCSE results at A*-C in French, from a large entry, was below the national average, but higher than in the previous year. All pupils entering for French attained grades in the range A*-G. Girls gained higher grades than boys, although both girls and boys performed less well than in other subjects. The results gained by nine pupils taking the Spanish GCSE examination in 2000 were well above the national average. All pupils attained grades in the A*-C range, the majority gaining the highest grades A*-B. CC

182. Only two students entered for A Level French in 2000. In the previous year, six students attained higher than average grades, of which the majority was in the higher range A-B.

183. The standards of pupils' work seen in Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations. After a term of learning French, pupils can exchange greetings and courtesies, make short descriptive statements in speech and writing about themselves and people they know, asking and answering simple questions about their home and school life. They can follow lessons conducted wholly or partially in the foreign language, and read short texts and captions. Pupils with special educational needs stay involved and contribute well with individual support from their teachers and learning assistants. From Year 8, higher attaining pupils and those requesting to do so, study a second foreign language, German or Spanish. They make rapid progress despite having only one lesson a week, applying the language learning skills acquired in French. By the end of Year 9 pupils can simulate everyday situations such as finding the way in town and booking a holiday abroad. In all three languages, most pupils are able to express their likes and dislikes, and use different tenses and structures to talk and write about past and future events. In addition to acquiring useful vocabulary, many pupils gain insight into grammar, and most adapt their written style successfully to different purposes including jottings or short informal letters.

184. In Years 10 and 11, higher and middle attainers learn to follow more complex and extended presentations delivered in the foreign language. The predominantly female pupils in the small German and Spanish classes benefit from their teachers' interactive style and develop very good levels of fluency. In the larger French classes a minority of pupils are confident but many less so, despite the good model of language offered by their teachers. While most respond briefly to set questions, many pupils rely heavily on their teachers' prompting or read their answers from written notes. Many pupils in all three languages develop a good range of vocabulary and most can express their opinions on topics such as leisure pursuits and holidays. Lower attaining pupils, studying for an alternative certificate in French, consolidate and practise the everyday language needed for living and travelling abroad. A few lower attaining boys act disruptively, finding little interest in repeating elementary topics such as the time, dates and the weather.

185. Sixth form students studying French for A Level build substantially on the foundation of their good GCSE results. They rapidly expand the range of their language and develop their understanding in intensive small group situations. They exploit authentic texts and recordings in their coverage of topical issues, such as the changing role of women in society. They learn to talk and write discursively about the social and moral implications of newspaper or television reports, supporting their arguments with statistical evidence and

information from the Internet. Additionally, they examine in the foreign language the ideas and creativity of modern French authors.

186. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. Most teaching is good or better and a minority of teaching is excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They are fluent, articulate and familiar with the requirements of the examination boards. They relate well to their pupils and in the best lessons a good-humoured, busy atmosphere prevails. Teachers usually plan their lessons well, to include brisk and balanced coverage of the four language learning skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Pupils enjoy watching their classmates conducting simulations of booking accommodation or weather forecasts. Lower attainers, including some pupils with special educational needs, learn particularly well when the teacher uses the new language to play a game or lets them design a bright poster. Where the teacher's presentation or the revision of elementary vocabulary goes on too long, a few pupils lose interest and achieve less as a result. Teachers' expectations of pupils are inconsistent. In all three languages, they make substantial demands of higher attainers, who react positively and achieve very well. With their assistants they give encouragement and support to the least able linguists, keeping most of them involved and productive. They are insufficiently rigorous in their use of detailed assessment to set targets, particularly for middle attainers in French. Too many of these pupils fail to attain at least a 'C' grade at GCSE – there are too many 'D' grades. Teachers make good use of homework to prepare and follow up lessons, encouraging pupils and sixth form students to work independently. They make some limited use of ICT, and are building up a useful stock of software, as well as encouraging pupils to use their own computers for research and to present their work attractively.

187. Curricular provision and standards of attainment in modern foreign languages have improved since the last inspection, although pupils entering for French GCSE still perform less well than in their other school subjects.

188. The head of modern languages was not available during the inspection. Since the last inspection teachers, have worked hard to compensate for past inadequacies in teaching. There are weaknesses in departmental leadership, for example inadequate documentation and pupil assessment evidence. However, departmental discussions and planning are competently led by the acting head of department. Formal discussion and planning continue, competently led by the acting head of department. Teachers have enriched the curriculum by offering three foreign languages and by organising extra lessons in German and Spanish for enthusiastic double linguists. A successful German exchange and short trips to France add a realistic dimension to work done in school. Further work is required to raise achievement in French, particularly that of boys, and to increase the use of computers for communication and independent study.

MUSIC

189. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that pupils' attainment is overall average. Girls are achieving higher standards than boys. Examination standards have consistently well above national averages.

190. Pupils' standards in GCSE music have improved since the last inspection though the numbers of pupils entered have fluctuated and comparisons are difficult. In 2000 there were 15 entries and all gained A* - C grades. Entries and results for 'A' level have also fluctuated. In 2000 there were 5 entries. All gained A – C grades. Three pupils took A/S level in 2000 and all gained A* - C grades. Fewer boys than girls choose music in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Girls achieve higher than boys. The department has introduced strategies to encourage more boys to be interested in studying music. For example, there are now support

teachers for both boys and girls on guitar, keyboard and drums.

191. The school does not receive information on pupils' prior attainment in music for Year 7 pupils. However, the department quickly assesses pupils' skills and knowledge. Very good planning and schemes of work meet the varied needs of all pupils including those with special educational needs. Current standards of pupils' work seen in Key Stage 3 are broadly average. Pupils' standards in instrumental lessons are good. Pupils' standards of work seen in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are above average.

192. The quality of teaching is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in the department. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and demonstrate very good skills in instrumental playing. Efforts are made to ensure that all pupils understand what is being taught and how they are to work through set tasks. Activities to develop literacy skills, as well as those designed to give beneficial musical experiences, feature regularly in lessons. Staff and pupils use keyboards and percussion instruments effectively during most lessons. There are examples of excellence in the teaching of harmony and listening skills in Year 13. GCSE and 'A' level students use computers. Key Stage 3 pupils do not have equal access to computers because the very small practice room is often used for instrumental teaching. Lessons are well planned for most pupils. There is insufficient attention paid in planning for higher attaining pupils, which results in the under-achievement of a few of them. Teachers use a wide range of strategies for teaching mixed ability classes in Key Stage 3 and effort is made by the staff to include as many pupils as possible in all parts of the lesson, though this is sometimes proves difficult when space is limited and equipment is faulty. Resources are well planned in advance where possible. However, most equipment has to be stored away and reassembled every day, shortening the life of adapters and headphones. In the absence of a technician, problems with equipment can sometimes slow down the progress of a small minority of pupils. Lessons start as promptly as possible but are sometimes a little late if pupils have to travel a distance from a variety of different teaching rooms.

193. The very good teaching has a positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils are well behaved and listen carefully. They respond well to quick question and answer sessions and follow instructions carefully, especially when moving for practical sessions and during dismissal. They are offered a wide range of music and are equally enthusiastic about music from different cultures and different times. In one guitar lesson seen, where the teaching was very good, care was taken to choose music that appeals to young people. The four pupils, working at two different levels of accomplishment, were enthusiastic and showed improvement during the lesson. Key Stage 3 pupils are all learning keyboard skills and are making satisfactory progress. In a Year 8 lesson seen, those pupils who were chosen to perform were able to internalise a melody, add a simple ostinato pattern and perform with confidence. Pupils in Year 11 are learning and improving improvisational skills in preparation for their examination. Teachers carefully monitor achievements and help pupils to plan their time for instrumental practice and revision. Teaching in the sixth form gives students clear direction in their approach towards examination questions. For example in one lesson seen, effective teaching which involved good planning led to students improving their skills in harmonising a Bach Chorale and their ability to identify errors in intonation, notation and rhythm.

194. The department is well managed and staff work successfully as a team. Nine peripatetic teachers support the department in many ways including performances in school and in the community. Departmental planning and pupils' profiling is thorough. Assessment of pupils' work is ongoing and carefully recorded. The department is not yet using data and analysis about pupils' attainments to inform planning, especially for higher attaining pupils.

195. The department provides many varied opportunities for pupils to perform in groups and as soloists in school and at many important events in the community, for example, the Mansfield Male Voice Choir and the Mansfield Choral Society. The school does not provide a regular time or place for boys to sing in extra-curricular time.

196. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous report. However, poor accommodation is having a detrimental effect on its work. Opportunities for individual pupils in lessons are limited due to time constraints, large teaching groups and lack of space in which to practise and perform.

197. The accommodation, which the school provides for music, is poor and the quality has deteriorated even more since the previous report when it was described as inadequate. Between fifty and sixty pupils are taught by a team of teachers in the main large teaching room. There is a gap in the wall in one corner, which enables sound to travel to and from the smaller teaching room where staff say it is difficult to teach aural skills on occasions. Pupils in Key Stage 3 do not have the space and quiet with which to concentrate and refine their work. Since the previous report the numbers receiving instrumental tuition has increased from thirty pupils to two hundred. This excellent provision compounds the problems caused by poor accommodation. EE

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

198. The inspection of physical education was carried out at a time when the work of the department was severely disrupted. Extremely cold weather prevented outdoor lessons from taking place and the local swimming pool was closed. Consequently, three groups together often used the only available indoor space in an adapted programme of activities.

199. Overall, pupils' standards of attainment are broadly average and in line with national expectations. In Key Stage 3 both girls and boys display sound standards of personal fitness, with boys somewhat ahead of girls. In badminton, most pupils made progress in improving their 'high serve' as they acquire new skills. In mixed Year 7 gymnastics groups, both boys and girls are under-achieving in comparison to pupils in other schools where they are taught in single gender groups.

200. At GCSE, examination results over recent years have fluctuated though have always been above the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades. The most recent results indicate a significant difference between boys' and girls' performances, boys doing better, and the department should make more use of assessment data to help find out why.

201. The latest results in 'A' level GCE show all students gaining grades in the A-E band, a little below the school's average for all subjects at this level. The change to AS level in the current Year 12 is aimed at raising standards in post-16 physical education.

202. In Key Stage 4, levels of personal fitness for boys are above average. In weight training most of them know about safe working and understand the principles of using weights to further develop fitness. Girls have developed sound standards of fitness in aerobics and many of them are skilled in learning and repeating step routines with considerable style. Much of the work seen in examination classes is above average. Most students in a GCSE group showed a clear understanding of how both physical and physiological factors affect performance in male and female competitors.

203. In the sixth form work in folders indicates that currently the students are making good progress over time. Answers to questions are accurate, extensive and well written.

204. A good number of pupils and students achieve at high levels, both as individuals and within teams, and represent the school at district, regional and national competitions in a wide range of sports.

205. Teaching is good and never less than satisfactory. In consequence most pupils' learning is good. They enjoy their lessons and respond positively to their teachers. Lessons begin with clear explanations or demonstrations that set clearly the objectives for learning. All teachers know and understand the subject well. They plan lessons very well and in most devise challenging and vigorous activities, setting appropriately high expectations for all students. In examination classes, questions are expertly posed to check on learning and skills are broken down into smaller units enabling students to recognise their complexity. When tasks are set in this way, pupils know what to do in order to be successful. Pupils are well behaved, work well with others and work safely in response to the proper emphasis placed on these aspects by their teachers.

206. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met at both key stages. Currently the allocation of time at Key Stage 3 is insufficient to enable all the components of the programmes of study to be taught as intensively as is normal for a school of this size. The department makes a valuable contribution to the school's extra-curricular programme within the restricting factors of the 'rolling' lunch-break and 'bussing' arrangements at the end of the school day. Assessment of pupils' work is generally satisfactory but there is considerable scope for further development. Though the proposed 'profile' will represent a significant step in ensuring that pupils' assessment becomes more detailed and more regular, the use of assessment to monitor pupils' achievements is currently unsatisfactory.

207. The department is well managed and benefits from strong leadership. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is no dedicated classroom base, although physical education is well established in providing GCSE and 'A' level courses. The sports hall is the only indoor teaching space and as such is inadequate for the size of the school and the curriculum demands of the subject. The nature and quality of what programmes of study can be offered suffer as a result of this poor accommodation. Standards in gymnastics and dance are depressed by the lack of specialist indoor space. Outside the hard play areas are in a sad state, the surfaces are dangerous and the perimeter fencing in very poor condition. Resources for learning are inadequate with a large shortfall in textbooks for GCSE and Post-16 courses. There is no provision of ICT equipment or regular access to it.

208. Since the last report the department has continued to work hard to provide a good quality programme and some improvements have been made. It has begun to address the need to increase the quality and quantity of measuring pupils' performance and monitoring their progress.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

209. The school has offered a wide range of vocational options. Key Stage 4 courses in computer literacy, business technology, word processing and text processing, have been beneficial for lower attaining pupils and have provided valuable opportunities for them to develop the skills which will be of use to them when seeking employment. Results attained by pupils on these courses have been good. In 2000, pupils entered for computer literacy and business technology examinations achieved a 100 per cent success rate. Similarly candidates for word processing and text processing at each level achieved 100 per cent passes with many gaining distinctions. Pupils entered for typing achieved high pass rates. Attainment of students entered for Advanced GNVQ business studies and health and social care was above average.

210. In the sample of lessons seen, attainment at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form was average or above. In a Year 10 GCSE business studies lesson, for example, pupils were able to identify many of the factors influencing the level of pay for a job. Some were able to express their ideas articulately and with good use of technical vocabulary. They were less successful with the written aspects of the work. Sixth form students are able to write extended reports for business studies and health and social care assignments. Following a visit to a local company, for example, one student had produced a detailed and coherent report about the working procedures she had seen. Good use is made of information technology to present work and process data.

211. Achievement in sixth form lessons is good. Students in a health and social care lesson, for example, developed a greater understanding of how the health service works and how this is influenced by the social and political conditions prevailing in society. Students were able to bring a broad general knowledge of current affairs to the discussion but not all were confident enough to contribute readily.

212. At both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers are knowledgeable and plan the work thoroughly. Lessons are structured carefully to provide a good balance between class teaching, group and paired work and individual endeavour. Independent learning skills are actively and effectively encouraged. Students in the sixth form are able to think and act in a mature and independent way. For example, because of clear explanations and good help with data processing techniques, students in a Year 12 business studies lesson were able to collate the findings of their market research and tabulate the results successfully. Teachers have established good working relationships with pupils that contribute to the positive learning atmosphere seen in lessons. Good questioning techniques are employed to extend pupils' answers and make them think. For example, the teacher of a Year 10 business studies lesson insisted on clarity and precision in the verbal responses given by pupils, helping to ensure that the concepts of employment and self-employment were fully understood.

213. The provision for vocational education is well managed. A great deal of work has been done in revising schemes of work to meet the new curricular demands. The introduction of Advanced Vocational Certificate courses in business and health and social care, for example, has been carefully planned. Schemes of work are detailed and there are clear development plans. Assessment is well managed and opportunities are provided for students to be involved in their own assessment. Clear procedures are in force to provide students with knowledge of their progress. Resources for teaching vocational subjects at 'A' Level have recently improved a little as a result of specific bids to the schools' curriculum fund, but the level of funding for these courses remains low. Problems have been experienced with the reliability of computers in business studies that sometimes causes delays for students. Accommodation for business studies is adequate, but students and teachers of health and

social care experience difficulties because of a lack of a 'base'. This means that an essential element of the course, access to learning resources for independent research, is made difficult. There are good opportunities for students to experience the working environment at first hand. Visits to local companies, care institutions and further education establishments are linked to coursework assignments and followed up by relevant classwork. Full advantage is taken to broaden the range of students' experience through a range of visiting speakers.

214. Since the last inspection, improvements in the organisation, management and teaching of vocational subjects have resulted in an increase in their status within the school.