

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

**ST JOHN FISHER ROMAN CATHOLIC  
SCHOOL**

**Peterborough**

**LEA area: Peterborough**

**Unique reference number: 110907**

**Headteacher: Mary Mihovilovic**

Reporting inspector: Ms Margaret Jones  
5028

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2000

Inspection number: 187538

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Park Lane Peterborough
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Appropriate authority:	Peterborough
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. David Bagstaff
Date of previous inspection:	18 <sup>th</sup> March 1996

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Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Margaret Jones	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Kevin Greatorex	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Jonathan Banks	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
David Bray	Team Inspector	Music	How well are pupils taught?
Tony Drane	Team inspector	English and Drama	
Maurice Edwards	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
John Follett	Team Inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	
Barry Lewis	Team Inspector	Information Technology Design and technology	
Michael Revell	Team Inspector	Science Equal Opportunities	
Susan Simper	Team Inspector	Art	
Keith Smalley	Team Inspector	Geography History	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St John Fisher Roman Catholic school is a Voluntary Aided 11-18 comprehensive, which was Grant Maintained until September 1999. It is situated to the North east of the centre of Peterborough in one of the most disadvantaged areas of the city. The school serves the Roman Catholic Deanery of Peterborough and beyond. It has a large catchment area, with thirty-two feeder schools. There are four main feeder schools and 72% of pupils travel by bus to school. Analysis of pupils' backgrounds by postcode shows that over one third come from disadvantaged areas. Over three-quarters of families are claiming Working Family tax credit. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is nearly twice the national average.

There are 655 pupils on roll, 290 boys and 365 girls. The school has grown in the years since the last inspection. There is a small sixth form with 76 students. The school used to run a sixth form in collaboration with Hereward Community College. This arrangement ended in 1998 and this year, for the first time, the sixth form is independent. There are more pupils with special educational needs who enter the school than is usually found.

15% of pupils are from other world faiths, many Muslim pupils attend the school and a distinctive feature is the inter-faith relationship between Catholics and Muslims.. There is also a group of Portuguese pupils. 121 pupils have English as an additional language. At the moment there are ten refugee pupils from Eastern Europe but this number changes on a weekly basis.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

St John Fisher Roman Catholic school is a good school, with many strengths and a positive ethos for learning. There is a "family feeling". It is a very close-knit community. The overall effectiveness of the school is good. It is very well led and managed. Teaching overall is sound, effective monitoring and self-review are in place, and the school is well equipped for further improvement. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. Their attainment improves as they move through the school. Pupils make good progress and achieve high standards.

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

- In Key Stage 3 test results in 1999, attainment was well above the average for similar schools in English.
- GCSE results in 1999 were above the national average. Standards in English, mathematics, geography, history and religious education are particularly high.
- Pupils now in the school are making good progress across Key Stage 3, which is consolidated and maintained so that standards for pupils aged 16 are good in most subjects.
- The headteacher, senior management, staff and governors promote Christian values of respect and concern for others.
- There is very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Music and drama make a significant contribution to the life of the school
- The school is very well led and managed, and achieves good value for money.
- Pupils with English as an additional language receive excellent support.
- Pupils with special educational needs are encouraged, valued and make good progress.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to school, and show respect for the feelings and beliefs of others.
- There is a very good induction programme for new staff.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities, especially in music and drama, is a significant strength.

#### **What could be improved?**

- The planning, provision and assessment of information technology across the curriculum.
- Teaching in Year 7, where one in four of lessons observed was unsatisfactory.
- Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 in science, design and technology and art.
- The use of assessment to help pupils improve their work and to help teachers to plan future learning.
- Levels of attendance which are below the national figures.

**Strengths outweigh areas for future development. The school is already working on three of the identified issues. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan**

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in 1996, attainment has risen in Key Stage 3 and very markedly in GCSE examinations. Teaching and learning have also improved substantially. Good progress has been made in response to issues in the previous report. Behaviour has improved, largely because teachers can now manage their classes better, but there are still some instances of poor behaviour in the lower school. The use of value-added information and analysis of results by gender has addressed, to a large extent, the issue of boys' underachievement. Successful changes have been made to ensure a daily act of collective worship and to improve the personal and social provision at the school. However, the extended form time on Friday morning is not always used well. More strategic planning is underway, and helped to facilitate the move into the Rochester building. Although improvements have been made in the design and technology and information technology departments, their impact on learning has been insufficient; issues of planning and assessment are still outstanding, and progress in these areas has been unsatisfactory.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Key Stage 3	C	D	D	B	well above average A Above average B average C Below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	A	
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	E		

The table shows that at Key Stage 3, attainment, across all three of the core subjects, was above average, when compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average. Results in national tests and teacher assessments show that by the age of 14, attainment is in line with national average in the core subjects of English and mathematics and below average for science. The attainment of boys and girls was similar to the national pattern, with girls attaining higher than boys overall. Boys' results were particularly weak in science. Attainment in all other subjects is in line with, or above, that normally expected.

Pupils aged 14 to 16 attain high standards. GCSE results in 1999 were above the national average, Girls achieved better than boys, but this gap has narrowed. Results were good in English and drama, mathematics, history, geography and religious education. Most grade A's were achieved in history, geography, German and religious education. Results in science were below the national average, although more pupils are entered for combined science than are usually entered in schools nationally. Small numbers of pupils are entered for music, art and design and technology and results are good.

Performance, at advanced level in 1999, was below the national point score. However, there are small numbers in the sixth form. Results in, English, history, geography, religious studies and sociology were good. Results in mathematics were poor and the school has carried out an investigation into this aberration. Students studying vocational courses achieved well.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against their targets because of effective support. Gifted and talented pupils are not sufficiently challenged in science. Relatively few pupils in these subjects achieve the highest grades. Pupils with English as an additional language, including several severely traumatised refugees, make good progress.

Pupils now in Year 9 make good progress, and achieve standards in line with national expectations in English and mathematics, drama, design and technology, modern foreign language, art music and physical education. They reach particularly high standards in history and geography. Achievement in science is below expectation due to non-specialist and inexperienced teaching. This progress is maintained and consolidated across Key Stage 4 and pupils achieve good GCSE results. In Year 11 lessons, achievement is particularly strong in history and geography, with pupils acquiring high order skills of analysis and evaluation. Pupils achieve well in textiles and art. They achieve satisfactory



standards in music, modern foreign language, food technology and physical education. Pupils do not have an opportunity to study information technology at Key Stage 4.

Currently, students in the sixth form achieve well in comparison with their prior attainment. High standards are reached in geography, sociology and physical education. Attainment is in line with expectations for the course in history, modern foreign language, theatre studies, music and art. Students taking GNVQ intermediate business are making good progress and achieving expectations in line for the course.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and eager to succeed. They show great interest, and often enjoyment, in what they are asked to do, and apply themselves conscientiously to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Good in the upper school. In the lower school some misbehaviour in a minority of lessons. During the inspection no evidence of bullying or lack of respect for property
Personal development and relationships	Consistently good relationships. Pupils demonstrate respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Pupils are trustworthy and show initiative and responsibility.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Unauthorised absence in line with national figures, but absence with parents' agreement is above average. Punctuality to lessons is a problem

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	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.*

**During the inspection, 151 lessons were observed and all teachers seen, apart from two religious education teachers. Religious education and collective worship were not part of this inspection, because of the denominational nature of the school.**

Teaching is at least satisfactory or better in 89% of lessons. In 61% of lessons teaching is good or better and in 29% of lessons very good or excellent. Unsatisfactory teaching is found in 11% of lessons, of which 4% were poor. Teaching is least effective in Year 7. The school monitors teaching carefully and takes effective action to improve quality. Teaching is a strength of the English department, with all lessons observed being at least sound, with two-thirds good or better. Teaching in the Sixth form is very good. In mathematics teaching is sound, although expectations vary across different classes. Not all pupils are managed effectively and there is little variation in teaching methods used. Teaching is satisfactory overall in science, with a significant proportion of good teaching and a minority of unsatisfactory lessons. These unsatisfactory lessons occur mainly at Key Stage 3. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the school is sound.

Learning is sound at Key Stage 3 and improves as pupils move through the school. The quality of teaching and support provided to pupils with special education needs is good and it has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The teaching and learning of pupils for whom English is an additional language is excellent where out-of class support is provided. The teaching of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A broad range in all key stages, underpinned by the religious ethos of the school. Does not meet statutory requirements for Information technology at Key Stage 4. Good extra- curricular activities, especially in music and drama.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision made, including opportunities to gain alternative accreditation, alongside GCSE's and, where appropriate, some pupils are entered for both. The school, through the LEA, also provides an alternative, work related curriculum for a small group of pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is good. The planning and organisation are excellent. The targeted support is very effective in enabling pupils to cope with basic skills. The next step is to ensure that all teachers cater consistently well for such pupils in normal lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, a strength of the school. Excellent provision made for prayer and reflection for all faiths. Assemblies strongly promote moral values. Many opportunities for residential and retreats. Cultural diversity of the pupils is recognised through the celebration of festivals. Planning for this aspect is much stronger at a whole school level than it is in subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	School provides good support and guidance and promotes the welfare, health and safety of its pupils in a caring environment. Assessment unsatisfactory overall, although good in some departments. Assessment information not always used to plan future learning. Little self-assessment.

The partnerships established between parents and the school are sound.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school by the senior staff and governing body are very good. The headteacher has established and shared a clear vision of the school as a centre of excellence for Roman Catholic education. Effective self-review and monitoring are in place. The role of head of department has not been sufficiently well developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	They are active and knowledgeable and work hard on the school's behalf. They critically review expenditure plans and pursue best value through rigorous tendering. Value for money evaluations of spending and its impact on learning are under-developed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Senior managers have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Data is being used to monitor and evaluate performance but is used not consistently to set individual pupil targets. Lesson observation does take place but there is no formal appraisal system.
The strategic use of resources	Financial resources are managed efficiently and effectively. Sufficient qualified and experienced staff, apart from in science at Key Stage 3. Accommodation has improved over the last four years and is well managed. Provision of learning resources is unsatisfactory, due to budget deficit, particularly in information technology.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They think their children make good progress</li> <li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school with a problem</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> <li>• The school helps their children become mature and responsible</li> <li>• Standards in the school are rising</li> <li>• The school expects pupils to work hard</li> <li>• Teaching is good and teachers work hard to help their children</li> <li>• The school works well with parents and encourages them to get involved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrangements for homework</li> <li>• Information in reports about the attainment and progress of their children</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities</li> </ul>

Inspectors confirm the positive views of parents. Scrutiny of the homework diaries during the inspection shows them to be properly completed by the students, parents and the form tutor. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities to broaden the personal development of pupils. Reports to parents vary in quality, and some are lacking in specific detail on attainment and progress.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

- 1 Pupils enter the school with below average prior attainment. National tests for eleven-year-olds show attainment below average levels, especially in science. A significant minority of pupils, 12.5%, has a reading age below 9 when they enter the school. There are more pupils with special educational needs who enter the school than is usually found.
- 2 Results in national tests and teacher assessments show that by the age of 14 attainment is in line with the national average in the core subjects of English and mathematics and below average for science. The attainment of boys and girls is similar to the national pattern, with girls attaining higher than boys overall. Boys' results are particularly weak in science. Attainment in all other subjects is in line with, or above, that normally expected.
- 3 Pupils aged 14 to 16 attain high standards and GCSE results in 1999 were above the national average; 51% attained five or more passes at grades A\*-C. Only 87% of pupils gained five or more passes at grade A\*-G, and the percentage of pupils gaining at least one or more GCSE passes at 89% was also below average. This was because some pupils were included on alternative non-GCSE programmes more suited to their needs. Girls achieved better than boys, but this gap has narrowed. When average points scores are compared, pupils at the school achieved levels in line with the national average. Results were good in English and drama, mathematics, history, geography and religious education. Results in science were below the national average, although more pupils were entered for combined science than are usually entered in schools nationally. Small numbers of pupils were entered for art, music and design and technology and results were good.
- 4 At Key Stage 3, against national benchmarks of pupils reaching levels 5 and 6 in similar schools, in 1999, attainment in English and mathematics was well above average. Science results were in line with those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Attainment, overall, across all three of the core subjects, was above average. The trend over time in the school's average national curriculum point score for all core subjects was broadly in line with the national trend.
- 5 By age 16, when compared to the national benchmarks of the number and level of passes in GCSE examinations, the school performs very favourably with results well above those of similar schools in the proportion of pupils passing at A\*-C levels. The overall trend from 1996 is below the improving national trend but it is rising,
- 6 Performance, at advanced level in 1999, was below the national point score. However, there were small numbers of students in the sixth form and this was the first year that the school had operated its own independent sixth form. Results in English, history, geography, religious studies and sociology were good. Results in mathematics were poor and the school has carried out an investigation into this aberration. Students studying vocational courses achieved well.
- 7 Targets set for GCSE performance in 1999 were exceeded. Appropriate targets for 2000 have been set by the school and agreed with the local authority. Although these are similar to the 1999 targets, they are realistic and challenging, based on the assessment data held by the school on the present year 11. Some use of data to set individual targets does take place in Year 11, but this practice is not consistently in place across the school.
- 8 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against their targets,

owing to effective support. They achieve good standards across the school within the context of their specific learning difficulty. They are well integrated into all areas of the curriculum. Learning support staff make informed decisions about the appropriateness of withdrawal work, and support pupils in the classroom in a flexible way. This means that support is provided, whilst at the same time pupils are able to access their curriculum entitlement alongside their peers.

- 9 Gifted and talented pupils are not sufficiently challenged in science. Relatively few pupils in this subject achieve the highest grades.
- 10 Pupils with English as an additional language, including several severely traumatised refugees, make good progress. This is due to excellent out of class language support, which is challenging and demanding whilst at the same time being sympathetic to the diverse needs of these young people.

### **Achievement by pupils currently in the school**

- 11 In English, pupils enter the school with below average attainment, with a significant number having problems with basic literacy. Good progress is made and pupils improve their reading and writing skills well. They are increasingly able to write at length accurately and with good presentation. Reading skills improve considerably, in particular, for those with English as an additional language. Boys benefit from the emphasis placed on reading and the careful choice of texts to appeal to their tastes. Standards of speaking and listening are good. By age 16, pupils are reaching standards well above the national expectation. Work in the sixth form is of high quality.
- 12 Pupils enter the school with below average attainment in mathematics. They make good progress, and by age 14, achieve standards just below the national average. Pupils are able to solve algebraic equations and predict sequences. By age 16, standards are above average in all areas of mathematics, apart from the use of information technology. Students in the sixth form enjoy the challenge of their work and are developing their competence in mathematical skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at all key stages and are well supported.
- 13 In science, pupils enter the school with attainment well below national average. Some progress is made, but by age 14 pupils are still below national expectations. However, their test results are in line with those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. By age 16, steady progress has been made, and pupils develop a better understanding of scientific ideas. Standards reach those typical for Year 11 in most schools. Standards in science are below those in English and mathematics at the school. Few students study science in the sixth form, but they achieve satisfactory standards. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Pupils, with English as an additional language, struggle at Key Stage 3, but make sound progress higher up the school.
- 14 In information technology, pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve standards that are typical for pupils aged 14. At Key Stage 4 there is no information technology course, although computer skills are used in some subjects, for example in design and technology. However, this use is not consistent or systematic and pupils' learning is not assessed. Students studying GNVQ business make good progress in developing their information technology key skill
- 15 In other subjects pupils make very good progress across Key Stage 3 and reach standards in line with or above national expectations, from a low base. Year 9 pupils

reach high standards in history and geography, and satisfactory standards in drama, design and technology, modern foreign language, art, music and physical education.

- 16 This progress is maintained and consolidated across Key Stage 4, and pupils achieve good GCSE results. In Year 11 lessons achievement is particularly strong in history and geography, with pupils acquiring high order skills of analysis and evaluation. Pupils achieve well in textiles and art. They achieve satisfactory standards in music, modern foreign language, food technology and physical education.
- 17 Currently, students in the sixth form achieve well in comparison with their prior attainment. High standards are reached in geography, sociology and physical education. Attainment is in line with expectations for the course in history, modern foreign language, theatre studies, music and art. Students taking GNVQ intermediate business are making good progress and achieving expectations in line for the course. The one student doing foundation level is also making good progress.
- 18 Standards of literacy improve as pupils move through the school. Speaking and listening skills are well developed in English, drama, religious education, history and geography. Standards of reading improve significantly across the Key Stages, particularly for pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. Boys maintain an interest in reading for longer than usually seen. Pupils make rapid progress with writing, and produce work which is extended, proficient and well presented.
- 19 Standards of numeracy across the school are sound overall, but vary between subjects. Good examples of the use of charts and graphs are found in history, geography, English and design and technology, but number work is not well developed in science. Numeracy is well addressed in mathematics in Year 7, with a specific lesson being devoted to improving skills. The mathematics department is aware of the National Numeracy Strategy and is undertaking an audit to form the basis of a whole school policy.

### **Progress since the last report**

- 20 Since the last inspection attainment in the end of Key Stage 3 tests has risen in all core subjects. In most other subjects there has been steady improvement: achievement has risen in the textiles section of design and technology and performance in information technology has risen to being in line with that usually seen. GCSE results have improved markedly. English results have improved year on year because of improved written work and thorough examination preparation. Standards in mathematics have improved. Science results have improved at GCSE but more slowly than in other subjects. Achievement in history and geography has improved at all key stages and there is now no evidence of under-achievement. Results in drama and modern foreign languages have improved considerably. Standards in music have improved. Performance in physical education has remained in line with that normally seen, but standards have declined in art.
- 21 The progress pupils make as they move through the school, shown through assessment data, is better for most than might be expected. Value added information is positive and the majority achieves above average standards. However, whilst overall standards are good, there is room for improvement in science and art and for the provision of more opportunities to use information technology at Key Stage 4. Within individual subjects, particularly science, there remains scope for still higher performance by talented and gifted pupils.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

## **Attitudes**

- 22 Pupils make good progress in these aspects during their time at the school. Their response to learning becomes increasingly positive as they get older. In the sixth form it is consistently very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and eager to succeed. They show great interest, and often enjoyment, in what they are asked to do, and apply themselves conscientiously to their work. Pupils take pride in their achievements and are keen to share their work with teachers and other adults. Most are able to sustain high levels of concentration throughout their lessons, but where teaching is poor some pupils find it difficult to maintain their commitment. A large majority of parents responding to the questionnaire indicated that their children like school. This shows in the way that they take pride in their appearance, looking smart in the school uniform and creating a positive impression.

## **Behaviour**

- 23 Behaviour at the school is satisfactory overall. When they come to school, in assemblies, at lunchtimes and at break-times, almost all pupils demonstrate very high standards of behaviour. Most pupils move around the school in a quiet and orderly manner, and have a very clear understanding of the standards expected of them. In lessons, behaviour, particularly in the upper school, is nearly always good and often very good or better. At the parents' meeting a few parents expressed concerns about misbehaviour in a small number of Key Stage 3 lessons. Observations during the inspection confirm parents' perceptions. In the lower school, behaviour causes a challenge to teachers' control in a significant minority of lessons. This is particularly evident in some science and art lessons.
- 24 Although the number of permanent exclusions has reduced, the number of fixed term exclusions has increased and is high. The decision to apply the exclusion sanction is taken more frequently than is usual at other schools and the school should consider whether other strategies may be more appropriate. During the inspection there was no evidence of bullying or lack of respect for school property.

## **Personal development and relationships**

- 25 Relationships in the school are consistently good. Pupils form constructive relationships with each other and with adults. They work co-operatively together, demonstrating that they will listen with interest to each other and will try to understand the other person's point of view. When given the opportunity they show that they can collaborate well. Almost all pupils consistently demonstrate patience, tolerance and understanding for others. They consistently demonstrate respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
- 26 Pupils' personal development is good. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility and they demonstrate that this trust is well placed. They regularly perform tasks within the classroom and around the school. As pupils progress through the school greater degrees of independence are encouraged. Older students regularly help the younger ones in a range of different ways, for example, by the students providing in class support for younger pupils. All pupils are eager to be involved in fund raising for charities. This was demonstrated during the inspection by the sixth form students who, for each Friday of Lent, were running "hunger lunches".

## **Attendance**

- 27 Attendance at the school continues to be unsatisfactory. Pupils who miss the bus or who have medical appointments often use this, with the authorisation of their parents, as an excuse for missing an entire day at school. Unauthorised absence continues to be broadly in line with the national average. Punctuality is a problem. Too many pupils arrive late, hindering the school's attempts to make a prompt and efficient start to the working day. This is often the result of buses arriving late. The layout of the school and the distance that pupils have to transfer between some lessons result in too much time being lost through staff and pupil movement around the site. The school does have plans for a more direct path between buildings to ease this situation.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 28 Teaching has improved substantially since the school was last inspected. Then just over one quarter of lessons in Key Stage 3 was unsatisfactory. Now teaching is at least satisfactory and better in 89% of all lessons observed. In over two thirds of these lessons the quality of teaching is at least good and the pace of students' learning is faster than average. One third of all lessons is very good or excellent.
- 29 Teaching is most effective from Year 8 upwards. Teaching is sound in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Teaching is a particular strength in the sixth form, where all lessons are at least sound and over one third is very good or excellent.
- 30 There are examples of effective teaching in all subject areas. In 11% of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory or poor because of one or more shortcomings. In these lessons pupils do not make sufficient progress. In Year 7, one quarter of lessons is unsatisfactory. This is a relative weakness. Only four lessons seen were of a poor standard. These lessons were predominantly in Key Stage 3.
- 31 Some good teaching was observed in all subjects. Teaching was particularly effective in a high proportion of lessons in English, drama, modern foreign language, history and geography. Most shortcomings were in a few lessons in Key Stage 3 science, design and technology and in art.
- 32 In lessons where teaching is of good or very good quality pupils learn quickly, are challenged effectively and make rapid progress. This occurs when teachers:
- have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and plan lessons to cover effectively the appropriate national curriculum or examination requirements. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and are effective in teaching basic skills. Subject knowledge is a strength.
  - plan effectively, setting clear objectives that students understand. Planning is sound overall and most effective when teachers are teaching examination courses.
  - challenge, inspire and expect the most of pupils. For example, in a Year 12 art lesson students carried out an observational drawing activity using charcoal. They lacked experience in this medium, but the teacher used good demonstration skills and set challenging time targets for the students to complete their work.
  - use methods which enable pupils to learn effectively. For example, in a Year 8 music lesson on the gamelan, a medieval stringed instrument, pupils were given clear tasks which were well structured and enabled them to succeed.
  - manage pupils well and insist on high standards of behaviour. For example, in a Year 8 design and technology lesson, making a wheeled toy, the teacher set clear objectives and guided the class confidently through their work.



- use time, support staff and other resources well. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson on buying clothes, the teacher used overhead transparencies, hand-outs, prompt cards and real clothes. Activities were timed well and good use was made of paired and whole-class work. In a Year 7 English lesson, mounted illustrations of The Highwayman by Alfred Noyes enabled the pupils to understand the poem.
- assess and mark pupil's work thoroughly. The marking of work is sound overall. It is good in examination courses but not as effective for Key Stage 3 pupils. Assessment is a relative weakness. For example, there is no on-going assessment for information technology. Many teachers do not make pupils sufficiently aware of mark schemes or how these are applied.
- use home work effectively. Homework is sound overall and good in the sixth form.

33 Learning is sound in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and post-16. Where learning is most effective pupils:

- acquire new knowledge and skills, demonstrating consistently high levels of effort. For example, in a Year 9 drama lesson on Romeo and Juliet pupils were able to sustain roles well, as a result of the encouragement of the teacher. In a year 10 history lesson, pupils built up a personal profile of General Custer, which they used to link with flawed decisions he made in battle.
- are productive and work at a good pace. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson on maintenance of life, all pupils made rapid progress in revising the topic and in developing their revision strategies. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, the teacher regularly emphasised the need to maintain a good pace of work when solving equations. By the end of the lesson most pupils were applying techniques to solve simple equations successfully.
- show interest in their work. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson pupils used their previous knowledge of urban models to test out a hypothesis. They were able to make thoughtful, focused comments about their work.
- understand what they are doing and how they can improve. For example, in a Year 9 history lesson on World War 1, pupils considered how useful letters are to a historian and were then able to write a letter indicating accurately those parts which might be censored. In a Year 11 GCSE textiles lesson, pupils clearly understood the relevant examination assessment criteria and what they needed to do to improve.

34 In the small number of lessons where there is insufficient learning teachers do not:

- gain the attention of all pupils and do not manage bad behaviour sufficiently well. This failing accounts for most of the unsatisfactory teaching and occurs principally in Key Stage 3 science. There are also a very small number of lessons in physical education, art, French, food technology and mathematics where pupils' behaviour is not managed effectively.
- motivate or maintain the interest of students because the pace of the lesson is too slow, expectations of pupils are too low. For example, in a few Key Stage 3 science lessons the beginning of the lesson takes too long and pupils have to wait before starting practical activities. During this time the class does not listen

to the teacher sufficiently well and loses interest in the activity.

- have insufficient subject knowledge. This occurs in a few science lessons where non-specialist teachers are too reliant on a set of published materials.
- plan effectively. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson investigating patterns and areas the objectives of the lesson were not made clear, so pupils made insufficient progress. In a Year 10 food technology lesson the work did not follow a clear sequence. This resulted in pupils being off-task and eventually the lesson not being completed satisfactorily.
- assess and mark work sufficiently thoroughly. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on electricity the teacher had not assessed pupils' prior knowledge effectively and the lesson was pitched at too low a level for the majority.

- 35 Good support is given to newly qualified teachers and more experienced teachers who are new to the school. Under- performance in teaching has been consistently monitored. This has enabled good improvements to be made in the quality of teaching.
- 36 The teaching of literacy is sound. There is a whole-school working party developing a policy. Some aspects of teaching literacy are in place. There is widespread use of key words, for example, anatomical words for A level physical education and writing structures within history and geography. The development of speaking and listening is effective in English, drama, music, modern foreign language, geography and history. It is weak in science and listening is not developed effectively in art. Good teaching emphasises the development of reading skills in English, drama, geography and history. Reading skills are not taught as effectively in science and mathematics. Writing is supported well through most subjects, with a wide range of opportunities to develop structured and personal responses in English and the humanities.
- 37 The teaching of numeracy is sound. A numeracy audit is currently taking place. The mathematics department is bringing its policy into line with the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers expect mental calculations to be carried out in all lessons and calculators are used to develop more powerful techniques of computation and analysis. The application of number in other curriculum areas is inconsistent. There are good examples in history and geography. Sound teaching occurs in English and design and technology. In science numeracy is not well developed.
- 38 The quality of teaching and support provided to students with special educational needs is good and it has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Many teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of pupils' specific needs. They work well in partnership with learning support assistants to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are able to access the curriculum. Pupils who present behavioural difficulties are dealt with effectively by staff in a non- confrontational way, which is usually effective in bringing them back on task. Generally, the information provided to subject teachers on pupils' specific individual needs means that support is effectively focused. When teachers are not so knowledgeable about the specific needs of pupils, less effective learning takes place. There are some very good examples, particularly in mathematics and English, of work being adapted to enable these pupils to fully access the subject and make good progress.
- 39 The teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language is excellent where individual, out-of-class support is provided. In lessons, teaching of these pupils is mostly sound, but it is unsatisfactory in art. Good strategies are in place for pupils with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional

language to develop relevant subject vocabularies and accuracy in writing.

- 40 The teaching of gifted and talented students is sound overall. Good teaching, for these pupils, occurs in drama, history, geography and examination courses in music, and design and technology. Sound teaching occurs in English, physical education, modern foreign languages, information technology and design and technology in Key Stage 3. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged in Key Stage 3 mathematics and science, in some classes.

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

- 41 The school provides a broad curriculum, which is Roman Catholic in its philosophy, and is accessible to all pupils. It is well designed to meet the needs of the pupils, helping them to develop into well-rounded young people.
- 42 Pupils receive a broad range of experiences, which are underpinned by the religious ethos of the school. The range is very good in drama and good in several subjects, such as textiles in design and technology, English, geography, history and physical education, particularly at sixth form. However, there are gaps in coverage of design and technology, and in art at Key Stage 3. The school does not meet statutory requirements in information technology at Key Stage 4.
- 43 At age 11 to 14 pupils take the full range of subjects, including religious education, drama and information technology. At age 14 to 16 most pupils take 10 GCSEs, including a good choice of options, such as textiles, food technology, drama and sport studies. Some pupils take GCSE in their home language, for example Urdu.
- 44 There was some criticism in the last inspection of the lack of alternative accreditation for less able Year 10 and 11 pupils. This has improved and there are now opportunities to gain other accreditation awards with a number of subjects currently offering a Certificate of Achievement, alongside GCSE's and, where appropriate, some pupils are entered for both. The school, through the LEA, also provides an alternative, work related curriculum for a small group of pupils who experience a range of vocational areas outside school and will also undertake some mainstream GCSE examination courses within the school. Some of these pupils have yet to be formally disapplied from the national curriculum.
- 45 The sixth form, although relatively small, provides a good range of Advanced Level GCEs, including sociology, religious studies, business studies and theatre studies. GNVQ business at intermediate level is only available in the sixth form, so there is no way for students to progress on a vocational programme from GNVQ Part 1 at age 14 through to Advanced GNVQ. Sixth form students all have a lesson of religious education each week, where they have a chance to increase their understanding of religious and moral issues, and they enjoy the range of activities offered in their weekly physical education lesson.
- 46 Pupils with special educational needs are catered for well at St. John Fisher. Provision is particularly good in drama, where clear guidance helps teachers to pitch the learning at the right level for the pupils, including those with English as an additional language.
- 47 Literacy is beginning to be addressed on a whole school basis, with a working party developing a policy. Some aspects of whole school literacy are in place, such as writing structures in history and geography and the widespread use of key words. Provision for numeracy skills is sound and improving. There is already a distinct lesson on numeracy in year 7.

- 48 Extra-curricular activities benefit the pupils greatly. Music has a big impact on the life of the school, particularly as result of its profile in the liturgy, but also through other activities, such as a visiting composer, the school orchestra and choir, further music lessons, visits and clubs for Asian and other music. Pupils gain rich cultural experiences through English and drama. There are thriving drama clubs in Years 7 to 9 and workshops in Year 11. Pupils go to the theatre and take part in productions and performances, including the Peterborough Celebration of Youth. There is also a full programme of other enriching activities, such as field trips in geography and visits to France. Many pupils appreciate the range and quality of lunchtime clubs. The sixth formers spoke appreciatively of the good range of educational visits, such as the leadership retreat and the business students' visit to Paris. They have taken part in a re-cycling initiative and some of them coach sports teams.
- 49 Equality of access and opportunity is very good across the school. There is, however, a lack of access to information technology in Key Stage 4 and no girls were observed attending the computer club. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good. The planning and organisation are excellent. The co-ordinator systematically identifies pupils' needs, as they join the school from a wide variety of backgrounds at different times of the year, and makes the best provision possible within the available resources. Where there is a common need, she gives expert tuition to pupils in small groups, and co-ordinates well the use of other experts, including bi-lingual assistants, to cater for the wide range of language and other needs. This targeted support is very effective in enabling pupils to cope with basic skills. The next step is to ensure that all teachers cater consistently well for such pupils in normal lessons.
- 50 The school provides well for pupils' personal, social and health education. Various subjects contribute, particularly religious education, and also drama, English, and science. This includes sex and drugs education. Other aspects are covered by a series of extra activities and events, such as retreats and special days, when the normal timetable is suspended. This programme contains many useful activities, but it is more a calendar of events than a coherent programme for each year group. The school is working on producing a plan which clearly covers all features of personal, social and health education, as it is difficult at the moment to check that each pupil covers every aspect fully. Pupils can talk to tutors during a weekly form period, and some pupils take part in activities such as charity, while others go to mass, but tutor time is not always used effectively.
- 51 Careers education is good. There is a good careers library and good links with the careers service. Pupils follow a well-structured programme, including a careers interview for all pupils. However, some students in the sixth form have not been encouraged to think through their ideas about the future.
- 52 The local community contributes very positively to pupils' learning through extensive religious links and work experience. Pupils visit churches and mosques and have frequent visits from religious leaders. However, there are few other community links, for example to relate business and industry actively to pupils' learning, so that they understand the relevance of their work in school to the world of work.
- 53 Links with feeder primary schools are strong and effective, although subject links are not consistently good. The school has developed well its links with higher education, especially St Mary's College, and there are flourishing links with Nottingham and Bangor University music departments.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- 54 This aspect is a strength of the school. The aspirations of the school to provide for pupils spiritually, and to develop in them a sense of service, responsibility and care for self and others are clearly expressed in the mission statement. These aims are well supported by the school curriculum policy. Parents strongly support the values promoted by the school. Planning for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is much stronger at a whole school level than in subjects, where little reference is made in planning.
- 55 The provision made for pupils' spiritual development is very good. The headteacher, head of religious education and teaching staff provide strong role models in recognising the value of faith and worship for all pupils, whether Christian or of other beliefs. Provision for spiritual development is made daily by prayer and reflection through lighting a candle and the *Thought for the day*, but this is more successful in some classes than others. Assemblies provide spiritual and moral direction, and are attended by pupils from all religious backgrounds. Pupils are actively involved in presenting assemblies through drama and readings. Music, especially choral work, makes a very significant contribution to liturgy, and is spiritually uplifting. Excellent provision is made for private prayer and reflection through the prayer room which is available for pupils of all faiths, and used regularly by Muslim as well as Christian pupils. Days of special religious importance, such as Ash Wednesday, are recognised through assemblies, and by celebrations such as Diwali or Eid ul Fitr. Works of art made by the pupils, and displayed in the foyer, provide focus for thought about the meaning of Lent. The school is well supported by priests from the local parishes, and strong links are also maintained with the Imam. All pupils feel that their religion and personal beliefs are respected and valued. In religious education, pupils visit places of worship, and study Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Hinduism. A Year 9 visit to the holocaust centre was a very memorable experience for pupils. In lessons, few examples of spiritual experiences were observed, except in geography, when pupils reflecting on the floods in Mozambique were moved when considering the impact on the people and the land. In science, the discovery of a fruit fly hatching was a source of interest and wonder.
- 56 Provision for moral development is good. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong, and are set a good moral example by staff. Assemblies strongly promote moral values. The Ash Wednesday assembly, for example, used the parable of the talents as a basis for initiating charity fundraising and each upper school class was given £5 and asked to increase it. The school supports a number of charities, including a Roman Catholic school in Sierra Leone, carefully selected to reflect a similar mix of faiths to that found at St John Fisher. In English and drama lessons, pupils consider moral dilemmas and decisions through discussion and other activities. In history, pupils consider the moral issues raised in their study of the slave trade. Although there is a comprehensive code of conduct to guide behaviour, a few pupils in the lower school choose to ignore this, and do not always settle readily to work in some lessons.
- 57 Very good provision is made for pupils' social development. Many opportunities are provided for residential opportunities, and retreats are of special importance. These provide pupils with excellent opportunities to spend time together outside school, and to enjoy a range of activities. Pupils value these occasions, and remember them as special experiences. Participation in sports and physical education develops team spirit. The policy of the school to retain a full lunch hour enables pupils to enjoy their meals, relax and socialise, or to participate with others in a wide range of lunchtime activities. In lessons, pupils work well in groups. In English, work is shared, and there is an emphasis on collaboration, and drama supports personal growth and self esteem. In design and technology, pupils work well together on batch production, and relationships in lessons are supportive. In

history, there is good teaching on gender, class and social hierarchies. Personal and social education is mainly delivered through religious education, which was not the focus of this inspection.

- 58 The school positively supports opportunities for pupils to enjoy culturally enriching experiences. Visits are made to galleries and theatres, and field trips and overseas visits also take place. Music is a very important feature of the school. Resident writers have visited the school, and pupils enjoy drama through performance, and through the experience of visiting groups. The cultural diversity of the pupils in the school is recognised through the celebration of religious festivals, and in history, through the choice of Islam as a unit of study. Although in English examples are drawn from a range of cultures, library provision is limited. Only very limited references are made to wider cultural sources in art, design and technology, music and physical education, and this has already been identified by the school as an area for further development.
- 59 Since the previous report, provision for spiritual development has improved greatly and school assemblies are now held daily. The quality of classroom activities, in tutorial time, remains more varied with good spiritual development and time for reflection in most groups, but not all.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

- 60 The school continues to provide good support and guidance and promotes the welfare, health and safety of its pupils in a caring environment. Staff show concern for the well-being of pupils and a wide range of measures exists to promote their development. Form tutors are sensitive to the needs of pupils, and consistently monitor their social progress. Form tutors often stay with the same pupils for more than one year, which enables them to get to know the pupils well, ensuring good continuity of pastoral support.
- 61 Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are, overall, unsatisfactory. While they are good in mathematics, history, geography, modern languages and drama, and satisfactory in English and music, they are unsatisfactory in science, art, design and technology, information technology and physical education. There is too little opportunity for pupils to be involved in assessing their own work. Too often, assessment information is not used to plan future learning, nor is it used consistently to set targets for individual pupils.
- 62 All staff at the school work hard to promote high standards of good behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are effective. The code of conduct and the "referral system" are understood by the whole school community. The Heads of Year and form tutors consult regularly to ensure that practices are consistently applied by all staff, many of whom were seen to pre-empt incidents of possible misbehaviour with firm, calm intervention, maintaining good, tight control.
- 63 The school has systems in place to monitor and promote attendance but they have not been effective in improving it. Registers are marked speedily, correctly and efficiently at the start of the working day and after lunch. All absences are properly noted and contact made with parents to justify the absence. Annual figures for attendance are correctly aggregated and properly published in the governor's annual report to parents and in the prospectus. The school works well with the Education Welfare Officer but, despite the joint approach, attendance and punctuality continue to be unsatisfactory.
- 64 Child protection issues are handled very effectively. All staff are aware of the need for vigilance and the steps to take if suspicions are aroused. Health and safety are

dealt with effectively in practice. Governors recently carried out an effective risk assessment on the site and buildings but did not include equipment or resources. There are systems in place for reporting emerging identified faults, but risk assessment has not been carried out by individual departments for machinery or equipment in specialist areas. During the inspection the senior management team and the staff managed an incident just outside the school particularly well. The minimum amount of disruption was caused through prompt and decisive action which eliminated any risk to the pupils.

- 65 The acting special educational needs co-ordinator has effectively built on the school's existing procedures. She is putting in place a good structure that enables pupils to be assessed and monitored and for individual education plans to be established with specific targets. All pupils' reading ages are tested upon entry to the school. This along with the results of their Key Stage 2 assessments and other information provided by the contributory school, is used to assess specific needs and write individual education plans. There is, however, a need to establish other diagnostic tests for use across the whole year group to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully identified. Individual education plans and other relevant pupil information are effectively disseminated to subject staff, and at the same time there are effective procedures in place to gather information from subject teachers and this is used well to review provision. There are also opportunities for teachers to provide subject specific targets on pupils' individual education plans, however these are not currently being identified by most teachers in a way that enables the support to be fine tuned to meet these pupils needs fully.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

- 66 Parents confirm that the school has many strengths. Almost all parents would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem. Parents believe that the school is well led and managed. They also feel that the school works well with parents. It is the parents' belief that teaching is good, that children make good progress and that they are helped to become mature and responsible. However, the responses to the questionnaire and the meeting with parents raised minor concerns regarding the arrangements for homework, the information about their children's progress and the provision of an interesting range of activities.
- 67 Scrutiny of the homework diaries during the inspection show them to be properly completed by the students, parents and the form tutor. They detail the quantity of the work and the deadlines for completion, enabling parents to be aware of the requirements, monitor the work of their children and to communicate with their tutors.
- 68 Parents, governors and other adults are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school and some respond enthusiastically by participating in a range of activities. Parents make an active contribution to the governing body and others are on the staff of the school. They are also involved in promotion of sporting activities and some help out on visits. Some pupils have the benefit of home computers to help them with their studies. Although there is no Parent Teacher Association a number of parents is actively involved in the Music Society Fund-raising Committee, which has recently provided a grand piano through fund- raising activities.
- 69 Parents are properly informed about the school and their children's activities through an appropriate range of letters, newsletters, the governor's annual report to parents and the school prospectus. Reports to parents vary in quality; some give the required information to parents, but too many lack specific reference to attainment and progress. Others lack information about aspects of the subject covered in the

period, and many make little reference to what the pupil needs to do to improve. Information technology results are not reported at the end of Key Stage 4.

- 70 A few parents felt that some individual communication, concerning issues like school transport, is not always met with as much sympathy as it might be. Inspection findings support parents' feelings.
- 71 The school provides a wide range of activities to broaden the personal development of pupils. There are many opportunities for pupils to be involved in sporting, music, arts and other after school clubs during lunchtimes and at the end of the school day. Inspection findings do not support parents' feelings on this issue.
- 72 The parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in decisions made about provision for their children, and have the opportunity to attend Annual Review and Transitional Reviews and make their views known. Parents are kept very well informed by the school about all aspects of their children's progress in relation to their specific learning difficulty and, as part of the normal process of parents' evening, are invited to a specific interview to discuss their children's progress in the context of their special need

### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

- 73 The leadership and management of the school by the senior staff and governing body are very good. The school's management promotes strong Christian values. The staff are friendly and caring and set good examples. Relationships are warm, and the school provides an effective supportive learning environment.
- 74 Over the last three years the headteacher has established a clear vision of the school as a centre of excellence for Roman Catholic education. This vision is shared and communicated to the whole school community. Her clear approach to accountability has produced many positive features and has brought about much needed change. Under her leadership school self-review has become well established. She has a very accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and takes considered and realistic action to address areas in need of development. The headteacher and the deputy head work well together and provide a clear educational direction for the school, which is to strive to achieve the best academic, social and spiritual standards for pupils.
- 75 The senior management team operates in an open and supportive manner, with a good team spirit. They have clearly written job descriptions and formal line management responsibilities, which link them to specific departments. Lines of communication are good.
- 76 A shortcoming in the leadership and management of the school is that although the management of subjects is satisfactory, the role of head of department has not yet been sufficiently developed. Consequently in a few departments, for example science, design and technology and information technology the quality of development planning is unsatisfactory and lacks focus on academic achievement. Assessment procedures and the use of data to plan future learning are variable across departments. The quality of some classroom monitoring is not rigorous enough. Not all departments pay sufficient attention to meeting, within lessons, the full range of needs of pupils with English as an additional language or pupils with special educational needs.
- 77 The governors are active and knowledgeable and work hard on the school's behalf. They run an effective committee system that is supportive but also asks probing questions. They are engaged in active monitoring of the work of the school and involved in the formation of policy and decision making. A good example is their taking the initiative on staff training for more able pupils, and support for the move



to lease the Rochester building. Statutory requirements are mostly met, except for the lack of information technology at Key Stage 4. The school does not currently meet requirements for the appraisal of teachers and is awaiting new guidance, but performance targets have been set for the headteacher and the deputy head.

- 78 The senior management team and governors exercise effective and efficient management of the school's finances. The draft school development plan, which is currently under discussion, provides strategic direction to the work of the school and it contains appropriate targets for development. This is an area of improvement since the last inspection. Educational priorities are generally supported well through careful financial management, with grants and additional funding being appropriately used. The role of the governors has now been defined appropriately as recommended in the last inspection report. The governors, through the work of the finance and buildings committee, critically review expenditure plans, monitor budget spend and pursue best value through rigorous tendering. While governors carry out some value for money evaluations of budget spending, this is an under-developed area, particularly related to significant curriculum expenditure.
- 79 The excellent work of the school administrator ensures very good day-to-day financial administration, with regular expenditure statements to all cost centre managers. The linking of site management responsibility to the role of bursar is ensuring cost effective procedures. The budget deficit, which was created during the change from Grant Maintained status, has inhibited development. Through rigorous budget management, however, the deficit is scheduled for clearance by the end of the year. Educational priorities are adequately funded, though the provision of information technology is below expectation. There is insignificant subsidising of the Sixth form by the other key stages. Special educational needs pupils and pupils with English as a additional language are appropriately funded, with good progress resulting from the investment in support staffing.
- 80 The school has sufficient specialist and experienced staff to teach the curriculum, apart from in science where non-specialist and inexperienced staff have an adverse effect on learning at Key Stage 3. There is adequate technical support, except in art where a new appointment will take place next term. Administrative staff provide an effective service. Kitchen and lunchtime staff contribute well to the provision of very good food and a pleasant social atmosphere in which pupils can to eat and enjoy each other's company. Good arrangements are in place for the professional development of all staff. Newly qualified teachers are well supported, and arrangements meet requirements. There are good induction arrangements for all staff new to the school.
- 81 The school's accommodation is well managed and classrooms are often improved as a learning environment by display of pupils' work. Accommodation has been improved over the past four years. It is good, providing effective accommodation for nearly all subjects and aspects of the school's life. Ten mobile classrooms have been removed through the use of the Rochester building on the site, enabling subjects such as English, geography and history to have their classrooms efficiently grouped together. Specialist accommodation is good and effectively supports the teaching in design technology subjects, science, art and drama. Physical education benefits from the availability of the sports hall and a gym, as well as the school hall, but the restricted size of the laying fields limits the range of activities. The weakest areas of accommodation are for information technology, where the room is a cramped adaptation of a classroom, and music, where, despite building improvement to create extra practice rooms, these spaces are too cramped and insufficient for small group work. Litter in some areas of the site is often a blemish on an otherwise pleasant working environment.
- 82 Provision of learning resources is seldom better than adequate and in some subjects, for example, art and music, shortage of resources inhibits pupils' breadth

of curriculum. The library is a pleasant, welcoming and well run resource centre, but in some subjects, especially at sixth form level, stock is too limited. Fiction, particularly for senior pupils, is good and there is an authoritative local studies section. The school is poorly provided with computers and other information technology materials and this is reflected in the age and specification of the computers in the library. Total spending on learning resources is currently low, because of the budget deficit, and despite the use of a formula to share this equitably between departments, nearly all receive too little funding for resources. Overall, resources are unsatisfactory and since the last inspection have failed to keep up with the growing expectation.

- 83 The provision of teaching and learning support staff for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The additional hours are effectively used to provide support in subjects. There was some criticism of the lack of focus of learning support assistants in the last inspection report. The recent move to attach learning support assistants to subject areas has enabled better links with each subject area and improved the quality of in-class support. There is a good size learning support room which provides enough space for teaching and an administration base. Learning resources are satisfactory, although there is an urgent need to develop information technology resources to provide opportunities for the development of independent learning systems.
- 84 The acting special education needs co-ordinator works with enthusiasm and commitment and is having a positive impact in taking the Learning Support Department forward. She provides good leadership to, and is well supported by, the other members of the department. The link governor has been active in monitoring the progress and the effectiveness of the department's work and has provided good support to the acting special educational needs co-ordinator in revising the special needs policy.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- 85 Improve the planning, provision and assessment of information technology across the curriculum by:
- Producing schemes of work with learning outcomes for Key Stage 4.
  - Auditing teachers' skills and providing training.
  - Making better use of information technology resources across the curriculum.  
(See paragraphs 165 – 180)
- 86 Improve the quality of teaching in Year 7 by:
- Improving techniques of classroom management and control.
  - Improving the quality of lesson planning.
  - Checking that tasks set are clear and pitched at the right level to meet the needs of the pupils.  
(See paragraphs 29, 30, 122, 126, 132)
- 87 Raise standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 by:
- Improving the quality of teaching in science and art.
  - Strengthening the co-ordination and management of the art and design and technology departments.  
(See paragraphs 30, 122, 126, 132 – 134, 142 – 143)
- 88 Improve the use of assessment to help pupils improve their work and to help teachers to plan future learning by:
- Ensuring consistency in marking and assessment.
  - Sharing mark schemes with pupils.
  - Making fuller use of assessment data for individual target setting.  
(See paragraphs 61, 124, 133, 142, 179)
- 89 Improve levels of attendance by:
- Establishing more effective links and partnership with families.  
(See paragraphs 27, 63)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	151
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	51

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	28	32	27	7	3	1

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 – Y12	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	624	31
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	209	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y12	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	110	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	121

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	52
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	45

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	9.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	52	78	130

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	25 (26)	27 (22)	18 (16)
	Girls	57 (51)	42 (35)	37 (17)
	Total	82 (77)	69 (57)	55 (33)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (68)	54 (50)	43 (29)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	54 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (42)	32 (25)	14 (6)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	33 (18)	32 (26)	22 (23)
	Girls	60 (44)	49 (44)	40 (42)
	Total	93 (62)	81 (68)	62 (65)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (64)	62 (62)	48 (56)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34(26)	49 (26)	16 (19)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	42 (45)	51 (62)	93 (107)

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	19 (13)	35 (42)	36 (44)
	Girls	28 (31)	46 (57)	47 (60)
	Total	47(44)	81(99)	83 (103)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51 (41)	87 (93)	89 (97)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (93)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.(1998)

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

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	10(9)	13(16)	23(25)

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	14.4	10 (13.2)	11.8 (12.7)	2 (2)	n/a (2)	2 (2)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.8)	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	15
Black – African heritage	14
Black – other	20
Indian	7
Pakistani	57
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	3
White	527
Any other minority ethnic group	10

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	1	
Indian	1	
Pakistani	11	1
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	95	3
Other minority ethnic groups	1	

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	41.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	292

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.3
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	23

## Financial information

Financial year	1998-1999
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	£
Total income	1,722,719
Total expenditure	1,759,131
Expenditure per pupil	2,851
Balance brought forward from previous year	47,087
Balance carried forward to next year	10,676



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	655
Number of questionnaires returned	64

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	27	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	33	5	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	45	8	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	39	11	3	3
The teaching is good.	41	53	6	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	47	14	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	33	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	25	3	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	28	63	3	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	59	34	0	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	38	3	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	45	3	6	13

### Other issues raised by parents

At the parents' meeting, attended by 27 parents, and in letters sent to the registered inspector, a few parents complained that some of their concerns, particularly concerning transport, were not always dealt with sympathetically. The great majority expressed appreciation for the work of the school, which they felt helped their children to develop into well rounded adults.

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

### **ENGLISH**

- 90 Pupils enter year 7 with attainment below national expectation, with a significant minority having insecure literacy skills, special educational needs or having English as an additional language. For the last three years, in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, there has been an upward trend. In 1999 the results for level 5 and above and level 6 and above were very close to the national expectation, and high when compared to similar schools. The department adds value over Key Stage 3 and provides a good foundation for Key Stage 4. This is evidenced in the general growth in extended writing, increased accuracy and improved presentation from Year 7 through to Year 9.
- 91 In 1999, in GCSE English, for which the department enters the majority of pupils, A\*-C results exceeded significantly the national expectation. Boys achieved very well in exceeding the national expectation for boys A\*-C grades by 16%. At A\*-G grades pupils achieved 100% pass rate. There has been a rising trend of improvement in English results, however, A\*-A grade performance is below expectation and the challenging of the more able pupils is a target for improvement. In 1999, in English Literature, pupils achieved slightly above the national expectation at grades A\*-C, with 100% pass rate at A\*-G. For those pupils who are borderline or below GCSE, the department successfully offers dual entry or entry to the Certificate of Achievement. The department is convinced, through their internal evaluations, that the success at Key Stage 3, and GCSE, results from the effective systematic programme of examination preparation. At both key stages pupils with special educational needs make good progress through effective teaching and support.
- 92 The GCE A level groups tend to fluctuate in numbers, though there is a trend of growth in take-up for the course. In 1999, in GCE English Literature, all students gained grades A-E, as has been the case for the last five years. A level students are enthusiastic about their course and frequently achieve above their predicted grades.
- 93 Standards of literacy are sound for the majority of pupils on entry, though a significant minority have a range of problems with writing skills. The department addresses the literacy needs of these pupils effectively, and there is growth in confidence and competence over Key Stage 3. Standards of speaking and listening are good in those areas of the curriculum where there is an emphasis on collaborative learning and the verbal presentation of work, for example, English, drama, geography, history, and religious education. Facility with the spoken word develops well through Key Stages 3 and 4, with mature levels of discourse in the sixth form. Standards of reading improve significantly on entry, particularly for the significant minority of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, who have problems with decoding the meaning of words. Good progress is made generally through effective support and appropriate learning programmes. Considerable emphasis is placed on reading, particularly in English, where there has been significant investment in individual readers, with specific consideration given to those texts likely to appeal to boys. As a consequence, boys maintain an interest in reading for longer than often seen. Pupils are keen to read aloud and do so with growing confidence and competence as they move up the school. Reading skills are under-developed in the teaching programme in science and mathematics. Standards of written work are very variable on entry. There is rapid development in Year 7 and by Year 8 the majority are writing at length, with increasing accuracy and with improved presentation. The best GCSE and A level writing is very proficient and well presented. Writing standards are supported well through most subjects with a wide range of opportunities to develop structured and

personal responses in English, history and geography. There is little evidence of teaching extended writing skills in art, and they are poorly developed in science at Key Stage 3.

- 94 Teaching is a strength of the English department, with all lessons observed being at least sound, and two-thirds good or better. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. The well-qualified and specialist team has good subject knowledge and employs an effective range of teaching and active learning approaches, from whole class teaching to small group work. A good example of small group collaborative work was seen in the Year 13 lesson, where a sophisticated sequencing exercise was used to map the course of *The Remains of the Day*. Teachers use questions well to probe student knowledge and understanding. There is often good use made of drama techniques to help pupils access texts, example, as in the Year 9 lesson where Lord and Lady Capulet, Juliet and the nurse were “hot seated” to bring out their thoughts and motivations. Planning is generally very good, with secure coverage of national curriculum and relevant syllabus requirements. High expectations are made explicit concerning behaviour and effort; as a consequence, pupils do their best and take care over presentation. A good feature is the effective management of pupils, which is largely achieved through the good working relationships established between teachers and pupils. Resources are often chosen well for purpose, e.g. the matching of mounted illustrations to the relevant sections of *The Highwayman* by Alfred Noyes aided a low ability Year 7 group to access the poem. Teachers are generally good at engaging pupils in discussions about their work. Marking and assessment practice is generally effective, particularly in the upper school. In the best responses to pupils’ work there is good use of developmental comment and targets, as well as praise, but this is an area not yet consistent across the whole department, especially across Key Stage 3. Homework is appropriately set, marked and returned. The learning support assistants work very well with pupils and with teachers and contribute significantly to the good teaching seen in the department.
- 95 The response of pupils to their learning is good or better in the vast majority of lessons. A small minority of lessons in Year 7 contained examples of poor attitudes to work and behaviour, however teachers challenge it appropriately. Attitudes and behaviour improve in maturity as pupils go through the school. Pupils quickly become focused on doing well, particularly at GCSE and in the sixth form, where they derive a great deal of enjoyment from the course. This was particularly marked in the Year 12 group where there was real appreciation of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and a savouring of her writing style and characterisations. The emphasis on collaborative learning and sharing of work develops sensitivity towards the ideas and work of others. Pupils develop good listening skills and show appreciation of the work of their peers. The ethos of the English classrooms is one of good working relationships and purposeful learning.
- 96 The head of department provides very good leadership to a supportive team, where two have substantial commitments to head of year responsibilities. Curriculum provision is broad and balanced, with statutory requirements met fully. The courses offer considerable opportunity for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, for example, through the texts studied, the social groupings within which learning takes place, and the many extra-curricular experiences provided, such as theatre trips and visiting writers. As a consequence, the department contributes significantly to the school’s aims as set out in the mission statement.
- 97 Since the last inspection report the department has continued to improve attainment at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. Progress has been made with developing writing competency and the rigorous preparation given to public tests and examinations. Schemes of work which were criticised in the previous report have been improved, and are being further reviewed to accommodate the literacy demands and the

revised national curriculum orders. There is still insufficient use of information technology, although encouraged by the department. This is linked to the inadequate resourcing in the school as a whole.

- 98 In order to improve standards further, the department should:
- target the more able in order to maximise the achievement of the top levels in the end of Key Stage 3 tests and at grades A\*-A at GCSE;
  - complete the review of the schemes of work and units, ensuring that literacy is well secured in Key Stage 3;
  - ensure that there is greater consistency by the team in the use of written developmental comment across all years.

## **DRAMA**

- 99 Pupils enter Year 7 with a wide range of drama experience and skills. The Key Stage 3 course provides a programme within which pupils develop confidence in performance, increasingly effective communication skills and a repertoire of drama techniques, which provide a good foundation for those who go on to take drama at GCSE. The standards of achievement in drama of Key Stage 3 pupils is at least sound, with many achieving good and better levels of proficiency.
- 100 In 1999, in GCSE drama, both boys and girls achieved well above the national expectation, with 80% gaining grades A\*-C compared to 67% nationally and all pupils entered achieving grades A\*-G. This performance is a significant increase on the 1997 and 1998 results. A key feature under-pinning the good results is the pupils' enthusiasm and commitment to the demands of the course.
- 101 In previous years the school has offered A level Performing Arts, however, the current Years 12 and 13 are following the GCE Theatre Arts course with the first results due in Summer 2000. Standards of attainment from lesson observations are good, with students displaying mature practical work and sound grasp of the theoretical elements of the course. The groups are very committed to the course and clearly enjoy the range of activities and learning required by the syllabus.
- 102 Drama is an inclusive subject and all pupils are able to take a full part in the courses in line with the declared aims of the department. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, often find success from performing through the spoken word and within character. The more able find scope for independent development of ideas, creativity and organisational skills. Speaking and listening skills are fostered effectively, though the links with English to capitalise on assessment opportunities have yet to be made. Literacy is supported well through oral development and the emphasis placed on reflective and analytical writing within the drama diaries. Drama also contributes significantly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including drama clubs, productions and theatre visits; the emphasis on collaborative working encourages socialisation, and the issues and dilemmas which form the basis for much of the drama work allow pupils to explore moral issues within a context. Spiritual development is often seen in the depth of emotional engagement and empathy generated by the pupils through their work, for example, in the Year 11 drama lesson where a group was exploring AIDS within an effective piece of stylised drama.
- 103 The quality of teaching in drama is at least good and often very good. The drama department has secure drama knowledge and understanding, as well as enthusiasm and commitment to the subject. Basic drama skills are developed well over Key Stage 3, so that by the time pupils start the GCSE course they can use a range of techniques and conventions with considerable fluency. The courses and lessons are planned well, with the GCSE Drama and A level Theatre Arts being

dictated by the demands of the syllabuses. Expectations of good behaviour and the development of drama discipline are made explicit. As a consequence of the clear expectations and good working relationships, teachers manage pupils very well and get the best from them. This was shown well in the Year 9 lesson where pupils were working on short scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* and achieving good outcomes through sustaining roles inspired by the expectations and encouragement of the teacher. A particular strength is in the development of reflective and critical faculties used to refine personal and group performances.

- 104 The response by pupils to drama is at least good, often very good, with occasional lessons where the response is excellent. In all years, pupils enjoy their drama work; they are keen to do well and eager to participate. The attitudes displayed are serious in terms of creating quality responses through effective 'rehearsal' and improvisation, as seen in the Year 10 lesson where groups were working conscientiously on rehearsed performances of extracts from *The Crucible*. There is also a sense of fun and enjoyment. This was exemplified well in the same Year 11 lesson as the serious work on AIDS, where another piece was highly comic with a family outing portrayed with considerable acuity. The growth in maturity of attitudes and content of the work is most marked in Key Stage 4, particularly in the Year 11 work. By the time students enter the sixth form they tend to be strongly committed to the subject with work of depth and emotional content resulting. No examples of poor behaviour were seen and the ethos of co-operation, collaboration and appreciation is a strength of the department. In this way drama plays a significant part in helping to fulfil the schools aims as set out in the mission statement.
- 105 The head of drama is providing enthusiastic and rigorous leadership to the subject, ably supported by the other team member. She provides a clear vision for the development of drama. Drama is a popular subject with pupils and has the capacity for further growth. The schemes of work and the courses have good breadth of curricular coverage, providing interesting learning opportunities. The accommodation for drama is good; however, the studio needs some refurbishment and investment in a simple lighting grid. Drama was not reported on in the last inspection report.
- 106 In order to improve standards further, the department should:
- continue to review and develop formal assessment procedures at Key Stage 3;
  - increase effectiveness of development planning through prioritising targets, giving detailed costings and linking professional development to targets more securely;
  - increase the drama reference and play-script resources in the library.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 107 Pupils at the school receive a good mathematical education. This is reflected in the results of national testing at age 14 and 16 and the progress pupils make. The mathematics department adds value through the courses the pupils study, and there are measurable gains in mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding.
- 108 In Key Stage 3 national tests in 1999, the results are now just in line with national expectations. Teacher assessments, although ambitious, confirm these results. When these results are compared to similar schools, the performance is rated very high. In GCSE in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C and A\*-G was above the national average and show continued improvement, a clear indication of the value added by the school. The 1999 A level results were very disappointing; the results were below average. The school has recently taken over the teaching of A level mathematics from consortium arrangements and students acquired over-optimistic estimates of their performance. Mock examinations at the school suggested that below average results were expected, but there was not enough

time left to take effective remedial action. The department has now introduced rigorous systems, including a modular A level course, to ensure improvements this year. From a close scrutiny of these new A level courses in mathematics, it is clear that improvements are already taking place.

- 109 Numeracy is sound in many curriculum areas across the school. The mathematics department is aware of the National Numeracy Strategy and is aware of pupil weaknesses. It is currently aligning its curriculum to ensure continuity for the year 2000 intake. As an interim measure, a detailed numeracy audit is taking place, which will form the basis of a whole school numeracy policy. Pupils' application of numeracy in other subjects is variable. There are good examples in History and Geography, ranging from effective use of scatter graphs and charts to logarithmic graphing with older students. In Science, numeracy is not well developed. For example, some pupils are not able to correctly draw graphs and do not know the difference between discrete and continuous data. Pupils measure accurately in design and technology and use ratio in food technology. In English, pupils are surprisingly effective, as graphing mood changes during their study of literature shows. In mathematics, numeracy is given a high profile, with a specific lesson in Year 7 devoted to improving skills. Mental calculations are expected in all lessons and calculators are used efficiently to develop more powerful techniques of computation and analysis.
- 110 Pupils enter the school with slightly below average attainment in mathematics. By the age of 14 they have attained close to national averages in all the required areas of work. For example, in number and algebra, almost all can form simple algebraic equations from problems posed in words. Many can solve the resulting algebraic equations correctly and have good standard routines for the arithmetic manipulations required. The majority of pupils make particularly good progress in using algebraic skills. Not all realise that checking solutions is an essential part of the problem solving process. All pupils are able to predict sequences arising from practical investigation and write up their results in a systematic way. Computers are not currently used to improve the detailed analysis or presentation of their work, and standards in the use of information technology are below that usually seen. In data handling, most pupils are able to define probability through practical investigations. Many are confident to explain game strategies for winning, based on their understanding of chance.
- 111 The courses in Key Stage 4 build effectively on this good work and, by the age of 16, standards are above average in all areas of mathematics, apart from information technology. The majority of pupils can use the angle properties of cyclic quadrilaterals to calculate unknown angles, although several cannot easily recall which property they need to apply. In number and algebra, almost all can calculate correctly using fractions and decimals. A few, however, still find addition and subtraction with mixed denominators confusing. The majority can use algebraic techniques correctly to change the subject of a variety of formulae and compare with standard forms for first order equations. Higher ability pupils can determine regions using linear inequalities, and are very proficient at understanding and testing the regions formed for inclusion or exclusion. In A level courses, by age 18, the range of mathematical skills has developed extensively. For example, all students know how to integrate and have a good range of skills for dealing with more difficult examples. They can substitute correctly for complex integrands and most are competent in the subsequent arithmetic calculations. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all key stages and are especially well supported in their learning within the mathematics department.
- 112 Attitudes towards mathematics are largely very good. Most pupils talk

enthusiastically about their work and demonstrate what they can do. Most know their predicted grades for GCSE examinations and are keen to work hard towards them. They are less clear about the criteria for level improvement at Key Stage 3. Behaviour is mainly good. However a small number of boys and girls in Key Stages 3 and 4 do not do as they are asked and their progress and attainment are adversely affected. Homework and lunchtime clubs are well attended and provide a valuable enrichment to the curriculum.

- 113 In the majority of lessons, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In over half the lessons, teaching is good or very good. All key stages contain examples of high quality teaching and learning. Teachers know their subject well. Individual support and feedback are of high quality. Where teaching and learning is at its best, the teaching pace is brisk and a variety of teaching methods are employed. Mathematical language is effectively extended, relationships are good and there is an appropriate sense of humour. Pupils enjoy their studies, are involved in their learning and make very good progress. For example, a Year 12 class was developing curve-sketching techniques. They were competent with general quadratic and hyperbolic functions and were extending their skills to a range of trigonometric functions. The students enjoyed the challenge of finding repeating period functions and by the end of the lesson were confident to talk about the period and amplitude for both sine and cosine functions. A Year 7 class was extending its algebraic skills of forming and solving equations. Challenging questioning effectively developed their previous knowledge and skills. Attention to the pace of work was emphasised regularly throughout the lesson. There was very effective support for those pupils with special educational needs and they understood what to do. By the end of the lesson, most students successfully applied techniques to solve simple equations. The teacher explained that one example came from a GCSE examination paper. The pride in their achievement was visible.
- 114 However, in a few lessons, there are significant weaknesses in teaching that affect progress and attainment, especially higher attaining pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. Expectations vary across these classes. Not all pupils are managed effectively and there is little variation in teaching methods. In many lessons, teaching is didactic, from the front of the class and allows limited independent learning. Where there are significant weaknesses, pupils are not sufficiently challenged or extended in their work and make little progress. Resources are poorly prepared and the pace in these lessons is slow. There are ineffective strategies for pupil management.
- 115 There is a clear vision for the subject, leadership is good and the documentation supports high quality work in mathematics. The analysis of examination results and development planning is sound, but lacks detail about teaching and learning changes required to raise standards, including a more precise evaluation of value added data. The curriculum is very good and assessment satisfactory, and both meet legal requirements. The use of accommodation is good and display work is especially effective in creating a stimulating environment for mathematics teaching and learning.
- 116 Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good. The success rates at the GCSE C/D boundary have improved, as have pupils' number skills. To improve further the department should:
- improve teaching and learning through implementation of the findings of recent monitoring, and implement target setting with clearer success criteria;
  - improve the provision for higher attaining pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4;
  - provide all pupils with their information technology entitlement.

- 117 Pupils receive an education in science which is uneven in quality, partly as a result of staff turnover and specialist staff shortage. They make progress as they go through the school, by the age of 16 achieving results approaching the national average.
- 118 Overall attainment in national tests and examinations is below the national average. In the Key Stage 3 national tests in 1999 42% achieved the level 5 norm, compared with 54% nationally. Over the past 3 years these standards for 14 year old pupils at the school have been about one year in learning behind the national average, based on National Curriculum levels. Boys' results have been particularly weak and on a declining trend. The school's results do not keep step with the national trend and the science results have been below the school's English and maths results. However these science results are in line with those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds.
- 119 By the age of 16 steady progress has been made. Results in the 1999 GCSE were lower than the national figures, with 35% of pupils gaining higher grades, compared with 48% nationally. The school does enter a greater proportion of Year 11 pupils than is usual. Nevertheless, many of those who do not achieve grades A\* to C still do relatively well compared with national performance, and the average score per 15 year old pupil in the school meets the national average. Over the past five years the school's results do not match the improving national trend, nor do these pupils do as well in the science GCSEs as in their other subjects. Boys in particular underperform, and the highest grades are not well represented. When compared with results in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, pupils at St John Fisher Roman Catholic school have done better than might be expected.
- 120 Few students took 'A' level science exams in 1999, and then only in biology and chemistry. Results are below the national average particularly at the higher grades. Performance has been unsatisfactory compared with that nationally.
- 121 Pupils enter Year 7 with knowledge of science well below the national average and below their attainment in English and mathematics. In lessons during their first three years they have achieved sound standards, gaining knowledge at a steady pace. During Year 7 insufficient progress is made, especially for the most able, because of too much repetition of earlier work. By Year 9 they can use the idea of forces acting in pairs on seesaws, but cannot apply their understanding sufficiently to solve problems. Investigative skills are only developed to a basic level. During years 10 and 11 faster progress is made in gaining knowledge and there is a better understanding of important scientific ideas such as evolution and natural selection. Achievement in lessons is good and the gap in attainment is being closed during these two years. Standards in Year 11 lessons are typical of those found in most schools. Standards in A level lessons are slightly below those expected for this age-group, representing satisfactory achievement in relation to previous attainment.
- 122 Teaching is satisfactory overall, with a significant proportion of good teaching and a minority of unsatisfactory lessons. These unsatisfactory lessons occur mainly at Key Stage 3, where the greatest proportion of teaching by inexperienced and non-specialist teachers occurs. Lack of specialist expertise contributes to pitching the lessons at too low a level and not stretching able pupils. This is particularly the case in Year 7, where some teachers do not assess pupils' existing understanding and adjust the demands of the teaching to match. During Key Stage 3 the heavy reliance on a published scheme has brought some much needed stability to the teaching, but contributed to low expectation of pupils. Teaching in sixth form lessons is at least satisfactory and often good. Across Years 7 to 11 pupils' attitudes are sound overall, but a few pupils show a lack of interest, commitment and organisation. Behaviour is too often unsatisfactory, particularly in the Year 7 classes. This occasionally shows itself as open non-co-operation, but more usually



in lack of respect for the teacher, leading to lack of attention and disobedience. The best teaching is usually found in Years 10 and 11. Here experienced teachers have the skills to manage pupils' behaviour better, to engage their interest and use the GCSE examination structure to more accurately judge the demand of their work. Starts to lessons are crisper, setting an appropriate expectation of work rate. Tasks are often short with clear timelines, which helps to maintain the rate of progress, but some lessons would benefit from longer periods spent on tasks, to enable pupils to work at their own pace, and allow greater independence and scope for challenging the most able.

- 123 The science curriculum is too sparse, particularly at Key Stage 3 and post-16. In Year 7 some of the work is too simple compared with that covered in primary school. Generally at Key Stage 3 the teaching time is tight, the teaching programme focuses too heavily on coverage of published texts, there is too little enrichment in lessons, little use of information technology and insufficient rigour in the teaching of investigations. At Key Stage 4, the GCSE structure and fuller allocation of time give a better curriculum with full equality of access. There is no A level physics course running. There is insufficient documentation to help teachers, particularly the newer staff, organise their programme of teaching.
- 124 There have been many staff changes recently, plus the long term absence of one teacher. The current department centres on the newly appointed Science Co-ordinator and two newly qualified teachers. This degree of instability in the department has created disturbance in the staffing and teaching, as well as providing potential for further development in the department. This rate of change in the work of the department has been exacerbated by the lack of management systems in existence. For example, there is no central recording of marks, analysis of assessment, evaluation of value added, nor scheme of work lesson guidance; the health and safety policy is outdated. Management systems are currently poor and hampering departmental improvement. However, the new head of department has established a commitment towards improving provision and performance. The accommodation is good, with sufficient modern, pleasant laboratories. There is an adequate supply of materials, the technicians efficiently manage texts and equipment.
- 125 Since the last inspection there has been little improvement. There is now more technician support and the significant changes to the staffing provide potential for improvement in teaching and attainment, although this has still to be realised.
- 126 In order to ensure proper improvement the school first needs to:
- achieve a stable team of specialist teachers;
  - improve the organisation of teaching and use of the published scheme at key stage 3, particularly in Year 7;
  - reduce the variability in teaching by improving behaviour management, demand and pace of weak lessons;
  - introduce effective management systems to support improvements in teaching and efficient operation of the department.

## **ART**

- 127 In GCSE examinations in 1999, 69% of pupils gained A\*-C passes compared with the national average of 61%, but a lower proportion of pupils were entered by the school than found nationally. Over the past three years, fewer pupils have been entered for the examination, both in actual numbers and compared with national averages, so although results have been average or better, there is a falling trend in success. In A level, 2 students entered the examination last year, and both achieved a pass.

- 128 At Key Stage 3 in 1999, in teacher assessments, 82% of girls were judged as working at or beyond expectations, but only 54% of boys reached the same levels. For pupils currently in the school, Year 9 pupils are achieving below average standards overall, and boys' achievement is below that of girls. Although some pupils draw well, a heavy dependence on tracing and enlarging methods and lack of first hand experiences, reduce pupils' confidence in their own drawing skills. When given the opportunity to improve through lessons providing clear demonstrations and first hand experience, such as drawing self- portraits, pupils make good progress and improve their skills. A lack of breadth in the range of art, craft and design studied depresses achievement further because pupils do not use a broad and balanced range of media, have very limited skills in three dimensional work and are not able to select their preferred media. Insufficient use is made of sketchbooks for experimentation and individual research. Most younger pupils have experience of using clay from primary schools, but used it in this school for the first time during the week of the inspection. Although most pupils can name a few famous artists, knowledge and understanding of their work is limited. Pupils with special educational needs and developing bilingual pupils often make less progress in lessons than others because insufficient attention is given to meeting their needs, especially when others disrupt the class.
- 129 By Year 11, pupils on examination courses have made sound progress and achieve average levels in relation to course requirements. Composition is often good, and pupils show imagination in their work. The narrow range of painting and drawing techniques and media limits achievement: although pupils are technically competent, their individuality is expressed mainly through composition rather than styles of work. Understanding of the work of other artists is sound. In Year 10, standards vary widely, with some good development of charcoal drawing through still life observation, and below average work in graphics.
- 130 Students in Year 13 have clear ideas about what interests them and work hard to research their projects thoroughly. Most work is design based and many students produce interesting and imaginative designs. They are confident in talking about their work and expressing their ideas. Critical skills are under developed, and only limited reference is made to the work of other artists. In Year 12, some excellent teaching is enabling students to improve considerably their confidence and range in drawing, and standards are higher.
- 131 Attitudes towards art are very variable. In the sixth form, positive commitment is shown, and students work hard and sustain concentration. In Key Stage 3, many groups do not settle readily to work, and there is an expectation that they can chat and disregard what the teacher is saying. These habits create additional problems for staff new to the school. In a very few lessons, a very small number of pupils, almost always boys, are confrontational and refuse to do what they are asked. When not effectively controlled, low level and more serious disruption affects the progress and learning of the whole class. When settled, and provided with challenging work, pupils enjoy the subject. In Key Stage 4, most pupils are well motivated, except in graphics where many, especially those who did not opt for the subject, are unchallenged by the work set. Despite these problems, most pupils are very trustworthy and show care in using materials, and relationships with teachers are largely positive.
- 132 The quality of teaching shows very wide variations from excellent to poor. On balance, there is too much unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils' learning reflects closely the quality of teaching, and varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. Teachers show secure subject knowledge, and show pupils practical techniques well when enough time is devoted to demonstration. They are able to advise pupils on artists they might study to influence their work, but do not enable younger pupils to express their own views or develop critical skills often enough. Even in well-planned lessons, too much time has to be spent settling the pupils to work. Insufficient attention is

given to developing listening and speaking skills, and the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language are often ignored. By contrast, numeracy is well taught. Most lessons are well prepared with materials ready, but there are wide variations in the quality of planning which identifies what pupils need to learn and how it will be achieved. In an excellent Year 12 lesson, the teacher had identified weaknesses in students' drawing, and through a series of challenging and focused approaches, using an interesting still life arrangement as a stimulus, improved greatly the confidence and range in students' work. Expectations in many other lessons are much lower, and there is a lack of clear focus, activities are rushed and insufficient attention is given to developing the wider skills pupils need to learn. Homework is set regularly, but it is set a half term in advance and not discussed in lessons. Marking is mainly regular, but does not offer advice on how to improve or on what the pupil should do next.

- 133 The schools' aims and values are reflected in the work of the department, and art is produced and displayed in response to the Christian year. There are many weaknesses in management of the subject. There are no schemes of work in place, and the curriculum overview does not provide enough analysis of what pupils should learn. Requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully met. There is insufficient craft and three-dimensional work and no obvious reference to non-western art. There is little use of information technology. There are no departmental systems for assessment, or for recording the progress made by pupils, but reports, although variable in quality, are often good at informing parents about the progress made by pupils. Development planning is weak.
- 134 The progress made by pupils in learning art in Key Stage 3 is slowed by poor curriculum planning and assessment, too little time overall spent studying the subject, and short lessons. Resources to support the subject are unsatisfactory, and although well used, books for younger readers, twentieth century art and art from different cultures are under-represented in the library. Resources for information technology are unsatisfactory.
- 135 Since the previous inspection, there has been a decline in the subject. Standards are lower, and issues identified for action have not been resolved. Poor behaviour and attitudes found in the previous inspection are still a regular feature of lessons, especially in Key Stage 3. Planning and systems for assessment have declined and are unsatisfactory.
- 136 To raise standards the department should:
- improve the management of pupils to create a positive atmosphere of learning in all lessons, and provide pupils with challenging work;
  - put into place schemes of work which identify learning objectives and learning outcomes; plan how pupils will make progress, and meet statutory requirements.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 137 In design and technology pupils benefit from very good, supportive relationships with teachers, and the opportunities to see and handle good quality work, particularly in textiles.
- 138 The attainment of pupils in Key Stage 3 is typical of performance nationally. Pupils are able to use labelled sketches in the generation of ideas, and show evidence of planning, analysis and sound evaluation when investigating the product. This was shown in a textiles lesson where pupils were designing ties. In this lesson they were also able to demonstrate good planning of their work by the use of step by step instructions. This planning, together with accuracy of making, are well developed in resistant materials lessons. Pupils use a good range of hand and

machine tools with increasing precision and control, for instance when drilling holes for axles in their toy vehicles in Year 8. Pupils are able to select and apply 'tie and dye' and 'batik' processes to cushions in Year 8 to create a range of interesting designs. When making the 'potted plant tool' pupils are able to use a range of tools and processes well, particularly with reference to health and safety requirements. Pupils do not show adequate progress in their use of designing across the media, except in textiles, where the use of knowledge and understanding to improve designs shows good progress between years. In the projects on a 'batch production toy vehicle' and an 'automaton', in resistant materials lessons, pupils do not generate sufficient ideas and are limited by a lack of designing strategies and drawing skills, which could demonstrate their creativity. Pupils are better at developing their skills of making and improve their competence and confidence in working with materials across all media well.

- 139 Attainment of pupils in Key Stage 4 is good in textiles and sound in food technology. In the design of products, pupils are able to apply test procedures to a range of fabrics, record the results and make decisions on which materials and techniques to use in their final product. Pupils are able to develop criteria for their 'waistcoat' designs in textiles, which take into account appearance, function, reliability and purposes for which they are intended, and use these to formulate a design proposal. In textiles, there is a wide range of design strategies being used, together with the generation of ideas using a variety of graphic media. In food technology, pupils are able to recognise the varying nutritional needs of different kinds of people, for example, they create 'food for diabetics' and 'meals on wheels'. During the preparation of food, pupils are not always able to match their choice of utensil with the food being used, and do not always take the correct health and hygiene measures, such as using separate preparation boards for meat and vegetables. In textiles, pupils' practical skills and techniques are further explored and developed to become more accurate as the products evolve. By Year 11, pupils make good progress in the development of their designing and making skills and improve the quality of their graphic techniques. The progress of pupils with special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language is good, with many pupils achieving levels of attainment above what would normally be expected.
- 140 Pupils are generally well motivated and keen to get on with their work. They are able to sustain concentration when working on various tasks, but there are occasions when pupils are off task and not well focused on the activity, such as with the cook-chill food production in Year 10. Pupils are very courteous and demonstrate trustworthiness by taking responsibility for their own learning, particularly in the GCSE textile groups. They listen attentively to the teacher. Relationships are very good and there is positive interaction between teachers and pupils.
- 141 The quality of teaching overall is good. The better teaching takes place in textiles and resistant materials lessons. Teaching is less than satisfactory in food technology. The characteristics of better teaching are evident in textiles lessons, where pupils are effectively managed, and there is a clear structure of learning with review to enable pupils to celebrate their progress and achievements. It is also good where tasks are timed and clear targets to be achieved are identified, as in the textiles GCSE groups. In both key stages, teachers are good at individually supporting the pupils in their work. Less than satisfactory teaching was observed in food lessons when poor classroom and pupil management and co-ordination led to poor progress in learning by Year 10 pupils. Some lesson planning lacks imagination, particularly in resistant materials, making the teaching not conducive to the development of creativity. Homework is well integrated into lesson planning.
- 142 Curriculum planning is generally good and covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum in respect of media taught, even though work on resistant materials does not feature in the Key Stage 4 scheme of work. The individual units

of work do not yet build on the learning that has taken place in previous units, and few contain much research into other cultures. The correct mixture of design and make assignments and focused practical tasks is less evident in the resistant materials units. The assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' work is unsatisfactory, with no standardised system in place. However, at Key Stage 4, the GCSE results are more fully analysed and have provided some useful strategies for improvement.

- 143 The co-ordination of the department has not yet been fully rationalised, leaving the subject without a clear educational direction and without consistent standards of teaching and learning. The head of textiles and food has ensured effective management of her two areas and supported the resistant materials well to ensure the subject as a whole has addressed many of the action points from the previous report. The subject benefits from good technical support that is well co-ordinated and ensures all health and safety issues are fully addressed. Accommodation and resources are good and benefit from excellent displays of pupils' work, celebrating their success.
- 144 Since the last report, attainment and progress of pupils at age 14 and at age 16 has improved, and pupils now display more positive attitudes to the subject. Many of the action points from the last report have been fully addressed, but there are still some to be resolved. The key points for action are to ensure:
- effective co-ordination and management of the subject as a whole;
  - the development of assessment, recording and reporting procedures to support pupils' learning;
  - consistency of the quality of teaching and learning across the media, particularly in food technology.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

- 145 This is a very good department which offers a rich geographical experience to all pupils and a high quality of teaching. Pupils achieve high standards.
- 146 Last years' unmoderated teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 showed pupil attainment was in line with national averages. Currently, in Year 9, attainment is above the national average, with less marked differences between boys and girls and an improving proportion gaining the higher grades. Attainment at GCSE, where 69.2% of pupils gained grades A\*-C in 1999, is well above the national average. The higher grades are well represented. Current attainment is at a similar high level. Last year all six post 16 students gained grades A-E at Advanced level and two thirds gained the highest grades, figures well above national averages.
- 147 By Year 9, pupils have a sound knowledge of locations and have acquired a working geographical vocabulary and appropriate terminology. They show a good understanding of geographical patterns and processes, as in their work on zones of a city in the UK and Brazil and earthquakes and volcanoes. Effective use is made of case studies to help pupils develop detailed knowledge and understanding of how people live in different places. In their work on migration from rural areas to Rio de Janeiro pupils write well in an extended way with some insight into the difficulties migrants face. Pupils are developing their understanding of geographical issues, particularly about global inequalities, where they use development indicators well. A major strength is investigative work which uses hypothesis testing approaches and field work. This work begins with an enquiry into leisure use at a local country park in Year 7, coastal fieldwork in Year 8 and, in Year 9, the buildings and functions of central Peterborough. For pupils to secure the higher levels of the national curriculum this good investigative work needs to allow an increasing independence of approach. When considering environmental and geographical issues pupils need to consider more complex systems and interactions. All pupils, including those with

special educational needs, are making good progress in acquiring and consolidating their knowledge, skills and understanding.

- 148 Towards the end of Year 11, pupils are achieving standards well above that seen in similar schools. They show a good knowledge and understanding of physical and human patterns and processes. Their work on development shows good graphical understanding of relationships between, for example, life expectancy and people per doctor. Their work on population structure and population pyramids includes both differences between countries and differences within a country. All work is underpinned by good case study work (for example, studying planning issues in London's Docklands, or the location and layout of the Cambridge Science park). A major strength is the high standard of course work. Pupils are engaged in thoughtful local urban fieldwork where, using a range of geographical techniques, they assess the impact of an expanding central business district. They also use development indicators to identify global inequalities, building appropriately on their lower school studies. Overall, work is of a good standard, but there is less analysis in the work of those pupils taking the short course and their work is less well organised. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress. The higher prior attainers are making particularly good progress and the percentage of pupils achieving the highest grades at GCSE is well above the national average.
- 149 Current attainment of students post 16 is above that found nationally. This judgement of students' work is supported by the current external modular results. Students produce a good standard of written work, which incorporates both theory and case studies. Their work on ecosystems shows a good use of scientific ideas and language. Individual studies are of good quality.
- 150 Across the school, pupils' response to learning is very good. In all the lessons seen pupils showed good levels of interest and concentration and worked productively on task. There was an atmosphere of learning in all the classes seen. There were few examples of fully independent work showing pupil initiative in the lower school, but more of these characteristics were seen in course work for GCSE and particularly in the individual studies written by sixth formers.
- 151 Teaching is good and two thirds of the lessons seen were very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned, managed and organised. Clear question and answer sessions challenge pupils and provide a good support structure so that pupils can learn effectively. Where the teaching was very good, as in a Year 9 mixed ability lesson, the teacher led pupils to identify a range of hypotheses, which would be tested in the field. Pupils clearly understood what hypothesis testing was and, drawing on their previous work on urban models, made thoughtful comments. In another very good Year 9 lesson the teacher used the technique of "stilling" to create a receptive atmosphere, and to offer pupils spiritual moments to reflect on recent floods. He then carefully, step by step, led the whole class to think critically how they might construct categories of buildings and land use that would help them gather relevant information in their local fieldwork. In a Year 11 class, the teacher led pupils through a case study of Rutland Water, illustrating how planners manage conflicting water-based activities. Although the commercial decision-making exercise was less rich than many examination examples, the pupils appreciated how conflict matrices could help them understand planning and management principles. All the teaching seen approached this level of challenge and pupil involvement.
- 152 The department works as a team and is very well led and managed by an able and enthusiastic head of department. There is very good, detailed documentation to support the broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers provide good fieldwork and enquiry opportunities, but information technology is not extensively used. Tests and tasks accurately assess pupils' attainment, although Year 7 and 8 pupils have too

little information about attainment in relation to national criteria. Pupils are not yet in a position to assess their work and set subject specific targets for improvement. There is good analysis of GCSE examination data. There is a sound development plan with appropriate priorities. Teachers and pupils now work in appropriate accommodation that is enhanced by good displays, but the rooms need black-out facilities. Resources are well used, to the point where core texts need replacing, and more atlases are needed.

- 153 Since the previous inspection the department has improved its standards of attainment in all key stages and teaching has improved to be good or very good across the school.
- 154 Action to promote further improvement should include:
- providing opportunities for increasingly independent work in Key Stage 3;
  - offering further challenge to pupils in Key Stage 3 by providing opportunities to investigate more complex systems and interactions (levels 6 and 7);
  - revising the assessment system to include more explicit use of national curriculum criteria.

## HISTORY

- 155 This is a very good department, which provides a rich history experience to all. It offers a high quality of teaching. Pupils achieve high standards.
- 156 The current attainment of Year 9 pupils in history is above that found nationally. This judgement is supported by last year's unmoderated teacher assessment where the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 and above was 6% higher than the national average. Pupils gained a fair proportion of the higher levels. Current Year 11 pupils are attaining well above national averages. This judgement is supported by last year's GCSE results where 67% of pupils gained A\*-C. The higher grades were well represented. Boys attain higher than girls. At advanced level all pupils gained grade A-E, but the higher grades were under-represented.
- 157 By Year 9, pupils have acquired a good knowledge and understanding of the events, people and situations studied together with an appropriate historical vocabulary. They are able to place events within a chronological framework using timelines and historical conventions. They show a good understanding of historical concepts such as change, cause and effect, as in the long term and short term causes of World War 1, and the role of individuals, as when writing about Robert Owen. They can comprehend sources and are beginning to analyse them, for example when they use a range of sources to tease out what happened at Sarajevo on June 28<sup>th</sup> 1914. When given research opportunities they can extract information from textbooks and library reference books and material, but they still have to learn how to conduct increasingly independent enquiries. Most can write well in an extended way about historical themes. Although pupils are offered the chance to consider historical interpretations, explaining how and why they have been produced is the least well developed part of the course. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress in acquiring and consolidating their knowledge, skills and understanding. There is no evidence of underachievement.
- 158 Towards the end of Year 11, pupils are achieving standards well above that seen in comparable schools. Over the two-year course pupils have acquired a good level of knowledge and understanding. They show a good understanding of historical change over a long time span, as in their detailed work on Medicine through time, and an understanding of long-term causes and contexts. In studying the American

West, pupils write well and in an extended way about difficult ideas such as “manifest destiny”, make good comparisons between Young and Smith as leaders of the Mormons or search for links between Custer’s character and his actions on the battle field. They use a range of historical sources well in considering the importance of the buffalo to the Plains Indian or in constructing a complex diagram to show the rise and fall of the US cattle industry. A major strength is the high standard of course work. Pupils are engaged in good historical enquiry using local buildings, inventories, burial registers and evidence in the parish church to investigate the “Great Rebuilding”. They also produce appropriate course work on the complex conflicts in Ireland. Although in one classroom the computer was in constant use by pairs of pupils using CD-ROMs on the Oregon Trail, or word processing a letter from the front to show First World War censorship, the use of information technology could be expanded and used in all classrooms. All pupils, including those with special needs, are making good progress.

- 159 Current attainment of students post 16 is above that seen in similar schools. Students make full notes, write well and produce a good standard of personal study. They show a good understanding of the different methodologies employed by historians.
- 160 Pupils’ response to learning across the school is very good. There was an atmosphere of learning in all classes and no example of poor behaviour was seen. Younger pupils show interest in and enthusiasm towards the work. History is a popular option at GCSE level. Older pupils are engaged with the work and show some initiative and independence of thought.
- 161 Teaching is good, with two thirds of the lessons judged very good. Teachers show a good level of historical knowledge and an understanding of how pupils learn. All the lessons are well planned and structured, each lesson building pupils’ learning and leading to at least one demanding and challenging task. In some Year 10 mixed ability classes, with pupils studying both the long and short GCSE course teaching was very good. Pupils extracted information from a text to build a biographical fact file on General Custer. Having read eight different interpretations of his character they then matched the source to names of informants. They built a table showing positive and negative features of his personality in order to evaluate his character. Finally they began to suggest possible links between his personality and the flawed decisions he made in battle. These lessons were well matched to pupils’ needs, moved at pace and each task was planned to build towards a demanding question. In a Year 9 mixed ability class, pupils considered the usefulness of letters to the historian. They read a number of actual letters from the front in World War 1. They discussed these as a class and made good generalisations about their content. They then wrote a similar letter indicating those parts that might be censored. In a Year 7 class, the teacher helped the class to revise their knowledge of the events leading to the Battle of Hastings. Using textbook pictures and printed panels, pupils considered how reliable the Bayeux tapestry was to the historian. All the lessons seen were well managed and organised and were effective in helping pupils to learn. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils.
- 162 The department works as a team and is very well led and managed by an able and quietly thoughtful head of department. There is very good, detailed documentation to support the broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers provide a good range of visits in all years, make excellent use of local sites, and, with the library, provide good research opportunities. Tests and tasks accurately assess pupils’ attainment and there is good feedback to pupils, but pupils need more information about their attainment in relation to national criteria in order to assess their work and set themselves subject specific targets for improvement. There is good analysis of GCSE examination data. There is a sound development plan with appropriate priorities. Teachers and students work in an environment enhanced by good displays.



- 163 Since the previous inspection the department has improved its standards of attainment in all key stages and there is now no evidence of underachievement. Teaching has improved to its current high level across the school.
- 164 Action to promote further improvement should include:
- providing further opportunities for independent historical enquiry work in Key Stage 3;
  - helping pupils to set themselves subject specific targets for improvement.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

- 165 In information technology pupils do not receive a consistent or coherent education during their time at school. The department has made improvements in pupils' attainment in Key Stage 3 over the past four years. Pupils are now attaining at the level that is usually expected for this age group, but the department has not addressed the needs of Key Stage 4 and the whole curriculum.
- 166 Pupils aged 14 are making sufficient progress and are demonstrating attainment that is typical of that usually found. Pupils have good communication and information handling skills. They are able to move text and edit for spelling and sense, when producing letters and leaflets. In Year 9 pupils are able to produce a 'Tourist guide for Peterborough', where they combine text and photographs, with clear labelling, to enable an audience to find its way through the presentation. Pupils are able to control and measure well, for example, they are able to use 'Flowol' software to develop a set of commands to control a range of sensors in a virtual house. When modelling, pupils are able to use a 'music mentor' to create patterns and relationships between musical notations and test out hypotheses.
- 167 At Key Stage 4 there is no information technology course, although in some subjects there is evidence of some good information technology work. In design and technology, for example, pupils use spreadsheets to cost materials and evaluate surveys. This is not consistent, however, and is not assessed, so does not contribute to the pupils' overall information technology capability.
- 168 In the sixth form, students are making good progress and are demonstrating attainment that is above the national expectations for the GNVQ key skills. They communicate and handle information well and in the most appropriate way for the tasks set. For example, they use word processing and spreadsheets to record their learning from a work placement.
- 169 Pupils generally show a keen interest in using information technology, though this is more evident in specific information technology lessons rather than supporting work in other subjects. During information technology lessons, pupils do not always concentrate well on the task set nor persevere to complete them. Behaviour is nearly always good, as pupils relate well to each other and show appropriate respect for the teacher and equipment.
- 170 The quality of teaching is generally sound in Key Stage 3. The teacher is secure in his understanding of the information technology curriculum and gives due attention to the teaching of essential software features. In the better lessons pupils are well managed and kept on task by regular intervention and support by the teacher. In some lessons, the tasks set do not always match the capability of the pupils, and they struggle in their understanding of what to do next. This happened in a Year 9 lesson, where a group building a suitable flowchart to control a range of sensors, lacked sufficient knowledge and understanding to operate the software and complete the task. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, poor planning and lack of structure led to unsatisfactory learning by the pupils.

- 171 The curriculum provision for the subject is adequate at Key Stage 3, and provides coverage of all the required strands. At Key Stage 4 the lack of specific curriculum provision fails to give sufficient opportunities for pupils to access the requirements of the National Curriculum. The procedures for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' achievement and progress are insufficient, and do not provide accurate or consistent records to determine pupils' levels of attainment. The information technology co-ordinator has yet to exercise leadership and management that will establish the subject in its own right and as a significant medium across the curriculum. There is no clear direction as to the place of information technology within the school and how it should be taught. This is because the development plan focuses on equipment and on the operational aspects of the subject, rather than establishing a comprehensive curriculum plan for information technology across the school. The skills of other teachers have not been audited, so the information technology competence of teachers in other subjects cannot be identified. The school is poorly resourced, having a pupil to computer ratio of approximately 20:1, which is well below the national average for secondary schools, with a significant number of the computers having low specifications.
- 172 Since the last report, curriculum provision at Key Stage 3 and the appointment of an information technology co-ordinator have been carried out. There are, however, many issues from the previous report which are still outstanding and need to be addressed. The key points for action to secure satisfactory improvement are to ensure:
- the provision of a comprehensive strategy plan for the integration and co-ordination of information technology across the school;
  - improvement of the poor pupil to computer ratio and more effective deployment of resources;
  - full compliance with the statutory requirements of access to information technology for all pupils, to include assessment, recording and reporting of the subject.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

- 173 The modern foreign languages department is good. Pupils benefit from good teaching and achieve well. Recent GCSE results show an improving trend, following a dip three years ago. Results are broadly in line with national expectations, but are good in comparison with similar schools. Pupils enter the school with below average language and learning skills but make good progress to creditable levels. Almost all pupils are entered for GCSE and almost all achieve at least a grade G pass. French and German have alternated as the first language. In 1999 German GCSE results were in line with national average, but they compared favourably with similar schools. This was all the more impressive because far more pupils entered than in other schools, where most pupils taking German are high ability students, learning it as a second foreign language. However, very few students continue studying languages post-16. There were none last year and only two in the present Year 13 and none in Year 12. Results have been below expected levels.
- 174 Teacher assessments in French at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate above average attainment. Observations in lessons suggested that, although some pupils are considerably above average, there are wide variations and the overall standard is broadly in line with levels usually seen. Some pupils show real confidence in speaking an unfamiliar language, for example to talk about themselves and their interests. They can speak and write extended dialogues, for example to shop for

clothes, checking size, price and colour and saying whether they like them or not. A considerable number, not just the most able, can cope with some questions outside a set dialogue. At the other end of the scale, some pupils struggle to respond to questions with more than a word or short phrase.

- 175 The present Year 10 take German and Year 11 take French. In both languages, all achieve at least a basic level of understanding and can speak and write a limited range of language well enough to get a simple message across. Most can speak confidently, using a reasonable range of familiar language. High fliers can express opinions, for example about why they like or dislike school subjects and can cope with unexpected situations. They show a good grasp of grammatical structures and can apply this knowledge in extended writing, although only a few manage to do this with sufficient accuracy and range to gain the very highest grades. Few pupils cope with routine use of French or German in class beyond set tasks. There is insufficient time to do a second foreign language properly, and few pupils choose to study one, although Italian has recently been introduced as a second modern foreign language in Year 10.
- 176 There are only two students in the sixth form. They benefit from good teaching,
- 177 Relationships in lessons are good. Most pupils apply themselves sensibly and concentrate well. They accept what the teacher asks and comply with rules, but there is seldom scope to show initiative. A few show little interest or motivation and either do little or chat, sometimes distracting others. The well-structured teaching and pupils' positive attitudes help most of them to make at least steady progress, and many build up their language skills well enough to make above average progress during their course. Listening and reading skills are adequately developed, although the present lack of listening stations has limited pupils' access to intensive listening. The opportunities for reading for pleasure are still limited, despite the recent arrival of new readers. The most able make adequate progress, although they are rarely given a special challenge. Pupils with special educational needs sometimes receive dedicated support by a specialist linguist, which enables them to make good progress. When such support is not available, they sometimes have difficulty in following the flow of the lesson. Pupils with English as an additional language adapt well and use their linguistic skills to good effect.
- 178 Teaching is good. It is almost always at least satisfactory and some is very good or excellent. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good through Key Stage 4 and post-16. Teachers carefully prepare a good range of activities, designed to build up pupils' language skills. They use a variety of methods, including rapid-fire language, "ping-pong" games and lively pair activities. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that pupils understand exactly what is expected of them at every stage of the lesson, both in terms of language and behaviour. They judge well when to move from skilful whole class questioning and practice to intensive speaking practice in pairs. A good example of this is in a Year 7 class, where pupils regularly use card prompts from a wall display to sustain question and answer practice for long enough to build up confidence and fluency with all the language they have learned. Lessons do not reach these heights where the sense of audience for language work is lacking and there is heavy emphasis on learning words rather than building language skills, including routine, independent use of French or German. Teachers generally manage their classes with firm, calm authority but, in a few cases, particularly in Key Stage 3, the teacher has difficulty in engaging the pupils' interest or in dealing with poor behaviour, and this slows the learning.
- 179 The department is led with clear vision and thorough planning. The pupils respect the dedication of the teachers, who work well as a team, supporting and monitoring each other. This contributes to an openness and willingness to share problems and

good practice, which indicates a capacity to go on improving. Assessment is very effective at Key Stage 4, linked to the modular course, and the information is well used to modify plans. More day-to-day assessment and feedback, including thorough marking, is under-developed, particularly in Key Stage 3, leaving some pupils unsure about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Some pupils benefit from residential visits to France. Otherwise, there is limited provision for cultural and linguistic development through direct contact with French and German people, for example with a foreign language assistant or e-mail links. The use of information and communications technology has yet to be developed.

- 180 There have clearly been considerable improvements since the last inspection, particularly in results and teaching. In order to improve further, the department should:
- clearly inform pupils about what level they are at and how they can improve;
  - plan better to improve pupils' language skills, so that all pupils learn to use the foreign language routinely in lessons;
  - further develop the monitoring system to ensure that best practice becomes the norm.

## MUSIC

- 181 Music plays a pivotal and important part in the life of the school. This is achieved through the very strong contribution made to the liturgy and spiritual life of the school, and a developing range of high profile out-of-class activities. These developments are relatively recent and have been put in place quickly and efficiently by the recently appointed music staff, supported by senior managers.
- 182 There has been one recent A level student who achieved a Grade E. Currently there is one year 13 student completing AS music. The attainment of these students is broadly in line with prior attainment.
- 183 Recent GCSE results are below the national average. In 1999 six pupils were entered and one half achieved a grade A-C. These grades matched their prior experience and attainment. Analysis of how the pupils achieved in other subjects shows that pupils did better in music than might be expected. No year 11 lessons were observed. Year 11 composition coursework shows some imaginative ideas which are organised into some quite effective pieces. The structure of pieces is a strength. In Year 10 lessons pupils have a variety of performance skills, which are expected, given their previous experience.
- 184 The attainment of Year 9 pupils is in line with that normally seen. They have a good knowledge of music and are able to recount facts such as the names of composers, the ideas behind impressionistic paintings and how the whole-tone scale is constructed. Their performance skills are under-developed and below expectation. For example, when playing pianos or keyboards they can find notes correctly but have little idea of suitable technique, such as use of the thumb. Attainment is inhibited by some of the accommodation, which results in too few spaces for group work and noise levels that are too high. Limited resources, such as glockenspiels, give access to poor sounds, which are unsuitable for the task given.
- 185 All pupils have good attitudes to their work. They arrive promptly for lessons and quickly settle. They are effective listeners, both at the start of the lesson, when instructions are given, and at the end when they listen to each other's work. They co-operate well in groups and remain on the task they have been asked to complete, even when not under direct supervision. The high expectations teachers have for behaviour make a positive impact on pupils' attitudes.
- 186 Teaching is sound in all year groups. Teaching has many good features. Teachers

set high expectations for behaviour, expect pupils to work to tight time-scales and offer good support. There is a strong emphasis on knowledge and pupils are able to talk about information, such as when Vivaldi lived, or recognise some key pieces of music. Music makes a good contribution to literacy. This aspect is supported well by effective classroom displays. In Key Stage 3, teaching is always at least sound and nearly half is good. Good teaching occurs when pupils move quickly to practical music making and the teacher's introduction is brief but very well focused. This occurred in a Year 8 lesson where pupils were working on ideas based on the gamelan. In this lesson the tuned percussion instruments available were suitable for the task given and the pupils worked very well to concentrate, despite the high noise levels caused by the lack of suitable rooms. Pupils also responded well to the clear tasks given as part of this project. Where teaching is sound, the over-long teacher's introduction or poor definition of tasks sometimes restricts progress. For example, in a Year 7 lesson pupils only had twelve minutes for practical activity and their compositions became a series of sound effects because they were not able to apply sufficient musical understanding.

- 187 Relatively little teaching was seen of GCSE pupils, owing to the illness of the inspector. Teaching is sound. The teachers respond appropriately to the needs of the pupils and good performing skills are used to accompany solo performers. When working on compositions, pupils lack focus about how to apply their musical knowledge. One pupil spent a whole lesson recording sounds from a drum kit for future use at home. Limited progress was made and the activity reflects the relative lack of resources available within the department.
- 188 The teaching of A level students is sound. The technology option is a weak area. The teaching of the aspect is sound, but hampered by a lack of suitable equipment. At present the teacher is using a keyboard from home in order to support students. Teachers also supply many other resources personally.
- 189 The department makes a strong contribution to the life of the school. Music within liturgy is very strong and the department has also developed work with composers, links with a university, started a music society, which incorporates strong extra-curricular activities, and set up an annual James Blades award. Concerts are high profile, but the department is also inclusive and aims to involve all types of pupils. This aspect of the department's work has been put in place in a short space of time and within a context where the subject has previously been held in low esteem. It shows great imagination, creativity and energy. Leadership and educational direction are clear strengths.
- 190 Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Then music had several key weaknesses. There are now no important shortcomings and many strengths. In order to improve further the department should:
- continue to revise and develop schemes of work, especially at Key Stage 3 in-line with the departmental development plan;
  - maintain the positive impact music has made on the life of the school and wider community.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- 191 All pupils are provided with good opportunities to participate in physical education from 11 to 18, and the department offers a GCSE and A level Sports Studies examination option.
- 192 The majority of pupils are attaining standards of performance in physical education, which are typical for their age. Last year teacher assessment at the age of 14 indicated that 69% of pupils were achieving above the expected level. At the last

inspection a GCSE exam was taught as a lunchtime extra-curricular subject and this was criticised on the grounds of lack of parity with other subjects. The school introduced physical education as a timetabled examination option open to all Year 10 pupils in 1997 and the first small cohort of pupils was examined for the first time in 1999. The percentage of pupils gaining a GCSE A\* - C was 33% which is well below the national average of 49.4%, however an analysis of these pupils' examination performance against their other subjects indicates that their performance in physical education is in line with their other results. A Level Sports Studies was examined for first time in 1999 with just two students who were taught as part of a local consortium for the first year of the course. Both students achieved a D grade, however the number is too small to make a meaningful comparison with national averages.

- 193 By the age of 14 pupils understand the importance of tactical play. In dance and trampolining pupils' performance shows good development. Most pupils are confident at developing a dance sequence and are able to perform a good range of basic trampoline agilities. By the age of 16, pupils effectively build on their earlier experience and have the opportunity to develop expertise in a good range of activities, and to study the subject at GCSE level. In a Year 9 trampolining lesson, higher attaining pupils were encouraged to observe others' performance and feed back to them how they could improve. This was done well, but is an approach which needs to be embedded more into all teaching for it to be effective. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs, as well as those with English as an additional language, is also good.
- 194 The quality of pupils' response to the teaching and their level of concentration and co-operation are generally good. A small minority of younger pupils, particularly those with behavioural difficulties, does require some teacher intervention to ensure they stay on task. This is done effectively with the minimum of disruption to the lesson and other pupils' learning. Relationships between pupils are good and pupils show appropriate care for others. For example, in a Year 8 dance lesson where one girl was without a partner another pair invited her to join them. A level students work well and are keen to question the teacher when unsure and are able to enlarge on the theoretical concept of the syllabus, for example, the role the circulatory system plays in exercise. Whilst the practical performance of many pupils undertaking the GCSE course is good, the standard of written work is relatively weak and they do not apply themselves as effectively to the theoretical elements of the course. There is a need to develop better study skills and more positive attitudes to completing written assignments and set readings.
- 195 Teaching overall is satisfactory with some good features. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and use good questioning skills to draw out and reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject. Lessons are usually well planned and group discussion was used effectively in a Year 11 GCSE theory lesson on the impact of the media on sport. This enabled pupils to make good progress in their understanding of this aspect of the syllabus. There is, however, a need to ensure that pupils not participating in practical lessons, because of injury or illness, are more involved in the learning process through officiating, or evaluating others' performance.
- 196 The department is soundly led and the head of department provides effective leadership of the subject and is well supported by her colleagues. She has worked hard to introduce the subject at A level and consolidate the GCSE course into the curriculum. Teachers in the department offer a good range of extra-curricular clubs at lunchtime and the school does participate in some inter-school games. There are, however, relatively few opportunities in the form of inter-tutor group competitive games, which would engage more pupils in participating in competitive sport. Whilst accommodation and facilities for the subject are good overall the provision of playing field space is tight and the need for pupils to move between the two

buildings results in a loss of some teaching time. There are too few opportunities for pupils to engage in self-evaluation of their performance or to set targets for their future progress. Reports to parents do not give a clear indication of pupils' attainment level, their progress and what they need to do to improve further.

197 The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, particularly in the provision for GCSE, which is now made during lesson time as part of the normal option block.

198 In order to improve further the department needs to:

- review current assessment practices and provide opportunities for pupils' self-assessment, target setting and evaluation of their own and others' performance to be built into lesson planning;
- develop information technology resources and staff knowledge and understanding, and ensure integration into schemes of work, especially for GCSE and A level.